Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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April 4, 2006

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SPRING TURKEY SEASON PREVIEW

By Joe Wilkinson
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Opening Day for spring turkey season feels different. It's not like December's deer season opener. Then, our northbound pickups resemble a caravan, packed with gear, extra clothes, food and other essentials. October's pheasant opener allows for breakfast and socializing over a last cup of coffee, waiting for the 8 a.m. start.

Come Turkey Time, though, it's more likely solitude and quiet for nearly 60,000 spring hunters in Iowa. Just by it's nature, calling in a wary gobbler is more a 'one on one' affair. And for me, it's about two hours from the time I roll out of bed, drive 70 miles and hike a half mile back into the woods. Neither offers much opportunity for socializing.

However, the spring woods make it worth the long, dark drive. Once set up in the Delaware County timber, I can sit back and enjoy the show. Calls from a couple barred owls provoke the first treetop gobbles. As a little light opens up the hillside, chickadees, wrens and blue jays provide the background music. I usually catch a few deer moving

from field to bedding areas. In most years I set up close enough to listen to the treetop hen talk and a few fly-downs.

From there, the turkeys set the game plan. Will they stick around or head elsewhere? The early morning scene plays out across the state. And the turkeys will be there. "It should be a great season," forecasts Todd Gosselink, wild turkey biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. "Hunter success in Iowa is usually about 50 percent; extremely high for the U.S. and the Midwest. We don't have anybody complaining that they can't find turkeys in Iowa."

Hunter success dipped just slightly (from 49 percent to 48 percent) in 2005. Gosselink wonders, though, if extra rain in the third and fourth seasons kept some hunters out of the woods. Also, '05 hunters sampled the effect of a below average turkey hatch in 2004; tied to heavy deluges in some regions. Still, the 24,000 toms harvested last year sits just below the record 25,600 from two years ago. The 2005 brood survey, meanwhile, was about average.

Again this year, hunters in southern and in northeast Iowa should see good turkey numbers. Gosselink urges hunters, though, not to look past other hot spots. He points to special zones in Shimek, Stephens and Yellow River State Forests, with limited quotas, as good antidotes to heavier hunting pressure. The Loess Hills area in western Iowa also rates high marks from him.

Of course, finding them, and luring a strutting tom into range don't always go hand in hand. That's why it's called hunting. Weather, terrain, hunter preparation and just plain luck play big roles through Iowa's four turkey seasons. Most veteran hunters break down the spring into three segments. That first season (and now in the youth season which precedes it) usually has turkeys in 'pre-mating' phase. "A lot of (gobblers) will come running to anything that sounds like a hen," feels Hunter's Specialties Rick White. White, who has won a variety of calling championships, acknowledges, though, that those early days might still harbor a last gasp of winter weather, chilling success rates.

By the end of Iowa's second season, the mating season is in full fling. "You're probably not going to call him to you if he's surrounded by hens," reasons White. His suggestions? Call to the hens. "Call aggressively. Call over the top of them. Make them mad," offers White. "They might come to chase you away. The gobbler's going to come running (with them)." He says it's a good time to work on the 'fighting purr' you—hopefully--have practiced.

By the fourth season, turkeys are most often in a 'post mating' phase. "Hens will be slipping away to the nest. That gobbler might be strutting to himself," says White, who says afternoon hunting can pay dividends, now. "Sit in the morning for a couple hours. If you're on a gobbler, fine. If not, go back in the afternoon," he suggests. "Give them a different call. A lot of times, that gobbler will come in 'silent' to your position."

And dropping one of those stealth gobblers provides a new twist to the story, when your friends brag about the strutting tom they took this spring.

Spring Turkey Season Dates

*Youth season...April 7-9 (residents only)
Season 1...April 10-13
Season 2...April 14-18 (residents only)
Season 3...April 19-25
Season 4...April 26-May 14
Archery only Season...April 10-May 14 (residents)

Shooting hours for all seasons are from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

*Hunters age 15 and younger on the day they purchase a license may take part in the Youth season. The youth does not have to have a hunting license or to have completed a hunter education course in order to participate. Each youth hunter must be under direct supervision of one adult mentor. That mentor must not carry a bow or firearm. The mentor must have a valid turkey license for one of the spring seasons, a valid hunting license and have paid a valid habitat fee, if normally required to have them to hunt.

