

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

www.iowadnr.gov

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STATE PARKS FILLING AS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND APPROACHES

DES MOINES – Electrical campsites will be filling to capacity by the middle of the week as Memorial Day Weekend approaches. Campers without a site are encouraged to call the park ahead of time to check on availability before they head out.

The Memorial Day Weekend marks the unofficial beginning to the summer recreation season and Iowa state parks and lakes will be busy with activity. “Our electric campsites on the reservation system were nearly gone by the middle of March,” said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the DNR’s State Parks Bureau. “If someone is looking for a site with electricity, my advice is to be flexible on your location, call ahead and to go as early as you can to get the site because if you wait too long, it will likely be filled.”

For many campers, Memorial Day Weekend is the first outing of the year. To help minimize problems, Szcodronski advised going through the equipment to make sure

it is in good working condition. He also said campers should brush up on the campground rules.

“We are going to be busy so having patience and being respectful of your neighbors will be important, especially this weekend,” Szcodronski said. “We want to remind campers to follow the quiet hours, to only burn firewood in fire rings and to leave the fireworks at home. It only takes on loud campsite to ruin the experience for a lot of campers.”

The DNR is also encouraging campers to get firewood locally to avoid bringing in any unwanted bugs. Each park will have identified local sources where campers can get wood.

Campers are also encouraged to keep their site clean and to pick up after themselves. Many state parks will be without the summer season help who do a good portion of the mowing and cleaning.

“We will be working hard to keep our parks in good condition, but it may take us a little longer to get the fire rings cleared out or to get an area mowed so we are asking campers to have some patience,” Szcodronski said. “They can help out by paying extra attention to their sites and by cleaning up after themselves.”

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

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CAMPING DOS AND DON'TS AND A FEW HELPFUL TIPS

- Get firewood locally to avoid bringing in any unwanted pests.
- Do not use the fire ring to dispose of trash. Burn only firewood.
- Stay current with the weather forecast.
- Pick up your trash, recycle what you can and leave the campsite clean and ready for the next camper.
- Check the camping equipment before heading to the park and replace any that are worn out.
- Double check the camping supplies [aluminum foil, can opener, water, matches, propane, oil, etc.]
- Leave fireworks at home.
- Quiet hours are from 10:30 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- Be respectful of your neighbors. One loud campsite can ruin a weekend for a lot of people.
- Safety pins and duct tape can solve a lot of weekend camping emergencies.
- Bring a first aid kit. Bring sun screen. Bring bug spray.
- Bring a camera and Iowa wildlife guide
- Have a few activities to do in case of rain.
- Plan meals ahead and pre-measure and mix dry ingredients in a re-closable bag.

- Go Fishing – crappies, bluegills, walleyes, bass and catfish should be active and close to shore.

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GOOD FISHING EXPECTED FOR HOLIDAY WEEKEND

DES MOINES – Spring fishing is nearing its peak as water temperature holds in the middle 60s for many water bodies in Iowa. Crappies, bluegills, largemouth and smallmouth bass, channel catfish and bullheads are all active and close to shore.

Barring any wild swings in the weather, the Memorial Day Weekend should offer some excellent fishing for a variety of fish species.

“I couldn’t think of a better scenario for the upcoming holiday weekend. If the weather holds, fish will be close to shore and ready to bite. This is what we all wait for,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Bureau. “Make sure the rod and reel are part of any weekend plans.”

The period from late May and early June is an excellent time to take kids fishing because many species are spawning and do not spook as easily. Larscheid said anglers can increase their catch if they use small tackle. Keep the bait small, too.

“The biggest problem we see is anglers using too heavy of line, and large bobbers and hooks,” he said. “Use as light of tackle as you can. I would suggest using four pound line, a bobber the size of a quarter and a size 8 hook.”

The Iowa DNR issues a weekly fishing report on Thursdays, but the report can be accessed anytime by going to www.iowadnr.gov then click on Fishing Report. A tutorial will guide the registration process. There is a new feature that allows users to select what information they want to generate by species or water body.

Media Contact: Joe Larscheid, chief, Fisheries Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-5208.

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BOATERS REMINDED OF IOWA’S MANDATORY LIFEJACKET LAW FOR YOUTH

DES MOINES – Memorial Day Weekend marks the beginning of the busy boating season. Boat ramps will be busy and parking lots full. For many of the boaters, it will be the first time on the water of the year. Boaters are reminded of the Iowa law requiring children under age 13 to wear a lifejacket while in a boat that is underway. The law became effective in 2008.

