

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

www.iowadnr.gov

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TAKE MOM FISHING

After taking mom to brunch and showering her with cards and gifts, there is one other treat to be had on Mother's Day. Take mom to a nearby lake for what is traditionally the peak of the crappie spawn and some of the best fishing all year.

Iowa is fortunate to have as many quality crappie fishing lakes, all within about 30 miles from anywhere. Keep the bait simple – a 1/32 ounce or 1/16 ounce jig with a small colored body, and fish around rocky areas near shore. If the water is clear, go with a dark jig body. If the water is dark, go with a brighter color. Tip the hook with a small minnow if the action is slow.

“We spend a lot of our time running from event to activity to work and we need to slow down and enjoy the moment. While we are honoring mom on Mother's Day, I would offer that there is no better gift to give mom than time and spending the day together at the lake,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of the DNR's fisheries bureau. “Fishing makes memories that will last a lifetime.”

For information on fishing in Iowa, go to www.iowadnr.gov and click on fish and fishing.

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

IOWA TURKEY RECOVERY IS A LANDMARK CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENT

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

“Their eyesight is keen. Their vision extraordinary. If they could smell, you’d never kill one.” Richard Bishop, Iowa Wildlife Biologist, Feb., 1979

When it comes to pursuing the wild turkey, a truer statement was never spoken. Those words, which rapidly became the catch phrase of turkey hunters statewide, were first uttered by Bishop as he addressed a packed audience of turkey hunter wanna bes during an Iowa Conservation Commission sponsored turkey hunting seminar held at the Mason City Public Library. Hunting buddy Steve Schutte and I were among those wild turkey wanna bes.

Although turkey hunting was a time honored tradition in America’s Deep South, the sport was brand new to Iowa. At that time, most of us had never even seen, let alone hunted, the eastern wild turkey. But recently transplanted populations were expanding, and Schutte and I planned on taking full advantage of the growing opportunity to pursue this legendary gamebird.

Our first hunt took place later that spring against the rugged backdrop of extreme Northeastern Iowa. Although neither of us successfully [or even came close] to bagging a bird, we did both manage to see and hear a couple of wild gobblers. That single experience was all it took. We had both become immediately and hopelessly gut hooked on turkeys and turkey hunting. We’ve returned to Northeast Iowa every single year since.

This year, we celebrated our 30th consecutive turkey opener with a trip to Thoma’s Dairy Bar. Located on the main drag of Garnavillo, Thoma’s is one of those diners where the term “home cooking” actually means just that. We stop there several times each season, partly for the extraordinary food and partly to gather intelligence on where local farmers, mail carriers, and milk truck drivers are seeing birds.

Digging into the noon special, Schutte and I began to compare notes. Steve had enjoyed a classic hunt that morning and had bagged a mature gobbler by ten o’clock. In spite of plenty of activity in my neck of the woods, the only thing that I’d had in so far were some lonesome hens.

Eventually, our conversation turned back to the early years of Iowa turkey hunting and on how far the sport has come. For the benefit of younger hunters, I think some of those changes are worth relating.

During the late 1970s, there were only two places to hunt wild turkeys ---- Stephen's State Forest [in the south] and the Mississippi River bluffs of the extreme northeast. The hunting season was divided into just two segments which ran for a combined total of 16 days. Hunting was only allowed until noon. The use of decoys was illegal and manufacturers offered little else in the way of specialized hunting equipment. Back then, a hunter could only take one bird per season. The state issued around 300 licenses annually, and hunters bagged less than 100 toms each spring.

Here's an example of how scarce wild turkeys actually were back then. If someone found a set of tracks where a gobbler had crossed the muddy surface of some remote logging road, other hunters would hike to that spot just for an opportunity to view the imprints. Whenever one of us came across a cast off turkey feather, the specimen was collected and taken back to camp so everyone could have a chance to see it. I realize that younger turkey hunters may find these stories hard to believe, but that's the way it was. It was not unusual for otherwise experienced hunters to spend several seasons in the turkey woods before finally getting a shot at a tom. Anyone who saw a gobbler at a distance of less than 200 yards was considered fortunate. Many hunters never really expected to bag a genuine Timber Ghost for themselves --- ever, but the idea that it somehow could happen was enough to keep most folks coming back for more.

