



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2022

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Fish hatcheries busy netting walleye

MORAVIA – The late night, annual walleye collection has begun at Clear Lake, Rathbun Reservoir, Storm Lake and the Iowa Great Lakes. Crews with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Bureau will set gillnets at night looking for walleyes that are ready to spawn.

This time of year, hatcheries operate around the clock as local staff bring in the nightly haul well past midnight. As fish “ripen,” the eggs are removed from the walleyes and the fish are returned to the lake where they were caught to make room for the next night’s catch.

The goal is to collect enough fish to hatch 140.9 million walleye fry that will supply Iowa lakes and fish hatcheries.

After being closed for the past two spawning seasons due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Clear Lake, Rathbun, Spirit Lake, and Storm Lake fish hatcheries are open and ready for visitors. Contact the hatchery you plan to visit for visitor hours.

Media Contact: Jay Rudacille, Iowa DNR Warm and Coolwater Fish Culture Supervisor, 712-336-1840.

Spirit Lake Hatchery filling with northern pike

SPIRIT LAKE – Crews with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources placed fyke nets in the outlets of the sloughs that flow into Big Spirit Lake on April 3 to start collecting northern pike. Northern pike spawn in sloughs and shallow vegetated areas around the Iowa Great Lakes prior to ice leaving the lakes.

A total of 195 adult northern pike were collected in three days. The fish were transported to the Spirit Lake Hatchery. The broodstock produced over 1.7 million eggs which are currently being incubated in special jars that allow fresh water to flow over the eggs, supplying oxygen.

In less than two weeks, the fry will hatch and be stocked into Iowa's shallow lakes.

The Spirit Lake Hatchery is open to the public, starting Tuesday, April 12. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., 7 days a week until May 6.

Media Contact: Kim Hawkins, Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery Manager, 712-336-1840.

State record smallmouth buffalo caught in lower Wapsipinicon River

John Dirks, from Anamosa, caught a 43 pound smallmouth buffalo on December 1, 2021 in the lower Wapsipinicon River.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff waited to certify Dirks' catch as the new state record smallmouth buffalo until genetic tests were completed to confirm that the catch was a smallmouth buffalo. Smallmouth buffalo are thought to hybridize at times with the other two native buffalo species in Iowa, black buffalo and bigmouth buffalo.

Buffalo species can reach impressive ages of over 100 years, according to studies in Minnesota. Iowa's new state record buffalo was aged to nearly 70 years old.

Learn more about Iowa state record fish on the DNR webpage at www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Iowa-Fish-Species/State-Record-Fish.

Media Contacts: Scott Gritters, Iowa DNR fisheries biologist at 563-880-8781 or Lucas Dever, Iowa DNR Law Enforcement officer at 319-480-0397.

Urban Forestry awards recognize local dedication to trees and outreach

DES MOINES – Every year the Urban Forestry Awards luncheon recognizes cities, college campuses and utilities that demonstrate a variety of dedication to the importance of trees in their respective communities. Awards were presented April 12th at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny, on behalf of the Arbor Day Foundation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Tree City USA Award – To qualify for the Tree City USA award, a city must have either a city forester or an active city tree board, have a tree ordinance, spend at least \$2 per capita annually for its community forestry program, and have a tree planting and maintenance plan.

The award recipients are Adel, Allison, Ames, Arnolds Park, Atlantic, Badger, Belle Plaine, Bettendorf, Bondurant, Boone, Burlington, Carroll, Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids,

Clarinda, Clinton, Clive, Coralville, Council Bluffs, Cresco, Dallas Center, Davenport, Decorah, Denison, Denver, Des Moines, DeWitt, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Gladbrook, Glenwood, Greene, Grimes, Hampton, Hiawatha, Hopkinton, Hudson, Indianola, Iowa City, Jefferson, Johnston, Keystone, Livermore, Luxemburg, Manchester, Marion, Marquette, Mason City, Muscatine, Nevada, Newton, North Liberty, Odebolt, Oelwein, Onawa, Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Red Oak, Rock Rapids, Sioux City, Spencer, Story City, Tipton, Urbandale, Van Horne, Washington, Waterloo, Waverly, Webster City, West Des Moines, Westphalia and Winterset.

