



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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Pheasant survey predicts a repeat of last year's excellent hunting for most of Iowa



Young pheasants fly from the gravel road edge to the safety of standing corn. The Iowa DNR's recently completed annual pheasant survey predicts a similar population as in 2021, which is good news for hunters. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Results of Iowa's 2022 pheasant population survey are in and the results were nearly identical to that of 2021, when hunters harvested the highest number of roosters in more than a decade.

The annual August roadside survey found Iowa's statewide pheasant population to be slightly under 20 birds per 30-mile route.

Within the survey, the northwest, west central and north-central regions again had the highest counts within the state, followed by the northeast and central regions. The full report is available at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey.

“If hunters enjoyed last year, they should enjoy this year. Pheasant hunting will again be good for most of the state, with the best hunting being north of Hwy. 30,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Based on the results of the August roadside survey, Iowa hunters can expect to harvest 300,000 to 400,000 roosters this year, which is similar to last year, when the harvest was the highest in more than a decade.

“Bird harvest relies heavily on the number of hunters in the field and the past two years saw highest number of pheasant hunters since 2009, and that has translated into our increased harvests,” Bogenschutz said. “The birds are there, so the harvest totals will depend on how many hunters return.”

An estimated 63,000 hunters participated in 2021, a slight increase over 2020.

While the pheasant count varied by region, the quail count was more consistent; and this year, it was consistently higher across southern Iowa’s quail range.

“We had a lot of anecdotal reports of quail whistling this summer and that increase was reflected in the survey,” Bogenschutz said. The highest counts came from southwest Iowa, followed by the south-central region.

Iowa’s partridge population was unchanged from last year, with the better numbers coming from the northcentral region. Iowa’s rabbit population was also unchanged from last year with the better population in the south-central region, but good numbers across the state.

The annual August roadside survey has been collecting data on Iowa’s upland game populations since 1962.

Hunters have the opportunity to hunt these species on additional acres of private land enrolled into the popular Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP).

Enrollment in the program is at an all-time high of nearly 32,000 acres. The IHAP allows hunters access to the portion of the property covered by the agreement, from Sept. 1 to May 31. Conservation officers will provide assistance, and enforcement, if needed.

- Youth pheasant season is Oct. 22-23
- Pheasant season is Oct. 29-Jan. 10, 2023
- Quail season is Oct. 29-Jan. 31, 2023
- Rabbit season is Sept. 3-Feb. 28, 2023
- Partridge season is Oct. 8-Jan. 31, 2023

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources,

Study tracks reclusive, threatened turtle species to better understand habitat needs



A yearling Blanding's turtle with a transmitter will help state wildlife experts to determine preferred habitats for the threatened species. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

The flat-bottomed boat noisily snaked through the narrow path through the towering cattails, its mud motor pushing it to a specific place in the marsh. On board, is a small but important passenger – a nearly year-old Blanding's turtle outfitted with a battery powered tracking device about the size of a dime with a small antenna.

Blanding's turtles are listed as threatened in Iowa, and the species is a candidate for listing federally due to its declining population caused by the loss of critical habitat and low nest success. Less habitat for nesting means the turtles nest close together, which can create a buffet for predators, or on road shoulders, making cars a predator, too.

By increasing the amount of preferred habitat, the turtles would spread out, avoid roads, and result would be a higher likelihood that some nests will be successful.

Blanding's turtles look sort of like a 1940s German-style leather half face style motorcycle helmet. Their domed, dark grayish/black shell with their bright yellow chin and underside of their neck makes them 100 percent identifiable. No other turtle in Iowa has that bright yellow chin and underside.

They prefer wetlands of all sorts and one turtle will use several different wetlands each year for different purposes, like hibernating, feeding and mating, and like those wetlands to have good plants in them. Generations ago, these wetlands would have been found in nearly every county, but, over time, as the wetlands disappeared, those populations were separated and died out.

