



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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DeVoss-Foster Wildlife Area offers visitors a unique, solitary experience in southern Van Buren County



Blue wing teal circle the wetland at DeVoss-Foster Wildlife Area. Photo Courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Just north of Cantril in southcentral Van Buren County, is the DeVoss-Foster Wildlife Area, a 330-acre mix of grassland, wetland and timber.

“It’s an easily accessible area, but once you get on it, you have to hoof it – and not many people are willing to walk to the timber on the far north section of the area to hunt deer,” said Jeff Glaw, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Sugema Unit.

The timber is next to the Fox River, which also serves as the DeVoss-Foster’s northern boundary, and roughly a mile from the parking lot. The area is boxed in by agriculture to the

east and west, and Hwy. 2 to the south.

“The area is underutilized,” Glaw said. “It’s a place where you can have a solitary experience.”

DeVoss-Foster was named for its previous landowners and developed in the late 1990s. Much of the management work has been to control brush encroachment on the grassland, battle pockets of the invasive black locust, sericea lespedeza, and autumn olive, and expand and improve the grassland and the 60-acre wetland.

Glaw said the Sugema Wildlife Unit team has been adding food and cover by planting a mix of forage sorghum and buckwheat in select areas to benefit pheasants and quail. He said they are also working to establish a type of dynamic habitat, called early-successional, adjacent to the mature trees to the north, that will offer a mix of grasslands, shrubs and young trees that over time, will over time become a young timber.

Early successional habitat is when an old field transitions into young trees that will eventually become a young timber, then a mature timber. This early stage creates a dynamic habitat important for many different wildlife species.

Managing the area requires continuous attention to improve and expand the grasslands, and control the brush from encroaching. To the north, the timber is on track to become more diverse with the added component of early successional habitat.

Wetlands were added on the northern section of the area in the early 2000s. Water flows in from the south and west. Pockets of water connect to make a series of wetlands that on this late August morning are ringed with bidens and other wetland plants.

Work to enhance the wetland network focuses on adding a control structure to the west side to help maintain shallow water through the system. It’s a good location to see shorebirds and to hunt ducks.

“We’re trying to manage this as a puddle duck area,” Glaw said. “By doing that, it gets to be a really good shore bird area, too.”

DeVoss-Foster is within the Lake Sugema-Lacey-Keosauqua Bird Conservation Area (BCA), which supports significant wildlife diversity.

More than 250 bird species have been documented in the BCA, including 81 considered species in greatest conservation need, four state-listed endangered and two state-listed threatened species, including Henslow’s sparrow, northern harrier, eastern meadowlark, red-shouldered hawks, Bell’s vireo, yellow and blackbilled cuckoos and more.

The Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring team within the Wildlife Diversity Program visited DeVoss-Foster in 2012 and again in 2015 to survey the wildlife population and confirmed a number of species in greatest conservation need, including the state threatened diamondback water snake, northern leopard frog, Edwards’ hairstreak, pipevine swallowtail and regal fritillary – all of state special concern.

Visitors also have the opportunity to fish at DeVoss-Foster Wildlife Area, and it doesn’t require a long walk. Just off the parking lot on Hwy. 2 to the northwest, is a small pond that can offer good fishing, especially for bass and crappies.

Media Contact: Jeff Glaw, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-799-0793.

Monarch Conservation Effort Report highlights Iowans' hard work

AMES, Iowa -- Iowa has been steadily adding new habitat for monarch butterflies over the past couple of years. The Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium recently released its [Monarch Conservation Effort Report](#), which offers a snapshot of monarch habitat establishment through 2020 in all 99 counties across the state.

"This report demonstrates the significant impact so far from the combined efforts of the consortium's broad membership and partners to engage Iowans about monarch butterflies and their importance to Iowa. Its release also underscores the need for continued education, habitat creation and conservation efforts by all stakeholders," said Daniel J. Robison, holder of the endowed dean's chair in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University.

The report summarizes the program goals, methodology and habitat acres established through 2020. The data show that over the past six years, more than 430,000 acres of monarch butterfly habitat has been established in the state. The habitat acres already established are over halfway to the consortium strategy's low-end goal of 790,000 by 2038.

"Monarch butterflies need habitats to live and feed during their fall migration from Canada to Mexico," said Kayla Lyon, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is proud of its partnerships with private landowners, conservation organizations, and state and local governments that contribute to monarch habitat management's preservation efforts on larger scales in Iowa."

The report shows how different land use sectors are doing in reaching habitat goals. Agriculture and Public Land have made the most progress and Road Rights of Way is on track to meet the 2038 goal. Habitat establishment is self-reported by individuals and organizations through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed Monarch Conservation Database (MCD), USDA's Conservation Reserve Program and Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs, and [HabiTally](#).

"Iowans are continuing to take steps to protect our natural resources and improve our water quality while ensuring that habitat is available for pollinators and wildlife in their communities," said Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig. "The Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium's proactive work is yielding results. As we continue to scale up and accelerate our water quality and conservation efforts, we are proud to work with public and private partners to implement conservation practices on agricultural land and within urban communities across the state."

The consortium also premiered a new tool for community use along with the report. The Monarch Conservation Effort Dashboards are platforms that allow anyone to interact with data at the state and county level. The interactive Iowa heat map allows users to click on a county and see a pie graph of the county's cumulative monarch habitat acres broken down by sector.

To read the report or interact with the dashboards, visit <https://monarch.ent.iastate.edu/monarch-conservation-effort>.

[Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium](#) comprises [members](#) and [partners](#) from 50 organizations, including agricultural and conservation associations, agribusiness and utility companies, universities and state and federal agencies.

To learn more about the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, visit lowamonarchs.info and follow @IowaMonarchs on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

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

Wait until after Oct. 15 to prune oak trees

The best way to prevent the spread of oak wilt is to not prune any oak tree during the growing season.

