



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 27, 2019

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Iowa's pheasant population steady, quail down

Iowa's pheasant hunters should expect to find a similar number of birds as last year, with the exception of south central and southeast Iowa, where the pheasant population decline was more significant.

Based on the August roadside survey, Iowa's statewide average is 17 pheasants per 30 mile route, down from 21 per route last year.

"The survey shows a population similar to last year for most of the state and based on those results, pheasant hunters can expect 2019 to be a near repeat in most regions of 2018," said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

He said hunters shouldn't avoid hunting areas with lower counts, but rather focus on hunting the best available habitat. "Hunting areas where there's good habitat next to a food source should increase the chance for success regardless of where you're hunting in the state," he said.

The 2019 roadside index is nearly identical to 2008, when hunters harvested almost 400,000 roosters.

"Unfortunately even though this year's roadside index is the same as 2008, our pheasant harvest will only likely be 200,000 roosters rather than 400,000. Why? Because of the lack of pheasant hunters," said Bogenschutz. "In 2008 we had 86,000 pheasant hunters, this fall we predict we'll have 50,000 hunters – we have the bird population to harvest close to 400,000 birds, but we don't have the hunters to harvest them."

Iowa's quail population was down 36 percent from last year. Iowa's quail range is across the southern three tiers of counties.

The full report is available at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey. Iowa's pheasant and quail seasons open Oct. 26.

Late winter, lousy spring hampers reproduction, opening day success

The two factors that determine Iowa's pheasant population are weather and habitat. Iowa's pheasant population dip is likely due to a combination of hen mortality from a late arriving cold and snowy winter followed by nesting failures from the cool spring and record setting rainfall in May.

That wet spring could pay benefits down the road to hunters who cannot get to the field until after opening day.

Farmers who faced significant planting delays in the spring will likely have a later than normal harvest. Hunters should expect to see standing crops when the season opens, making hunting more difficult early.

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-979-0828.

Heavy boat traffic expected for Labor Day Weekend

Boaters heading out for the Labor Day holiday will likely find busy waterways across the state.

Susan Stocker, boating law administrator and education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said boat operators need to operate with caution and to watch for hazards in the water.

The weekend weather forecast is favorable for boaters and combined with a three day weekend should produce heavy boat traffic. Stocker said ramps will likely be busy, placing boating etiquette at a premium.

"Everyone is excited to get on the water," she said. "Be patient, and when it's your turn be ready to launch. Courtesy on the water goes a long way in avoiding problems."

She said an obvious way to prevent problems is for boat operators to avoid alcohol while operating the craft.

"We want boaters to have fun on the water, but we don't want that fun to end in a boating tragedy. Boaters need to keep safety in mind while on the water," Stocker said.

Preparing for a safe day on the water begins in the driveway. Make sure to have a properly fitting life jacket for each person on board and that all of the safety equipment, including a properly working fire extinguisher, is on board.

"Remember, life jackets only work when worn," Stocker said. "Life jackets float, you don't."

Media Contact: Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439

Boating safety tips

- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun, glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol hindering the operator's ability to make decisions.
- Before leaving the house, check the trailer lights, wheel bearings and the hitch.
- Make sure there is a current fire extinguisher and horn/whistle, a wearable life jacket for everyone and a USCG approved throwable device onboard.
- File a float plan with a friend, including your destination, expected time of return and type of boat.
- Wear your lifejacket - it floats, you don't.
- Inflatable lifejackets are light weight, comfortable and USCG approved. Wear it.
- Take a boater education course. It has valuable information and many insurance companies will offer a discount on boat insurance.
- Top two safety violations in Iowa are having inadequate life jackets and operating too fast and too close to other vessels.

Virus claiming deer in Iowa

An outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) is impacting deer primarily in south central Iowa with the largest concentration of infected animals being reported in Warren County.

EHD is caused by a virus spread by female midges that feed on deer. It causes high fever in deer and the cell membranes in their heart, lungs and diaphragm to weaken and burst. Infected deer are attracted to water to combat the fever and dehydration due to the hemorrhaging and usually die within a few days.

In dry years it can be worse as deer are more concentrated around water and since the disease is spread by a biting midge more deer can become infected. EHD remains active until rain disperses the deer, wind disbursts the midges or a heavy frost kills them.

EHD is not related in any way to chronic wasting disease.

Losses due to EHD occur annually, usually at low levels and in localized areas. Current loss estimate is more than 400. The number is likely to increase as bow hunters head to the timber to begin placing their tree stands.

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Non-resident user fee pilot project underway at Lake Manawa, Waubonsie state parks

Council Bluffs, Iowa - With Labor Day Weekend just a few days away, nonresidents visiting Lake Manawa State Park or Waubonsie State Park are reminded of a new nonresident vehicle fee requirement that began on Aug. 15.

“We hope park users have had an opportunity to visit the parks and become familiar with the daily use fee pay stations,” said Jake Schaben, park ranger at Lake Manawa State Park.

The daily permit fee is \$5. Nonresidents can go to one of the five self-registration kiosks at Lake Manawa or three self-registration kiosks at Waubonsie to register and pay for the daily permit. The daily permit is valid for the entire day in which it is purchased.

The daily permit is not required for nonresidents who are registered campers, cabin renters, or who have rented a day-use lodge or shelter. The daily fee is also not required for nonresidents who go to the beach and pay the beach admission at Lake Manawa.

Nonresidents may purchase an annual vehicle permit for \$40. The annual permits are available for purchase only through the park office during posted hours. The Lake Manawa office is located at 1100 S. Shore Dr., and is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. The Iowa DNR is working to have the annual permit available for purchase through the online park reservation system in mid-September.

For more information about the nonresident user fee, visit www.iowadnr.gov/parks or call Lake Manawa State Park at 712-366-0220 or Waubonsie State Park at 712-382-2786.

Water pump repairs underway at Riverton Wildlife Area

Riverton, Iowa - Hunters planning to go to the Riverton Wildlife Area for the September teal season will need to adjust the way they plan to hunt. The main pump used to flood the wetland has been offline for the past two weeks.

“We are working with a local contractor to get the main pump running again,” said Matt Dollison, wildlife biologist for the Riverton Wildlife Area. “We are pumping water at the Jensen tract, which is south of county highway J46, that should have huntable water for walk in hunters.”

Iowa’s September teal only season is Sept. 1-16 statewide.