



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION | WWW.IOWADNR.GOV/NEWS/

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NOVEMBER ANTLERLESS DEER SEASON LICENSES VALID ON PRIVATE LAND ONLY

DES MOINES – Iowa’s three-day November antlerless deer season is Nov. 27, 28 and 29 and is open to Iowa residents only. Hunters who want to participate in the season should note that these licenses are valid on private land only, which is a change from previous years.

The season is open in participating counties where the antlerless only licenses have not sold out and licenses will remain on sale until either the quota fills or the season ends.

Hunters must wear blaze orange during this hunt and party hunting is legal. Hunting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Media Contact: Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-774-2958.

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HERE COMES WINTER BIRD FEEDING

By Joe Wilkinson
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Our balmy-at-times November so far may have misled you. Things are cooling down now, though. All that's missing is the snow and wind for Iowa's winter bird feeding season to settle down around us.

Actually, most of those winter birds are here. That's why it's a good idea to get those cold weather feeding stations up and running. "It will help establish their feeding patterns. You'll be on the 'circuit,' so to speak, for those migratory birds that are moving around right now," explains Pat Schlarbaum, nongame wildlife technician with the Department of Natural Resources.

And there are a lot of us out there. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service says one-third of Iowans watch wildlife. And more than 400,000 of us take our wildlife viewing on the road. Between serious birders traveling to hard-to-reach viewing areas and families with a pair of binoculars in the park, birds and birding make up a big share of that demand.

It all starts in your backyard. "We've definitely seen an increase in traffic; people coming in buying feeders and stuff," notes Ronda Wilson, who runs Birds Eye View in Coralville. "They're buying black oil sunflower seeds...that interests most of the native songbirds. Some of them are getting specific seed to attract specific species, though."

If you stock just one feeder, or just one type of feed, black oil sunflower seed is the standard. "It's the most widely appreciated feed for the 'more desirable' species; the cardinals, nuthatches, chickadees, the tufted titmice," said Schlarbaum.

Though you can take home seed in 25 or 50 pound bags, to get a break in the price, the spike in the seed oil market has rounded off in the past year. The continent-wide ethanol boom over the last couple years didn't just create a demand for more corn. It also hiked interest in peanuts, safflower and sunflower seeds. That sent prices higher, particularly in 2008, with flood related losses and higher transportation costs. "Prices are down significantly this fall," relays Wilson. "They had gone through the roof; sunflower seeds, nyjer and peanuts, a year or so ago."

Depending on your interest...and the size of your feeding area, you can branch out from there. Nyjer thistle seed keeps goldfinches coming back. Peanuts attract the stately gray on white titmice, perhaps even more than sunflower seeds. It took less than a day for a big sapsucker to zero in on my wire peanut feeder. Hairy and downy woodpeckers climb all over it, too. I take down my nectar feeders about mid-October after the hummingbirds clear out and pull out the wire suet feeders; which are woodpecker favorites, too. I filled one, but it's neglected until we get snow on the ground, apparently.

Overall, the message is simple. If you fill it, they will come. Still, serious backyard bird barons work a couple more 'feather factors' into their feeding regime. A water source; say a bird bath with a heating element, can multiply the bird population. A quick splash lets birds clean themselves and better regulate body heat; critical for those tiny bodies in bitter cold weather.

On the other hand, you may have too many birds. “House sparrows, grackles...some of the more undesirable species; you have some luck luring them away if you scatter some cracked corn or the cheaper feed mixes in a back corner of your property,” suggests Schlarbaum.

If you’re a ‘no-squirrel advocate,’ like me, safflower seeds do not appeal to them...but are favorites of cardinals. Most full service wildlife stores have squirrel-proof feeders...and others that discourage sparrows. Wilson says there is a big move toward ‘green feeders;’ those made from recycled plastic, rather than wood.

The view from your window is hard to beat, on a subzero day with the flitting reds, whites and blues...and ten shades of gray. And the time spent filling those feeders and maybe even looking a little beyond your back yard, gets you and your family outdoors, too...even if it is just watching from the window.

Getting Started? Stepping it Up?

Any full service bird supply store or counter can answer your ‘getting started’ questions, if you want to feed the birds or otherwise enjoy winter wildlife. It might take just an \$8 dollar feeder and a small bag of sunflower seed. Most veteran feeders discourage setting out the cheap mixes which are heavy on millet. From there, though, the sky’s the limit, for feeder choices and the various seeds, suet and side treats.

A variety of websites and blogs are out there, too. Hopefully, you’ll remember your goal is to enjoy the outdoors...not stare at a computer screen. A few good sites to get you rolling include: www.iowabirds.org , www.icbirdss.org , www.audubon.org and the DNR’s website; www.iowadnr.gov (click on nongame wildlife, left column).

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REVIEW OF EXPERIMENTAL MISSISSIPPI RIVER WALLEYE-SAUGER REGULATION TOPIC OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

BELLEVIEWE, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting three public meetings to discuss the current experimental walleye and sauger regulations on the Mississippi River and the proposed changes to those experimental regulations. The public meetings will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 1, in Davenport, Wednesday Dec. 2, in Dubuque, and Thursday Dec. 3, in Burlington.

Walleye and sauger anglers have been taking part in two experimental regulations over the past five years with the goal of reducing sauger mortality in the winter by closing tailwater fishing at three lock and dams, and increasing egg laying walleyes in the population with a 20 to 27-inch release slot on walleyes from Dubuque south to the Missouri border.

