



# IOWA OUTDOORS

## IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION | [WWW.IOWADNR.GOV/NEWS/](http://WWW.IOWADNR.GOV/NEWS/)

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**For questions or information on these articles, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.**

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More than \$15,000 in Fines, Costs, Restitution, Damages for the Pair

### **TWO SOUTH CAROLINA LAW OFFICERS PLEAD GUILTY TO IOWA CHARGES**

WEST UNION, Iowa – Two South Carolina law enforcement officers pleaded guilty to falsely claiming Iowa residency to obtain in-state hunting licenses. Charges were filed against Kester “Kess” Holmes, 33, and Phillip Lee Morris, 34, both of Saluda, S.C., last fall.

Holmes pleaded guilty to four counts of making false claims to obtain resident Iowa deer licenses, and one count of making false claims to obtain an Iowa resident turkey license. Holmes was sentenced to pay maximum fines and court costs, as well as liquidated damages for illegally taken game, and make restitution to the Iowa DNR for the difference between resident and non-resident license fees.

In addition, Holmes was ordered by the court to return two sets of buck deer antlers to the Iowa DNR, and lost his hunting and fishing privileges in Iowa for five years. His fines, costs and restitution will exceed \$9,000. Holmes is a deputy sheriff in Saluda County, S.C.

Morris pleaded guilty to four counts of hunting and possessing game without valid resident Iowa DNR licenses and was ordered to pay the maximum fines, court costs, as well as \$4,000 in liquidated damages for illegally taken wild game, and \$1,400 restitution to the Iowa DNR for the difference between resident and non-resident license fees. The court further

ordered Morris to return two sets of buck deer antlers to the Iowa DNR, and suspended his hunting and fishing privileges in Iowa for five years.

Morris was also charged with falsifying information to obtain an Iowa driver's license, to which he also pleaded guilty and received a suspended jail sentence, and was ordered to pay court costs and fees. Morris, a state trooper, was dismissed from the South Carolina State Patrol.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officer Dave Elledge received information on Morris and Holmes a few years ago, which began the investigation. The two stayed in an old rural farm house they used as camp, on the Fayette-Clayton County line.

"Any time an investigation involves law enforcement personnel, extra care and caution must be taken, in all aspects of the case," Elledge said "Confidentiality is of utmost importance, due to the fact one is dealing with individuals who are savvy to investigative techniques.

Several officers from northeast Iowa, as well as other DNR personnel assisted in the cases. Iowa DNR officers also received cooperation in the cases from the Special Investigations Unit of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Enforcement Bureau.

The cases were prosecuted by Nathan Lein, assistant county attorney for Fayette County, Iowa and Susan Krisko, of the Iowa Attorney General's Office.

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## **WILDLIFE THIEVES GOING FULL SPEED FOR IOWA STAGS**

It's a rare night when Conservation Officer Chris Flynn does not receive a call about someone spotlighting deer and that shots were fired.

Just two weeks ago, Flynn received a call at 10 p.m., and while responding, he received a second call about the same thing, only five miles away. When he arrived at the second scene, the evidence indicated that it was a different vehicle involved than the first scene. His phone rang again – another spotlight and more shots fired. Three calls all within five miles of each other.

Flynn has been chasing these calls down since the middle of September, but with the harvest in full swing and the deer breeding season about to hit its peak, the phone has been ringing almost constantly.

Spotlighters who poach deer can be tough to catch, he said. Some of the poachers are real professionals at it; patterning the deer movements over a number of nights with no gun or bow in the vehicle until they see the big buck. Once they identify that buck and his pattern, they make one more trip out with the gun and take the deer home.

"These are game thieves stealing from all hunters and wildlife watchers," said Jason Sandholt, district law enforcement supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "The poachers want to show off their trophy as a way of declaring themselves a great hunter,

but in reality the only way they could bag the deer was to cheat and steal it from the lawful hunters.”

Not all spotlighting is illegal, but state conservation officers would prefer if all activity were reported.

“We don’t know if it is a legal or illegal case until we stop them,” said Flynn. The key to catching spotlighters is for officers to receive the reports as soon as possible.

“Calling the report in, in a timely manner, is the best way to help us catch these guys,” Flynn said. Other valuable information includes a description of the vehicle or the people involved, the location and direction they were traveling, the number of shots and where they were skinning.

“Knowing ahead of time if they were skinning in an open field versus a timber would help us because the fur bearer hunting season opens Saturday, and raccoon hunters will be out in the timber looking for raccoons,” Flynn said. “Every bit of information helps.”

The activity can also be reported through the Turn-in-Poachers hotline by calling 1-800-832-2020. Callers can remain anonymous. Since the TIP was started 1985, 70 percent of the 9,200 calls received have involved deer poaching.

