

# *Iowa Outdoors*

*Iowa Department of Natural Resources*

[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

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**[Electronic photos available upon request for Spring Turkey Hunting articles]**

**April 7, 2009**

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## **SPRING TURKEY SEASON PREVIEW**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Cold temperatures, even a threat of snowflakes yet, keep winter hanging on. For Iowa's 40,000 turkey hunters, spring is as close as this Friday morning. That is when the three day youth season opens. The rest of us will wait until Monday, or one of three other 'mini' seasons circled on the calendar. Resident hunters can hold up to two turkey tags. Most are shotgun hunters, selecting one of those seasons. A second tag can be used only in the fourth season. A growing number of archery-only hunters can hunt across the four seasons, given the degree of difficulty in luring a wary gobbler into bow range.

Over the last three decades, Iowa's turkey 'deficit' has become a surplus, as stocking, woodland management and the big bird's breeding proficiency have wild turkeys as a prevalent game species again. Still, that leaves the hunter with the task of getting a gobbler close enough to set sights on him.

"Find where they're roosting. That's where you want to be first thing in the morning," advises Todd Gosselink, forest research biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. "Scouting is great; getting out there before the season, looking for scratch signs, feathers."

With a good mix of upland timber and crops, northeast Iowa has been a gobbler stronghold over the years. However, you may want to 'Head West.' "Western Iowa, the Loess Hills, is probably one of the stronger regions. There is a great mix of habitat there, with crops and timber," assesses Gosselink. "Typically, it gets less rainfall so you get good recruitment and good survival."

Don't dismiss rainfall and weather as turkey factors. The floods of 1993 and again in 2008, underscore how much of a factor weather is on nesting success and poults survival. "The flood hit at probably the worst time last year; right at the end of when turkeys were on the nest," recalls Gosselink. "We definitely lost nests; especially where turkey habitat is in the lower flood plains; north central, northern Iowa. I'm sure those areas were impacted." Across Iowa, summer 2008 surveys showed a 12 to 18 percent reduction from 2007 in the number of poults seen with hens.

Iowa's spring turkey hunting tradition involves slipping into the woods before dawn. Gosselink says, though, not to discount those midday moments. "By midmorning, you can still hear some gobbling. You have to know where the turkeys are and then decide whether to travel," says Gosselink. "If you walk, use a shock call; a locator to get a bird to respond." He calls them 'second chance' birds. The hens that morning were either uninterested or have gone off to nest, depending on the time of season. Toms are a lot more responsive, when the real hens are gone and another one keeps calling out for him.

Your decision then, is to stay where you are...or walk halfway to that early morning gobbling and then set up for action.

### **Season dates:**

April 10-12...Youth Season  
April 13-16...Season 1  
April 17-21...Season 2  
April 22-28...Season 3  
April 29-May 17...Season 4

Iowa's 2008-09 Hunting & Trapping Regulations booklet (online [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) or at sporting goods counters) contains details ranging from shooting hours to type of shot or arrows to use and participation in youth season.

### **Call in that Bird**

Iowa's reported turkey harvest has taken a nose dive in the last couple years. Biologists think the population is about the same. There are still 50,000 licenses issued. Why the drop? Not all birds taken are reported.

For years, the DNR sampled hunters with a postcard survey. Results showed hunter success up to 40 percent in some years; making Iowa the envy of turkey hunting states nationwide. Since 2007, a hunter harvesting a bird has been required to report it. Over that period, hunter success has dropped to 20 percent. "We did some compliance testing and found out that only 74 percent of hunters contacted had reported their bird,"

says Gosselink, of the Iowa DNR. Hunters are urged to report that turkey, via the DNR Web site or a toll free telephone number on their tag.

“Inaccurate reporting affects management decisions,” stresses Gosselink. “It tells us about the population dynamics. If it drops, for instance, that (indication of over-harvest) might lead to a reduction in fall harvest.”

### **Color Caution in the Turkey Woods**

Spring turkey hunters dress in full camouflage and routinely produce sounds like a turkey. That spells out the need for caution in a big way. Safety officials urge hunters to pay attention to colors.

