



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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1. North Iowa Butterfly Enthusiast is All About Monarchs – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photos available upon request]
2. North Iowa Youth Outing Takes Aim on Archery – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photos available upon request]
3. Iowa’s Longest Water Trail Dedicated September 2
4. Rabbit and Squirrel Hunting Seasons Open Sept. 5
5. Popular Bridge Closed for Repairs
6. Early Muzzleloader Tags Gone
7. DNR Director’s Public Forum Heads to Lake Macbride State Park in Johnson County
8. Clinton Meeting Set for Proposed Regulations on Paddlefish

NORTH IOWA BUTTERFLY ENTHUSIAST IS ALL ABOUT MONARCHS

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

FOREST CITY---North Iowa’s, Lisa Pleggenkuhle Grummer is a Monarch tagging machine. As an active volunteer with Monarch Watch International, she has single handedly captured, marked, and released more than 5,000 Monarch butterflies. Her labor of love has not been in vain. So far, scientists have successfully recovered more than 50 of her tags. Nearly all have been found on butterflies wintering in remote Trans Volcanic Mountains near the village of El Rosario in central Mexico.

But Lisa’s fascination with Monarchs extends far beyond capturing and tagging migrating adults. As a means of increasing backyard butterfly survival at home, she also collects Monarch eggs, cultures the caterpillars, provides screened incubators as caterpillars form chrysalis, and then liberates newly emerging crops of adults. At times, the intense insect culture could almost be described as a full time job.

“Every year seems to get bigger, and recently I’ve been raising around 500 Monarchs per season,” she says. “Late summer is the busiest. By then, I’m raising the maximum number of babies as well as collecting and tagging migrating adults coming down from the north.

“Beginning in early August, I’m out every day hunting for eggs. But I don’t start tagging adults until August 20th which is when I’m sure that the annual Super Generation of migrating butterflies has arrived in Iowa.”

Super Generation is the label scientists attach to the year’s final crop of young. And although these butterflies look exactly the same as those seen earlier in the summer, they are profoundly different. For other Monarch generations, the entire life cycle is measured in mere weeks. By contrast, Super Monarchs will acquire the remarkable ability to halt aging, will complete a seemingly impossible three thousand mile long migration marathon, and will then live for more than eight months --- which, for Monarch butterflies, is the rough equivalent of a human living to be 600 years old.

Within days of emerging as adults, the Super Generation Monarchs begin to move southward. Not just in a general southerly direction, mind you, but rather on a specific and well defined course that will lead to the exact same winter roost trees used by their great-great-great-grandparents the winter before.

“The fall migration is fascinating, and conditions have to be spot on perfect,” says Lisa. “Triggered by shorter days and north winds, their instincts just seem to take over. Migrating monarchs can travel 50 miles per day. With the right winds, they’ll make 100 miles.

“By the end of August, the migration is peaking and things really become intense,” she notes. “By then, I’m finding tons of eggs, raising loads of babies, and catching lots of adults. By early September, I might easily be catching over one hundred butterflies per day, and have had more than thirty in the net at one time. Sometimes it can take more than 20 minutes to record the data from one good net. When that happens you know you’re having fun.

“Adult Monarchs feed solely on nectar,” says Lisa. “They aren’t picky about the kind of nectar they eat, but they do need to feed often. Monarchs actually gain weight during migration.”

As the flight moves southward, the aerial pathway narrows. Survivors become concentrated and merge in huge clouds that fill the skies like orange glitter. Finally, following more than two months of rigorous migration, the Super Monarchs arrive in Mexico.

But the Monarch’s epic journey is not yet complete. One final and punishing hurdle must still be conquered before the insects can safely rest. That challenge is to reach the perfect winter climate found solely among the high elevation, mountainside firs that stand more than ten thousand feet above sea level.

The task is daunting but crucial. Migration losses have been great and winter is fast approaching. No Monarch eggs, caterpillars, or adults remain to the North. For wing weary migrants, the only hope of survival lies in successfully reaching the perfect environment of the volcanic forest.