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WITH THIS YEAR'S TURKEY SEASON JUST DAYS AHEAD ---

PRESEASON SCOUTING CAN INCREASE HUNTER SUCCESS

By Lowell Washburn
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

It's that time of the year again. Iowa's hardwood forests are currently echoing with the distinctive, staccato gobble of the eastern wild turkey. Blood stirring and primitive, it is a sound like no other. For turkey hunting enthusiasts, the deep resonate rattling presents an annual summons that cannot be denied.

This year's hunting seasons are almost here. That's a good thing, because most hunters have been chewing their nails for weeks now, wondering just what to expect from upcoming days in the field.

Regardless of what success Opening Day may offer, I feel like I've already had a pretty good season. During the past several days I've been spending a good share of my free time exploring local timbers and testing my calls on preseason gobblers. As always, the boisterous, crack of dawn turkey shows have been nothing short of spectacular.

Although I've seen other hunters scouting their territories, most have been watching and listening from the road. It's a great time of the year to be outside and that's

part of the reason why it seems especially unfortunate that the majority of hunters are so reluctant to enter the woods until the seasons open.

For years now, turkey hunting professionals have been preaching that preseason, mock hunts are a giant *No No*. Conducting such excursions, the pros claim, will result in educated birds, call shy toms, and dramatically reduced success when the hunting seasons open for real. Often repeated and widely accepted, this time worn theory has been around since Iowa turkey seasons first opened more than thirty years ago.

At first glance, the stay-out-of-the-woods-until-you're-ready-to-shoot concept does sound logical. But in reality, the philosophy merely becomes myth.

The basic premise that the gobbler who hears your call, comes looking, and then doesn't find a real hen will not respond to the same sound another day is just plain ridiculous. Wild turkeys are a highly social, highly vocal, highly mobile form of wildlife. In the real woods, similar scenarios of hide and seek play out on a near continual basis. When such events do occur and a tom doesn't actually see every hen he hears, the bird does not automatically become a hermit.

Getting into the timber in advance of the hunting season provides the hunter with distinct advantages. The mornings are crisp and the predawn gobbling is as good as it gets. When daylight arrives and roosted birds hit the ground, they rarely fail to provide dramatic displays that include more in-your-face gobbling, nonstop strutting, and sparing. It can get rough out there. If you're extremely fortunate, the morning show may even feature a genuine turkey smack down as two or more needle-spurred heavyweights vie for territorial dominance.

Preseason forays give turkey enthusiasts unparalleled opportunities to look and listen as wild turkeys communicate and interact within a completely natural setting. If you really want to know what your calling is supposed to sound like, nothing tops the instruction of a live hen. It's an education that can't be matched by reading, listening to tapes, or watching TV videos.

While serving to acquaint you with the patterns of the birds you'll be hunting, preseason scouting also allows the hunter to become familiar you with every minute detail of the woodlands you'll be tromping. That sort of knowledge can only result in a greater probability of success.

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BRUSH UP ON SAFE HUNTING PRACTICES BEFORE SPRING TURKEY SEASON BEGINS

DES MOINES – The aggressive gobble announced to the timber there was a new sheriff in town. Although dawn was a few minutes away, that gobble was answered from above as nearby hens flew down from their roost.

For the 60,000 Iowa turkey hunters, the spring season is just around the corner.

"There is a passion to turkey hunting that is hard to describe unless you've been out there as the woods have woken up," said Rod Slings, recreation safety program supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "I know turkey hunters who have been waiting for this day since last May."

Turkey hunting in the spring is a different type of experience. Hunters head to the woods while it is still dark, set up their decoys, and settle in to await the sunrise.