This turtle is fortunate – it spent its first 11 months eating and growing in a protected environment at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) in the lab of Dr. Jeff Tamplin, growing to the size of a three to four-year-old turtle in the wild. It was released along with the other surviving hatchling in early June to the same marsh where its mother was found last year.

This yearling turtle was one of two survivors out of 20 eggs the female was carrying. It was later determined that most of the eggs were not fertilized.

On this hot July afternoon, Emily Asche eases the boat into the mire to release the little turtle where she found it the day before.

Asche, a seasonal employee for the DNR, is tracking five adults with transmitters here, two females and three males – in addition to the hatchlings.

“We outfitted the adult female and two hatchlings with tracking devices to follow their movement and learn more about their range and the habitats they use at different times of the year, in the hopes of recreating more of their preferred habitat,” said TJ Herrick, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR.

Tracking devices on the adults can last eight to nine years, he said. The batteries on the hatchlings will need to be replaced after a few months because the devices are much smaller, not exceeding three percent of the turtle’s body weight.

Herrick said they found another female this June which was carrying 17 eggs, and tracked her until her movements indicated she was nesting. These turtles move up to a mile away from the marsh to nest, usually along a field edge where she will dig a hole in the dirt and lay the eggs before she returns to the wetlands, leaving the eggs to develop alone.

They found the nest, covered it was wire fencing on the four sides and top, and placed a camera to watch it for the young to emerge.

Blanding’s turtle incubation period and sex are determined by temperature. The warmer the temperature, the shorter the incubation period (50 days), the cooler, the longer (128 days). Temperature above 87 degrees, hatchlings will be female. Temperature in the middle 70s, hatchlings will be male.

Herrick said they are tracking the soil temperature daily to have an idea when the eggs will hatch and the likely female to male ratio. “We’re hoping for more females,” he said.

This isn’t the only study on Blanding’s turtles underway.

The Iowa DNR is partnering with other organizations, like Blank Park Zoo and Iowa State University, to collect data on Blanding’s at different locations in an effort to better understand habitat needs, and then incorporate that information into management practices.

Life as a turtle isn’t easy. In the wild, Blanding’s face long odds – from skunks and raccoons raiding nests for the eggs, to snapping turtles and cranes feeding on the hatchlings during the first few years of life. Females don’t begin to reproduce until age 18-20; males at age 14-15. However, these turtles can live to nearly 80 years old and

their reproductivity grows as it ages, meaning the oldest turtles have the biggest clutches.

If a Blanding's turtle is encountered, take a photo and leave it on its way. If it's encountered on the road, it is acceptable to help it cross in the direction it is heading. Blanding's turtles are protected and it is illegal to collect one as a pet or to kill it.

Busy Labor Day weekend expected on Iowa waters and at state parks

DES MOINES – The unofficial end to summer this weekend is expected to draw thousands of Iowans to their state parks and waterways.

The DNR reminds users to abide by all safety measures to ensure a safe and enjoyable Labor Day holiday weekend.

Boating Safety

Boaters headed out to a lake, river, pond or any other waterway should follow these safety tips:

- Plan ahead and avoid peak hours and large crowds of boaters.
- Park your vehicles and trailers in designated parking spaces NOT in grass areas or they will be ticketed and towed.
- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol, hindering the operator's ability to make necessary decisions.
- The same limit of .08 for operating a vehicle under the influence applies to boating.
- Always have a designated operator that avoids consuming alcohol.
- Wear your life jacket, it floats, you don't! Any children under the age 13 must wear a lifejacket at all times on a vessel underway in Iowa.
- Every boat or vessel must have a wearable life jacket for everyone on board; a USCG approved throw-able flotation device is also required on vessels 16 feet or longer.
- Make sure there is a charged fire extinguisher on board, as well as a horn/whistle.
- Slow down and watch for other boaters or personal watercraft.
- Avoid dams and other hazards on waterways.
- Obey all posted warning signs and rules.
- Drain plugs and other water draining devices must be removed and/or remain open during transport to avoid the spread of invasive species.