With the literal future of the species hanging in the balance, the butterflies begin their accent. Within days, the colorful insects begin filtering into the lofty, two-mile-high winter roosting sites of their ancestors. Home at last to a place they’ve never been, the Super

Monarchs will slumber until lengthening spring days rekindle the age old urgency to move north.

“It’s simply so amazing to think of a single monarch traveling all the way from Canada [or through Iowa] to the mountains of Mexico,” says Lisa. “They are truly a fascinating creature.”

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NORTH IOWA YOUTH OUTING TAKES AIM ON ARCHERY

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

LAKE MILLS---The archery range was full and the kids were pumped. The hunt was on and arrows were flying by the dozen. The game rich venue included such challenges as wild boar, turkey, white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope --- even an enraged black bear. The fact that these trophies were merely life sized Styrofoam replicas of the real thing did little to dampen the excitement. Like I said, the kids were pumped and appeared to be having the time of their life.

The event was Winnebago County’s Youth Archery Field Day. According to event host and Archery in the Schools promoter John Carlson, the purpose of the outing was to provide North Iowa youngsters with a first time, hands on introduction to the sport of archery. Held last Saturday at Lake Mills, the field day was the result of a joint effort between the Iowa DNR, White-tails Unlimited, and the Lake Mills Task Force Against Substance Abuse.

“For me, it was very rewarding to see kids show up and have fun being outdoors. Our goal was to get new shooters on line, and I think we were successful. Everything, including the food was free, kids had a great time and no one had a chance to get bored,” said Carlson. “Our conservation officers provided first time shooters with expert instruction on the basics of safe bow handling and participants experienced a wide variety of hands on opportunities. In addition to traditional bulls-eye targets, kids had the chance to shoot at balloons, shoot a bow from inside a blind, and attempt a variety of life-sized, 3-D targets.”

Following decades of service as an archery instructor and successful tournament competitor, Carlson realizes the value of getting kids off to an early start.

“One of our main objectives was to expose as many kids as possible to the sport of archery,” said Carlson. “We had a number of teens turn out and there were some shooters as young three and four years of age. Fortunately, we had enough equipment to meet everyone’s needs and kids got to shoot as much and as long as they wanted. Some of them were on the range for more than two hours. That’s a lot of shooting for youngsters who have never pulled a bow. It was great to see that kind of first time enthusiasm.”

“There is a definite need to get young people involved in activities that get them into the out-of-doors,” says event coordinator and DNR Conservation Officer, Matt Washburn. “Archery --- whether it’s target shooting or hunting --- is a good way to accomplish that.”

Washburn noted that the Winnebago County field day was patterned after a similar event conducted by DNR officer, Eric Johnston in Mitchell County.

“I think everyone was very pleased with this year’s field day and we hope to stage another event next summer. It was obvious that the kids had a lot of fun on the target range,” said Washburn. “Hopefully, they’ve discovered something that they’ll want to continue. They may be kids today, but ten or twenty years down the road they’ll be the ones responsible for maintaining Iowa’s natural resources. Recreational youth activities like archery and bow hunting are an excellent way to begin a personal investment in those resources.”

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IOWA’S LONGEST WATER TRAIL DEDICATED SEPTEMBER 2

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will designate the North Raccoon River Water Trail in Sac, Calhoun, and Carroll counties on September 2, making it the longest state designated water trail since the program started in 2006. The North Raccoon River in Greene and Dallas counties was designated last fall.

“The trail stretches 163 miles from Vogel access in Sac County to Booneville Access in Dallas County,” said Dan Towers, Greene County Conservation manager, and coordinator for the water trail.

The event will kickoff at 2 p.m. with a six mile paddle on the North Raccoon River from Jackson Access to Rainbow Bend Access in Calhoun County. Those interested in paddling should arrive at Rainbow Bend Access at 2 p.m. — paddlers and boats will be shuttled to the put in. There are six tandem canoes available for use. Contact Carroll County Conservation Board at 712-792-4614 to reserve a canoe.

The dedication ceremony will start at 5:30 p.m. at Rainbow Bend Access. The first 25 people to arrive at the ceremony will receive a free DNR 2009 Water Trails t-shirt.

“The water trails program has been very popular as more and more people are starting to discover the beauty of Iowa’s rivers,” said John Wenck, river programs outreach coordinator for the DNR.