“We’ve stressed for years that hunters should not have any visible clothing that’s white, red or purple-blue as seen on wild turkeys during the spring,” says DNR Recreational Safety Officer Pat Jorgensen. “We have had an incident in which a shot was fired, because of a visible red ‘gun butt’ pad on a shotgun.”

Jorgensen also advises blaze orange, even if just a patch on your vest--on the way in...and out. “If you do take a turkey, carry him out in a blaze orange vest or bag. Don’t just sling him over your shoulder and walk out.”

And while not illegal, safety advocates suggest not using any ‘gobbler’ type calls. It is possible another hunter might ‘stalk’ that call and be tempted by movement...or decoys. “There are so many realistic decoys now; even a full strut tom with a fanned tail,” says Jorgensen. “That has dangerous potential. If you move with your decoys, stick them in your coat or cover them up before moving.”

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## **DNR PREDICTS STRONG POPULATION OF ADULT GOBBLERS**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The first segment of this year’s five part, spring turkey hunting season begins Friday, April 10 with a special three-day, adult mentored youth hunt. The first segment of the regular gun/bow season begins April 13. Although wild turkey populations may vary between regions, hunters can expect to encounter good to excellent numbers of spring gobblers statewide.

“Western Iowa’s Loess Hills have absolutely great turkey numbers right now, and populations are also strong in the Northeastern Region,” reports DNR Forest Wildlife [Turkey] Biologist, Todd Gosselink. “Central Iowa also has good turkey numbers and populations there are currently above the 10-year average.”

Gosselink noted, however, that last year’s record flooding did have a negative impact on turkey poult production across much of Iowa. Although the number of adult gobblers remains high in nearly all regions, hunters can expect to see fewer jakes during this year’s round of spring seasons.

“Our late summer [2008] brood surveys showed that turkey recruitment was down last year --- especially across the eastern half of the state,” says Gosselink. “In extreme Southern Iowa, turkey production has suffered for three consecutive years now, and total populations [for all age groups] are definitely below the 10-year average.

“In many ways, it all comes down to a matter of perspective,” says Gosselink. “Although total turkey numbers are down in some places from what they were, populations are still very strong. Iowa’s mix of agriculture and timber produce some truly great turkey densities. In Iowa, even the ‘down’ years are really good when compared to other regions of the country.”

Year in and year out, Iowa turkey hunters enjoy a success rate of around 25 percent, which compares favorably to other Midwestern states. In other parts of the U.S., average hunter success rates are lower.

Around 10,000 wild turkeys are bagged in Iowa each spring. A slightly above average total of 12,000 gobblers were bagged during the 2008 spring season. Around 40,000 turkey hunting enthusiasts are expected to take to the field during the 2009 season.

“A lot of people ask me which segment of the season is best,” says Gosselink. “I really push for people to take a kid hunting during the youth season. It’s a great opportunity and getting young people started is so important.

“For adults, I’d have to say that the third season is certainly the most underutilized. Only 12 percent of turkey hunters go third season, while 44 percent hunt during the fourth season.”

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## **SPRING TURKEY HUNTERS REMINDED TO REPORT THEIR HARVEST**

All successful turkey hunters must report each turkey they harvest, including the length of the spur, if the bird was harvested on public or private land, and in what county the turkey was harvested.

For length of spur, hunters will need to know if the spur is less than 1/2 inch, 1/2 to 3/4 inch, or greater than 3/4 inch. Hunters will be asked for their nine digit harvest registration number when reporting. The number appears under the heading "Step 2:" on the Harvest Report tag. Each tag has a unique harvest registration number.

Next, have a pen and paper ready because once the turkey is registered, the hunter will receive a confirmation number that must be written on the Harvest Report tag, which is then be applied to the turkey.

Finally, choose the method of registration. Hunters are encouraged to register their harvest online if access to the Internet is available because it is the quickest, easiest and most reliable means of reporting, but telephone reporting is also easy and convenient.

If reporting online, go to [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) and click on the red Harvest Reporting System button on the right side of the page.

To report by phone, call 1-800-771-4692.