Beach & Swimming Safety

Wherever you choose to swim this Labor Day weekend, whether it's a backyard pool, a pond or lake, or a public pool, please follow these safety tips:

- Keep young children at arm's reach at all times. Never, even for a moment, leave small children alone or in the care of another young child while swimming.

- Drowning is silent.
- Learn how to perform CPR.
- Avoid alcohol use while swimming.
- Alcohol is prohibited at some public beaches.
- Glass bottles are prohibited on beaches.
- Stay within the roped area of the lake.
- Swim with a buddy.
- Obey posted signs and flags.
- Wear a life jacket or some kind of personal flotation device.
- Use sunscreen and drink plenty of water as needed.
- Iowa's public beaches do not have lifeguards on duty.
- Check for bacteria levels at state park beaches at: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/things-to-do/beach-monitoring>

Because the beaches are busier this summer, staff are encouraging visitors to utilize the non-peak times and days. For the busier beaches/parks, the non-peak days usually include Sundays through Thursdays, and Fridays before 5:00 pm. If you plan to go to the beaches on Saturdays, the non-peak hours are usually before noon.

Parks staff may temporarily close parking lots when they become full and limit the number of visitors at that point. The DNR recommends visitors go to another nearby park or beach that is not as heavily populated. Visitors are reminded to only park in designated parking spaces. All violators will be cited by staff.

State Parks/Campgrounds Safety

This weekend will be another very busy one if you plan to visit a state park and campground, use these safety tips to ensure an enjoyable time:

- Pack snacks, food, water and personal hygiene products, including hand sanitizer, to bring along for hiking and utilizing the state parks.
- Stay hydrated with plenty of fluids.
- Don't hike alone and always have some way to communicate if you get lost and need help.
- Wear proper outdoor attire for hiking.
- Plan ahead for your visit to our parks and campgrounds. If a parking lot becomes full at a park or campground, staff may temporarily close the parking lots and limit the number of visitors at that point.
- If there is no parking available, do not park in the grass areas or any other area that is not a designated parking spot. All violators will be cited.
- Utilize the parks during non-peak times, which often include mornings and evenings.
- If a park is heavily populated, find another nearby state park that is less populated.
- Don't transport firewood, buy it locally.
- Be respectful of your neighbors camping around you.

- Slow down on park roadways and obey posted speed limit signs. Families and kids are often walking or biking on the roads.
 - "Carry In, Carry Out"—please pick up any trash and carry out what you carry into the park. Be respectful and care for our natural resources.
 - Campers should dispose of trash in receptacles, not burn it in the campfires.
 - Check [the DNR website for all of the latest closures](#).
 - If you plan to fish, be sure to have a current fishing license. You can purchase one by visiting [com](#), or by downloading the Go Outdoors Iowa app on your smartphone through the Google Play store or the App Store. You can also purchase your fishing license at some local retailers.
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Paddling Safety

Whether it be tubing, kayaking or canoeing, paddlers are enjoying the splash of the water, scenic views, and wildlife viewing from Iowa's rivers, rapids and streams. Stay safe each time you paddle with these simple safety tips:

- Some rivers in northeast and north-central Iowa are swollen and swift with consistent rainfall earlier this week. Stay on lakes and flat-water while the rivers are high.
- With very low water levels in central and western Iowa, due to drought conditions, some waterways are not suitable for paddling, often leaving paddlers stranded.
- Always know your river conditions before you go paddling. For the latest river conditions, contact Iowa DNR Customer Service at 515-725-8200 or your local county conservation board for updates.
- Let others know where you will be paddling, including what access to what access, and when you are expected to return.
- Always wear your life jacket. Kids under age 13 must wear a life jacket at all times. The vessel must have enough life jackets for all members on board.
- Avoid sandbar crowds and "rafting" up together. Tubers are reminded not to go in groups larger than 10 and don't tie tubes to one another.
- Check the Iowa DNR's interactive paddler's map at iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Where-to-Paddle for updates on real-time hazards like downed trees and log jams, strainers and bridge construction. Pay attention to the dam warning signs and know where dams are located before you head out on the water.
- Find individual water trail maps, including access points at iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures.