"Hunters should be going through their checklist, including brushing up on the safety tips," Slings said. Those tips include not wearing any patriotic colors – red, white or blue - to the field, visit with the landowner to see if anyone else has permission to hunt in the same timber, and to go over the hunt plan.

"Since spring turkey hunting can often be a solitary event, it is really important for hunters to leave a hunting plan with someone before they head out to the woods. Outline where you're going, if you will be hunting with someone and when you will return," Slings said.

It is also good advice to wear blaze orange when entering and leaving the field, and to carry a blaze orange bag to carry out the turkey, if successful, and decoys.

"You want to be identified as a person from all directions walking in and out of the woods," Slings said. "Turkeys don't wear blaze orange."

Slings said hunters need to be sure of their target and of what is behind their target.

"Knowing it is, in fact, a turkey, by positively identifying the beard and spurs of a turkey, and knowing what is behind the target is key. Think about who you go hunting with – it's people close to you: your family and your friends. Practice safe hunting," Slings said. "The ultimate goal is for everyone to get home at the end of the day."

For more information, contact Slings at 515-281-8652.

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STATE PARKS BUSY WITH SPRING CLEANING, PREPARING FOR CAMPERS

INDIANOLA – Campers at Lake Ahquabi State Park braved high winds and heavy rain just to spend the weekend in a state park. Unpredictable weather isn't the only

factor to overcome for early season campers. Most state parks still have only limited facilities available.

Iowa State Parks are open year round, but during the cold weather months, without creature comforts like flush toilets or hot showers. All state parks are undergoing the annual spring tune up for camping season. As April begins, state park staff are busy getting each building ready, turning water on, preparing campsites and – predictably – fixing problems.

"By now, we are getting our mowers ready, working through our list of repairs and generally putting our energy into getting our parks ready for business," said Jim Lawson, who supervises nine state parks in south-central Iowa. Over the next few weeks, staff will be placing courtesy docks, preparing picnic tables and ordering supplies for the summer.

"April is our busy season for resource management projects, like prescribed burns on our prairie areas," Lawson said. "Around April 15 we will begin turning the water on but almost without fail, we will have leaks and other repairs needing attention. Something usually falls apart or freezes during the winter and we won't find it until the water is turned on."

The usual spring work will have a new twist this year. Park staff will begin placing signs identifying campsites available for reservation. This is the first year state parks will accept reservations for campsites or cabins.

As weather improves, staff will begin fixing erosion problems on park trails and clearing debris from the campground left by Mother Nature. An influx of seasonal workers will begin arriving in May. Many are college students and will need to be trained on the ins and outs of working in the park. Campground hosts will go through training as well before they settle in to a summer of volunteering in the park.

"There is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes to run our parks that people don't see but are vital to making the system run smoothly," Lawson said.

The peak season for state parks is May 1 through Sept. 30. Free camping weekend for Iowa residents only is May 5, 6 and 7. Campsites during free camping weekend are only available on a first come, first serve basis. No reservations will be accepted during free camping weekend.

For more information, contact your local state park staff or Jim Lawson at 515-281-5876.

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

DONNELLSON – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is hosting a public meeting to discuss a proposal to designate the Shimek State Forest region as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m., April 19, at the Donnellson Community Center, located in the downtown area (on old Highway 218) across the street from the Pilot Grove Community Bank.

"Various conservation programs and conservation plans aimed at individual groups of declining birds are gathering under the umbrella of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) to conserve all birds in all habitats," said Bruce Ehresman, biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Diversity Program.

The Iowa DNR is working with other partners to establish Bird Conservation Areas and embrace the concept of all-bird conservation. "Current research suggests that sustainable bird populations require conservation efforts at a much broader level than has been used in the past," said Ehresman. "The partnership between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners is crucial to creating large expanses of bird habitat and reversing the trend of declining bird populations."

