



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Hayden Prairie State Preserve is a true Iowa gem



*Prairie smoke is beginning its short window in bloom at Hayden Prairie State Preserve in north central Howard County. It will add thin gray fibers hanging from each flower that, from a distance, resembles smoke. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

Four miles west of Lime Springs off Jade Avenue and 50<sup>th</sup> Street, is Hayden Prairie State Preserve, home to more than 200 plant species, 20 types of butterflies and 46 different bird species. This 240-acre National Natural Landmark, five miles south of the Minnesota state line, is a rock star in the prairie community.

Hayden Prairie is the largest remnant prairie in the state outside of the Loess Hills. It has been the focus of more than 30 studies looking at its plant and insect communities and visited by countless school groups.

"It's pretty impressive," said Troy Anderson, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Upper Iowa Wildlife Unit responsible for managing the unique resource. "There are a lot of plants here that you don't see in many places."

What makes Hayden Prairie special is that its historic plant community is largely intact because the land hadn't been farmed. It was owned by the same family who, for some 80 years, annually hayed the area. In 1945, Dr. Ada Hayden, botanist at Iowa State University, paid a visit and declared the area as a special place. It was acquired by the Iowa Conservation Commission later that same year and named for Dr. Hayden after she passed away in 1950.

On this early June morning, the prairie was in transition from spring plants just past peak bloom to summer plants just starting to flower.

Walking through the 40-acre section west of Ivy Avenue that was burned this spring, the ground goes from wet to humusy to dry. A large part of this area came up in a sea of blooming shooting star.

"It was all over," Anderson said motioning with his hands while standing in the middle of the section where a common yellowthroat was singing nearby. Just as shooting star begins to fade, prairie smoke is beginning to approach its short window in bloom. Prairie smoke will add thin gray fibers hanging from each flower that, from a distance, resembles smoke. This area will undergo a lot of growth in the next month, he said.

Other unique prairie plants here are the rare western prairie fringed orchid, field sedge, small sundrops (little evening primrose), small white lady's slipper, yellow lady's slipper, tall cotton grass, slender sedge, valerian, oval milkweed, hoary puccoon, bird's foot violet, Michigan lilies, wild rose, white wild indigo, cream wild indigo, golden Alexander, wild phlox and prairie blazing star, among others.

Bobolinks, meadowlarks, northern harriers, Henslow's sparrows, smooth green snake, short eared owl, badgers, gophers, wild turkeys, pheasants, common yellowthroats, Dickcissels, upland sandpipers, grasshopper sparrows and more call the prairie home. The butterfly community includes silvery blue, Acadian hairstreak, great-spangled fritillary, eastern-tailed blue, pearl crescent along with lots of monarchs.

With all this diversity and it's easy to see why Hayden Prairie is a big deal.

"It's the plants and birds and insects out here that make it special," Anderson said.

It is open to the public and does allow hunting. Hayden Prairie is bordered on three sides by roads with a small access off 50<sup>th</sup> Street on the north near the National Natural Landmark stone and kiosk.

Hayden Prairie was designated as a biological state preserve in 1968, which, among other things, means plants, berries, seeds, etc. cannot be picked, dug or otherwise removed.

### **Advisory committee**

Anderson has put together a committee of experts on insects, plants and grazing made up of current and retired DNR staff, a professor from nearby Luther College, and others

to look at different management strategies to protect the prairie and prevent aspens and dogwoods from expanding their footprint here. The prairie is also being threatened by crown vetch, brome grass and sweet clover.

“We’re looking at different ways to protect this unique place, and get input from different points of view,” Anderson said. “The main battle is with the woody vegetation.”

**Media Contact:** Troy Anderson, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-379-5725.

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## Show What Drives You with a Natural Resource License Plate

Iowans reconnected with their state parks, fishing holes, hunting spots, prairies, lakes, rivers and wetlands at record levels last year proving that not everything that happened in 2020 was bad.

Keep that connection going by purchasing a natural resources license plate for your car, truck, motorcycle, RV, and boat trailer and show everyone on the road what drives you. From brook trout to bald eagle, goldfinch, pheasant and buck, a portion of the purchase price and renewal goes to support where the wild things are.