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## CAMPING SEASON FAST APPROACHING

DES MOINES – Winter weather can't last forever. Despite the recent snow storm, Camping Kick-off Weekend is only a few short weeks away. Campers in an Iowa State Park during May 1, 2 and 3 will receive a gift package that includes a camping coupon good for one night of camping at an electrical site, a free issue of *Iowa Outdoors* magazine, recipes, camping tips and more in a reusable mesh trash bag.

The theme for Camping Kick-off Weekend is, be a green camper. The State Parks Bureau is proud to partner with Keep Iowa Beautiful and the DNR's Land Quality Bureau to provide the reusable mesh trash bags.

DNR staff will be encouraging campers to make wise use of energy and water resources in the park and to be good stewards of their campsite; to leave their site clear of trash and to recycle what items they can.

"We will be visiting with campers about ways they can reduce the energy and water consumption in the campground that, if followed, campers will likely not even notice, but that when all parks are put together, can make a significant impact in our utility use," said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the DNR's State Parks Bureau.

Szcodronski said some of the conservation efforts could include not leaving outside lights on all night or running an air conditioner when no one is in the camper.

Campers will need to pay the appropriate site fees to camp during Camping Kick-off Weekend and reservations are available online at [www.reserveiaparks.com](http://www.reserveiaparks.com) or by calling the reservation hotline at 1-877-IAPARKS Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The call center is not open on weekends or state holidays. Half of all campsites are still available on a first come, first serve basis.

The camping coupon may be used at anytime after Camping Kick-off Weekend. Campers needing some of the add-on campsite amenities, such as full hook-ups or an equestrian site, may use the coupon, but will need to pay the difference.

Most electrical campsites have already been reserved for Memorial Day Weekend, but quite a few remain for Camping Kick-off Weekend and for the Fourth of July. However, Emerson Bay, Clear Lake, Lake Geode, McIntosh Woods, Palisades-Kepler and Pleasant Creek state parks have filled all their reservable electrical campsites.

Other state parks with only a few electrical sites available for reservation include Backbone, Bellevue, Black Hawk, Elk Rock, Fairport, Gull Point, Lake Ahquabi, Lake of Three Firs, Ledges, Lewis and Clark, Maquoketa Caves, Union Grove and Wapsipinicon.

**Media contact: Kevin Szcodronski, chief, Iowa State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-8674.**

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## **PREPARATION CANYON STATE PARK CLOSED FOR STORM DAMAGE CLEAN UP**

PISGAH, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has closed Preparation Canyon State Park for the season to allow a logging contractor to remove trees damaged from the tornado that passed through the area in 2008.

Roughly half of the 340 acre park is damaged. “We have closed the park for safety reasons involved with having an active logging operation. We need to keep people out while the logging is underway,” said Scott Dykstra, park ranger for Preparation Canyon and nearby Lewis and Clark state parks.

Preparation Canyon is a popular spot for hikers and for hike-in campers. Dykstra said hikers could use the nearby Preparation Unit of the Loess Hills State Forest. The Preparation Unit has 3,800 acres surrounding the park, including 5 miles of trails, numerous county roads dissecting the unit, an overlook deck with a spectacular view of the Loess Hills and Missouri River bottomland. Primitive camping is also allowed.

The logging contractor has been working for about two weeks. Work was initially set for January, but weather conditions and the steep terrain did not allow the contractor to get the equipment in or the logs out.

Damaged trees include black walnut, red elm, basswood, and burr oak. Most of the trees were mature but trees of all sizes and ages were damaged. Depending upon the weather, work could continue into the fall.

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## **FISH HATCHERIES BUSY AS SPRING WALLEYE NETTING BEGINS**

DES MOINES – The late night, week-long annual walleye collection is underway, beginning first at Lake Rathbun. Crews with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ Fisheries Bureau have been setting gillnets for the past few nights looking for walleyes ready to spawn.

Crews will begin netting at Storm Lake on Wednesday, Clear Lake either Thursday or Friday, and Spirit Lake on Friday. The goal is to collect enough fish to hatch 111 million walleye fry to supply Iowa lakes and fish hatcheries.

Hatcheries will operate around the clock as workers bring in the nightly haul well past midnight. In the morning, those fish will have their eggs removed, then will be returned to the lake to make room for the next catch.