Because the concept of Bird Conservation Areas is relatively new to Iowa, only seven such areas currently exist. Shimek Forest is only the second BCA designed to benefit forest birds. Each BCA consists of a core of protected land surrounded by large expanses of well-managed bird habitat, most of which is privately owned. Since participation is voluntary, there are no restrictions or requirements placed on the landowner. Landowners who would like to assist with bird conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance.

"Designating a Bird Conservation Area helps draw attention to the needs of birds that are in trouble, and it allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds," said Doug Harr, coordinator for the Wildlife Diversity Program. "Declining species such as Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Whip-poor-will, and American Woodcock all should benefit from the designation of the Shimek Forest Bird Conservation Area."

Besides benefiting declining bird populations, establishing BCAs in Iowa could provide an economic boost for the state. Bird watching is one of the fastest growing pastimes in North America, with an estimated 70 to 80 million participants in the United States. According to a recent U.S Fish and Wildlife Survey, wildlife watchers in Iowa, alone, now spend up to $188 million each year in pursuit of this hobby.

For more information, contact Ehresman at 515-432-2823 or Harr at 515-281-4815.

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STATE PRESERVES BOARD TO MEET APRIL 14 IN WAPELLO COUNTY

DES MOINES – The State Preserves Advisory Board will meet at 8:30 a.m. April 14, at Pioneer Ridge Nature Center, Wapello County Conservation Board, near Ottumwa. The meeting is open to the public.

Pioneer Ridge Nature Center is 6 miles south of Ottumwa on Hwy. 63.

Board members will meet at 1 p.m., at the AmercInn Motel at 222 W 2nd St. in Ottumwa for a tour of Garrison Rock on April 13. The tour is open to the public.

Members of the State Preserves Advisory Board are Neil Bernstein, Robin Fortney, Laura Jackson, Scott Moats, Armando Rosales, Cynthia Peterson and Liz Christiansen, deputy director of the DNR

A more detailed agenda is available on the Iowa DNR's website www.iowadnr.com under State Parks / Preserves, then click on Preserves Advisory Board link.

The following is the meeting agenda.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of January Meeting
- Anderson Prairie Encroachment Issue
- Research Request on Invertebrates at State Prairies
- Seed Harvest Request
- Proposal Selections for Fiscal Year 2007
- Open Discussion
- Election of Chair
- July Meeting – Scott County

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PRAIRIE RESCUE 2006 MOVES TO SPRINGBROOK

DES MOINES – Prairie Rescue 2006 continues with an event planned for Saturday, April 15. Join other volunteers as they help save a prairie while celebrating "Aldo Leopold Month."

Springbrook Conservation Education Center, located seven miles north of Guthrie Center, will hold this week's only prairie rescue event. The public is invited to help remove woody invasive species from a previously burned section of prairie.

Volunteers should meet at the Conservation Education Center's parking lot at 9 a.m. The rescue will last until noon. Participants should bring handsaws, loppers and gloves. Volunteers should also dress for the weather, bring sunscreen and wear long sleeves and pants.

Saturday's event is part of the seventh annual Iowa Statewide Prairie Rescue; a series of volunteer efforts to revitalize Iowa's endangered prairie habitat.

This year, the events also commemorate Aldo Leopold, who advocated public understanding and protection of the environment. Governor Tom Vilsack recently signed a proclamation declaring April as "Aldo Leopold Month."

At each of the roughly 25 planned events, volunteers will help care for a prairie site by removing invasive species, planting native seeds and assisting with other tasks. Visit www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/pr06.html for details about upcoming events. Rescues occur throughout April and in early May.

Prairie rescues give volunteers the chance to protect what remains of Iowa's beautiful prairie habitat. Native grasslands once covered 70-percent of the state but has been reduced to 0.1-percent of their original size. The remnants, scattered in small patches throughout the state, now require professional and volunteer assistance to survive.

For more information, contact Sarah West at Sarah.West@dnr.state.ia.us or at (515) 281-6271 or Cathy Engstrom at cengstrom@inhf.org or at (515) 288-1846.

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TREES AND SHRUBS AVAILABLE FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT

AMES - Habitat created by trees and shrubs is critical to wildlife survival in Iowa. Though one tree gives some benefits, a diverse planting of trees and shrubs give the greatest benefit to the most wildlife.

