

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

THE TIME FOR MORELS IS NOW

THIS YEAR’S MUSHROOM CROP IS NEARING PEAK

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

This is the week, experts say. It’s time to drop everything, grab your favorite skillet, and head for the Iowa woodlands. This year’s crop of morel mushrooms has emerged, and this spring’s harvest is predicted to be short and sweet.

Ask any mushroom hunter, and they’ll tell you it’s been a late spring. Combine that with unusually cool but dry weather --- and it’s definitely not the sort of climate that brings on a bumper crop of morels.

But conditions are currently showing a marked change for the better says Art Slater, a Dubuque native and 17-season-veteran of the spring mushroom slopes.

“Things are picking up and success has really improved during the past week,” says Slater. “Now that we’ve received sufficient rainfall and warming temps across most of the state, morels are starting to appear just about everywhere.

“The smaller gray morels are the first to show each spring and the larger yellows come a week or two later,” said Slater. “I found my first good batch of grays about a week ago in south central Iowa. During the past few days, I’ve been getting reports of people finding nice sized yellows from around Davenport and near Des Moines. From what I’m hearing, it sounds as if Dubuque is more or less the dividing line with people

finding yellow morels south of there, and pretty much all grays to north. For those ‘who follow the hatch,’ I think the hunting will continue to be productive for at least another week or so in northern Iowa.

“I think a lot of people became discouraged because they didn’t find all that many morels early on,” says Slater. “But when the grays did finally start popping, it seemed that the numbers were about average. Now that we’ve had the moisture, I’m pretty optimistic that the yellows will provide some excellent hunting this season. I’ve seen it happen before. Things start out slow and everyone kind of quits looking. That’s a mistake and you can really miss out on a lot of excitement when things start happening later. Besides that, who wants to miss being out in the spring woods smelling the air, seeing the flowers, and hearing all the birds? It’s just a great time of the year to be out. Searching for morels is a good excuse to be there.”

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SILVER CREEK TROUT STREAM NO LONGER OPEN TO PUBLIC FISHING

WAUKON, Iowa – Silver Creek, a privately owned trout stream located between Dorchester and Waukon in Allamakee County, is no longer available for public fishing.

“We are thankful to the landowner who allowed the public to fish on Silver Creek and want to remind the public that fishing on private property is a privilege not to be taken lightly,” said Karen Osterkamp, fisheries supervisor for northeast Iowa.

Osterkamp said anglers are encouraged to be respectful of private land by closing all gates and picking up after themselves. “A good portion of our trout fishing is done on private land. The next time you head out to your favorite trout stream take the extra effort to meet the landowner. A simple thank you can go a long way to continue the partnerships that are so valuable to Iowa’s trout fishing,” she said.

The DNR works closely with landowners to not only gain angler access to trout streams, but to reduce runoff and improve water quality in those streams.

“Private landowners should be applauded for the conservation practices they conduct to improve water quality and the survival of trout in our northeast Iowa streams,” Osterkamp said.

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NEW SIGNS REMIND BOATERS TO WEAR LIFEJACKETS

DES MOINES - Boaters backing down the ramp at any state park or federal reservoir in Iowa will notice a “Life Jacket Zone” sign painted on the concrete.

“The lifejacket zone message is an additional reminder to boaters as they launch that it is important to wear the lifejacket while they are on the water,” said Susan Stocker, boating education coordinator with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary to paint signs on more than 150 ramps across the state.

“We are just starting with the busy boating season and it is important to remind our boaters to brush up on their safe boating practices, check all their navigation equipment and make sure they have proper fitting lifejackets in good condition for each person onboard,” Stocker said.

There are more than 232,000 boats registered in Iowa.

For more information, contact Susan Stocker, boating education coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-0122.

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BOATER EDUCATION COURSE HELD DURING NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK

DES MOINES - “Spring into Safe Boating” is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., May 17, at the Lakeview Boat Ramp, on Saylorville Lake, offering vessel safety inspections by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and water safety games by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. There will be prizes awarded to active participants.

