



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2020

- [Iowa's only prairie chicken population about to take center stage for annual show](#)
- [Six community trout ponds stocked last week](#)
- [Five northwest Iowa men plead guilty to 48 wildlife violations](#)
- [Public Meeting to discuss Blue Lake \(Lewis and Clark State Park\) dredging restoration efforts](#)
- [State Preserves Advisory Board to meet April 4](#)
- [Residential Tree Distribution Events offered statewide this spring](#)

### Iowa's only prairie chicken population about to take center stage for annual spring show



*The Iowa DNR is hosting a prairie chicken viewing day on April 9, after a two-year hiatus. The show begins at sunrise, best seen from the viewing platform, west of the main lek, on the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. This unique bird show is nowhere else in Iowa. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

Kellerton, Iowa - The haunting coos begin before the sunrise as dark shapes appear on the lek, seemingly out of nowhere. Jumping, charging and sparring – this is serious competition among male prairie chickens to show their worthiness as mates to the females watching nearby.

This ancient ritual is repeated each spring on the short grass booming ground of the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area, in Ringgold County. Kellerton was among a handful of public areas where prairie chickens from Kansas were released in the 1980s and early 1990s as part of a reintroduction effort. It is currently home to the only prairie chicken population.

The area received nearly 500 additional birds from Nebraska from 2012-2017 to improve the genetics and give the population a boost.

Between the Kellerton area and the Dunn Ranch, just across the border in Missouri, there are between 100-150 prairie chickens that call the Grand River Grasslands home. The habitat is managed through a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, Missouri Department of Conservation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

A lot of habitat work has been done on these areas and on private lands nearby, with the goal of creating expansive treeless grasslands necessary for the prairie chickens to survive.

"Ideally, we'd like to have 800 birds here, which would make it a sustainable population, but we're nowhere near that," said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program. "Prairie chickens are like other ground nesting birds that struggle with cool wet springs, and icy winters, and the weather just is not cooperating for prairie chickens to thrive."

While the habitat focus was intended for prairie chickens, a secondary benefit is grassland birds that require similar expansive habitats. With all the improvements near Kellerton, the area was the first [Bird Conservation Area](#) dedicated in Iowa and has been recognized as a [Globally Important Bird Area](#) for grassland birds.

#### **Prairie Chicken Day Sunrise, April 9**

After a two-year hiatus, the popular Prairie Chicken Day has returned.

The Iowa DNR is hosting a prairie chicken viewing day on April 9, beginning at sunrise on the viewing platform, west of the main lek, on the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. DNR will have staff available to answer questions and additional spotting scopes for the birds.

"The prairie chickens are most active and visible from middle March through mid-April, and they boom at sunrise and again at sunset," said Shepherd. "Sunset offers viewing because the platform faces east so the sun will be at your back but there will not be as many birds as there are in the morning."

There is no cost to attend.

**Media Contact:** Stephanie Shepherd, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-230-6599.

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## **Six community trout ponds stocked last week**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released between 1,000 to 2,000 rainbow trout [Liberty Centre Pond](#), in North Liberty; [Prairie Park Fishery](#), in Cedar Rapids; [Marr Park Pond](#), in Washington; [Wilson Lake](#), in Fort Madison; [Discover Pond](#), in Muscatine; and [Ottumwa Park Pond](#), in Ottumwa, as part of its cool water trout program that brings trout to areas that cannot support them during the summer.

All spring community trout stockings will be unannounced this year. Check the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov/trout](http://www.iowadnr.gov/trout) to find out when the remaining community locations have been stocked.

The spring community trout stockings are a great place to take kids to catch their first fish. A small hook with a nightcrawler or corn under a small bobber or small simple spinners such as a Panther Martin or Mepps is all you need to get in on the fun.

Bringing trout to cities and towns offers a "close to home" option for Iowans who do not travel to the coldwater streams in northeast Iowa to discover trout fishing.

The popular program is supported by the sales of the trout fee. Anglers need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily limit is 10 per licensed angler with a possession limit of 10.

Children age 15 or younger can fish for trout with a properly licensed adult, but they must limit their catch to one daily limit. The child can purchase a trout fee which will allow them to catch their own limit.

Find more information about trout fishing in Iowa on the [DNR trout fishing webpage](#).

**Media Contact:** Mike Steuck, regional fisheries supervisor, Northeast Iowa, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-927-3276.

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## **Five northwest Iowa men plead guilty to 48 wildlife violations**



*Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

Ida Grove, Iowa - An investigation that began as a turkey poaching case last fall concluded with five individuals pleading guilty to 48 wildlife charges and assessed \$83,000 in fines and liquidated damages.

State conservation officers were executing a search warrant at the home of Devon Lewis, 26, of rural Washta, Iowa, on Nov. 21, when they discovered evidence of poaching activity. Once an additional search warrant was secured, investigators uncovered evidence of a year-round poaching network involving at least 70 deer, turkeys, ducks, raccoons and red fox dating back to at least 2018.

State Conservation Officer Kirby Bragg said evidence from the lengthy investigation showed that these individuals would shoot wildlife out of season, over bait and from vehicles, often without the proper tags. The deer were primarily bucks with antler

The following individuals pleaded guilty in January in Ida County court.