In response to the call to expand wildlife habitat plantings, the State Forest Nursery, at Ames, is offering low cost Wildlife and Songbird packets of conservation trees and shrubs for citizens to plant this spring.

A new packet offered this year allows individual to create their own specialty packet consisting of up to up to four different species in units of 50 for a total of 200 trees

and shrubs. This new packet costs $90, plus $10 for shipping. "This packet is ideal for someone who has ¼ to ½ acre of available land to devote to wildlife," said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau.

Conservation tree seedlings available include: black oak, bur oak, chinkapin oak, pin oak, red oak, swamp white oak and white oak, along with silver maple, sycamore. Also, river birch, male cottonwood, hybrid poplar, hybrid willow, red cedar, jack pine, red pine and white pine. Conservation shrub species available include: serviceberry, buttonbush, silky dogwood, gray dogwood, redoiser dogwood, hazelnut, ninebark, wild plum, chokecherry, Nanking cherry, elderberry, arrowwood, nannyberry and highbush cranberry. Conservation seedlings come in two sizes 8 to 16 inches tall and 17 to 24 inches tall.

To place an order, contact the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 M-F 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or go to www.iowatreeplanting.com for more information.

For more information, contact Walkowiak, at 515-242-5966 or john.walkowiak@dnr.state.ia.us.

APRIL BRINGS A PACKED SCHEDULE OF VOLUNTEER EVENTS

DES MOINES – Natural resources volunteers have a full calendar with workdays and special events planned throughout April. Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program within the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), encourages all Iowans to join these efforts.

- Look for opportunities to preserve the state's precious remaining prairie habitat during the seventh annual Iowa Statewide Prairie Rescue. Events occur every weekend until May 6. Check www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/pr06.html for details about individual rescues.

- Volunteers in O'Brien County have the opportunity to test the water quality in their local streams. IOWATER, the DNR's citizen water quality monitoring group, will hold a "snapshot" testing event on Saturday, April 8. Contact Scott Osborn at (712) 757-3835 or at scott.osborn@ia.usda.gov for more information.

- Help give Cedar Rock State Park a new, spring look during an April 8 cleanup. Volunteers will meet at the park visitor center at 9:30 a.m. Contact Pat Schmitz at (319) 934-3572 or at Pat.Schmitz@dnr.state.ia.us for more information.

- Beautify and revive Carter Lake during a second annual cleanup event on April 8. Volunteers will walk the shores of Carter Lake, near Omaha, Neb., removing garbage. For more information, visit www.carterlakepreservation.org or contact Jeanne Eibes at (712) 347-6455 or at carterlake@hotmail.com.

- April brings spring buds to trees — and new trees to homeowners during Operation ReLeaf community tree distribution events. Volunteers can help distribute reduced-cost trees to Alliant Energy Customers during Saturday, April 22 events in Clarke and Hardin Counties or during Saturday, April 29 events in Linn and Story Counties. Check www.alliantenergy.com/releaf for more information or contact Amy Oliver at (515) 281-6749 or at amy.oliver@dnr.state.ia.us.

Find out more about these and other events on our online calendar at www.keepersoftheland.org.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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HIGH SCHOOL TRAPSHOOTING COMPETITION SET FOR APRIL 29

CEDAR FALLS – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is partnering with several national organizations and local gun clubs during the 2006 Spring High School State Trapshooting Championships, a move aimed at promoting shooting sports in Iowa.

The DNR is sponsoring two top trophies at the competition, set for April 29 at the Cedar Falls Gun Club in Black Hawk County. State conservation officer officials are expected to be on hand at the competition to present the trophies.

"The DNR Law Enforcement Bureau greatly supports the shooting sports. Young people that take up shooting will no doubt enter the hunting field as the next step," said Rod Slings, recreational safety coordinator for the DNR. "Having safe and knowledgeable firearm skills are as important on the trap range as they are in the hunting field. The shooting sports require a combination of skill and knowledge. These participants are tomorrow hunters and have the potential of becoming leaders of the conservation movement."