“It’s best to wait until after Oct. 15 to start pruning oak trees,” says Tivon Feeley, with the Iowa DNR’s forest health program. “Then you can prune your oaks all winter long with the goal to stop pruning by March 1.”

Oak wilt, caused by a fungus, has been present in Iowa for many years. Iowa’s red, black, and pin oak are more susceptible to oak wilt, but it can also infect white and bur oak. Black, pin, or red oak usually die within the same summer they are infected. White oak and bur oak can often take a number of years before they succumb to this disease.

Oak wilt can spread from infected trees to healthy trees in two ways: a small beetle that carries spores of the fungus from a diseased tree to a healthy tree with an open wound during the growing season, and through root grafts connecting nearby oaks. For example, if a red oak is infected and there is another red oak within 50 to 100 feet there is a good chance that the roots of these trees are grafted and the fungus can move from the diseased tree to the healthy tree.

Feeley says symptoms to look for on infected trees usually include leaves turning a bronzed brown along the outer margins of the leaves. These leaves can often still have some green on them as they fall from the tree. The defoliation tends to start at the top of the tree.

If a tree is wounded from storm damage or pruning is required during the growing season, treat the wounds immediately with a wound dressing such as acrylic paint. Do not purchase pruning paints/sealants. Those products slow the tree’s ability to seal over the wound.

Learn more about oak wilt prevention and control at www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Forest-Health/Oak-Wilt.

Media Contact: Tivon Feeley, Forest Health Forester, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-669-1402.

Introductory trapping course brings a mix of youth and adults to Oakland Mills area



State Conservation Officer Dan Henderson demonstrates the techniques necessary to use a live trap to catch and release a nuisance animal during an introductory course on furharvesting Sept. 24, at Oakland Mills. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

The Henry County Conservation Board's Oakland Mills Nature Center on the south side of the Skunk River was the host site where 18 participants experienced a hands-on introductory course on furharvesting on Sept. 24.

Attendees were a mix of youth and adults who learned about the types of traps, trapping techniques, laws, and ethics and then headed to the field to experience how to set traps in different situations for different types of furbearers.

State Conservation Officer Dan Henderson said instructors ran through different types of traps and methods used in the water to catch beavers, otters and muskrats, then the technique to trap bobcats, fox and coyotes using dirt sets, and then different trapping options for the roadways, including dog proof traps.

But he said one of the most popular topics was the live trapping and release unharmed scenario.

"We had participants who were really interested in live trapping aspect to get nuisance raccoons out of the sweet corn patches, or flower beds – not to hurt them, but to get them away from the area," Henderson said.

The course was produced by a partnership with the Henry County Conservation Board, and avid local trappers Mickey Craig and Justin Mertens.

"We had a lot of interest in this course and it's something we are looking at doing as an annual thing," he said. "This program would not have been possible without Mickey and Justin donating their time and sharing their passion of trapping in hopes to get our youth involved."

Instructors stressed the importance of being conservationists and families shared experiences with trapping. Trapping serves a role with regard to managing certain populations of furbearers and if these populations get too high they can become susceptible to certain diseases, like distemper, mange and rabies.

Traps, lures, baits, and tools were donated by sponsors in efforts to get the kids started in their trapping adventures. The event was sponsored by Funke Traps, Backwater Baits, Bret Smith, Kansas Trapline Products, Prados Trading Post, Wickenkamp Traps, Papio Creek, Keg Creek Baits, Marty Smith and Randy Mitchell.

Wickenkamp Traps donated three live traps for the attendees to take home.

Media Contact: Dan Henderson, State Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 319-653-1636.

Learn to Hunt program opens registration for upland bird virtual Q & A panel discussion

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a virtual program to teach skills needed to hunt, field dress and cook upland birds to those with little or no upland bird hunting experience.

The workshop will be held via Zoom, on Oct. 25 from 6-8 p.m. Experienced instructors will teach the basics skills and strategies needed to hunt pheasants. The workshop is designed for participants age 16 and older. There is no fee to participate.

“Participants will learn the skills and knowledge it takes to hunt upland birds by themselves, like the proper equipment, where to hunt, safe shooting practices, and how to field dress, butcher and cook them as a means of sourcing your own protein,” said Jamie Cook, program coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Space is limited so early registration is encouraged. For more information and to begin the registration process go to https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-blm7IDeT4aNqkEQ0VMN2A

The program is provided through a partnership with the Iowa DNR and Pheasants Forever. It is part of a national effort to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters due to the overall decline in hunting and outdoor recreation.

Media Contact: Jamie Cook, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515.350.8091.

Award-winning conservation education professional development scheduled this fall

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sponsoring professional development for K-12 and early childhood educators this fall.

Online Course for K-12 Educators

A *Project WILD*, *Aquatic WILD* and *Project Learning Tree* online self-guided course for teachers, naturalists and other K-12 educators is available October 9-December 4. The course is designed so individuals can work through the activities independently.

Participants must register no later than November 15 through AEALearning at <https://aealearning.truenorthlogic.com/> and complete coursework by December 4. You will

be asked to create an account if you do not already have one. After logging in, enter “Project WILD” in the course search to find registration information for the course.

Participants will explore the three national award-winning activity guides. Upon completion of the required activities, participants receive all three teaching guides. Iowa teachers can earn license renewal credit for the course. Materials are aligned with NGSS and other Common Core standards.

Early Childhood Opportunities Iowa State University Extension provides *Growing Up WILD* training for early childhood professionals that include continuing education credits through the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services.

Workshops are scheduled Oct. 8 in Newton, and Oct. 29 in Hamburg. Visit the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach website

(www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/growing-up-wild) to register or check for other classes.

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