

Iowa DNR News

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2025

- [Bluegills are biting in small ponds and lakes across Iowa](#)
- [Iowa's 2025 pheasant hatch is underway](#)

Bluegills are biting in small ponds and lakes across Iowa



Male bluegills build nests (also called beds) for female bluegills to lay eggs in. These spawning beds were built on reefs at Prairie Rose Lake, near Harlan. Photo courtesy of Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

In late May and early June, male bluegill build nests that female bluegill lay eggs in. Bluegill nests are circular depressions, 1 to 2 feet in diameter. Built in clusters called beds, they appear to look like the surface of a golf ball or elephant tracks.

Male bluegills are easy to catch when they are guarding the nests in shallow water. Cast from a distance instead of getting close if the water is clear. Fish will be less finicky if they don't see you.

Bluegill have small mouths. Keep your hooks, bobbers and bait small and your line light (2 or 4 pound-test). Weighted bobbers will help you cast further. Worms are a great bait option. You can also tip your jig with a small piece of artificial worm.

Look for bluegill on any type of structure in the water. Check out our [mobile-friendly fishing atlas](#) to see where habitat features are in your chosen lake. Many near-shore spawning structures and off shore reefs have been added to Iowa waters.

Bluegills can be found in almost every lake across Iowa. Check the [weekly fishing report](#) to find out where bluegills are biting.

Media Contact: John Lorenzen, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.

Iowa's 2025 pheasant hatch is underway



The first reports of pheasant chick broods have been coming in to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) over the past two weeks, marking the beginning of the 2025 hatching season.

The mild winter and favorable April weather led to some early nesting across much of the state and while May is primarily an incubation month, June is when the peak hatch occurs.

“Hens are determined nesters and if they lose a nest, they will continue to re-nest into July, but the data shows that each attempt has fewer eggs than the previous effort,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist with the Iowa DNR.

“When we have early nesting years, we typically have the highest number of chicks and it is looking like 2025 will be an early nesting year.”

Hens will begin incubating after the last egg is laid and eggs hatch after 23 days of incubation. The warming temperatures in the forecast should be good heading in to the June 10-15 peak of the hatch, as rain and cold weather can be a fatal combination for the newly hatched chicks.

The young pheasants begin to make short flights – around five feet – at 10 days old and can keep up with the hen on longer flights after another five days. The Iowa DNR will release the results of its pheasant population survey – conducted in August as part of the August roadside survey – in early September, which is the best estimate of what hunters will find in the field this fall.

A century of pheasant hunting

The Iowa DNR and Pheasants Forever are celebrating 100 years of pheasant hunting in the Hawkeye State. The first season was held Oct. 20-22, 1925, when 13 counties in north central Iowa were opened to pheasant hunting. Hunters were allowed a three-rooster limit, for a half-day of hunting. An estimated 75,000 hunters participated.

Hunters can commemorate the 100th anniversary by purchasing a hard card featuring Iowa Pheasants Forever Print of the Year when they purchase their 2025 hunting and fishing licenses.

Information on places to hunt, the August roadside survey results and more is available online by clicking the 100 Years of Pheasant Hunting graphic at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey.

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