Organizers expect this year's event to be the biggest in its 21-year history.

"High school trapshooting is really catching on," said Dave Swanson, state director of the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP). "In 2000, there were 117 shooters at the spring championship in Cedar Falls. It has grown to 330 participants representing 63 teams and nearly 40 high schools. We expect to go over 400 participants this year."

The SCTP was initiated in 2000 by the National Shooting Sports Foundation to promote youth shooting across the country. It is affiliated with the three main clay target shooting disciplines – trap, skeet and sporting Clays – and works with the three governing bodies of those respective groups, the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA), National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA), and the NSCA, National Sporting Clays Association (NSCA). The SCTP encourages each state to have teams formed by school affiliation, gun club affiliation, or other organized groups such as 4-H.

"The teams are encouraged to practice together and then participate in the SCTP state championship," Swanson said. "The top three teams from each division – junior and senior – then qualify to go to their respective national championship."

The SCTP state championship will be held at the Stockdale Gun Club in Ackley May 6.

The spring championship in Cedar Falls and the SCTP state championship are two of the three events used to determine is the Iowa all-state high school trap shooting teams at the end of the season. The third involves an electronic league, designed to further encourage youth shooters to practice. Youths are allowed to shoot rounds on their home ranges, and submit the scores to the Stockdale Gun Club, either by fax, phone call or email.

Results from all three components determine the first, second and third team all-state trapshooting teams.

"Youth shooters need to realize, however, that at least half of the electronic league scores need to be submitted by April 16, with the remainder turned in by April 27," Sawnson said.

For more information on three events, visit www.stockdalegunclub.com To learn more about high school trapshooting in Iowa, contact Swanson at 505-571-4178 or 641-847-2969, or by email at dave.swanson@ivescollc.com.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of April 4, 2006

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Water temperature at Guttenberg is 45 degrees and at Bellevue is 47 degrees. River stage at Bellevue is 9.73 feet, turbid, and is on a steady rise. Yellow perch are biting in the upper part of **Pools 10** (Harper's Ferry) and **11** (Guttenberg). Sauger and walleye fishing is fair in **Pools 9 to 11**. Channel catfish are starting to bite on cut baits and night crawlers in **Pools 12 to 15**. White bass fishing should improve as soon as the water conditions improve in **Pools 9 to 15**. Many walleye have moved out of the tailwater areas and are staging along the wing dams in **Pools 12 to 15**.

Cedar, Maquoketa, Turkey, Upper Iowa, and **Wapsipinicon rivers:** River levels rose an average of three feet over the past weekend; however, fishing conditions should improve rapidly throughout the week.

Big Woods Lake (Black Hawk): Anglers are catching a few crappies and bluegills fishing wax worms under a bobber.

Meyer Lake (Winneshiek) and **Lake Hendricks** (Howard): The ice went out during the middle of last week and these lakes are now ready for open-water fishing.

Trout stocking began late last week and most streams are running clear. Stocking information for specific streams can be found on the web at by going through the DNR web site at www.iowadnr.com or directly to http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/news/stockrep/groupstock.pdf. Anglers may also call the recorded trout stocking information hotline at 563-927-5736.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Iowa Great Lakes (Dickinson): Ice has just recently gone out on area lakes. Concentrate in shallow water areas for best action for all species. Remember - there is a closed season on walleye and muskellunge on Spirit, West and East Okoboji lakes.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): The lake is now completely ice-free. Water temperature was 40 degrees on Monday. Fishing has been slow. Walleyes should start moving into shallow rocky, shoreline areas to spawn within the next week. Once spawning begins male walleye will be available for 2 to 3 weeks. Ideal water temperature will be 45 to 55 degrees. The best fishing is generally on the windy shoreline. Look for walleyes on the east shore near the outlet, Billy's Reef, the Island and Dodges Point. Best baits will be leadhead jig tipped with a minnow or jig dressed with a twister tail. Anglers did report catching some bullhead with night crawlers at the Ventura Grade jetty this past weekend.

