

Iowa DNR News

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nature is Calling: Explore Iowa with the State Park Passport in 2025

The Iowa State Park Passport is back in 2025 and better than ever. With more than 60 state parks and forests featured on the Passport, visitors will love discovering hidden gems in the state park system.

Park visitors can sign up and download the State Park Passport onto a mobile device to earn points toward prizes and giveaway opportunities. In its sixth year through partnership with Travel Iowa, the Passport has been a popular way to explore new parks and track outdoor adventures.

How it works

To sign up, go to <https://www.traveliowa.com/iowa-state-park-passport-sign-up/> on your mobile device. Click on the blue “Sign Up” box on the page and follow the steps to check out and download. To see prizes and rules go to: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/places-go/state-parks/parks-passport>

Earn prizes when you check in with the 2025 State Park Passport

Through October 31, passport holders can earn points by checking into dozens of state parks and forests using the online app. Each park has a different point value (either 100, 200 or 300 points), with remote or “hidden gem parks” earning higher points. Redeem points for various prizes.

- **500 points** – any passholder redeeming at this level gets \$5.00 off an overnight camping stay
- **1,000 points** – first 500 passholders to redeem at this level get a beautiful and unique sticker. Created by Iowa artist Naomi Friend, choose from 20 different state park designs.
- **2,500 points** – first 300 passholders to redeem at this level get a free Iowa state park t-shirt
- Additionally, each check-in counts as an automatic entry into a sweepstakes drawing for a three-night at a four-bedroom cabin at Springbrook State Park.

Once points are redeemed, the passholder resets to zero points and starts earning again to get any additional points, so cash-in early, or bank for higher level prizes.

The Passport, sticker and t-shirt prizes are sponsored by [Travel Iowa](#).

Hidden gems within each park

Also discover staff-selected “Hidden Gem” features within each park on the Passport, such as historical markers, scenic overlooks and more!

Get ready for adventure this summer with the State Park Passport!

Previous passholders will need to re-subscribe to take part in the 2025 Passport program.

Green Valley State Park anchors popular public recreation complex in Union County



The 69-acre Gator Recreation Area, northeast of Green Valley State Park, received prescribed fire a few weeks ago targeting cool season grasses and to knock back cedars and the native vegetation has already returned. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

A young male turkey is slowly walking to the safety of a pile of downed cedar trees, near the entrance road to Green Valley State Park’s campground. The tree piles located around the park are part of a project reclaiming the hillsides for prairie, offering important nesting for grassland birds and protecting the lake from sediment erosion.

“These transition periods can be a little visually messy but when finished, but when the prairie is back on the land and visitors can see the lake, it will be pretty neat,” said Chad Paup, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) nearby Grand River Unit.

The cedar tree piles are visual evidence of the work underway, opening the area up to prairie restoration. The piles will disappear over time as part of the DNR’s annual

late winter early spring prescribed fire season. Evidence of existing prairie has been reappearing in the clearings, especially by the dam.

"This area is loaded with prairie blazing star," Paup said.

The habitat work is a part of a long-term effort to knock back unwanted invaders and open up and return native prairie and savanna to the land.

"Bottle gentian was under the Reed canary grass and really showed after the invasives were burned, but it's a constant battle with canary grass to keep it at bay," he said.

Green Valley State Park, with its campsites, restrooms, playgrounds, fishing jetties and piers, boat ramps, cabins, canoe launch, fish cleaning stations and miles of trails, is one piece of a larger complex in Northwest Union County.

The outlet of Green Valley Lake is the water source for Summit Lake that flows through Mitchell Marsh, a 360-acre waterfowl and upland hunting area, connecting Green Valley to Creston.

Given its location and consistent water source, Mitchell Marsh is popular with duck hunters and paddlers. Summit Lake has a no wake restriction is also popular with paddlers and offers an opportunity to catch yellow perch, in addition to bluegills, crappies and largemouth bass.

The complex has two areas that extend east of Green Valley Lake Road, with the largest being roughly 160 acres of Mitchell Marsh. This section of Mitchell Marsh is mostly prairie with food plots, a dove field and a marsh that is popular with hunters.

One and a half miles to its north is the 69-acre Gator Recreation Area, that was initially acquired to hold sediment removed from the most recent lake dredging project, around 15 years ago.

Today, it's actively managed to provide pheasant and quail hunting, has a popular dove hunting plot that rotates between sunflowers and soybeans. A local farmer partners with the DNR to maintain all the food plots on the complex. The Gator tract received prescribed fire a few weeks ago targeting cool season grasses and to knock back cedars and the native vegetation has already returned.

Driving into the park from the northwest side, leads to a gravel parking lot next to the grassed surfaced trail section surrounding the lake. Two anglers are fishing from a boat near a silt dike, serenaded by spring peeps and chorus frogs. Mourning doves can be heard cooing from a distance.

With the diverse, mixed-use public areas two miles north of Creston, visitors can experience mother nature with the comfort and convenience of nearby restaurants, retail shops and hotels.

"Fall is a great time to be here, view fall colors in southern Iowa, make a weekend of fishing for panfish or bass at Green Valley or other nearby lakes," Paup said.

"When you put it all together, it's pretty unique."

Media Contact: Chad Paup, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-5708.