Today, Iowa's spring turkey hunting opportunities include a special youth season in addition to a four part split season that runs for more than a month with hunting allowed statewide. Around 40,000 licenses are issued annually, and hunters bag 10,000 to 12,000 gobblers each spring. Additional fall hunting seasons are now allowed across many parts of the state. Hunters capitalizing on all options can harvest up to four birds annually, and hunting runs from sunrise to sunset.

About the only discouraging word this rosy scenario is that, as turkey hunting has grown more and more popular, access to private hunting grounds has become more restricted. As aging landowners leave the farm, more and more private access is lost --- often as a result of competing hunters buying chunks of timber for personal recreation.

The flip side is that, while private lands hunting opportunities have decreased, the amount of publicly owed timber has soared. Those public acquisitions of Iowa forest lands are the direct result of hunter sponsored conservation efforts, including DNR programs where live trapped, Iowa turkeys were sold to other states [\$500 per bird] engaged in budding restoration programs of their own.

The restoration of the eastern wild turkey to Iowa woodlands remains a hallmark conservation achievement. If anyone had predicted just how successful and recreationally important this wildlife recovery project would one day become, not one of us who attended that 1979 turkey hunting seminar would have dared believe it. But with patience, hard work, and hunter dollars, it happened anyway.

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LARSCHIED NAMED CHIEF FOR FISHERIES BUREAU

DES MOINES – Joe Larscheid, 44, of Bondurant, was promoted to chief for fisheries bureau at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, on May 1. Larscheid had been supervisor for the fisheries research section since 2008.

Larscheid received a BS and MS from the University of Wyoming, in Laramie. He joined the DNR as the natural lakes research biologist at Spirit Lake in 1991, and led research projects that improved survival of hatchery produced muskie and walleye. Both species were caught in record numbers during the spring gill netting at Spirit Lake and the Okobojis.

Larscheid replaced Marion Conover, who retired in December.

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LAKE RATHBUN TO BE ANGLER DESTINATION IN 2009

MORAVIA – One of Iowa's most dynamic lakes is poised to offer excellent fishing later this month that will last all summer long. Lake Rathbun, in southern Iowa's Appanoose County, has traditionally been a walleye, catfish and crappie destination for anglers across Iowa and the Midwest beginning in middle to late May.

"There is tremendous fishing to be had, no doubt about it," said Mark Flammang, fisheries biologist at Lake Rathbun. "There is going to be some really excellent fishing for walleyes this year, and for white bass and channel catfish."

Lake Rathbun is also home to Honey Creek Resort State Park that offers full hook-up RV camping, cabins and hotel rooms to relax in after a day of fishing. The resort has as a restaurant, indoor water park, 18-hole golf course and trails on site.

Flammang said anglers will find a huge year class of walleyes measuring 17 to 18-1/2 inches that will make up the majority of the catch. "People are really going to have some excellent fishing this year for walleyes," he said.

Walleye fishing usually begins in late May and lasts through the summer. Anglers should look for any points or underwater humps as potentially attractive to walleyes. Use night crawlers on a jig or a live bait harness, or cast or troll crankbaits. "This type of fishing is something a novice angler can pick up on as long as they are in the right spot," Flammang said.

Also around the end of May, the white bass fishing begins. White bass is one of the hardest fighting fish and offers fast action. It is a great species to introduce someone to fishing. Fish the same areas as walleyes and use flashy blade baits or heavy steel baits.

"There is a tremendous number of 12 to 15-inch white bass and fishing should be quite good," Flammang said. "From late May on, white bass fishing is always a possibility."

Once the weather warms, Lake Rathbun will have good fishing for channel catfish through the summer. Use any of the commercially prepared catfish baits or night crawlers and fish from shore or a boat. The lake is full of catfish.

Although not likely a huge factor this year, the crappies in Lake Rathbun are abundant, but may be toward the lower end of angler acceptable size. There is a large

year class of 8 to 9-inch crappies that should be pushing 10 inches by the end of the summer. A traditional jig and minnow works best for crappies.

“Lake Rathbun is a prime system to see fast growth rates in fish,” Flammang said. “The crappies will grow quickly. Everything out there is going to grow quickly. I am expecting a good fishing year.”

For more information on Honey Creek Resort State Park, go to <http://honeycreekresort.com/>

Media Contact: Mark Flammang, fisheries biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-647-2406.

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IOWA’S STATE PARKS LOOKING FOR GOOD SEASON

This marks a year of both challenge and promise for Iowa’s state parks. After last year’s catastrophic flooding and wind storms, Iowans are welcoming fair weather and the opportunity to get outside. And park staff is hoping the economic downturn will encourage many to experience the wonderful recreational resources we have in our own state.