The event is held in conjunction with National Safe Boating Week, May 16 to 22.

As part of National Safe Boating Week, the three agencies will host a free boater education course. The course will be held over three consecutive evenings at the Saylorville Lake Visitor Center from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on May 18, 19 and 20. There is a \$5 fee for those participants who would like a completion certificate following the course. Attendees will be eligible for boating safety equipment giveaways.

The course is designed to promote safe and responsible boating practices and to instill a sense of responsibility while making the students aware of their actions and potential consequences of these actions. This course meets the State of Iowa requirements for any person 12 years of age or older, but less than 18 years of age to operate any vessel propelled by a motor of more than 10 horsepower.

To register for the boater education course, email your name, address, phone number to boatingclass@flotilla4.org.

For more information, contact Jeff Rose, Operations Manager U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Saylorville Lake, or Leah Deeds, Park Ranger U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Saylorville Lake, at 515-276-4656.

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

CLARION – The public is invited to discuss the proposed designation of the public and private area encompassing the Lower Morse Lake Waterfowl Production Area as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, May 21, at the Wright County Conservation Board Headquarters, on the northwest shore of Lake Cornelia Park, about four miles northeast of Clarion.

The Iowa DNR is working with many partners to establish Bird Conservation Areas and embrace the concept of all-bird conservation. The idea for the BCA is an outgrowth of the national Partners in Flight program and was first developed to assist grassland bird recovery in Wisconsin.

“Current research suggests that sustainable bird populations require conservation efforts at a broad landscape level,” said Doug Harr, coordinator of the DNR’s wildlife diversity program. “The partnership between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners is key to creating large expanses of bird habitat and reversing the trend of decreasing bird populations.”

“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 Bruce Ehresman, wildlife diversity program biologist with the DNR. Declining grassland nesting species such as American bittern, northern harrier, bobolink, and Henslow’s sparrow all will benefit from the designation of the Lower Morse Lake Grasslands complex as a Bird Conservation Area, as will game species including ring-necked pheasant and several species of waterfowl.

Typically, the core area of each BCA is made up of a significant amount of public land, land owned by private conservation organizations, or land protected by conservation easements, and it is important for areas around this core land to also be managed for good wildlife habitat.

“Since most of that property is privately held, landowners or land managers who would like to assist with all-bird conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance,” said Harr, “Participation is voluntary, so there will be no restrictions or requirements placed on the landowner.”

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

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TWO AMERICORPS WEEK ACTIVITIES SET

DES MOINES—Iowa AmeriCorps members serving in the Department of Natural Resources have activities planned for AmeriCorps Week, May 9-14.

On May 13, AmeriCorps members serving at Honey Creek State Park, near Moravia, will be holding an Inclusion Day Event. The event will include education on the decline of grassland nesting birds and efforts to restore them followed by the building of bluebird, wood duck, and bat houses by persons with disabilities from Passageway and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation.

Building the houses helps build workplace and social skills for the disabled members of Passageway and Iowa Vocation Rehabilitation. Honey Creek State Park Resort will receive an Audubon Society certificate for the promotion of endangered birds after the houses are set in place.

On May 14, there will be an AmeriCorps member led clean-up of nearly a mile of trail area south of Gray's Lake Park from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

There are still spots for clean-up volunteers. Trash bags will be provided, volunteers are asked to bring work gloves and dress to work in the brush. Meet at the shelter on the south-side of the lake. Parking is available in the south parking lot.

To volunteer or for more information, contact AmeriCorps member Tom Stone at (515) 281-8305 or thomas.stone@dnr.iowa.gov.

AmeriCorps is the national service program that provides thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds with education awards in exchange for three months to one year of community engagement. The DNR coordinates two AmeriCorps programs to further conserve and enhance Iowa's natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations.

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

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2009 DNR SALE SET 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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