“The natural resources license plate is an important funding source for our 1,000+ nongame wildlife species, like rare grassland and forest songbirds, amphibians and reptiles, and their critical habitat,” said Pete Hildreth, Conservation and Recreation Division administrator at the DNR. “It also provides funding to track threatened and endangered species and to conduct special wildlife population surveys.”

\$10 of the purchase price and \$15 of the renewal is dedicated to the conservation of wildlife species not considered sport fish or game. The remaining funds support the Resource Enhancement and Protection grant program that has benefitted natural and cultural resource projects in every county of the state, from central Iowa’s High Trestle Trail, to the Manchester Whitewater Park in eastern Iowa and Loess Hills’ Preparation Canyon in the west.

“This is an easy way for Iowans to express their support for the state’s natural resources and wildlife and show everyone what outdoor passions drive them,” said DNR Director Kayla Lyon.

Getting the natural resource plate is easy – simply take the existing plate to your county treasurer’s office and tell them you want a natural resource plate. You can then automatically renew each year on your vehicle registration. Plates feature the American goldfinch and wild rose, ring-necked pheasant, bald eagle, an Iowa or a brook trout. For more details, go to [www.iowadnr.gov/licenseplates](http://www.iowadnr.gov/licenseplates). Personalized plates can be ordered online at <https://iowadot.gov/mvd/>

## Paddlers encouraged to brush up on safety before hitting the water

Iowa lakes and streams will soon be busy with paddlers eager to get on the water as summer is finally here. For many, it will be their first time out for the year, and experts advise they go through their equipment and review safety tips before heading to the water.

“The number one hazard on the river is strainers,” said Todd Robertson, river programs outreach coordinator with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Strainers are piles of wood or trees that can appear anywhere on a river, especially after it rains.

“These wood piles can trap a boat and paddler with little chance of escape if sucked under,” Robertson said. “The best way to avoid these strainers is to know how to properly navigate your boat or by portaging around them.”

The DNR has a paddler interactive map online where paddlers can report large strainers or new logjams at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Where-to-Paddle>. Paddlers are encouraged to check the map before heading to the water. They should also check the condition of their lifejackets and replace any that are worn out or damaged.

“If you’re using your lifejacket as a seat cushion or have it stored under the deck rigging, it’s not going to be there for you when you need it,” Robertson said. “Plan to wear it.”

On the rivers, watch for low-head dam warning signs that will direct paddlers how to get around these dangerous dams. Never go over a low-head dam, Robertson said. “The hydraulics and boil will keep you with little chance of escape.”

Paddlers are in-between swims, he said, and in addition to wearing the lifejacket, paddlers should dress for the water temperature and not the air. There can be cool conditions even on summer days. During the heat of the summer, dehydration can take place while getting that workout so stay properly hydrated.

**Media Contact:** Todd Robertson, River Programs Outreach Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-243-3714, or Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439.

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## Fawning season is here, deer are on the move

The calls have been coming in to field offices and conservation officers for the past few weeks and will only increase as the first few weeks of June marks the peak of the deer fawning season.

Callers report finding an “abandoned” fawn in an unusual place, like a flowerbed or small patch of cover. Rest assured this is normal deer behavior.



“The doe searches out an isolated location where she feels safe and on occasion those places are not what we may think of as ideal. She chose that location because it made sense to her,” said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife research biologist with the Iowa DNR. “The worst thing someone can do is to ‘rescue’ the fawn. Mom is likely nearby and watching you. Leave it be or if you did handle the fawn, return it to where you found it and walk away.”

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will not be rehabbing or co-mingling fawns with other deer to avoid the potential of spreading chronic wasting disease – or other disease - to new areas.

The spindly legged newborn fawn is designed with a few survival tools built in – it is born without scent to avoid predators and its spots are cryptic camouflage that emulates the sunlight spots on the leaf litter in the timber. It will lay motionless to avoid detection and may remain in the area for up to two weeks all while under the care of the doe.

After the fawns are born, the doe will return to fairly normal behavior – sleeping, feeding – but returning to nurse and care for the fawn.

