

Iowa DNR News

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Low key Tuttle Lake Wildlife Area offers a little bit of everything for the outdoors



The most recent addition to Tuttle Lake was converted to prairie and the planting is doing well. Mountain mint, gray headed coneflower, hoary vervain, partridge pea, great blue lobelia, goldenrod, showy tic trefoil, Maximilien sunflower, compass plant, purple prairie clover, side oats gramma, false boneset, prairie onion, prairie blazing star, June grass leadplant can all be seen. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Tuttle Lake Wildlife Area is an out-of-the-way kind of place known locally for its pheasant hunting and, recently, sneaky good walleye fishing. Its 1,500 plus acres is part lake, part wetland, part prairie, part floodplain, and part small savanna on the Iowa Minnesota border in Emmet County.

On this cool and breezy late August morning, the area is quiet except for Canada geese loafing in the floodplain, and pelicans and cormorants enjoying the slack water of the East Fork of the Des Moines River, all under the watchful eye of an adult red-tailed hawk soaring overhead.

“It has a little bit of everything here,” said Lucas Straw, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Prairie Lakes Unit – Ingham office.

The rolling topography is mainly a mix of prairie and seasonal wetlands. The natural wetlands made it difficult to farm so much of the area historically, was kept as pasture.

“We think there’s some remnant prairie there and we’re managing it to see what will return,” Straw said.

Part of that management includes using prescribed fire to mimic what had occurred naturally. Prairie Lakes staff burned a quarter section this spring to rejuvenate the prairie plants and keep the woody vegetation from encroaching.

The most recent acquisition was northeast of the intersection of 510th Avenue and 120th Street and a portion of that was converted to prairie. The young planting is really showing itself.

Mountain mint, gray headed coneflower, hoary vervain, partridge pea, great blue lobelia, goldenrod, showy tic trefoil, Maximilien sunflower, compass plant, purple prairie clover, side oats gramma, false boneset, prairie onion, prairie blazing star, June grass leadplant and more. The prairie is buzzing with insects and grassland birds.

A neighbor, who is part of the beginning farmer program, assists with some of the work. He has handled the haying, and planting and maintaining the food plots for the past four years.

The largest feature of the area is Tuttle Lake at 2,300 acres. The shallow natural lake is on the state line with roughly 970 acres in Iowa.

While it is a larger lake by Iowa standards, it is shallow with a maximum depth of around six feet. Its 50,000-acre watershed feeding the lake helps to minimize fish kills even during severe winters.

Natural resources agencies in Iowa and Minnesota coordinate fish sampling and the Iowa DNR stocks the lake with newly hatched walleye fry. Residents of both states can fish the lake with a resident fishing license.

“The outlet is a popular wader fishing spot for walleyes in the spring,” he said.

The fry stocking has provided a more consistent product here, and walleye fishing has been good recently, but can have ups and downs because of winter kills and limited habitat.

The lake has a good population of channel catfish and bullheads, with crappies, yellow perch and a few northern pike available. The outlet is the headwaters for the East Fork of the Des Moines River.

The outlet is on the southeast corner of the lake and on the edge of Okamanpeedan State Park, a small day-use only state park with no modern facilities. Emmet County has a park on the southwest corner of the lake, with electrical campsites, restroom, a boat ramp and playground.

A state managed boat ramp and parking lot sits between the two parks. The ramp and parking lot are scheduled for improvements next year.

Media Contact: Lucas Straw, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-362-1651.

Fort Atkinson historic fort renovations celebrated at rendezvous

FORT ATKINSON – Iowans are invited to celebrate and tour recent renovations at the Fort Atkinson Preserve, which is a nationally significant 1840s military post in northeast Iowa. The celebration will begin at noon on Saturday, Sept. 28 as part of the annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous.

Fort Atkinson is managed by the Iowa DNR as a historic preserve that features several original buildings such as barracks and a gunpowder house, along with archaeologically significant artifacts. Recent assessments and repairs were funded through a grant from the Save America's Treasures program through the Historic Preservation Fund, as administered by the National Parks Service, Department of the Interior, and donations from the Friends of Fort Atkinson.

The Fort Atkinson Rendezvous is a free, two-day event that featuring historical reenactments of frontier life in 1840s. Participants dress in authentic costumes worn from the time period, recreating military life at the fort, as well as how hunters, trappers, and traders displayed furs and supplies for barter at a frontier rendezvous as existed further west in the Rocky Mountains. The event is celebrating its 48th year.

To learn more, visit www.iowadnr.gov and search for Fort Atkinson Preserve.

Lend a hand in a state park at Statewide Volunteer Day on Sept. 28

Iowans are invited to lend a hand at the DNR's eighth annual statewide Volunteer Day on Saturday, Sept. 28. Several parks across the state will be hosting volunteer events to help spruce up trails, buildings and other park amenities.

"Iowa state parks are beloved places for many Iowans, and we greatly appreciate the help volunteers provide," said Sherry Arntzen, chief of Iowa Parks, Forests and Preserves.

Clean-up efforts at Statewide Volunteer Day will be unique for each park and may include litter pick-up, staining or painting buildings, planting trees, clearing trails and more.

Citizens interested in volunteering can learn more at www.iowadnr.gov/volunteer. If weather looks inclement on Saturday, volunteers should contact the individual park office in case changes to date, time or meeting location for the event occur.

Media Contact: Mary Runkel, (Statewide Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator) at mary.runkel@dnr.iowa.gov/ 515-443-2533.

Migratory bird hunters reminded to register for the Harvest Information Program (HIP) every year

All hunters who pursue migratory game birds are required to register for Harvest Information Program (HIP) either through the Go Outdoors Iowa app on their

smartphone, through a link at www.iowadnr.gov/waterfowl or at www.gooutdoorsiowa.com.

Migratory game birds mean more than ducks and geese; in Iowa it includes mourning doves, ducks, geese, coots, doves, woodcock, rails, and snipe.

Once registered, hunters will need to write a confirmation number on their license, print an updated copy of their license with the confirmation or take a screenshot of their confirmation on their phone to show proof of registration. Requiring a confirmation number will allow the DNR to better track migratory bird hunters – a federal requirement.

Media Contact: Orrin Jones, State Waterfowl Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-231-1957.