Black Hawk (Sac): Fishing is good for small crappie off the west stone pier using small jigs under a bobber.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Overall, water temperatures are still cold and fishing activity has been slow. Anglers have indicated generally slow fishing.

Don Williams (Boone): Few anglers are out due to the weather. There is some activity for crappie and bluegill, but overall fishing has been slow.

Hickory Grove (Story): Some crappie and bluegill fishing with worms under bobbers, although fishing is slow.

Big Creek (Polk): Crappie fishing has been slow to fair using jigs and minnows. Better areas to fish include near the dam and in the east arm of the lake.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappie fishing has started for shore and boat anglers using jigs and minnows. Anglers have also caught a few bluegills.

Below Saylorville Dam (Polk): White bass and walleye fishing have been fair to good using jigs and/or minnows. Some channel catfish are also reported below the reservoir.

Below Lake Red Rock (Marion): Reports of fair fishing for white bass and walleye using jigs in the tailwater area. Fishing has picked up for nice sized channel catfish.

Des Moines River (Polk): Fishing activity is starting to pick up below the dams in Des Moines, although no specific activity has been reported.

Green Valley (Union): Channel catfish are biting on shad bait in shallow warm coves. Some crappie can be caught from shore in warm areas on jigs and minnows.

Three Mile (Union): Channel catfish fishing is good using shad in the upper half of the lake in warm coves.

Wilson Lake (Taylor): Some bluegill and crappie can be caught from shore in 4 to 7 feet of water using night crawlers and minnows.

West Lenox (Taylor): Crappie can be caught from shore in 5 to 8 feet of water with small jigs.

Icaria (Adams): Channel catfish up to 2 ½ pounds can be caught with shad in the shallows.

Binder Reservoir (Adams): Channel catfish up to 2 ½ pounds can be caught in the coves and the upper end using shad or night crawlers.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: The water temperature at Lack and Dam 16 (Muscatine) is 48 degrees and the river pool stage for Pool 16 is 10.68 feet. Water levels are expected to increase over the next several days from the recent rains. Fishing has been fair for walleye and sauger on jigs tipped with minnows in the tailwaters below dams 15 to 19. Anglers report fishing for channel catfish has been good in **Lake Odessa** (Pool 17 and 18) on dead shad and shad guts. Catfishing has also been good to fair in the mouths of tributary rivers and streams and around the wingdams. Crappie fishing has been fair to slow in the backwaters. Fishing for white bass has been fair on jigs and minnows.

Lake Darling (Washington): Water temperature is 44 degrees. Anglers are picking up a few catfish along the rocky shorelines. Look for crappies to still be in deeper water around the sunken trees. The water is still too cold for them to be closer to shore.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been hitting in bays and coves. The water temperature is in the low 40s.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Crappies have been biting off points and around structure using minnows under a bobber. Largemouth bass have been hitting on a variety of artificial lures.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Walleyes can be caught using crankbaits and jig and minnow combos along the rocky shorelines and rip rapped areas.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): The channel catfish bite is slowing, but some can still be caught in the shallow upper reaches on shad fillets or guts.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): Carp fishing is excellent below the dam at Oakland Mills. Catfishing is good to excellent as they fatten up after their winter hibernation. Hit the mouths of the feeder creeks with night crawlers and minnows.

English River (Washington): Catfishing is fair to good on night crawlers and minnows.

Iowa River (Washington and Louisa): Anglers are doing well on catfish using shad guts and minnows.

Wapsipinicon River (Linn): Smallmouth bass have been willing to bite for anglers. The best technique has been drifting a bobber and minnow rig. Keep in mind, there is a three fish daily bag limit with a length limit of 12 inches on smallmouth bass.

Cedar River (Linn): Some anglers have been catching a few walleyes below the dams. Jig and minnow combos have been producing best. A few crappies have also been caught on minnows in some of the backwater/off channel areas.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

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