“We’ve just had a beautiful kickoff to our camping season this past weekend,” says Kevin Szcodronski, State Parks bureau chief. “And we hope people will continue to come out to relax and enjoy our parks. It’s easy to understand why they have earned the reputation for being ‘places of quiet beauty.’”

Over the past year, Iowa’s state parks have embarked on an aggressive effort to make their facilities more environmentally friendly. In addition to doing comprehensive energy audits at each park, nearly \$750,000 has been invested in the past year to upgrade utilities.

“We are also providing information to our visitors on how they can conserve electricity and water in the parks and basically make their visits more ‘green,’” says Szcodronski.

State parks have not been immune to the turmoil of the state’s economic struggles. Some services such as cleaning and mowing will be reduced due to budget constraints.

“We’re hoping our visitors will understand and will work with us in keeping our parks clean by picking up trash around campsites and picnic areas, and recycling whenever they can,” says Szcodronski. “State parks belong to all of us and all of us have a responsibility to be good stewards.”

Media Contact: Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-8674.

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BOAT REGISTRATIONS NOT DUE UNTIL 2010

DES MOINES – Boat owners in Iowa are reminded that their registration renewal is not due until April 1, 2010. Iowa's 232,000 boat owners will either receive a reminder in the mail from their county recorder, or by publication, alerting them when their registration is due.

In 2007, the Iowa boat registration process switched from being due in odd numbered years to a three year cycle and any boats purchased during the cycle would receive a prorated fee to complete the cycle.

An article in the current edition of *Iowa Game and Fish* incorrectly stated renewals were due April 1, 2009.

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CAMPGROUND HOST VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

DES MOINES — The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is looking for volunteers to act as campground hosts in Iowa's state parks.

Live-in campground hosts provide a friendly presence in campgrounds, perform valuable work, and act as models for other campers.

The primary responsibility of the campground host is to assist campers by answering questions and explaining park rules in a cheerful and helpful manner. Volunteers should be familiar with state park and forest campground rules and the reasoning behind them.

From May through September, campground host volunteers serve as "live-in" hosts for at least a four week period. The host stays on the campground in a designated free campsite in the park with a "Host" sign and a "Host" cap or pin.

Other campground host duties include helping with registrations, directing people to points of interest, litter control and light maintenance.

To apply, contact the specific park supervisor either online at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/volunteer/camphostpage.html>, or by contacting Jolene Richeson at 515-242-3399 or Jolene.Richeson@dnr.iowa.gov. Applications will be accepted all summer and should be turned into the park supervisor where you wish to host.

For more information, contact Karen Schechinger at (515) 281-0878 or at karen.schechinger@dnr.iowa.gov.

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2009 DNR SALE AUCTION FOR JUNE 20

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR will hold an auction on June 20, at the Elwell Family Food Center on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The gates open at 8 a.m. when the public may view the items for sale and the auction will begin around 9 a.m.

A buyer's premium fee will be added to all sales to pay for the auctioneer.

Items up for auction will only include firearms and bows, no other equipment will be sold. The items are sold "as is" with no guarantee or warranty.

Any person interested in purchasing a firearm at the auction must have either a valid Iowa permit to acquire pistols or revolvers, a federal firearms license, or a professional or non-professional permit to carry concealed weapons. The Iowa permit to acquire can be obtained from a sheriff's office. Allow two to three weeks to receive the permit.

Payment must be made on auction day. All sales are final. Firearms must be removed from the site within one half hour after the sale of the firearm is completed.

The Iowa DNR reserves the right to reject any bids and withdraw any item from the sale at any time. To receive a copy of the sale bill, send an email to susan.davenport@dnr.iowa.gov or a self addressed stamped #10 envelop to Surplus Sale, Iowa DNR, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319.

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EARLY TROUT FISHING AND THE REMNANTS OF 2008 FLOOD

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Several vehicles in the grass and gravel parking lot let us know we were expected. As our hatchery truck pulled up to the chain blocking access to the path along Elk Creek, in Delaware County, a couple heads popped up from just over the bank.

Trout anglers like to get to the streams early. Not a bad idea, since many of those streams sport a different look this spring. Much of the water flowing over the rocky streambeds is groundwater, trickling in from surround limestone bluffs. The floods of 2008, though, created a few changes. Water came crashing through with freight train velocity; often more than once last spring and summer.