“We now have nearly 400 miles of dedicated water trails with nearly 1,000 miles being developed” he said. More dedications will be forthcoming this fall, including one for the Des Moines River Water Trail in Boone County on September 19 and one scheduled for the Middle and South Raccoon River Water Trail on October 10.

For more information on Iowa water trails, see www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/.

Media Contact: John Wenck, river programs outreach coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at 515-281-8969

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RABBIT AND SQUIRREL HUNTING SEASONS OPEN SEPT. 5

The 2009-10 hunting season for cottontail rabbits and squirrels (fox and gray) opens on September 5. Cottontail rabbit numbers will be similar to last year according to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources annual August roadside survey that found the population generally decreased across the state.

Todd Bogenschutz, the DNR's Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, suspects snowfall this past winter in northern Iowa and a very cool spring/summer statewide reduced the reproductive success of cottontail does. The DNR's roadside survey indicates the southern and eastern portions of Iowa will offer the best rabbit numbers this fall.

According to Bogenschutz, there are several effective techniques that may be employed to hunt rabbits including stomping brush piles, walking slowly through abandoned farmsteads or along brushy fencerows, or wooded draws. The best form of rabbit hunting is done with the companionship of one or more beagles, says Bogenschutz. Beagles and other trailing dogs can increase your success and improve the quality of the hunt.

The cottontail season remains open until February 28, 2010, the daily bag limit is 10, and the possession limit is 20. Shooting hours are from sunrise to sunset. Hunters can view the DNR's roadside counts of cottontails in early September on the DNR's website at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/upindex.html>.

Squirrel numbers are hard to estimate because the DNR does not survey for squirrel populations, but statewide numbers should be similar to slightly better to last year, according to Todd Gosselink, Iowa's forest wildlife biologist. Squirrel populations typically peak following good mast years, says Gosselink, and last fall had a good mast crop across Iowa for white and bur oaks, but almost no red oak acorn production. Last fall also produced a good hickory and walnut crop.

"In the fall of 2007, white oaks and hickories produced an extremely poor crop, so this last fall was a very positive change in hard mast production in Iowa's woodlands. Iowa's mix of agriculture and woods make an excellent habitat mix for wildlife, and provide plentiful waste grain for squirrels during the non-growing seasons. Squirrel numbers should be good for this year's fall hunting season," Gosselink said.

Hunting opportunities for squirrels are excellent in Iowa because hunting pressure is low, says Gosselink. In the early 1960s, Iowa had 150,000 squirrel hunters and a harvest of more than 1 million squirrels compared to last fall where an estimated 23,160 squirrel hunters

harvested 169,478 squirrels. Although forested habitat for squirrels has increased in the state over the last 30 years, interest in the sport has declined. Gosselink attributes this decline to more opportunity to hunt other species, like turkey and deer and the decline in Iowa's rural population.

The squirrel season opens September 5 and extends through January 31, 2010, the daily bag limit is 6 (fox and gray squirrels combined) and the possession limit is 12. There is no restriction on shooting hours.

Fox squirrels can be found anywhere there are a few acres of trees, but gray squirrels are generally limited to the heavily forested areas in eastern and southern Iowa. Squirrel hunting is best done in one of two ways: the sit-and-wait technique which is used near likely feeding areas such as beneath oak, walnut, or hickory trees or corn-forest edges, or the still-hunting technique which is employed by slowly walking through forested areas and stopping frequently to watch for feeding squirrels. The best hunting times usually are during the morning and afternoon feeding hours.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

RABBIT – Todd Bogenschutz, Boone Research Station, 515-432-2823.

SQUIRREL – Todd Gosselink, Chariton Research Station, 641-774-2958.

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POPULAR BRIDGE CLOSED FOR REPAIRS

BOONE – The popular CCC pedestrian stone bridge in Ledges State Park was closed for the remainder of the recreation season on Monday for repairs and refurbishment. The pedestrian bridge is located at the second water crossing on Canyon Road.