### **Sidebar: Poachers Keep Game Wardens Busy**

Iowa Conservation Officer Chris has seen the poaching activity in Jefferson and Van Buren counties increase over the past 12 years. Just within the past 48 hours, Flynn has charged two groups of non-residents with either using a fictitious identity to obtain a license to taking deer without a license. Add in a case of shooting deer over a baited area, another case of taking deer out of season and the list goes on.

“It seems like it never ends,” Flynn said. “There’s not enough time in the day and we’re only scratching the surface.”

Flynn said the public can help protect the resource from game thieves by calling the local conservation officer directly or by calling the Turn-in-Poachers hotline at 1-800-532-2020. Callers can remain anonymous.

“I’ve spoken with other wardens in southern Iowa and can say that without a doubt that I’ve seen more deer hunters out this past weekend than during the shotgun season,” he said. “It would be helpful if the public could call in with information on any unlicensed individuals as well as any other poaching activity.”

“The key to catching these guys is alerting the local warden as soon as they activity is witnessed with as much detailed information as possible,” Flynn said. Details include the poaching activity, a description of the individual or individuals, the location, vehicle description and license plate number if possible, and in which direction they were heading.

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[Electronic photos available upon request]

## **HAND CRAFTED DECOYS PROVIDE LINK TO IOWA'S OUTDOOR PAST**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Next to the shotgun, a realistic spread of duck or goose decoys is the waterfowler's most important tool. Limited only by the buyer's pocketbook, purchasing a set of decoys is as simple as a trip to your favorite sales outlet or online retailer. But things weren't always that way. Before the age of automated paint systems and high tech plastics, hunters were often faced with proposition of crafting their own waterfowl decoys. The completed counterfeits were as varied and diverse as the craftsmen who designed them.

Positioned between two of America's great rivers and home to countless natural wetlands, Iowa had its share of decoy makers. In most cases, they were hunters themselves and made only enough decoys to meet personal needs. Although most of these Iowa originals have vanished over time, a few classic examples remain. Treasured by contemporary art collectors and hunters alike, they hearken to simpler times and provide a tangible reminder of when southbound ducks and geese darkened the Iowa skies. Here are some examples.

Although Hancock County's Eagle Lake is best known to contemporary sportsmen for its superb mallard hunting, the thousand-acre marsh once attracted impressive numbers of southbound diving ducks as well. The annual phenomena did not go unnoticed by duck shack owner Clarence Miller who, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, assembled an impressive personal rig of 200 hand crafted lesser scaup [bluebill] decoys. Miller used cork for the bodies and white pine for the heads. For added durability, the bottom of each decoy was fitted with a painted pine base. A harness-leather loop for attaching decoy rope was then added to the base. Finally, each piece was brought to life with the installation of high quality, Herter's glass eyes. The decoys were killers, and Miller later added two dozen cork mallards to the spread. Today, five bluebills are all that remains of the rig. They represent a unique link to Iowa's waterfowling heritage.

Wesley "Pickle" Griggs procured most of his living by tilling the rich black soil his Manly, Iowa farmstead. Although money was never plentiful, Griggs personally printed and distributed religious Gospel Message Pamphlets across much of the state. Griggs was also an avid waterfowl hunter who took special delight in matching wits with the wild Canada goose. Iowa goose flocks had not yet been restored and, in those days, goose hunting involved the challenge of trying to bag highly pressured arctic nesting honkers. The task was never easy. During the late 1930s or early 1940s, Griggs fashioned a unique set of field decoys. To give the birds a more realistic, non-glare appearance, Griggs covered the bodies of his geese with fine burlap gunny cloth. High quality oil paints were then mixed and applied to the finished replicas. Each decoy was completed by adding a set of realistic burlap covered legs and feet. Used on big river sandbars, the counterfeits were crude but effective.

Most, but not all, collectable decoys are ducks and geese. During a long 1950s North Iowa-style winter, Hancock county farmer, artist, and skilled taxidermist Charlie Brcka crafted this great horned owl at his rural Garner studio. The well worn decoy was never used to

attract other owls, of course, but was rather intended to arouse the anger of its arch enemy --- the common crow. To make the two-piece decoy even more effective, Brcka ran a large wooden rod from the owl's head downward through the entire length of the body. A quick tug on a cord leading to the rod made the head swivel, a feature which incited incoming crows to a virtual frenzy.

The origin of some Iowa decoys remains a mystery. Fashioned by an unknown carver, this crude but simplistically elegant drake canvasback once rode the waves above the vast, duck attracting aquatic celery beds of the upper Mississippi River. Discovered in the "junk corner" of an Allamakee County decoy shed, the handsome 'can was rescued from an uncertain future. But the beguiling drake will never again feel the spray of breaking waves, thrill to the whistle of wild wings, or savor the aroma of burnt gun powder. Today, it silently rides the calm waters of an Iowa decoy collector's book shelf.