"It changed its course. There used to be a big, deep hole here," explains Randy Mack, hatchery technician with the Department of Natural Resources. His arm swept from the camping area at Twin Bridges county park back to the bluff 70 yards away. "Because of all the flooding, it has cut back against that far bank. It filled this hole with sand. Anglers are going to have to find new holes to fish."

Up and down the Delaware County stream, we could see changes. Bends were dry. Large trees had roots exposed, now on the edge of a new stream corridor. A few spots had rip-rap dumped into new crevices to slow erosion.

But the anglers were adapting. “I caught these on a silver string lure; has a nice glint to it,” demonstrated Cody Nelson, as he held up a couple nice rainbows. He and his dad had driven more than two hours from the Ames area to get to one of their favorite streams. “We didn’t get up here last year—gas prices were so high,” explained dad, Dave Nelson. “It has changed quite a bit (but) I just love it up here. It’s beautiful country. I’ve been coming here for 35 years.”

Trout anglers are a loyal crowd. As we pulled into Bankston county park in Dubuque County later in the morning, 21 vehicles were in the small parking lot. Their occupants were scattered up and down the stream. Among them was G. Bert Carlson, my favorite professor from years—*and years*—ago at the University of Dubuque. He had been there since about dawn and had caught and released several trout using either a small orange larva imitator or a black ‘scud.’ Each was similar to natural food that shows up in the watercress or under rocks in the stream.

We guessed it had been 25 years since we had crossed paths last. As he talked about fly fishing and old English Lit classes, he was casting over and under four other conventional anglers. “It’s the economy. That’s why it’s so crowded,” opined Carlson—G. Bert to any one who knows him. “People want to get away from their troubles...so they come out here to fish.”

Hard to argue with that logic, though a few anglers *were* ready to call it a day. “You stocking Swiss Valley today? No? Good,” proclaimed one as he peeled off his waders. He was heading for a little loneliness on that stream, about 20 minutes away.

There are usually plenty of anglers greeting the trucks that rumble through the stocking schedule five or six days a week. The straight-from-the-hatchery trout are usually easier to catch than their stream-wary cousins. In these chilly early mornings, though, it takes some adjustment. “Maybe a few minutes, maybe an hour or more,” suggests Mack. “They’ve been riding in 50 degree hatchery water and we putting them into water that’s maybe 40 degrees. It takes them awhile to get acclimated.”

Anglers who want a little quieter fishing experience often head to where the stocking was yesterday...or where it will be tomorrow. DNR head counts show that in the northern streams; those through Allamakee, Winneshiek and the northern sections of Clayton and Fayette Counties, over twice as many trout per angler are stocked. There are also hidden creeks with naturally reproducing populations of wild, brown trout.

Still, even just-stocked trout are fun to catch. The day to day stocking schedule is available on the DNR website, www.iowadnr.gov click on Fishing or by calling 563-927-5736.

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LAKE MIAMI DRAWDOWN TO START MAY 15

MORAVIA – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is planning to lower the water level at Lake Miami to improve the quality of fish populations in the 122-acre impoundment near Albia. The lake will be lowered six feet beginning on or about May 15 and maintained at that level until ice out in 2010.

Mark Flammang, fisheries biologist at the DNR's Rathbun fish hatchery, said the goal during the lake draw down is to improve fishing at the lake.

"Water level manipulation to concentrate predator and prey species is a widely used practice to manage fish populations," Flammang said. Lake Miami currently has a dense population of slow growing bluegills and crappies and Flammang said the lake draw down would improve the overall quality of the panfish once the lake refills.

"Our goal is to reduce the total numbers of bluegills and crappies in the lake, and to increase the competition among those species and that in turn will leave more food to go around which will result in improved growth of fish and better overall panfish quality," he said.

Anglers may still use the lake during the draw down and the park will remain open. The boat docks and ramps were designed to work with lower water levels and angler and boater access will not be affected.

The Monroe County Conservation Board, who manages the park at Lake Miami, has been notified about the work.

The lake will refill to normal levels during the spring of 2010.

Media Contact: Mark Flammang, fisheries biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 641-647-2406.

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DNR INVITES CAMPERS AND ANGLERS TO SHARE PHOTOS

The DNR is building online galleries for sharing fishing photos and for state park photos. Share a photo of your recent catch, or the great scenic from one of Iowa's state parks, or maybe a snapshot of your family enjoying the park.

