

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pheasant survey predicts another year of good hunting for most of Iowa

Results of Iowa's 2024 pheasant population survey are in and the results were nearly identical to the 2022 and 2021.

The annual August roadside survey found Iowa's statewide pheasant population to be 19 birds per 30-mile route, down from 23 birds per route in 2023. The decline was expected after much of Iowa received 3-7 inches of rainfall above normal during the nesting season.

"Iowa hunters have enjoyed good pheasant hunting over most of the state for the past five seasons, including last year, when we had the highest harvest in 16 years. If our dry weather continues into fall, the corn and soybean harvest could be mostly complete by opening day, and that usually leads to good success," 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 350,000 to 400,000 roosters. Last year, Iowa saw an increase of an estimated 20,000 pheasant hunters over 2022, which helped push the harvest to nearly 600,000.

"Last year, pheasant hunting was the best it's been since 2007, and while the numbers from the survey were lower, it's shaping up for another good fall," he said. The full report is available at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey.

Iowa's quail population was led by the southwest and west central regions of the state.

"Route after route, we had staff recording quail further into the west central region," Bogenschutz said.

Iowa's partridge population was lower, with the better numbers coming from the northcentral and northwest region. The rabbit population was higher than last year

with the better population in the south half of Iowa, but good numbers can be found across the state.

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

- Youth pheasant season is Oct. 19-20
- Pheasant season is Oct. 26-Jan. 10, 2025
- Quail season is Oct. 26-Jan. 31, 2025
- Rabbit season is Aug. 31-Feb. 28, 2025
- Partridge season is Oct. 12-Jan. 31, 2025

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-979-0828.

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 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://programs.iowadnr.gov/aquia/Programs/Beaches>
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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:

- Plan ahead for your visit to parks and campgrounds. Pack snacks, food, water, sun block, bug spray and personal hygiene products, including hand sanitizer.
- Stay hydrated with plenty of fluids.
- Don't hike alone and always have some way to communicate such as a cellphone.
- Wear proper outdoor attire for hiking, especially sturdy tennis shoes or boots rather than light sandals or flip-flops.
- Slow down on park roadways and obey posted speed limit signs. Families and kids are often walking or biking on the roads.
- 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.
- Consider visiting the parks during non-peak times, which often include mornings and evenings to avoid the biggest crowds. If a park is busy,, find another nearby state park that is less populated.
- Don't transport firewood; buy it locally.
- Be respectful of other park visitors when camping, especially at night.
- "Carry In, Carry Out"—please pick up any trash and carry out what you carry into the park. Campers should not burn trash in the campfires as trash can contain toxic substances such as plastics or chemicals.
- 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 gooutdoorsiowa.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.

Paddling Safety

Whether it be tubing, paddleboarding, 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Bridge construction on I-80 over the Raccoon River is creating dangerous conditions for paddlers. Warning signs are posted at some of the river accesses. Paddlers are advised to avoid launching kayaks, canoes and tubes from the Puckerbrush Access in Dallas County. Check the [Iowa DNR's interactive paddling map to](#) help you plan your paddling trip and avoid bridge construction areas.

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Two popular state parks to host centennial celebrations this fall

2024 marks the 100th anniversary of both Pilot Knob State Park, Forest City, and Ledges State Park, Boone. Local community organizations are hosting September celebrations at each park to commemorate these special milestones.

The Pilot Knob centennial celebration will take place Saturday, Sept. 14. Hosted by the volunteer group Friends of Pilot Knob State Park, the day kicks off with a rededication ceremony at 10:00 a.m. at the park's CCC-era Warming House. Visitors can enjoy a free lunch, and ice cream; souvenirs will be available for purchase. Additional activities throughout the day include a silent auction and bingo, live

music, outdoor games, and presentations about the park's history and even ghost stories. With limited parking at Pilot Knob, please carpool to the event. Event staff will help direct parking at each lot. Once lots are full, guests can access a shuttle from outside the park entrance. Find out more by visiting the event page: <https://facebook.com/events/s/100th-anniversary-celebration/851195473256430/>.

The volunteer group Friends of the Ledges is planning a community celebration on Saturday, Sept. 28. The day will start at 8:30 a.m. with a pancake breakfast fundraiser. Additional activities will kick off at noon and include live music, a bags tournament, a historical character hike, carnival games, bingo and more. With limited parking at Ledges, a shuttle bus service will be available for visitors to get around to park events. Find out more by visiting the event page at <https://www.facebook.com/events/1274035846920418/>. Ledges will then host a rededication event on Saturday, Nov. 9, which is the actual dedication date for the park. This event will highlight the rich natural and cultural history of Ledges with displays, presentations and guided hikes.

Events at both parks are free and open to the public.

Media Contacts:

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Water level to drop at Three Mile Lake starting Sept. 3

CRESTON – Lake water levels at Three Mile Lake in Union County will be lowered an additional three feet as a part of an ongoing lake restoration project.

Managers will maintain the lake at approximately eleven feet below normal pool to expose additional areas of the lake bed and shoreline for construction. Water released through the lake's outlet structure to lower the lake level will be released slowly to avoid downstream impacts.

Construction activities began in the fall of 2023 and will be completed in the spring of 2025, when managers will allow the lake to refill. An effort will be made to maintain recreation throughout the project and access to the lake for boating via the main boat ramp. Boaters should use caution throughout the lake as tree stumps, cedar tree brush piles, and underwater reefs may be at or near the water's surface with the lower water levels.

The restoration project will improve and protect water quality in Three Mile Lake and provide new recreational opportunities for this popular destination. Planned activities include stabilizing the shoreline, improving the jetties, installing fish habitat and modifying the existing in-lake silt basin.

For more information, contact George Antoniou at george.antoniou@dnr.iowa.gov
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