- Devon Lewis, 26, of rural Washta, pleaded guilty to 23 citations with fines and damages totaling \$37,600 and a minimum seven-year hunting license suspension;
- Taylor S. Luvaas, 27 of Schaller, pleaded guilty to 14 citations, with fines and damages totaling \$31,118 and a minimum seven-year hunting license suspension;
- Jacob R. Fouts, 23, of Cherokee, pleaded guilty to six citations, with fines and damages totaling \$5,861 and his hunting license will be suspended;
- Dylan D. Lewis, 22, of Cushing, pleaded guilty to three citations, with fines and damages totaling \$5,251 and his hunting license will be suspended;
- Austin T.L. Lewis, 19, of Cushing, pleaded guilty to two citations, with fine damages totaling \$4,300.

The judge condemned five rifles, three shotguns and three bows used to commit crimes.

"Our best chance to catch poachers is when the public provides us with timely information after witnessing illegal activity take place," said Officer Bragg. "It was apparent that this activity had been going on for quite some time."

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources was assisted by the Woodbury County Sheriff's Office, Woodbury County Conservation Board, Ida County Sheriff's Office and the Ida County Conservation Board.

**Media Contact:** Kirby Bragg, State Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-661-9237, or Mick Klemesrud, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-490-5690.

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## Public Meeting to discuss Blue Lake (Lewis and Clark State Park) dredging and restoration efforts

ONAWA – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will host a public meeting at 6 p.m., March 31, at the Lewis and Clark State Park's Visitors Center to discuss ongoing lake restoration efforts at the park, including a hydraulic dredging project for the 2022 open water season.

Restoration activities planned for the park will be presented at the meeting, along with an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the dredging operations and potential impacts to the park throughout the construction season.

Over the past decade, members of the community have worked with DNR and other project partners to develop and implement a comprehensive lake restoration plan to improve water quality and recreational opportunities at Blue Lake. Hydraulic dredging is a significant step in the restoration process for improving water quality in the lake.

The dredging project at Blue Lake wildlife area is being completed in two phases. Phase one, completed in 2021, constructed a sediment containment site for holding dredged materials from the lake, and phase two will hydraulically remove approximately 40,000 cubic yards of sediment from the main basin of the lake to minimize sediment resuspension and improve water clarity. For more information about the Blue Lake Restoration project, check out the video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAIqgllxTBU>

Blue Lake was added to the State's list of Impaired Waters in 2004 due to poor water transparency attributed to sediment resuspension within the water column. A water quality improvement plan (TMDL) was completed for the lake in 2009, but water quality remains poor. Restoration planning efforts began in 2011 to address sediment resuspension within the lake and better manage water levels and nutrient inputs to the lake.

Lewis and Clark State Park is a very popular recreation destination with more than 40,000 visitors each year. The campground is consistently one of the busiest in the state. The park is a popular place for boating, camping, relaxing, hiking or walking the trails and fishing.

**Media Contact:** George Antoniou, Lake Restoration Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-201-6775 or [george.antoniou@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:george.antoniou@dnr.iowa.gov)

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## State Preserves Advisory Board to meet April 4

The State Preserves Advisory Board of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 1 p.m., April 4, in the second floor conference room in the DNR Air Quality Wallace State Office Building, 502 East Ninth Street, in Des Moines.

The meeting is open to the public. Any person attending the public meeting and requesting special requirements such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments should contact the DNR or ADA Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service at 735-7942, or [Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov), and advise of specific needs.

The public can listen to the meeting via Google Meet at [meet.google.com/voe-eb](https://meet.google.com/voe-eb) or

by calling 567-318-0189 and entering the PIN of 736 903 069, followed by the password.

Members of the State Preserves Advisory Board are Rebecca Kauten, Steve Gunder, Amy Crouch, Rick Cerwick, Perry Thostenson and Barbara Schroeder. The Deputy Director of the DNR is Alex Moon.

The following is the April 4 agenda.

- Approve agenda
- Approve minutes of past meeting

- Proposed Turkey River Mounds State Preserve management plan
- Approve Research, Inventory and Management grant proposals
- Lamson Woods State Preserve management plan update
- White Pine Hollow State Preserve management plan
- Repair of sanitary sewer line in Ames High (Pohl Memorial) State Preserve
- Merrill Stainbrook State Preserve management plan
- Open discussion

A more detailed agenda is available on the Iowa DNR's website at [www.iowadnr.gov/spab](http://www.iowadnr.gov/spab).

For more information, contact John Pearson at 515-669-7614.

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## Residential Tree Distribution Events offered statewide this spring

Iowa residents and Alliant Energy customers can purchase landscaping trees for homes at deep discounts this spring. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources collaborates with local nurseries and organizations to provide a mixture of hardy low-growing ornamental and evergreen tree species.

The DNR will offer discounted trees through its Residential Tree Program in Council Bluffs on Saturday, May 21. Any Iowa resident can purchase up to two trees per address at \$25 per tree, plus a small credit card processing fee.

Alliant Energy's [One Million Trees](#) initiative helps plant more than one million trees for each utility customer - by the end of 2030. Alliant Energy customers can participate and purchase up to two trees per planting address at \$25 per tree. Tree sign-up dates and locations include:

- Tuesday, April 26 in Decorah
- Saturday, April 30 in Ottumwa
- Thursday, May 5 in Storm Lake
- Tuesday, May 17 in Ames

Find event location addresses and times along with order forms and requirement information about available tree species on the DNR webpage at [www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Residential-Tree-Program](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Residential-Tree-Program)

**Media Contact:** Gabriele Edwards, Urban Forestry Program Specialist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-822-1031 or [gabriele.edwards@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:gabriele.edwards@dnr.iowa.gov)