For more information on how to submit a photo, rules or to view the gallery, go to <http://www.iowadnr.gov/parks/photoregs.html> for parks photos and <http://www.iowadnr.gov/fish/news/photoregs.html> for fishing photos.

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DNR TOPS LIST OF EMPLOYERS FOR ISU AG GRADS

DES MOINES — The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) ranks as the number one employer of 2007-2008 Iowa State University graduates from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences program, according to Iowa State data.

"It's certainly a nice recognition for the DNR," said Mike Gaul, Director of Agriculture and Life Sciences Career Services at Iowa State. "DNR has done a good job of having a presence at our events and letting students know about opportunities."

The DNR tied for the top spot with Pioneer Hi-Bred International, each hiring 12 Bachelors Degree Graduates from Iowa State. Iowa State itself was in a three-way-tie for third with Monsanto Company and the United States Department of Agriculture, each hiring 10 graduates. Other employers mentioned included Syngenta, HNI Corporation, Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, Ag Leader Technology, ConAgra, and John Deere.

“We try to find, hire, and retain the best employees for the DNR and I think our relationship with Iowa State helps us do that,” said Pat Boddy, Deputy Director of the DNR. “It’s also gratifying to know we offer opportunities for the best and brightest young people to stay in Iowa.”

The DNR has a wide variety of professional positions. Iowa State graduates are engaged in conservation and preservation of Iowa’s natural resources in areas including forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and land and water quality management.

The data for the rankings came from information gathered by the Agriculture and Life Sciences Career Services Office at Iowa State. The full study data can be found at <http://www.career.ag.iastate.edu/files/placement-summary-07-08.pdf>.

For more information, contact Jane Mild at (515) 242-6004 or at jane.mild@dnr.iowa.gov.

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ANGLERS’ LEGACY 09 - HELP SOMEONE CATCH A MEMORY

Anglers across America are “pledging” to take others fishing. Remember that special person who took you fishing and got you hooked? Would you enjoy fishing and the outdoors if they had not asked?

That’s what *Anglers’ Legacy* is all about – giving back what you have been given and promising to introduce somebody new to the activity you love. Join in on this national effort and share your love of fishing in Iowa this fishing season.

Take the Pledge

[Take the pledge today](#) and share your knowledge with as many Iowans as possible this fishing season. Visit our [Iowa Anglers’ Legacy](#) web page for more details.

Register Your Experience

Let us know when you take someone fishing. Go to our [Iowa Anglers’ Legacy](#) web page and click on “Register Your Experience.” This will take you to a short survey on Survey Monkey. Registration forms must be submitted by noon, September 15, 2009.

Complete a **new registration form** for each person you take fishing. Every time you register a new person, your name will be entered into a drawing (held September 15, 2009) for a prize package. The name of the person you register will also be entered into a drawing. (Prize Package Sponsors: Bass Pro Shops, Iowa DNR, Scheels, Shakespeare and Sportsman’s Warehouse)

In addition to the prize drawing, we will award 10 t-shirts (limit 1 per participant) every month. These drawings will be held May 31, June 30, July 31, and August 31.

Create a Memory

Memories are best shared. [Email us](#) your favorite fishing stories. We will compile the stories and share them on a special web page linked off our [Iowa Anglers' Legacy](#) web page (click on "Create A Memory").

For more information, contact the DNR's aquatic education program at 641-747-2200.

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STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD TO MEET MAY 8

INDIANOLA – The State Preserves Advisory Board of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 8:30 a.m., May 8, at the Annett Nature Center, 15565 118th Avenue, south of Indianola. The meeting is open to the public.

Board members will meet at 1 p.m., May 7, at the Apple Tree Inn, 1215 N Jefferson, in Indianola, for a tour of Woodland Mounds and Berry Woods state preserves. The public is invited to attend the tour.

Members of the State Preserves Advisory Board are Deborah Lewis, Carl Kurtz, Gail Brown, Armando Rosales, Cynthia Peterson, Stephen Dinsmore and Richard Leopold, director of the DNR.

The following is the May 8 agenda.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of January Meeting
- Seed Harvest Request
- Proposals Selections for Fiscal Year 2010
- Hartman Bluff Preserve
- Proposed Glenwood State Preserve
- Cedar Island
- Proposed Bicycle Trail at Starr's Cave Preserve
- Election of Chair
- Open Discussion

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

For more information, contact Daryl Howell at 515-281-8524.

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