Media Contacts: Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439 or Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator, 515-205-6845.

Prairie Resource Center is seed source and knowledge base for Iowa's expanding prairies



Rows of species-specific plots growing 2,000 prairie plants per plot sit outside the greenhouse at the Prairie Resource Center, at Brushy Creek State Recreation Area. The plants started in the adjacent greenhouse then planted as plugs, hand weeded and seeds hand-harvest. It's the most labor-intensive method to collect seed at the center.

Lehigh, Iowa - The prairie around the 6,500-acre Brushy Creek State Recreation Area, in Webster County, is much more than just another pretty flower – it's the source for prairie seeds planted on Iowa state parks and wildlife areas.

At one time, nearly 80 percent of Iowa was covered in prairie. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Prairie Resource Center cultivates and harvests native plant seed to establish new prairies on public land. Bill Johnson, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR, is responsible for overseeing seed production and filling orders for the increasing demand for prairie seed since the facility opened in 2000.

The initial seed to begin growing prairies here was collected from remnant native prairies on the state preserves.

"We want the best prairie on our public land and that's what we're trying to promote here," Johnson said. "I want everyone to see the to see the benefits provided by prairies that I see."

The Prairie Resource Center and surrounding fields have grown more than 100 different prairie plant species, but not every year. Johnson uses a combination of species-specific cultivated plots growing 2,000 plants per plot, blocks of land planted with little bluestem then 20-foot-wide strips of specific prairie plants, and whole fields with established prairies to provide seed requested by land managers.

“The individual plots are the most labor intensive,” he said. “We plant plugs started in our greenhouse, hand weed the plots and hand harvest the seeds. We can combine the field strips later, which is less labor intensive, but that method doesn’t work on all species. For example, we tried planting prairie blazing star in strips but rodents ate the bulbs underground.”

For species that work using the field strip method, Johnson said they can harvest about 50 pounds of seed per year. This year, golden Alexander and partridge pea is doing really well. White indigo too, but white indigo will probably be harvested by hand.

Harvest begins in May for the early seeds, but the bulk occurs from the middle of August to middle of October. For plants that mature late, frost is key to finalizing the seed harvest.

All seed collected here is used on public land, mostly state parks and wildlife areas, and does not go to private landowners. Johnson does work with private landowners looking for advice on seed mix and on how to establish a prairie.

“Planting a prairie takes time and the transition doesn’t happen overnight,” he said. “We prepare the area by cropping it for one or two years to eliminate any brome or canary grass that may be present.”

First year prairies are weedy and require mowing to keep the annual weeds down, allowing the prairie plants to put down roots, get moisture and sunlight. “Getting the plants off to a good start that first year is key,” Johnson said.

Once the prairie is established, the native plants can out compete unwanted invasive species. Prairies attract bugs and provide habitat important for grassland birds and pheasants and the flowers are important for pollinators. The stems and root systems benefit water quality by standing up in heavy rain, slowing runoff and keeping soil in place.

“It’s habitat for all – pheasants, quail, turkeys, butterflies and bees,” he said.

Johnson said Iowa State University visited the reconstructed prairie managed by the center searching for the federally endangered rusty-patched bumble bee and the American bumble and found both in one day.

“This shows that habitat is the key, if you plant it, wildlife will soon follow,” he said.

This is a statewide program supported by the sales of hunting and fishing licenses. No federal funds are used to support it. Information on the Prairie Resource Center is available online at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/conservation/prairie-resource-center>

Expanding knowledge of the prairie

The Prairie Resource Unit has hosted government agencies, school groups, scholars, even foreign scientists – and has hosted the North American Prairie Conference.