At Spirit Lake, crews will also be collecting muskies to hatch 500,000 muskie fry.

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## **PRAIRIE RESCUE EVENTS SCHEDULED AROUND IOWA THIS SPRING**

Volunteers of all ages will help “rescue” prairies at 15 sites throughout Iowa during April and May. This is an annual event coordinated by the Iowa DNR with support from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, county conservation boards and private conservation groups.

Volga River Recreation Area in Fayette County will host an event on Thursday, April 9. For a complete listing of all Iowa Prairie Rescue sites, visit the Prairie Rescue website at <http://www.inhf.org/prairierescue2009.htm> The events are also listed on the Iowa DNR Keepers of the Land events calendar at [www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/index.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/index.html).

Questions may be directed to Whitney Davis, Iowa DNR, at 515-281-6271, or [Whitney.Davis@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Whitney.Davis@dnr.iowa.gov).

Today, only about 1/1,000th of Iowa’s prairie remains. These small prairie remnants, even those in public ownership, are still at risk from encroaching species and the lack of historic fire and grazing patterns.

Prairie Rescue volunteers will clear invasive species such as brush and small trees from the sites. Experts will conduct controlled burns on some of the prairies.

These efforts will allow adults and children to experience prairie while preserving this endangered ecosystem for future generations.

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## **TALKIN’ TRASH – DNR TO UNVEIL RIVER TRASH SCULPTURE ON EARTH DAY**

DES MOINES – What was once an eyesore is now becoming an object of beauty. Trash dredged from the Winnebago, Shell Rock and Cedar rivers last August by hundreds of volunteers on the DNR’s annual Project AWARE river cleanup event will be celebrated on Earth Day – not as trash, but as art.

On April 22, the public is invited to view the sculpture from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the main lobby atrium of the Wallace State Office Building, 502 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street, in Des Moines. Artist David Williamson and DNR staff will be available to greet visitors, answer questions, and most importantly, gather public input to complete the project.

Rather than a finished piece, the unveiling will reveal a sculpture-in-progress, and public input is requested to complete the final transformation of the trash into finished sculpture. As a collaborative effort amongst cleanup volunteers, everyday citizens, and artist David Williamson, more public input is needed before this metamorphosis can be complete.

“Due to the collaborative nature of this project, we encourage visitors to join us on Earth Day to add their thoughts,” Williamson said. “With the sculpture about 60

percent complete, this is a great opportunity to welcome public input and the exchange of ideas that are so crucial to this type of project.”

As part of a multi-year project known as *The River Gates of Project AWARE*, the sculpture is not only an interpretive piece that honors the work of volunteers, promotes environmental stewardship, and tells the story of Project AWARE, but it has also been designed for use as a security gate for the DNR building at the Iowa State Fair.

Along with the sculpture, music created through a similar collaborative effort will also be performed, and sculptures from previous years of Project AWARE will be on display.

**For more information, please visit [www.iowaprojectaware.com](http://www.iowaprojectaware.com) or contact Brian Soenen at [Brian.Soenen@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Brian.Soenen@dnr.iowa.gov) or (515) 205-8587.**

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## **IOWA PHEASANTS IN NEED OF GOOD SPRING**

There is a growing concern over the lack of pheasants in the Hawkeye State after the severe winter and the wet spring in of 2007-08 took its toll on hens and washed out the nests of hens that did make it to spring.

“We lost a lot of hens the winter before this past one and nesting was very poor with all the flooding last summer,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist for DNR. “For pheasant numbers to bounce back we need some more average winter and spring weather, rather than record setting stuff that we saw last year.”

Fortunately pheasants did get some relief from Mother Nature this winter. Preliminary information from the Iowa Climate Bureau shows Iowa had 31.8 inches of snow, which is about 26 percent above normal, but well below the 66 percent above normal snowfall of the winter of 2007-08.

Bogenschutz noted that snowfall was below normal in southwest and west-central Iowa, but was 50 percent above normal in northeast and east-central Iowa. While snowfall in northeast and east-central regions was well above normal, it is considered mild when compared to the winter of 2007-08 that saw values 140 percent above normal.