Take the Tackle along on all your summer adventures

It's easy to add fishing to any outdoor outing this summer. Keep tackle in your vehicle so you can wet a line—wherever, whenever this summer.

“Make sure a rod and reel are part of any weekend plans,” said Tyler Stubbs, Iowa DNR community fisheries biologist. “Time spent with friends and family is priceless—especially when it involves fishing.”

Fishing is fun, inexpensive and a great activity for all ages. Enjoy Iowa's outdoors and spend some time fishing this summer at hundreds of Iowa lakes, thousands of miles of rivers or a neighborhood pond. Get tips for taking kids fishing and catching crappie and bluegills on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/readytofish.

“Many newer athletic complexes have fishing areas nearby,” explains Stubbs. “The excitement doesn't have to end when you step off the field. Pack the tackle and enjoy some relaxation by the water after the game.”

The [Spring 2025 Iowa Outdoors magazine](#) includes a list of great fishing spots, many in areas known for other activities and events where you can **take the tackle along**.

Anyone catching their first fish is encouraged to take a photo of their catch and upload it to receive the DNR's first fish certificate of accomplishment. Apply for a first fish certificate online at www.iowadnr.gov/firstfish

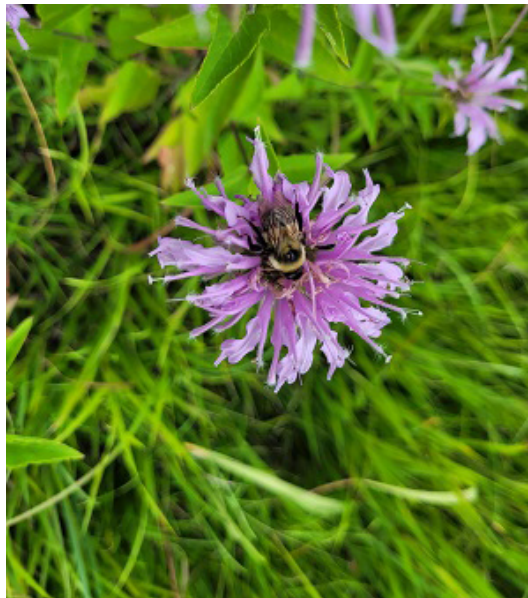
Get hooked on fishing during free fishing weekend June 6-8

Iowa residents can try fishing without buying a license on June 6, 7 and 8 as part of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) free fishing weekend. All other regulations remain in place.

Keep the fun going all summer long by buying a fishing license. It's easy to buy a fishing license with the DNR Go Outdoors Iowa online licensing system at <https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Licensing/CustomerLookup.aspx>. You can download the public Go Outdoors IA mobile app for iPhone and Android devices to buy and store your fishing license, so you will always have access to your license no matter where you are. Yearly, seven-day, or 24-hour fishing licenses are available.

Media Contact: Tyler Stubbs, Community Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-344-6960.

Upcoming training opportunity for Iowa's Bumble Bee Atlas



Rusty Patched Bumble Bee on Bergamot - A Rusty-patched Bumble Bee forages on Wild Bergamot flowers. The Rusty-patched is a federally endangered species that occurs in Iowa.

If you ever wanted to learn more about and maybe even actively help the most adorable bees in Iowa, here's your opportunity.

2025 is the second year for [Iowa's Bumble Bee Atlas](#) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is looking for volunteers to participate all over the state.

To become a Bumble Bee Atlas volunteer you should:

1. Watch the first two online training videos posted on the Iowa BBA website.
2. Create a Bumble Bee Watch account.
3. Adopt one of Iowa's survey grid cells.
4. Gather equipment and print off data sheets.
5. Attend a field training to get some in person training and experience in catching, handling and photographing bumble bees.

A number of in person field trainings will be held at various locations around the state throughout June and July.

"These are helpful for anyone who wants to participate in the survey because they provide hands-on experience with the atlas methods and with catching, handling and photographing bumble bees," said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program.

"These trainings are most helpful for people who have already gone through the two initial online trainings (now available as recordings) though it is not a requirement to have done so before attending an in-person field event."

Iowa Field Training Events

JUNE 21 | Swiss Valley Nature Center, Peosta | 10 am - 12 noon

JUNE 21 | Reiman Gardens, Ames | 2 to 4 pm (right after pollinator fest concludes - pre-registrants get into the festival free!) ([Ames Registration](#) link)

JUNE 22 | Cedar Valley Arboretum, Waterloo | 12 noon - 2 pm

JUNE 24 | Humboldt County Historical Museum, Dakota City | 10 am - 12 noon

JUNE 28 | Lake Anita State Park, Anita | 10 am - 12 noon

JULY 10 | Dickinson County Nature Center, Okoboji | 5 - 7 pm

JULY 19 | Honey Creek State Park, Moravia | 10 am – 12 noon

JULY 26 | Missouri National Recreational River, New Castle, Neb. (about 45 min from Sioux City) | 10 am - 12 noon

[Registration](#) is free but pre-registration is required. The number of participants for each training is capped at 15-20 people and is most appropriate for adults and children over 12 years old.

More field events may be added so keep an eye on the bumble bee atlas events page.

Not yet convinced? [This video](#) about the Atlas, featuring some of our star surveyors from 2024, will give you an idea how atlas surveys work and will hopefully get you excited to join us!