The law states “a person shall not operate a vessel in Iowa unless every person on board the vessel who is age 12 and under is wearing a U.S. Coast Guard approved life

jacket.” A lifejacket must be worn when the vessel is underway, which means when a vessel is not at anchor, tied to a dock or the bank/shore or aground.

A child age 12 and under in an enclosed cabin, below deck, or aboard a commercial vessel with a capacity of 25 persons or more is exempt.

There are only two states remaining without some age requirement for lifejackets for children – Wisconsin and Virginia.

For more information, contact Susan Stocker, boating education coordinator for the DNR, at 515-281-0122.

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Burn Firewood Where You Buy it Slows Spread of Pests, Emerald Ash Borer
**ENTERING CAMPING SEASON IOWA OFFICIALS ASK FOR
HELP PROTECTING OUR TREES BY NOT MOVING FIREWOOD**

DES MOINES – As summer camping season gets ready to enter full swing, members of the Iowa Emerald Ash Borer Team reminded Iowans of the importance of not moving firewood, as it can carry invasive pests, such as the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), that threaten the health of the state’s trees.

EAB, an invasive beetle that feeds on ash trees and eventually kills them, is the most eminent threat. A new infestation was recently found near Victory, Wis., on the east bank of the Mississippi River, less than one mile from Allamakee County, in northeast Iowa.

The movement of out-of-state firewood to and through Iowa poses the greatest threat to spread EAB. Areas currently infested are under federal and state quarantines, but unknowing campers or others who transport firewood can spark an outbreak.

Campers are encouraged to definitely not bring firewood from out of state. Staff with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Parks will have identified where campers may purchase firewood locally.

The Iowa Emerald Ash Borer Team includes officials from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension and the Iowa DNR, USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the USDA Forest Service.

To learn more about EAB and other pests that are threatening Iowa’s tree population please visit www.IowaTreePests.com.

“Emerald Ash Borer and other pests have the potential to do significant damage to our state’s trees, but by burning firewood where you buy it you can make sure you aren’t helping bring these pests into new, previously uninfested areas,” Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey said.

The Emerald Ash Borer is native to the Orient, and was introduced in the United States near Detroit, Mich. in the 1990s. Although not yet found in Iowa, EAB has more potential for future harm to Iowa forests and urban communities than any other insect currently being dealt with in the United States.

EAB kills all ash (*Fraxinus*) species by larval burrowing under the bark and eating the actively growing (cambium) layers of the trees. EAB has been killing trees of various sizes in neighborhoods and woodlands. Ash is one of the most abundant native tree species in North America, and has been heavily planted as a landscape tree in yards and other urban areas. According to recent sources, Iowa has an estimated 58 million rural ash trees and approximately 30 more million urban ash trees.

Each member of the Iowa Emerald Ash Borer Team is taking steps to monitor Iowa's ash trees and ensure that the beetle has not spread into Iowa by examining high risk sites. The Iowa EAB team has defined high risk sites as locations where people would bring out-of state wood, such as campgrounds, nurseries and sawmills.

Monitoring efforts include visual surveys at high risk sites by Iowa State University, DNR's placement of sentinel ash trees that are intentionally stressed so that they are more attractive to EAB, and the placement of purple sticky traps around the state that attracts and traps the insect by a collaborative effort among APHIS and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

For more information on EAB and other invasive pests threatening Iowa's trees, Iowans can contact:

- Robin Pruisner, State Entomologist in the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, can be reached at (515) 725-1465 or at Robin.Pruisner@IowaAgriculture.gov.
- Tivon Feeley, with DNR Forest Health, can be reached at (515) 281-4915 or by e-mail at Tivon.feeley@dnr.iowa.gov.
- Jesse Randall, ISU Extension Forester, can be reached at (515) 294-1168 or by email at Randallj@iastate.edu.
- Mark Shour, ISU Extension Entomologist, can be reached at (515) 294-5963 or by email at mshour@iastate.edu.
- Laura Jesse, ISU Entomologist at the ISU Plant & Insect Diagnostic Clinic, at (515) 294-0581 or by email at ljesse@iastate.edu.
- Donald Lewis, ISU Entomologist, can be reached at (515) 294-1101 or by email at drlewis@iastate.edu.