Perhaps the biggest region to see improvement this past winter was south-central Iowa. Snowfall was near normal versus 118 percent above normal in 2007-08. “We could really use a break in south-central Iowa. It has some of our lowest pheasant population counts,” said Bogenschutz.

“Plugging this past winter snowfall information into our weather models shows, if we assume normal spring rains and temperatures, our pheasant numbers should bounce up this fall,” he said. “But this forecast all depends upon what happens this April and May during the nesting season. We should of had a good carry over of hens, especially in regions with below or near normal snowfall, thus if Mother Nature cooperates this spring we could see a nice increase in bird populations in those regions.”

Bogenschutz noted pheasant populations have doubled in a single year in Iowa with good habitat and weather. However, doubling in some regions in Iowa still does not greatly improve bird numbers.

“In south-central Iowa we are averaging about five birds per route, so a doubling would only mean 10 birds per route, still below the 30 birds a route most hunters would like to see. However, it’s a start in the right direction,” he said.

Previous DNR roadside counts on pheasants can be found at the DNR’s Web site at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/uproad.html>

**Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist, Iowa DNR, 515-432-2823.**

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**Media Contact: Willie Suchy, Supervisor, Wildlife Research Section, Iowa DNR, 515-281-8660.**

## **DNR TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 29 ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RULES**

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting a public meeting to discuss a number of new proposed regulations including changes to deer, waterfowl, and turkey hunting seasons and some changes to the trapping seasons. The meeting will be conducted over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on April 29, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“This is an opportunity for our hunters and people who support wildlife to give us some feedback on these regulations,” said Dale Garner, chief of the DNR’s wildlife bureau. “We will go over the proposed regulations and seasons and our rationale behind each change, and take comments from anyone willing to speak, then, if there is any time remaining, we will open the discussion to other topics.”

The proposed changes include reducing the number of fall turkey hunting licenses that will be available, changing the counties that will be open for the November and January antlerless deer seasons and changing when the antlerless licenses for these seasons will go on sale. Other topics include proposed waterfowl season dates and restrictions on placing traps in roadways before the trapping season begins.

Any interested person may make written suggestions or comments on the proposed changes on or before April 29, 2009. Persons who wish to convey their views orally should contact the Wildlife Bureau at (515)281-5034 or at the Wildlife Bureau offices on the fourth floor of the Wallace State Office Building. Written comments may be sent to the Wildlife Bureau Chief, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034; or faxed to (515) 281-6794.

The DNR will have staff members from the wildlife bureau at each site to answer questions, and to take any written comments.

**ICN Locations:**

<b>Ames</b>	Ames High School, 20 <sup>th</sup> and Ridgewood
<b>Calmar</b>	Northeast Iowa Community College, Dairy Education Center, 1527 Hwy. 150 South
<b>Centerville</b>	Centerville High School, 600 CHS Drive
<b>Clinton</b> Drive	Graphic Arts Technology Center of Iowa, 1951 Manufacturing
<b>Council Bluffs</b>	Abraham Lincoln High School, 1205 Bonham Avenue
<b>Creston</b>	Creston High School, 601 West Townline Road
<b>Dubuque</b>	Dubuque Senior High School, 1800 Clarke Drive
<b>Fort Dodge</b>	St. Edmund High School, 501 N. 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street
<b>Iowa City</b>	Iowa City High School, 1900 Morningside Drive
<b>Johnston</b>	Johnston High School, 6501 NW 62 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue
<b>Marion</b>	Marion Public Library, 1095 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue
<b>Marshalltown</b>	Marshalltown High School, 1602 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue
<b>Mason City</b>	North Iowa Area Community College – 4, 500 College Drive
<b>Ottumwa</b>	Ottumwa High School, 501 E. 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Sioux City</b>	Central Campus Individual Learning Center, 1121 Jackson Street
<b>Spencer</b>	Spencer High School, 800 East 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street
<b>Waterloo</b>	Hawkeye Community College – 1, 1501 E. Orange Road
<b>West Burlington</b>	Southeastern Community College – 1, 1500 West Agency

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