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- [Black-capped chickadees astonishing secrets](#)
- [Learn to Hunt program opens registration for wild turkey workshop](#)
- [Iowa State Fairgrounds host state archery tournament March 4-5](#)
- [Course on chronic wasting disease set for March in Dubuque County](#)

Black-capped chickadees astonishing secrets

Black-capped chickadees survive the harshest winters with amazing adaptive behaviors and abilities. From adjusting their core body temperatures to shedding and adding brain cells to memorizing hundreds of locales of stashed foods, these tiny wonders have astonishing secrets.

Weighing only one-half ounce, chickadees consume as much as 30 times the amount of food in winter as it does in the summer, using a strategy known as scatter hoarding to maintain that diet.

Chickadees would store one or two bits of food - tree-infesting caterpillars, insects, spiders and seeds - in hundreds or thousands of places over several acres during warmer months. In far northern latitudes, they may hoard a half-million items. Caches are usually within feet of where the food is found. Sunflower seeds from feeders are taken farther away, secretly stashed from competitors. Before stuffing and concealing the item in rough bark, branches and crevices, chickadees will remove larvae heads, moth wings and the shells of large seeds.

How does it remember the hundreds of hiding spots of newly hidden food caches? In October, chickadees grow new cells in the brain's hippocampus, critical to memory. By spring, millions of these cells die as hidden food dwindles and memory is less vital.

Surviving a cold Iowa winter requires more than down and fat, so chickadees shiver to maintain minimal body temperatures. By gradually lengthening times between shivers, body temperatures drop as much as 10 degrees, requiring 20 percent less in caloric needs.

By reducing metabolism at night, an extra layer of fat is added by morning. On cold nights, modest energy stores last until dawn by lowering their normal 108-degree temperature to 86 degrees through controlled hypothermia. This nocturnal semi-hibernation slows metabolism rates by 25 percent.

Iowans can support this amazing little bird and the 1,000-plus other species of songbirds, bald eagles, salamanders, turtles, monarchs and bees and more that make up the majority of wildlife in Iowa by contributing to the Chickadee-checkoff on their state income tax form.

The Fish and Wildlife Fund, commonly known as the "Chickadee Check-off," is a mechanism the Iowa Legislature created in the 1980s for Iowans to donate to wildlife conservation on the Iowa state income tax form. Before this time, so called "non-game" wildlife had no dedicated

funding. It is one of the only funding sources for the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Diversity program, which is responsible for these species.

The Fish and Wildlife check-off is on line 57a of the 2022 IA 1040 Iowa Income Tax Return. Once located, donating is easy: simply write-in the amount to donate and the sum is either automatically deducted from the refund or added to the amount owed.

Funding helps to improve wildlife habit, restore native wildlife, provide opportunities for citizens to learn about Iowa's natural resources and much more. Recent projects have been investigating the nesting success of barn owls and determining the status of the endangered rusty-patched bumblebee.

New this year, donors who miss donating on the tax form, can donate to the non-game program on the web at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/donations>.

Learn to Hunt program opens registration for wild turkey workshop

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a program to teach skills needed to hunt, field dress and cook wild turkey to adults who have little to no wild turkey hunting experience.

The two-part workshop, scheduled from 6-to 9 p.m. on March 9 and 16, at Olofson Shooting Range, near Polk City, features instructors providing hands-on learning to build basic knowledge and skills of turkey hunting. The course is designed for participants 16 years of age and older.

"This workshop provides the opportunity to learn the skills for those interested in the challenge of hunting wild turkey, as a means of sourcing their own protein," said Jamie Cook, Hunter Education coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Participants will learn about turkey hunting equipment, where to hunt, safe shooting practices, how to field dress and prepare and cook wild turkeys.

Space is limited, early registration is encouraged. To register, go to <http://license.goooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx?id=2531>. The cost is \$25.

The program is provided through a partnership with the Iowa DNR and the National Wild Turkey Federation. It's 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

Iowa State Fairgrounds host state archery tournament March 4-5

An estimated 2,200 students from more than 125 schools from across Iowa will be in the Richard O. Jacobson Exhibition Center (Bullseye) and the 4H Building (3D) at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines March 4-5, to participate in the 17th National Archery in the Schools Program State Tournament. This is the largest youth archery tournament in Iowa.

Iowa student participation in the National Archery in the Schools Program has grown each year beginning from scratch in 2006 to now more than 4,500 participants in 2023.

"The National Archery in the Schools Program is a great youth sports program because archery has no limitation, students of all physical and athletic abilities can partake and succeed," said Zach Benttine, archery coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Competition begins at 8 a.m. each day. There will be 50 targets set up for bullseye, which will allow 100 participants to shoot at a time. There will be 30 targets set up for 3D, which will allow 60 participants to shoot at a time.

Admission is \$5 for 18 and older, 17 and younger are free. Participants and coaches are allowed free admission to the Iowa Deer Classic at the Iowa Events Center upon showing their official wristband.

Archers Shoot for College Cash & Equipment

Archers participating in the Iowa Archery in the Schools Program can earn money for college.

More than \$10,000 will be awarded in college scholarships based on performance at the state tournament. An additional \$9,000 will be awarded outside of the state competition to archers participating in the program based on academics, essays, and other established criteria.

In addition to scholarships, teams receiving placement at the state tournament will also be eligible to receive an estimated \$5,000 in equipment for their schools.

Scholarships are provided by Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever, Whitetails Unlimited, Iowa Bowhunters Association, Safari Club International, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Haney Family Foundation, Chuck Hallier Memorial, and the National Archery in the Schools Program.

For more information on the Iowa Archery in the Schools Program visit: www.iowadnr.gov/nasp.

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Course on chronic wasting disease set for March in Dubuque County

PEOSTA - Chronic Wasting Disease Ambassadors is a collaborative education program between the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach that seeks to help Iowans address the challenge of chronic wasting disease.

Registration is open for a course in March at the Swiss Valley Nature Center, in Dubuque County. Classes are scheduled for March 15, 22, and 29, from 6-8 p.m. There is a link to the online registration at <https://naturalresources.extension.iastate.edu/programs/chronic-wasting-disease-ambassadors>. Class size is between 12-25 participants.

The goal of the program is to develop a small, connected, and well-educated network of local leaders to effectively communicate about the management and mitigation of chronic wasting disease.

Graduates of the three-week training program become “ambassadors” for the science-based management of chronic wasting disease. Ambassadors are knowledgeable in the management, prevention, and testing for the disease and equipped with communication skills and resources to help educate others within their community.

Participants can include hunters and non-hunters, community members, and anyone interested in white-tailed deer conservation and management.

Jordan Koos, of Decorah, is a deer hunter who took the course offered in Waukon in November 2021.

“It was a well-developed program, and having only a handful of participants, helped to carry it,” he said. “I learned a lot; didn’t realize the number of counties it was in or the number of positives. I would recommend it.”

The course is taught through in-person instructions, demonstration, and networking, and short online lessons between class sessions that allow ambassadors to learn at their own pace. It covers everything from the basics of chronic wasting disease ecology to the science of effective communication. The program comprises about eight hours of learning and networking with ISU and DNR educators and other concerned community members.