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PEREGRINE FALCON NESTING INCREASES IN IOWA

DES MOINES - Peregrine falcons have increased their presence in Iowa, with peregrine partners and volunteers now reporting 13 territories in the state, an increase from the 12 reported in 2007. Cargill's grain silo at McGregor, is Iowa's newest site to attract nesting peregrines.

A nest box was placed at this site 11 years ago by Dave Kester and Bob Anderson with Raptor Resource Project.

"We are tentatively planning to band young at this site," said Pat Schlarbaum, wildlife technician with the DNR's wildlife diversity program. The public will be invited

to this banding when the date and time is finalized. Banding falcon young occurs when chicks are 17 to 26 days alive.

In Des Moines four young will be banded at American Republic Insurance building at 601 6th Ave. at 11:30 a.m., on June 3. The public is invited to this banding.

Also in Des Moines a second territory has been established at the state Capitol. Adult peregrines can be observed bringing prey items and feeding young on east side of the Capitol. Schlarbaum said plans are in the works to band young at the Capitol and the public will be invited when that date and time is finalized.

In Cedar Rapids, Jodeane Cancilla with Macbride Raptor Project will band young at the US Bank building when date and time is finalized. The public will be invited to this banding.

At a cliff near Lansing Power Plant on the Mississippi River, Bob Anderson of Raptor Resource Project reported a nesting pair. Downstream at a bluff near Waukon Junction, called Leo's Bluff, a peregrine pair has again nested successfully. This site is on an historic cliff site where peregrines last nested before their demise due to DDT. The public is invited to these bandings beginning at Leo's Bluff at 8 a.m. on June 5.

A smokestack box at the ML Kapp power plant in Clinton has attracted a nesting pair for a third year. The nest box was installed by Bob Anderson and Raptor Resource Project.

In the Quad Cities, there are nesting pairs on the I-80 Bridge near Bettendorf, the MidAmerican Energy headquarters in Davenport, and on the I-280 Bridge. Four young will be banded at MidAmerican Energy's Louisa Generating Station at 10 a.m. on May 27. MidAmerican Energy's headquarters falcons will be banded at 10 a.m. on May 28. The public is invited to both bandings.

There is a peregrine pair nesting on Great River Bridge in Burlington. At Alliant Energy plant near Chillicothe in Wapello County, a pair is again nesting in box installed on their smokestack by Anderson and Raptor Resource Project.

Of the 13 territorial pairs in 2008, eight successful nestings produced 20 young. Elsewhere in the Midwest, 193 territories had 166 nesting pairs. Of these, 411 young fledged from 148 successful nesting attempts.

The pair nesting at the MidAmerican Energy headquarters in Davenport may be viewed by going to www.wqad.com then clicking on News, then on NewsChannel 8 Falcon Cam. Also a falconcam has been established at American Republic site in Des Moines by going to <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/diversity/falconcam.html>

For more information, contact Pat Schlarbaum at 515-432-2823 or 712-330-0526.

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

IOWA PEREGRINE RECOVERY REACHES NEW MILESTONE

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

At its monthly May meeting, members of the DNR's Natural Resource Commission unanimously approved a measure to remove the peregrine falcon from Iowa's endangered species list. The state's fastest bird is now officially listed as a species of special concern. The much anticipated upgrade is a significant milestone in the decades long recovery of what many consider to be the planet's most spectacular bird species.

The rugged limestone cliffs of the upper Mississippi River in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin were once home to mid-America's greatest densities of nesting peregrine falcons. Exceedingly swift and profoundly courageous, the raptors were highly revered by native Americans who build huge earthen effigies --- some with wingspans exceeding 150 feet --- that accurately depicted the birds in flight. Although the arrival of European settlers had a devastating impact on many Iowa wildlife species, peregrine falcons held their own until the conclusion of World War II. That's when "better living through chemistry" ushered in the environmentally devastating era of DDT and the dark vision of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

Pesticide induced egg shell thinning had soon decimated peregrine populations nationwide. By the late 1960s, only one peregrine falcon nest --- located on a cliff near Lansing, Iowa --- remained along the entire length of the Mississippi. When even those birds disappeared, not one single peregrine of any age or sex, could be documented anywhere from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean. For modern day, twentieth century falcon admirers, the spring had indeed become silent.

