

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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IOWA PHEASANT HARVEST HITS RECORD LOW

DES MOINES – Based on results of licensed hunters who pursued small game in Iowa, an estimated 383,000 rooster pheasants were harvested during the 2008-09 season, the lowest total on record and marking only the second time since 1958, Iowa's pheasant harvest did not reach 500,000 roosters.

Unfortunately for Iowa pheasant hunters, both times happened within the last eight years, and both followed winters rated among the most severe in Iowa's history.

“The good news is that so far, we are having a good nesting season and if the weather holds through the middle of June, our pheasant population could see an increase of up to 20 percent,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “There are three factors to having a good pheasant population: a mild winter; a warm and dry spring and large chunks of habitat. Missing one of those can impact the population. Unfortunately in the past 10 years, the trends for all these factors have been mostly negative.”

Bogenschutz said he was not too surprised with the harvest totals because he saw a preview in the annual August roadside survey.

That poor pheasant forecast also may have led to fewer hunters taking to the field. Based on the hunter survey, an estimated 86,000 hunters pursued pheasants, which is an all time low in Iowa.

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823.

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[electronic photo available upon request]

LOOKING FOR ANGLING ACTION?

CHECK OUT CLEAR LAKE'S YELLOW BASS BONANZA

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE – Clear Lake Open Bible Church Pastor, Will Hunsaker is one contented angler.

While fishing at the Clear Lake Island shortly after sunrise on Memorial Day, Hunsaker successfully landed his 1,600th yellow bass for the season --- an event that would have any fisherman grinning from ear to ear. By the time most anglers were just heading out for the day, Pastor Will was making his way to shore. Towing a wire basket containing more than 80 adult yellows it was simply “all I care to clean for today”.

“The Island is such a blessing and it is my favorite place to fish,” says Hunsaker. “I get out as often as possible, and generally try to fish from 5:30 to 7:30 each morning. That leaves me time to get back, clean fish, and still be to the office by 9:00.”

“I love catching and eating yellow bass,” said Hunsaker. “Last year, between myself and the people who fished with me, we caught a total of 3,600 yellows. I thought this year would be slower, but it hasn't been. I keep a very detailed log and last year, I caught my 1,600th fish on May 25. This year, I hit the same number on the exact same date.”

Hunsaker, who wader fishes near shore, has two recommendations ---- go small and go slow. Small jig head / Twister tail combos weighing 1/32 oz. are fine. Jigs weighing 1/64 oz. are even better. Although nearly any color may work, most anglers choose white, yellow, or chartreuse.

“I eat a lot of fish and also give fish to friends,” said Hunsaker. “Our church has an annual fish fry on the first Sunday of November and I supply the fish for that.”

Short lived and prolific to the point of being considered a nuisance species in many Iowa waters, especially in southern Iowa, DNR fisheries biologists note that yellow bass are one fish that anglers never have to feel bad about ‘catching and keeping.’ The more fish anglers harvest from a population, the better the growth rate for survivors. When adult populations are high, anglers are encouraged to catch all they can. In addition to being a feisty scrapper in the water, the mild flavored yellow bass is also without equal on the dinner plate.

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GREAT DEAL FOR GREAT FISHING AT HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK

MORAVIA – Fishing activity on Iowa’s popular Lake Rathbun is on the upswing after a weekend of good fishing. Anglers are catching walleyes, channel catfish and white bass with regularity.

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, individual cottages, indoor water park, 18-hole golf course and trails on site.

The resort is also offering a Trophy Buster Fishing Package, which includes lodging at one of the resorts NEW cottages and a boat slip for just \$159/night. For more information on this package, visit www.honeycreekresort.com or call 877-677-3344. Be sure to ask for the “fishing package” for this great deal.

“I’m glad to see the white bass bite is here,” said Mark Flammang, fisheries biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at Lake Rathbun. “White bass fishing is exciting, fast-paced fishing for everyone, from novice to skilled anglers. These fish are good sized and fishing is as good here as other lakes, like Red Rock.”

Flammang said the walleye bite traditionally improves with warmer weather. Fishing close to shore in shallow water with a night crawler is popular as is trolling crankbaits around lake structure. For white bass, fish the same areas as walleyes and use flashy blade baits or heavy steel baits.

Anglers are also picking up a few crappies in the Southfork area.

The lake is starting to see an increase in recreational boating as the water temperature warms.

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PROPOSAL UPGRADES BALD EAGLE AND PEREGRINE FALCON FROM ENDANGERED TO SPECIAL CONCERN

DES MOINES – The Natural Resource Commission has proposed upgrading the status of the bald eagle and peregrine falcon from endangered species to species of special concern at its May 14 meeting.

Daryl Howell, with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said volunteers and landowners played an important role in documenting the recovery of eagles and peregrines by monitoring and reporting nesting activity and allowing access to nests on their property.

The proposal is now open for public comment. Any interested person may make written suggestions or comments on the proposed amendments on or before July 16, 2009.

Such written materials should be directed to the Endangered Species Program, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 East Ninth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034: fax (515)281-6794. Persons who wish to convey their views orally should contact the Endangered Species Program at (515)281-8524 or at the Endangered Species Program offices on the fourth floor of the Wallace State Office Building.

A public hearing will be held on July 16, 2009, at 10 a.m. in the Fourth Floor East Conference Room, Wallace State Office Building, at which time persons may present views either orally or in writing.

Media Contact: Daryl Howell, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-8524.

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