

***Iowa Outdoors***  
**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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**TIP CALL RESULTS IN FELONY CHARGE AGAINST NEBRASKA MAN**

DES MOINES - An anonymous call to the Turn In Poachers (TIP) line has resulted in felony charges being filed against a Nebraska man.

Rodger Blanchard, 44, of Bellevue, Neb., has been charged as a felon in possession of a firearm stemming from alleged illegal hunting activity in Taylor County. He is also being charged with numerous other fish and wildlife violations.

DNR Conservation Officers Deb Howe and Andrea Bevington, along with Special Agent Darren Hampton of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, began investigating Blanchard's activities after receiving the anonymous TIP call on Dec. 12 alleging that he was violating Iowa deer hunting regulations.

In conducting an investigation, consent searches were executed on Blanchard's vehicle, his father's vehicle, his parent's residence in Sharpsburg and his primary residence in Bellevue, Neb. When he was initially stopped by officers, Blanchard was in possession of three firearms and assorted ammunition. As a convicted felon, Blanchard is barred from possession of firearms.

The three firearms and ammunition were seized by officers, as were one mounted buck, packaged deer meat, two Iowa resident deer tags, Iowa resident hunting, fishing and deer licenses and an Iowa ID. It is alleged that Blanchard has been using the Iowa ID to purchase resident hunting and fishing licenses since 2000 even though he has been a resident of Bellevue, Neb. for approximately the last seven years.

In addition to the charge of felon in possession of a firearm, Blanchard is also charged with illegal taking of a whitetail deer (doe), illegal possession of a whitetail deer (buck), false claim for resident hunting and fishing licenses, no valid hunting license, no valid deer tag and no valid fishing license. The DNR will be seeking restitution of \$10,000 for the deer.

“This is a classic example of how only a name and a couple of minor details called into the TIP hotline resulted in multiple charges being filed against an individual suspected of being involved in the violation of a number of Iowa fish and game laws,” said Howe.

The DNR and ATF were assisted by the Taylor County Sheriff’s Office and the Lennox Police Department.

**For more information, contact Conservation Officer Deb Howe 712-520-0507 or Conservation Officer Andrea Bevington 712-520-0508.**

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## **JANUARY ANTLERLESS SEASON BEGINS ON JANUARY 11**

The January Antlerless deer season is January 11 to 27, in 59 Iowa counties. This season is designed to increase the doe harvest, the most important component of the DNR’s population management of deer herds. In the counties open for the January Antlerless season, this will be the last opportunity for Iowa hunters to take to the field.

This year, the January Antlerless Season is about a week longer than it was a year ago, providing more time for hunters to fill their tags. Another change from last year’s antlerless season is that the 21 counties in the southern two tiers of the state will be open to the use of center fire rifles .24 caliber or larger for the entire season.

The first three days of the season, Jan. 11 to 13, will be shared with resident Late Muzzleloader season hunters who had their season extended to help mitigate for the Shotgun Season extension.

Party hunting is legal for participants of the January Antlerless season and all hunters must wear blaze orange. Hunters are reminded that beginning on January 11, a 2008 hunting license and Habitat Fee payment is needed to go hunting.

Currently, with the snow and colder weather, deer throughout the state are concentrated near higher quality food sources with standing corn and soybeans being especially attractive. There have been reports throughout the state of smaller food plots that have already been completely utilized by deer, turkey, and pheasants. The forecasted moderating weather conditions may affect deer distributions, especially in southern portions of Iowa. If moderate weather conditions hold and diminish snow and ice cover, deer concentrations can be expected to disperse somewhat as the animals began to make use again of waste grains in fields and the associated cover areas. Also, as temperatures increase, deer can be expected to move less during daylight hours.

There are still more than 17,000 antlerless licenses available for the January Antlerless season in 22 counties. Antlerless licenses are available in northeastern Iowa in Winneshiek and Allamakee counties. In the more southern portions of the state, there are still 20 counties with licenses available and 15 of these counties are counties in which center-fire rifles are a legal option.

Last year, about 24,000 antlerless licenses were issued for this season. Hunters reported killing about 6,600 deer, of which 85 percent were does, or about 7 percent of Iowa's doe harvest. This is significant, especially considering that the entire state is not open during this season. In many counties, the 2007 January Antlerless season increased doe harvests from 20 percent to more than 40 percent.

Deer numbers in many areas in eastern and southern Iowa are higher than desired and harvesting one or two does will help farmers and landowners. Hunters can also utilize the Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program to donate deer to the Iowa Food Bank and provide needed meat for Iowans.

Hunting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. All deer harvested must be reported using the harvest reporting system by midnight the day after the deer is recovered. This is the second year where hunters have reported their kill. Hunters can use the DNR website [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) or call 1-800-771-4692 to report their harvest. This year hunters can also report at the license vendor. For hunters with Internet access, online reporting of the harvest is the easiest way to register your deer. The harvest reports are a vital piece of information Iowa DNR biologists need for properly managing Iowa's deer population and hunting opportunities.