“We’ve worked with different public entities – county road departments, conservation boards - to help us to produce seed, maybe one or two species, and in exchange they get a share of our seed mix in return for growing that one species,” Johnson said.

He said they're partnering with Polk, Lee, Boone, Winneshiek and Franklin County conservation boards, and will add Story County next year. And he's looking for more.

"We've been doing this for 22 years, usually with species that we've had good luck growing and have a recipe for success," he said. "What I want is a diverse prairie everywhere on our public lands."

He's regularly hosted groups of master gardeners and master conservationists, staff with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and since 2006, has held a service learning program in the spring with Webster County sixth graders and the county naturalist who help with plantings and cutting brush while learning about the prairie.

Russian grassland biologists along with their translator were touring the United States, and visited the Prairie Resource Unit around the fall of 2012. They toured the single species plots and saw a demonstration of combining and harvesting seeds. While most spoke some English, as long as Johnson could say the plant name in Latin, they understood.

Media Contact: Bill Johnson, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-543-8319.

Iowa's rabbit, squirrel season opens Sept. 3

The good news for Iowa's cottontail rabbit hunters is that Iowa has an abundant rabbit population, with the south-central part of the state seeing the best overall numbers. The better news for hunters is Iowa's cottontail rabbit season begins Sept. 3 statewide.

"It should be another good year for rabbit hunting not only for experienced hunters, but for young or novice hunters who can learn necessary skills with little competition," said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Last year, an estimated 17,000 hunters harvested more than 100,000 cottontail rabbits. The most popular way to hunt is with a shotgun walking brushy areas with grass next to crop fields in the morning or evening. It can be done individually or with a group of friends.

Rabbit hunting does not require a significant investment or high tech equipment, just a shotgun and some shells. Rabbit is a lean, low fat meat and popular table fare considered a delicacy in many culinary circles.

Cottontail rabbit season is Sept. 3 to Feb. 28, 2023. The daily limit is 10 rabbits with a possession limit of 20. Jackrabbit season is closed. While wearing blaze orange clothing is not required to hunt rabbits, it is recommended. Shooting hours for rabbits is sunrise to sunset.

Iowa's cottontail rabbit population estimates are included in the recently completed August roadside survey of upland wildlife species at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey.

Local squirrel populations are variable depending upon acorn production and it appears to be a good nut year in many areas. In areas of lower annual acorn production look for patches of hickory trees as an excellent alternative.

Squirrel hunting is an inexpensive and exciting way to get introduced into hunting. Those new to hunting can gain valuable woodsmanship skills as squirrels will twist and turn hunters through the woodlands.

“One beauty of squirrel hunting is if you mess up and spook a squirrel there is usually another one just down the ridge, this provides lots of opportunities for success,” said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR. “Experienced hunters often say that they haven’t hunted squirrels since they were a kid. Well, this is the year to be a kid again. Get yourself outside chasing squirrels and bring someone new to hunting along. Squirrels are definitely an underutilized resource.”

Be prepared during early squirrel season for mosquitoes and other flying pests, Coffey said, and try and hunt in the early cool mornings as squirrels will be very active before the heat of the day.

Hunters will generally find plenty of squirrels and little competition. This would also be a good opportunity to do some scouting for a spring turkey hunt or to look for whitetail deer rubs before bow season.

“These honed skills will make you an overall better hunter. Many of the skills needed for squirrel hunting are also used for spring turkey hunting,” Coffey said.

Last year, nearly 17,500 squirrel hunters harvested approximately 103,000 squirrels.

Squirrel season is Sept. 3 to Jan. 31, 2023, with a daily bag limit of six total or combination of red fox squirrels or eastern grey squirrels and a possession limit of 12. Fox squirrels are generally found in more open pasture timber and woodlots whereas grey squirrels tend to be in more mature timber. There is no restriction on shooting hours.

Hunters looking for places to go rabbit or squirrel hunting should use Iowa’s online hunting atlas at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting, with more than 600,000 acres of public land that allows hunting.