Iowa fisheries researchers have looked at the data to determine whether there has been an improvement in the size structure and catch rates of sauger and walleye in the special regulation areas and are presenting this information to the angling public.

“This is an opportunity for our anglers who support fisheries to give us some feedback on these regulations. We will go over the experimental walleye and sauger regulations and our rationale for any changes and take comments from anyone willing to speak,” said Mike Steuck, Mississippi River fisheries research biologist. Research findings and public input will assist DNR Fisheries staff in decision making to continue, expand or change the regulation.

Any interested person may make written suggestions or comments on or before December 31, 2009. Written comments may be sent to Mike Steuck, Bellevue Fisheries Research Station, 24143 Hwy 52, Bellevue, IA 52031, or faxed to 563-872-5998.

The Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau will have staff members present at each site to answer questions and to take any written comments.

Public Meeting Locations. All meetings are scheduled from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Davenport: Tuesday, Dec. 1, Davenport Library, 3000 N. Fairmont St. Davenport

Dubuque: Wednesday, Dec. 2, Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd. Peosta

Burlington: Thursday, Dec. 3, Starr’s Cave Nature Center, 11627 Starrs Cave Rd. Burlington

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

GRAND RIVER, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources invites the public to discuss the proposed designation of the region including Sand Creek and Dekalb wildlife areas as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA) at a public meeting on December 2. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center in Grand River, located downtown Grand River on the east side of Broadway, 2 blocks north of W. 1st St. (county road J20).

Creating Bird Conservation Areas is a high priority for the Iowa DNR.

“The proposed Sand Creek Woodland/Savanna BCA is a unique area containing both woodland and grassland habitats that provide homes to about half of Iowa’s nesting bird species, many of which are declining at an alarming rate,” said Bruce Ehresman, with the DNR’s wildlife diversity program. “From birds of large forests, like red-shouldered hawk and wood thrush, savanna species such as red-headed woodpecker and northern mockingbird, to declining grassland birds like northern bobwhite and bobolink, and Creek and Dekalb wildlife areas and adjoining lands provide the ideal southern Iowa setting for what could be our fifteenth Bird Conservation Area.”

The Bird Conservation Area concept focuses on all-bird conservation on a large scale its success depends upon partnerships between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners. Each BCA consists of at least 10,000 acres with one or more core areas of permanently protected bird habitat surrounded by large areas of privately owned land that also provides important habitat for birds. Core public lands are managed for all wild birds, but especially for those species experiencing regional or continental population declines.

Wildlife biologists and private lands specialists work with willing landowners to find ways to improve their properties for birds. The program is entirely voluntary, non-regulatory, and can result in extra incentives for landowners to make bird habitat improvements.

“Establishing a Bird Conservation Area helps draw attention to the needs of birds that are in trouble; plus it allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds,” said Doug Harr, DNR wildlife diversity program coordinator. “Declining species ranging from nongame species such as Whip-poor-will to game species like American Woodcock all should benefit from the creation of the Sand Creek Bird Conservation Area.”

Anyone interested in bird conservation, bird watching, and improved natural resource management is encouraged to attend this public meeting.

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

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EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT THIS FRIDAY FOR SHOOTERS AT BANNER SHOOTING RANGE

Banner Shooting Range, near Indianola, will be offering a special early bird discount to all shooters who register to shoot prior to 12 p.m. on Friday, November 27. The range will open at 9 a.m. for those who would like to sight in their shotguns/muzzleloaders or who simply want to shoot targets or a round of clays. The hourly rate will be \$5 per shooter. The regular pricing rate of \$8 per hour will resume at noon.

While others are shopping come out and enjoy a free cup of coffee and fun day of shooting at Banner Shooting Range.

Banner Shooting Range Hours:

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Closed on Wednesday

Winter hours January 1 through March 31

11 a.m. to sunset Monday and Friday,

9 a.m. to sunset Saturday and Sunday

Closed Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Call 515-961-6408 for potential weather related closings.

The shooting range is located at 13796 Elkhorn Street between Des Moines and Indianola on US Hwy. 65/69 in Warren County.

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NEW GUIDE OFFERS ASSISTANCE TO WOODLAND OWNERS WHEN HARVESTING TREES

DES MOINES – Call Before You Cut is a new resource and consumer protection campaign that encourages Iowa woodland owners to seek professional advice before harvesting trees. By calling 800-865-2477, landowners can receive *A Landowners Guide for a Successful Harvest*, an information kit and advice on good harvesting practices, at no cost.

“This packet will provide to woodland owners information that will help assure the health and value of their woods,” said Paul Tauke, State Forester.

The information packet can also be obtained online at www.callB4Ucut.com, which features information about Iowa’s harvesting rules and guidelines.

“When a tree should be cut depends on many things, such as its age and maturity, its contribution to your woods’ health, the market price of different timbers, and your own goals and needs,” said Tauke. “Make sure that your ‘select cut’ is based on all these things and not just the size of the tree.”

Surveys show more than 30 percent of woodlot owners have authorized harvesting on their lands in the last five years. Yet only 18 percent have sought the advice of a professional forester.

Iowa’s 3 million acres of privately owned forested land makes up 8 percent of the state’s landscape.

The “Call Before You Cut” campaign is coordinated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Bureau. Additional program sponsors include the Society of American Foresters, Iowa State University Forestry Extension and the USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry program.

For more information, contact Aron Aron Flickinger, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Bureau, at (515) 242-5966.

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