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## **IOWA FURHARVESTER SEASON BEGINS NOV. 7**

CLEAR LAKE – More than 15,000 fur harvesters are expected to head to the streams, timber and fence lines when Iowa's fur harvest season begins Nov. 7. While bobcats and otters grab the headlines, other species, like raccoons, make up the bulk of the harvest.

Coyote numbers are doing well statewide, with higher numbers in the Loess Hills area, the southern half of the state and in the far eastern counties. Coyotes are less abundant elsewhere but with a good predator call in the right habitat, furharvesters could pick up a coyote anywhere in the state.

There is a good population of beaver and mink over much of the state. Mink have been providing a challenging option to late season trappers who battle ice and cold conditions to keep their traps functional and trapping skills honed.

Red fox numbers are down and the population is seemingly trending downward. The loss of habitat, past outbreaks of mange and competition from coyotes have all added to the decline of the red fox in Iowa. For the past four years the red and also the gray fox has been on the low end of the harvest totals.

Muskrats, once the mainstay for Iowa trappers, remain in low numbers in Iowa, the Midwest and across much of the nation. There are a few local wetlands that have a fair number of muskrats but furharvesters will need to scout them out.

The otter and bobcat quotas remain unchanged from 2008 with a limit of 200 bobcats and 500 otters in total, and one bobcat and two otters per licensed furharvester.

Furharvesters who are successful must call a conservation officer or other designated DNR personnel within 24 hours of capturing the otter or harvesting the bobcat, and meet with DNR personnel within 48 hours to receive and apply a CITES tag. The CITES tag must be applied before the otter or bobcat is skinned and remain with the animal until it is sold.

The DNR will post the daily quota on its website and on the telephone harvest hotline at 515-281-5918.

Once the quotas for each are met, trappers have a 48 hour grace period to report any trapped bobcats or otters. Otters and bobcats caught within the grace period may be kept. After the grace period, and in areas of the state closed to bobcat harvest, all trapped otters and bobcats must be turned over to Iowa conservation officers or other Iowa DNR personnel. There is no grace period for bobcats that are shot.

The bobcat season is only open in the southern two tiers of Iowa counties and in the counties along the Missouri River from Woodbury County through Fremont County.

Fur markets may be a little sluggish but furharvesters are encouraged to still get out there and pursue their favorite quarry and enjoy Iowa's great outdoors.

Furharvesters must have a furharvester license and pay the habitat fee, if normally required to do so to trap. There were nearly 16,000 fur harvesters who participated in Iowa in 2008. So far in 2009, more than 9,100 fur harvester licenses have been sold. The season runs through Jan. 31, 2010, except for beaver which closes on April 1.

**For more information, contact Ron Andrews, DNR Furbearer Specialist, at 641-425-5088.**

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## **NEW GENERAL MANAGER FOR HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK**

MORAVIA – Honey Creek Resort State Park has welcomed a new general manager, Andrew Woodrick, to lead its team and head operations for the resort, which includes a hotel, water park, conference facility, restaurant and golf course.

“Andy offers extensive experience, especially with resorts where natural resources are an important amenity,” said Lee Fundanet, director of operations for Central Group Companies, the management company for Honey Creek Resort. “His strong leadership skills, innovative ideas and exceptional customer service will be an excellent match for Honey Creek and all we have to offer.”

Woodrick has nearly 20 years experience in the resort and hospitality industry, most recently as general manager for Caribou Highlands Lodge in Lutsen, Minn. During his career he has served in management roles for resorts in Palm Springs, Calif., the British Virgin Islands, Sun Valley, Idaho, and for a management company based in Phoenix, Ariz.

“I have greatly enjoyed my time in the Midwest and this is where I want to stay,” said Woodrick. “I look forward to continuing Honey Creek Resort’s reputation as a top-notch destination, and have many ideas for adding more special events and services.”

Honey Creek Resort State Park opened its doors one year ago. The facility is managed by Central Group Companies of St. Cloud, Minn., and is the first resort of its kind as part of the Iowa state park system.

Since opening, the resort has hosted more than 43,000 lodge and cabin guests, hundreds of events, and 157,000 patrons to its restaurant, banquet and bar facilities.

“I am excited to welcome many visitors, both new and returning, to Honey Creek Resort State Park in the years to come,” said Woodrick.

For more information about Honey Creek Resort State Park, visit [www.honeycreekresort.com](http://www.honeycreekresort.com).

**Media Contact: Lee Fundanet, Central Group Companies, (320) 469-6468,  
[LFundanet@centralgroupcompanies.com](mailto:LFundanet@centralgroupcompanies.com)**

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