Tree City USA Growth Award – To qualify for the Tree City USA Growth award, cities must provide education and public relations, partnerships, planning and management, and tree planting and maintenance in their community. The award recipients, which were also recipients of the Tree City USA award, are Bettendorf, Clarinda, Clinton, Coralville, Des Moines, Dysart, Hiawatha, Jefferson, Johnston, Marion, Mason City, Ottumwa, Polk City, Story City, Washington and Waverly.

Tree Campus USA Award – To qualify for the Tree Campus USA award, a campus must have a campus Tree Advisory Committee, a tree care plan, a tree program with dedicated annual expenditures, an annual Arbor Day observance, and a service learning project to engage the student body. The award recipients are Clarke University, Drake University, Hawkeye Community College, Iowa State University, Kirkwood Community College and the University of Iowa.

Tree Line USA Award – To qualify for the Tree Line USA award, a utility must meet five minimum requirements, including quality tree care, annual worker training, tree planting and public education, a tree-based energy conservation program, and an annual Arbor Day celebration. The award recipients are Alliant Energy, MidAmerican Energy and Waverly Utilities.

Media contact: Emma Hanigan, Urban Forestry Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-249-1732.

Eager paddlers need to take extra precautions to stay safe

With recent warmer temperatures, restless paddlers are ready to put canoes and kayaks in the water. Early spring paddling can provide solitude, exercise and an opportunity to see amazing wildlife, but extra precautions are needed to stay safe.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recommends that paddlers wait for warmer weather to allow the water temperatures to rise slowly. It could be several weeks before water temperatures are ideal and safe as water and air temperatures continue to change.

“Air temperatures may feel warm in early spring, but the water is still dangerously cold and can be deadly to boaters,” said Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Water Trails Coordinator. “We have not had enough consistently warm days to raise water

temperatures. Cold water shock and hypothermia can set in quickly if you are not dressed and fall into the cold water, so dress for a swim.”

Stay away from strainers and sweepers—wood or branch piles—deadly hazards that can pull a paddler under or pin them underwater. These are usually found on outside river bends where currents are strongest.

Review these simple safety tips before you head out on the water.

- Check your canoe or kayak for any needed repairs or maintenance after being stored for several months. Look for holes and leaks, make sure all hatch lids fit snug and securely and check your paddle blades for signs of cracking or splitting.
- Wear your lifejacket at all times when underway. Dust off your life jacket and make sure all buckles and zippers work properly and look for holes and tears. Replace the life jacket if it has damage that cannot be repaired. Wear a life jacket at all times while on the water, regardless of your swimming ability. Not only do they help keep your head above water, they help maintain warmth.
- Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature. Plan as if you were to be in the water at some point because “paddlers are just in between swims.” A wet suit or dry suit is a must. Do not wear cotton clothing—it fails to insulate when wet. Choose synthetics or wool. Dress in layers so you can peel a layer off if overheated.
- Always bring along a dry bag with a complete set of extra clothes you can change into if you get wet, a first-aid kit and a protected cell phone or weather radio. Get out of wet, cold clothing as soon as possible. Pack plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- Let a friend or loved one know where you are going and when you are expected to return. It will be easier to find you if you need help.

Media Contact: Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator, 515-205-6845.

Two additional community trout ponds stocked last week

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released between 1,000 to 2,000 rainbow trout at [Lake Petocka](#), in Bondurant and [Terra Lake](#), in Johnston, as part of its cool weather 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/trout to find out when the remaining community trout locations have been stocked.

The popular community trout stocking 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 five trout 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.

Media Contact: Mike Steuck, Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Northeast Iowa, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-927-3276.