



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 5, 2022**

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## Spring prairie chicken survey is underway

The annual spring survey of known prairie chicken lek sites is underway.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began structured surveys of the prairie chicken population in 2009, to learn more about the number of birds at the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area, and on nearby private land.

“These surveys give us a population estimate – a general idea how many birds are down there, and the population trends overtime,” said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR’s Wildlife Diversity Program.

There are two surveys – a route survey that is conducted twice each spring where staff follow a specific route and listen for chickens at known sites for three minutes per location, and a more intensive “blitz” survey of all sites conducted on one day, where staff visit each lek and spend 20 minutes listening for calls and record the type of habitat at each location. Surveys are conducted in Missouri and Iowa.

“The blitz survey gives us a really good idea of how many leks are occupied and how many birds are using them,” Shepherd said. The blitz survey is scheduled for a few days before the 2022 Prairie Chicken Day on April 9, weather permitting.

Route surveys have already been conducted, she said, with mixed results.

Route surveys recorded four active leks with a total of roughly 20 birds, 9-10 of which were at the main lek at Kellerton.

Shepherd said they’re expanding their data collection to include feathers from the leks that will be used for a genetics study to see the connection between the Missouri and Iowa birds, and how much of the genetics is from the Kansas or Nebraska birds that were released on the sites over the years. She said there is new survey using cameras to capture images of the birds on the leks that is another way to getting information on the birds.

“The feather collection and camera capture survey are ways we can collect information on the birds without disturbing them,” Shepherd said.

She also reached out to landowners in the area near Kellerton to let the DNR know if prairie chickens are using their land.

“If you’re a landowner in the area, this is the time to be listening for them and if you do have them, please let us know,” she said.

Shepherd said there have been reports in the past of prairie chickens in western Iowa, but not an established population. “But we’d like the public to let us know if birds are visiting western Iowa,” she said.

### **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 at the viewing platform, west of the main lek, on the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. The DNR will have staff available to answer questions and additional spotting scopes to see the birds.

There is no cost to attend.

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

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## **Renovations at Pikes Peak State Park to begin April 2022**

McGregor, Iowa - Pikes Peak State Park will undergo a major overhaul to improve the campground and main parking lot later this month.

Detra Dettmann, northeast district supervisor for the State Parks, Forests and Preserves Bureau with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said the project will bring welcome improvements.

“Pikes Peak is one of our premier destination parks in Iowa, and we anticipate the campground and parking lot renovations will improve our visitors’ overall park experience,” she said.

The campground’s electrical system will be upgraded, space will be added between the camp pads as will some pull-through campsites. Full hookup campsites will be added, additional water hydrants will be placed throughout the campground and there will be two dump stations. The overall number of campsites will remain about the same.

Just three miles south of McGregor, Pikes Peak State Park sits 500 feet above the confluence of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, offering impressive overlooks and breathtaking views. Weather permitting, the main parking lot construction timeline should allow the park to be open during the busy autumn leaf viewing season this year.

While the work in the park is underway, the main entrance will be closed.

“We will have signage stating the entrance is closed, as well as information on our webpage,” said park manger Matt Tschirgi. “We will reopen the parking lot as soon as possible, which will give visitors easy access to the overlook.”

For more information and to find out the current status of the closure, go to the Pikes Peak webpage at [www.iowadnr.gov/pikespeak](http://www.iowadnr.gov/pikespeak).

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## Iowa boat registrations expire April 30

Iowans will be registering more than 231,000 boats before April 30, when current boat registrations expire. Boat registrations are good for three years and registration fees go to support water trails, navigation enforcement, aquatic invasive species, and boater education and safety.

Boat registrations are handled by Iowa’s county recorders and boat owners may bring their current registration to any recorder’s office when they renew. Nonresidents who register their boat in Iowa will go to the county where the boat is primarily used.

Owners who purchased a boat from a private seller and are registering it in their name should bring the signed registration and to make sure the title is signed over to them, if applicable.

Only boats displaying a current registration are allowed to operate on Iowa waters.

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