And then a couple of good things happened. In 1972, the use of DDT was forever banned. That same year, a falconer [Falconers are hunters who use trained raptors to capture wild game.] named Tom Cade successfully hatched a captive produced peregrine egg at Cornell University. That event quickly sparked the vision of returning vanished populations through the release of captive produced young falcons. The idea struck a cord and falconers from across the nation were soon donating their precious feathered hunting partners to the conservation cause.

Partnering with DNR, falconers also assumed a leadership role in the Iowa peregrine recovery, securing and preparing release sites as well as raising the \$100,000 needed to purchase, care for, and release more than 100 baby peregrines into suitable habitats. Survivors of those initial Iowa release efforts, along with their totally wild descendants, have now returned to reoccupy historic Mississippi River nest sites [eyries] in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Additional pairs claim territories on the synthetic ledges of nearby office buildings, bridges, and power company smokestacks.

Iowa's now successful peregrine recovery has included scores of volunteers and is the result of more than 20 years of planning, hard core fund raising, and plain hard work. The efforts paid off and contemporary hawk watchers can finally breathe a sigh of relief. Peregrine falcons have successfully returned to the cliff ledge nest sites of their ancestors ---- including to a cliff near Lansing where that last 1960s pair existed.

But while the celebration continues we also need to be reminded that renewed peregrine populations are not something to be taken for granted nor is the falcon necessarily home free. Securing the species' future will require a constant and increased level of stewardship as well as continued environmental vigilance.

Media Contact: Lowell Washburn, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-425-1023.

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

SPRING BIRD MIGRATION IS REACHING ITS PEAK IOWA STATE PARKS OFFER EXCELLENT VIEWING

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Tens of thousands of neotropical migrating birds are currently streaming into Iowa. There are dozens of species ---- warblers, towhees, grosbeaks, tanagers, orioles and more. For Iowa wildlife enthusiasts, the stage is set for some of the most action packed birding of the year.

A majority of neotropical birds winter deep into Central America and South America and then push north for the nesting season. Many species are most easily viewed during spring migration, becoming more secretive and less visible during the actual nesting and brood rearing season. Other species are simply moving through our state en route to more northerly nesting areas.

The woodland habitats existing within Iowa's state park system currently offers some of the best birding opportunities to be found anywhere in the mid-west. Parks do not necessarily have to encompass huge tracts of land in order to attract large numbers of migrating birds. My favorites in the north of Iowa include Pilot Knob State Park near Forest City, McIntosh Woods State Park at Clear Lake, and Pike's Peak State Park at McGregor.

In the south, Nine Eagles State Park at Mt. Ayr, Wildcat Den at Muscatine, Viking Lake State Park near Red Oak, or Waubonsie near Hamburg are all sure fire guarantees for good birding.

If there is currently a single, Number One top birding tip it is simply this ---- Don't delay! The spring migration is brief. If you enjoy bird color and bird song, don't postpone getting into the outdoors and visiting an Iowa woodland.

First Breeding Bird Atlas Blockbusting Weekend June 5

The Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) is a five year project where volunteers search for evidence of bird nesting throughout the state to determine bird distributions and how bird species are doing in Iowa. The first BBA Weekend will be held at Viking Lake State Park in Montgomery County June 5-7.

A sign-in table will be available throughout the weekend for atlas volunteers to come and go as needed. Saturday, volunteers will be out in blocks searching for nesting birds. Sunday at 3 p.m. in the park, there will be a grand compilation of information collected on birds during the weekend.

If you plan on participating, please RSVP to the BBA Coordinator the Monday prior to the weekend. For more specific information, visit

<http://bba.iowabirds.org/Default.aspx> or contact Nicki Nagl, the BBA volunteer coordinator at bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org or 515-432-2823 ext. 117.

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CAMPAIGN REINTRODUCES THOUSANDS TO FISHING

DES MOINES – Residents throughout Iowa are rediscovering the simple, affordable thrills of boating and fishing, thanks in part to the marketing efforts of the Iowa DNR to bring lapsed anglers back to the sport.

Iowa is one of 32 states participating in a direct mail marketing program coordinated by the [Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation](#) (RBFF). Now in its second year, the program is designed to increase fishing license sales and generate awareness of local conservation efforts that the sales help fund. More than 125,000 Iowa residents have received postcards so far in May, and will receive a reminder to buy their fishing license and go fish in June.

In 2008, the direct mail program resulted in more than 12,000 fishing licenses and permits in Iowa. Based on these results, the direct mail program has contributed more than \$113,000 in net funding for fish and wildlife management efforts.