The bridge will be re-pointed and missing stones will be replaced to ensure structural integrity. The project was made possible by the Friends of the Ledges, Inc., Boone County Endowment, Fenton Trust, Leonard A. Good Trust and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Vieco Construction, from St. Joseph, Mo., was awarded the \$46,000 contract. The work is scheduled to be completed by Nov. 1.

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EARLY MUZZLELOADER TAGS GONE

Iowa hunters took only a week to buy out the 7,500 deer tags available for the early muzzleloader season. Statewide, most deer tags went on sale at midnight, Saturday August 15. The last of the early muzzleloader tags was purchased this past Saturday, August 22.

The tags have been popular over the years; allowing gun hunters their first chance to get into the woods. This year's early muzzleloader season is October 17-25, with only Iowa residents allowed. "That quota of 7500 tags keeps it an uncrowded hunt, especially for hunters interested in harvesting a buck before the peak of the rut," noted Tom Litchfield, deer research biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. For the first month, hunters may purchase one 'any deer' gun season tag—and a similar bow tag--as well as one county and season specific *antlerless* tag.

Beginning September 15, residents may purchase as many county antlerless tags as they wish, until quotas fill. A quick check of the availability at noon Monday (August 24), the antlerless quotas in Butler, Floyd, Franklin, Mitchell, Plymouth, Webster and Worth counties *did* fill. Each county had only 50 to 150 available, in the first place. There are 22 counties, mostly in north and northwest Iowa with no county antlerless tags offered this year; with biologists determining that deer numbers were in line with target populations.

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DNR DIRECTOR'S PUBLIC FORUM HEADS TO LAKE MACBRIDE STATE PARK IN JOHNSON COUNTY

MEDIA CONTACT: Tammie Krausman, DNR, at (515) 402-8763 or Tammie.Krausman@dnr.iowa.gov.

SOLON— DNR Director Richard Leopold will hold a public forum at the Main Lodge at Lake Macbride State Park main lodge near Solon on Thursday.

Richard Leopold, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, is holding forums across the state again this year to discuss natural resource issues with Iowans.

"I really look forward to hearing from Iowa's citizens. Last year, we got great feedback and ideas from more than 300 attendees," said Leopold about the seven forums held last year. "Our relationship with Iowans is something we highly value within the DNR and we will work together on the things most affecting our natural resources."

Each public forum begins at 6 p.m. with Director Leopold outlining the DNR's top priorities, the environmental report card, providing an update on budget cuts and discussing local issues. Another hour-and-a-half will be devoted to answering questions from the public.

Director Leopold has hosted more than 60 people at forums at Honey Creek Resort and Dolliver State Parks so far this month.

Upcoming public forums scheduled for Leopold are as follows, listed alphabetically by city:

Bedford

Lake of Three Fires State Park Lodge
Tuesday, Sept. 8, 6 p.m.

Bellevue

Bellevue State Park Lodge
Thursday, Sept. 3, 6 p.m.

Clear Lake

Clear Lake State Park Lodge
Thursday, Sept. 17, 6 p.m.

Council Bluffs

Hitchcock Nature Center
Wednesday, Sept. 30, 6 p.m.

Sioux City

Stone State Park Lodge
Thursday, Sept. 24, 6 p.m.

Solon

Lake Macbride State Park Main Lodge
Thursday, Aug. 27, 6 p.m.

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CLINTON MEETING SET FOR PROPOSED REGULATIONS ON PADDLEFISH

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will host a public meeting to receive comments on a proposal to change the fishing regulations covering paddlefish.

The proposed changes limit anglers to a maximum 5/0 treble hook size when snagging paddlefish, places a 33-inch maximum length on paddlefish as measured from the front of the eye to the fork of the tail, and reduces the length of the fishing season to March 1 through April 15.

The public meeting will begin at 7 p.m., Aug. 26, in the Clinton County Administration Building, Room D, 1900 N. 3rd St., in Clinton. Any persons who attend the public hearing and have special needs, such as hearing or mobility impairments should contact the Department of Natural Resources and advise of specific needs.

The DNR will be accepting written comments through Sept. 1. Send comments to Martin Konrad, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034 or offer oral comments by calling 515-281-6976 or in person at the fisheries bureau office on the fourth floor of the Wallace Building.

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