**For more information, contact Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist, at (641) 774-2958.**

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**LATE MUZZLELOADER SEASON EXTENSION**

Resident Late Muzzleloader hunters are reminded that their season has been extended three days from January 11-13. This season extension was put in place to help mitigate for the Shotgun Season extension that took place during the first weekend period of the Late Muzzleloader season.

Late Muzzleloader deer hunters participating in the season extension will need to have a 2008 hunting license and paid the current 2008 Habitat Fee. All Late Muzzleloader season regulations will apply during the extension. Holders of Late Muzzleloader any-deer licenses may still harvest antlered deer during the extension.

This three-day extension will run concurrent with the beginning of the January Antlerless season in portions of the state.

**For more information, contact Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist at (641) 774-2958.**

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## **SENDING SWANS SOUTH**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

A couple more layers of snow and a ride south might seem like a good idea. For 30 young trumpeter swans in Iowa, it's a done deal.

In the next few days, the seven-month-old cygnets will be collected from five locations; loaded into a trailer and pointed toward Arkansas. Wildlife biologists hope the swans' new winter homes will click in their migration memory next year, when it is time to migrate again.

"This is the next step in the swan restoration program here," explains Dave Hoffman, from the Department of Natural Resources wildlife bureau. "Since the 1990s, trumpeter swans have been released on wetlands through Iowa. Since those early years, young swans have been paired with adults through their first season. In some cases, the adults were disabled birds. Others had their wings clipped to keep them close to a secure, supervised location."

As swans began nesting and raising broods by the late '90s, those family groups could migrate. Still more, young coming were in; to buoy those wild populations. And not all of them migrate to the best of winter homes. "These cygnets don't have the parents to show where to migrate, so we will release them where there are free flying adults," says Hoffman. "We're hoping they'll hook up with the young birds and show them the migratory path back to the north."

By placing the swans in the Hollow Bend National Wildlife Refuge in central Arkansas and the Buffalo National River Area in northern Arkansas, they will have the food, water and protection from predators to come through winter in good shape. Hoffman says many young swans were wandering into marginal habitat during migration; maybe not going far enough to escape Midwest cold snaps and reducing their overall chances for survival. “The next step is to increase survival and increase nesting and reproduction as they migrate back to Iowa.”

There’s no guarantee, of course, that the swans will zero in on the exact home pond they leave this winter. The program, supported by the 14 states in the Mississippi Flyway Council and in conjunction with the Trumpeter Swan Society, is designed to get swans back to the upper Midwest. Where they all shake out will depend on wetland availability and water quality. Lake Wapello in southeast Iowa or Clear Lake in northern Iowa might have a net loss of local birds, if a pair sets up nesting one or two counties away. However, the big picture will benefit, with more swans on more wetlands.

“We had 30 successful pairs of nesting swans in Iowa (in 2007) so the migrating population is growing slowly,” says Hoffman. “We are seeing increasing numbers of trumpeters.” That’s a far cry from the swan ‘drought’ that stretched from 1883 to 1998 without a confirmed nest in Iowa. As more swans imprint on Iowa and other northern waters, they’ll find their way back and forth between wintering areas. And wildlife officials hope swans—the largest North American waterfowl—keep up that visibility to tell the story of wetlands; and how important they are to a variety of wild species, as well as for flood control and water quality.

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## **CAST AWAY WITH FISH IOWA GAMES**

Fish Iowa Games is a casting competition developed by the Iowa Sports Foundation (Iowa Games) in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. This free program is a fun competition where students learn to cast from three distances using the flipping, pitching, and casting techniques. Often this is the first time kids have held a rod and reel. Fish Iowa Games is a great introduction to fishing for the kids of Iowa.

Last year more than 8,500 students from across the state participated in the program. Join in on the fun, register your school today. Go to [www.IOWAGAMES.org](http://www.IOWAGAMES.org), click on Special Sports Events, then click on the Fish Iowa Games logo.

The first 100 schools who register will receive a kit, valued at more than \$100, with everything you need for the competition:

- Guidelines and diagrams
- Instructional DVD

- Score Sheets
- Reporting Forms (return to Iowa Sports Foundation)
- Targets – 2
- Contest spincast rods and reels – 2
- Casting plugs (5/16 oz) for practice – 25
- Participant ribbons – 1 per contestant
- Medals – gold, silver, and bronze for each class
- Sample press release
- Activity Sheets

**For more information about Fish Iowa Games and online registration visit [www.IOWAGAMES.org](http://www.IOWAGAMES.org) or contact Cory Kennedy at [cory@iowagames.org](mailto:cory@iowagames.org) or 888-777-8881 ext. 6.**

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## **STATEWIDE MEETING FOR YOUTH CLAY TARGET PROGRAMS**

FORT DODGE - Coaches and prospective coaches of Iowa High School and Scholastic Clay Target Program teams are invited to attend an information meeting on the upcoming 2008 clay target season.

The meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m., Jan. 12, at the Iowa State Patrol Post 7 headquarters in Fort Dodge. There will be a presentation on the upcoming spring season, coach training opportunities, rules overview and how to sign up a team.

Representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa High School Clay Target Association will be on hand to answer questions.

**For more information, contact Ben Berka at 515-281-0140 or [Ben.Berka@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Ben.Berka@dnr.iowa.gov)**

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[Editor's Note: Hold this Wilkinson Story Until Jan. 10]

## **WINTER VISITORS - BALD EAGLES HEAD TO IOWA**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Those majestic eagles perching in the bitter cold last week got a little soggy this week. That dampens viewing opportunities for winter wildlife watchers, but otherwise gets winter somewhat back to normal.

The heavy snow and ice cover through December made for prime eagle viewing across Iowa. Warmer temperatures will scatter them inland, but the regular hot spots still should offer good viewing opportunities. “They are going to be primarily along open water areas; especially along the Mississippi River, below the dams,” suggests Bruce Ehresman, wildlife biologist with the Department of Natural Resources wildlife diversity program. Fish going through the rollers are stunned and float to the surface. In addition, extreme cold kills off many gizzard shad, which are prolific in warm weather in Iowa. “Those areas provide an excellent food source and excellent perch sites nearby, so that’s where there will be high populations of eagles. In fact, at Keokuk three weeks ago, we had a report of about 600 bald eagles wintering along the lock and dam.”

Those eagle numbers have soared in the last couple decades, as our nation’s symbol comes back from the mid-1900s. That’s when use of DDT and loss of habitat sent numbers plummeting in the lower 48 United States. Decades of work by landowners, conservationists and policy makers have shown steady results; capped last summer as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service removed the bald eagle from the Endangered and Threatened Species List.

The comeback is quantified by the annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey across the country. “That survey is a great tool to track the recovery,” proclaims Ehresman. “In Iowa, we’ve gone from 383 birds in the first survey in 1983, to a high of over 4,400 in 2004. Typically, we see 3,000, 3,300 in the Iowa counts.”

The larger numbers are still concentrated up and down the Mississippi River corridor. However, the Des Moines River basin, from Des Moines into southeast Iowa has shown tremendous growth. Likewise, numbers along the Iowa and Cedar rivers have increased, too. It’s not unusual in the winter to see an eagle soaring low over the open water along an old low-head dam; common in many river communities in Iowa.

Those eagle numbers attract eagle *viewers*, too. Whether you attend an organized event or just pull over to watch from your vehicle, bald eagles put on quite a show. “A highlight for me is when I can see bald eagles ‘kettling’; a group of 40 or 50 flying overhead,” relates Ehresman. “They’re locking talons. They’re doing little barrel rolls, all kinds of interaction. They are pretty vocal, too; sitting along the river, always hollering at each other. They’re just a dynamic species.”

When you watch eagles, it’s a good idea to keep your distance. “There’s no need to make them nervous. If they fly away, they’re burning calories they need to survive,” stresses Ehresman. “View them from the car, even from the opposite side of the river. Use a spotting scope; with the car as a blind. Give them a wide berth and appreciate them from a distance.”

## **Bald Eagle Watches, Website**

Get an up close look at our national symbol at any of the Bald Eagle celebrations this winter, along the Mississippi River or communities inland. Learn where and when they are by going to [www.missriver.org](http://www.missriver.org) offered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Natural Resources management section and clicking on 'Bald Eagle Days.'

The Bald Eagle Days festivities began last week at Clinton and continue through early March. Many offer live eagle viewing indoors; along with education sessions. Some also environmental and art fair. Eagle Watch information is also found at [www.iowa.dnr.gov](http://www.iowa.dnr.gov).

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## **DNR OFFERS VOLUNTEERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEW YEAR**

DES MOINES — As 2008 kicks-off, the Keepers of the Land volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many statewide opportunities for Iowans to make volunteerism part of their New Year's resolution.

- **Brush Control Opportunity:** Officials at Big Creek State Park, in Polk City, are seeking volunteers to help trim brush along park trails and roadsides, pick up downed branches, and place it at collection locations. Tools will be provided. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Kim Olofson at 515-984-6473.
- **Interpretive Trail Sign Designing Opportunity:** Officials at Green Valley State Park, near Creston, are seeking volunteers to assist with the design of self-guided interpretive signs and placement along existing park recreational trails. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Greg Haley at 641-782-5131.
- **Office Organization Opportunity:** Officials at the Wallace State Office Building, in Des Moines, are seeking volunteers for various office organization needs including filing, sorting, copying, and archiving. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Merry Rankin at 515-281-0878.
- **Picnic Table Painting and Repair Opportunity:** Officials at Union Grove State Park, near Gladbrook, are seeking volunteers to help repair and paint park picnic tables. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Frank Rickerl at 641-473-2556.
- **Tree Enhancement Opportunity:** Officials at Volga River State Recreation Area, near Fayette, are seeking volunteers to assist with improving timber stands through cutting down trees, pruning trees, and removing excess brush. Tools and on-site training will be provided. This opportunity is available immediately and is

ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Tom Halverson at 563-425-4161.

A full listing of volunteer opportunities and events is available at [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org)

**For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at [Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov)**

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