“This year’s program kicks off at a time when many people are seeking affordable getaways,” said RBFF President and CEO Frank Peterson. “As they discover fishing and purchase licenses, these sales will help generate the funds needed to preserve our nation’s natural resources. We’re thrilled to have Iowa participating in this year’s campaign, and can’t wait to see more people enjoying the outdoors as a result.”

Launched in March 2008, the three-year Direct Mail Marketing Program aims to recruit and retain lapsed anglers and generate awareness of the connection between fishing license sales and conservation efforts.

“Last year’s program helped us bring numerous anglers back to fishing, and we’re confident we’ll see even more growth in license sales this year,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of the DNR Fisheries Bureau.

About RBFF

RBFF is a nonprofit organization established in 1998 to increase participation in recreational angling and boating. RBFF helps people discover, share and protect the legacy of boating and fishing through national outreach programs including the Take Me Fishing™ campaign and Anglers’ Legacy™.

Media Contact: Julie Tack, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-8665

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AMERICORPS MEMBERS SHOWED SPIRIT TO “GET THINGS DONE” DURING AMERICORPS WEEK

DES MOINES—Two activities led by DNR AmeriCorps Members during AmeriCorps Week succeeded in showing what AmeriCorps is all about: getting things done and giving back to the community.

On Wednesday, AmeriCorps members Charles Tucker and Michele Fuhrer led members of the Passageway rehabilitation clubhouse program in building bird houses and bat boxes.

“There was a small portion of education about the birds involved, but the idea behind the Inclusion Day event was to get the members of Passageway, Inc. involved with AmeriCorps, DNR, and the natural resources of Iowa. I think this was achieved,” said Fuhrer.

A total of 22 habitat units were created by the Passageway members: 14 bluebird houses, 6 bat boxes, and 2 wood duck boxes. The units will be placed at Honey Creek Resort State Park to help the park attain an Audubon Society certification for the promotion of endangered birds.

“Projects like this really let our members give back to the community,” said Passageway Executive Director Linda Oleson-King. “It’s a great opportunity.”

Then on Thursday, AmeriCorps member Tom Stone led a group of volunteers from around Des Moines in cleaning up the wooded area south of Gray’s Lake City Park next to the bike trail.

“The trail is relatively new, but was built in what was previously a rail road area, so there was all kinds of trash and debris in there,” said Stone.

Along with litter like plastic cups and glass bottles, volunteers found and removed items including car tires, old rail road ties, metal pipes and cans, and several decomposing mattresses.

“I’m incredibly grateful to my volunteers who worked harder than I could have ever asked,” Stone said. “Thanks to them, we left the area better than we found it and that was our goal.”

The filled trash bags and other materials removed by volunteers were hauled away for proper disposal by city workers.

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

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

WILDLIFE BABY SEASON HAS BEGUN

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The annual wildlife baby season has begun.

I saw my first proof of the occasion late last week. I had just pulled onto a blacktop roadway that parallels the edge of a marsh when a hen mallard stepped from the ditch. As I slowed to observe, 11 tiny ducklings suddenly scrambled out of the thick grass to join their mother.

Making sure no one was behind me, I came to a stop to observe the proud hen mallard parade her row of tiny duplicates across the blacktop and into the adjacent marsh.

With the mallard family safely in the cattails, I continued on my journey.

That's how all wildlife baby encounters are supposed to end: wildlife families intact and in their natural habitat. Human observers inspired by the encounter.

Unfortunately, many scenarios have a far less happy ending. Whenever people encounter a newborn fawn, nest of baby cottontails, or fledgling baby bird, they often assume that the animals are orphaned and in need of immediate human intervention. The fate of these hapless youngsters is forever sealed as they are promptly "rescued from the wild."

In most cases, these wildlife babies perish soon after capture. Should an animal survive the initial trauma of being captured and confined, it often succumbs more slowly to pneumonia, other diseases, or malnutrition.

Whether they're adults or young, all species of wildlife have highly specific needs for survival. "Rescuing a baby from its mother" not only shows bad judgment -- it is also illegal. Wild mammals are protected by state law. Wild birds are protected by both state and federal law. Illegally capturing and possessing wildlife can lead to serious penalty.

Observing native birds and mammals in their natural habitat is a unique privilege. Making field notes or obtaining a good photo or two provides an even more lasting memory. But once you've done that, leave wildlife babies where they belong ---- in the wild.

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