



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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- [Annual spring wildlife spotlight survey underway](#)
- [Bumble Bee Atlas Seeks Volunteers to Search for Declining Iowa Bees](#)
- [Improve your paddling skills with DNR canoe and kayak schools](#)

Annual spring wildlife spotlight survey underway

Staff with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are currently conducting their annual nighttime spring spotlight surveys across the state, collecting information on Iowa's deer and furbearer populations.

The annual survey is conducted from mid-March through April in each county, beginning an hour after sunset, preferably on nights with low wind, high humidity and above freezing temperatures. The routes cover different habitats from river bottoms, to farm fields, prairies, woodlots, pastures and timber stands.

"Keeping the routes and conditions consistent provides more reliable data," said Jace Elliott, state deer biologist with the Iowa DNR.

The 25-mile routes – two per county - are driven below 25 miles per hour with staff shining spotlights out of both sides of the vehicle, recording the number of deer and furbearers seen along with the habitat type, at different points along the way. This is one of the only surveys that provides an index on elusive furbearer species, like badgers and otters. Staff are careful to avoid shining homes and livestock while on the survey and contact the county sheriff ahead of time in case they receive any calls.

"This survey produces really valuable information on our deer and furbearer populations, both locally and at the state level, allowing us to see population trends over time," said Elliott. The survey began in the late 1970s as a way to collect information on the raccoon population, but was expanded to include deer and other furbearers.

"It's an important index that is combined with other data and surveys we use that gives us the most complete picture for these species and guides our management decisions to benefit the resource," Elliott said.

The survey report will be posted later this summer to the Iowa DNR's website at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Population-Harvest-Trends>

Media Contact: Jace Elliott, State Deer Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-249-7056.

Bumble Bee Atlas Seeks Volunteers to Search for Declining Iowa Bees

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa State University partner with national nonprofit to launch statewide effort to conserve Iowa's pollinators

BOONE— A new statewide project is looking for Iowa volunteers to help researchers track and monitor the state's at-risk bumble bees. The [Iowa Bumble Bee Atlas](#) is a collaboration between the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Iowa State University, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources that aims to understand native bumble bee distributions and their habitat needs throughout the state.

Iowa is home to at least 14 species of bumble bees that play an essential role in sustaining the health of the environment, from pollinating native wildflowers to flowering crops in farm fields and backyard gardens. Unfortunately, several bumble bee species native to Iowa have undergone alarming declines and face an uncertain future.

"The recent listing of the rusty patched bumble bee as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is increasing the need to collect data on the occurrence of all bumble bee species in our state," said Dr. Matthew O'Neal, professor of entomology at Iowa State University.

The effort is one of a growing number of Bumble Bee Atlas projects run by the Xerces Society and their partners in 20 states. In 2023 alone, more than 900 individuals participated in the Atlas, documenting over 20,000 bumble bees. The volunteers have discovered species previously thought to be gone from their states, contributed to new field guides, and rapidly improved scientists' understanding of bumble bee populations across the United States. Without the efforts of these "community scientists", it would be impossible to gather information across such a wide geographic area.

"Community science is a powerful conservation tool," said Genevieve Pugesek, an endangered species conservation biologist with the Xerces Society. "Declining species are typically not abundant on the landscape, which makes them really

difficult to study. It requires a lot of time and dedication to collect sufficient data on these species. A great deal of what we know about rare and threatened bumble bees is thanks to volunteer contributions.”

Information gathered by community scientists provides a modern day snapshot of bumble bees and serves as a benchmark to which future conditions can be compared. Data can be used to assess bumble bee ranges, phenology, and habitat associations and evaluate how these patterns have changed over time. This information can then be leveraged to design conservation guidelines for at-risk species and create habitat management guidance for land stewards.

“Knowledge about vulnerable insects and other wildlife is so important to setting our management objectives, so that we can contribute to the continued health of these species,” said Stephanie Shepherd, a wildlife diversity biologist with Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “We are excited to learn more about the bumble bees in our wild areas and everywhere else.”

Traditionally, community science projects receive much of their data from densely populated towns and cities, while rural and remote areas remain under-surveyed. In Iowa, monitoring wildlife in these rural areas can be particularly challenging because 98% of the state is privately owned. The Atlas project prioritizes rural areas, allowing scientists to better understand how bumble bees are faring outside of urban settings. Collecting data across the state will call for volunteers ready to explore all areas.

The Iowa Bumble Bee Atlas is open to anyone with interest in pollinator conservation. Training will be provided on how to complete surveys, take high quality photographs of bumble bees, and submit observations using a platform [called Bumble Bee Watch](#). Interested volunteers can sign up for the first online training event on April 13, 2024 and view other events at bumblebeeatlas.org.

For more information about the Iowa Bumble Bee Atlas project, please visit bumblebeeatlas.org.

To receive updates on the Iowa Bumble Bee Atlas, sign up for the [mailing list](#) or follow the Bumble Bee Atlas on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

About the Xerces Society The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation is a donor-supported nonprofit organization that protects our world through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats. Xerces works throughout North America to conserve pollinators and other invertebrates, protect endangered species, and reduce pesticide use and impacts. Our staff use applied research, policy advocacy, public education and on-the-ground habitat improvement to advance meaningful, long-term conservation. Xerces is the largest invertebrate conservation organization in the world. For over 50 years, we have been

champions of Earth's most biodiverse and overlooked animals, protecting the life that sustains us. Learn more at xerces.org.

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Improve your paddling skills with DNR canoe and kayak schools

DES MOINES —Naturalists, youth group leaders and others who take people out on the water in canoes and kayaks are encouraged to attend one of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) paddling schools.

Participants will learn paddling skills, how to identify hazard and river features, tips for teaching different learning styles, and risk management strategies. Instruction time will be one-third classroom and two-thirds on-water in both lake and river environments, solo and tandem.

All courses will be taught at Briggs Woods, along the Boone River in Hamilton County. The canoe school is limited to 12 participants and the kayak school is limited to 8 participants. This is not a beginner level course; participants should have previous paddling experience.

The schedule for 2024 paddling schools is:

- May 21-22, Canoe School
- June 5-6, Canoe School
- July 23-24, Kayak School
- Aug. 6-7, Canoe School
- Aug. 27-28, Kayak School

DNR paddling schools are designed for either canoeing or kayaking instruction. Make sure you register for your preferred instruction. Registration fee is \$65 for each two-day course. Overnight accommodations are not included in the

registration fee. Participants have the options to camp, rent a cabin, or stay in Webster City at a motel while participating in the two-day school.

To register or for more information, go to www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/How-to-Paddle/Canoe-Kayak-Schools. Get your registration in quickly, these classes fill up fast.

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