The fawning season also coincides with an increase in deer vehicle collisions.

“There is a lot of movement this time of year that is part of the social structure of deer. The doe is on the move looking for the safe isolated place to have the fawns. In addition last year’s fawns – teenagers now – are starting to venture out to find new space. These yearlings have to make their own decisions for the first time, encounter other adult deer and build new social structures,” Coffey said. “This movement behavior can occur during all times of the day. Once it settles out, the active time will return to dawn and dusk.”

Drivers are reminded to drive defensively, avoid distractions, slow down and not to veer for deer. If they hit a deer, drivers can get a salvage tag by calling either the local conservation officer or local law enforcement. There is no fee for a salvage tag it does require that the entire deer is taken.

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## Shooting sports athletes converge on Cedar Falls for Iowa’s largest trap shoot

More than 2,700 Iowa shooting sports athletes will participate in the 2021 Iowa Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) Trap Championships in American Singles, Doubles, and Handicap Trap. More than 700,000 targets will be shot by the athletes, ranging in age from grade school through high school.

The Scholastic Clay Target Program has seen constant growth in Iowa and across the nation, with increases in participation seen in Iowa middle school and high school teams, which have grown from 1,400 athletes in 2011 to more than 4,200 athletes today.

“The Scholastic Clay Target Program provides many opportunities to Iowa’s shooting sports athletes. You don’t have to be the biggest, strongest or fastest, it really is a level playing field. All athletes are welcome to attend and compete at the state championship events. The shooting sports are as much a competition against yourself as it is with other competitors, and we have many athletes shoot their personal best at these events,” said Chris Van Gorp, shooting sports coordinator with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The all-day events will take place at the Iowa State Trapshooting Homegrounds, located north of Cedar Falls:

- June 8-9: Elementary and Middle School Trap Singles
- June 10: Handicap and Doubles Trap Events, all ages
- June 11-13: High School Trap Singles

The Scholastic Clay Target Program is the largest, fastest growing, and most exciting youth clay target program in the US, Van Gorp said. Student athletes from elementary through high school and college have the opportunity to compete in sports such as trap, skeet, and sporting clays, as well as Olympic disciplines like bunker trap and international skeet.

The SCTP is a youth development program, first and foremost and we do this through the shooting sports and competitive shooting. The SCTP’s mission is to help kids reach their highest potential in becoming the best athletes and young adults they can be. For more information on the Scholastic Clay Target Program in Iowa, contact Chris Van Gorp, DNR Shooting Sports Coordinator at 515-313-8048 or [chris.vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:chris.vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov).

**Media Contact:** Chris Van Gorp, DNR Shooting Sports Coordinator, (515) 313-8048 or [Chris.Vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Chris.Vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov).

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## Fishing regulations to be relaxed at Otter Creek Lake in Tama County

TAMA - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will relax the fishing regulations at Otter Creek Lake, near Tama, starting June 15 to allow anglers to more freely harvest fish before the lake is dewatered this fall for a planned lake restoration project. The fish population will be renovated to remove common carp and yellow bass from the lake.

Anglers with a valid sport fishing license may harvest all sizes and unlimited quantities of any species of fish from Otter Creek Lake. Any number of fishing poles is allowed. Anglers must remain in sight of these lines at all times, and follow all other fishing regulations and area rules.

Liberalized fishing regulations for Otter Creek Lake will be in effect from June 15 to December 31, 2021. Otter Creek Lake and Park hours are from sunrise to 10:30 p.m.

Specific regulation changes include:

- Removal of bag and length limit restrictions on largemouth bass.
- Removal of bag limit on channel catfish.
- Removal of bag limit on crappie and bluegill.

Dynamite, poison, electric shocking devices, or any stupefying substances are not allowed. It is illegal to sell fish or stock captured fish into public waters.

The contractor is scheduled to move in on July 6. Access to the boat ramp and west side of Otter Creek Park will be closed until the restoration project is completed. No boating of any kind will be allowed on Otter Creek Lake. Fishing will be allowed only along the east lake shoreline.

The DNR will restock the lake with largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie and channel catfish after the restoration project is complete and the lake has refilled.

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