Hunters have the opportunity to hunt these species on additional acres of private land enrolled into the popular Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP).

Enrollment in the program is at an all-time high of nearly 32,000 acres. The IHAP allows hunters access to the portion of the property covered by the agreement, from Sept. 1 to May 31. Conservation officers will provide assistance and enforcement, if needed.

Media Contacts: Rabbits - Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-979-0828. Squirrels – Jim Coffey, Forest Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-774-2958.

2022 Volunteer Fire Department – Wildland Fire Assistance Grants Available

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forestry - Fire Program, working in coordination with the US Forest Service, has grant money available for Iowa's rural fire departments to help battle wildfires.

Applications are due on Oct. 15. The grant provides 50 percent reimbursement for wildland fire equipment with a maximum reimbursement grant of \$4,500 per department.

The grants offer funding assistance for wildfire suppression equipment, slide-in units, hoses, nozzles, adapters, portable tanks and pumps, personal protective equipment and communications equipment. Additionally, if a fire department has a special need that can be tied directly to wildfire suppression, this grant allows for such special requests.

Gail Kantak, state wildland fire supervisor for the Iowa DNR, said fire departments should send her a Wildland Fire Report whenever they respond to a wildland fire or provide assistance to a prescribed or controlled wildland fire. Departments actively returning these reports receive priority points in the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant application scoring process.

All Iowa volunteer fire departments were mailed information about the 2022 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant. The grant application package and the Wildland Fire Report form are available online at www.iowadnr.gov/fire.

For more information, contact Gail Kantak at gail.kantak@dnr.iowa.gov, or 515-689-0083.

Late summer cattail and floating-leaved plant control for ponds

Have the cattails in your pond taken over your favorite fishing spot or crowded you from one side of the dock or swimming area?

Late summer or early fall is the best time to manage cattails, America Lotus, water lilies and other emergent or floating-leaved plants that are on the pond's edge or are above the water. Spraying certain herbicides this time of year will eliminate the whole plant, and it will not regrow next spring. There is little risk of depleting the oxygen in the pond with treating these plants; they die-back every year at this time and decompose slowly over the coming months.

Starting in late summer, these plants move food to their roots to survive the winter, making systemic herbicides most effective. The most common active ingredient to use is glyphosate (a few brand names with labels for aquatic use include Aqua Neat, Aqua Pro, Aquamaster, GlyphoMate 41, Rodeo, and RoundUp Custom). Find these at local hardware, farm supply or garden stores or try an online search for "aquatic glyphosate."

A surfactant or spreader-sticker must be added to many of these herbicides to allow it to stick to the plant's leaves. Read the label and check with your local or online retailer to

select a surfactant that you can use in ponds. Spray the above-water part of the plant until just wet (not dripping) and follow instructions on the product label.

When you compare product brands, consider the amount of active ingredient, if a surfactant is needed, and size of the container. A product with a higher amount of active ingredient or one that does not need a surfactant added may provide a better value. The convenience of a ready-to-use (RTU) product that you do not have to mix or add a surfactant may outweigh price considerations.

Be careful to:

- Read and follow the product label for application instructions and precautions.
- Spray when calm, or when winds are low and out of a favorable direction to avoid accidentally spraying other plants valuable to landscaping. Increase the droplet size of the spray to reduce drift.
- Spray plants early in the day with full sunlight after the morning dew has dried to get the best results.
- Obey State law. Shoreline owners on public waters in Iowa may not use herbicides to control aquatic vegetation without a permit. Contact the Iowa DNR fisheries office near you for rules and instructions for removing aquatic plants from public waters.

Learn more about aquatic plants in ponds at www.iowadnr.gov/pondplants.

Media Contact: Jason Euchner, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-230-4789.

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, watch for other boaters and for hazards in the water.

The three-day weekend marks the unofficial end of summer and will likely produce heavy boat traffic, busy ramps, and 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.