



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 27, 2009

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SLOW PHEASANT OPENER EXPECTED

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The forecast is pretty well known. This weekend across Iowa, we find out where the pheasants are...or aren't.

Iowa's premier game bird still draws a crowd. Even last year, with preseason counts at near record lows, 86,000 hunters were in the field. They took an estimated 383,000 ringneck pheasants. Pre-season counts were basically about the same this summer; down in the northern third of Iowa and up a bit in the lower two-thirds. "When all is said and done this season, we should harvest about 300,000-350,000 birds," estimates Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Department of Natural Resources.

On opening weekend, of course, standing crops play into the plans, too. That was obvious in last weekend's Youth Season...when steady, soaking rains kept combines out of the field for much of the week. By early this week, the corn and soybean harvests were three weeks behind schedule.

With all the standing crops in the field, hunters should wear more than the minimum amount of blaze orange. The law requires at least one visible external piece of apparel with at

least 50 percent solid blaze orange in color: hat, cap, vest, coat jacket, sweatshirt, shirt or coveralls.

“The goal is to be seen,” said Megan Wisecup, recreation safety program supervisor for the DNR. “Wear as much blaze orange as possible. Visibility of hunting party members is critical for hunter safety, especially while in dense vegetation.”

Hunters staying within their proper zone of fire is also a major safety issue while pheasant hunting. “Swinging on game is one of the main causes of pheasant hunting incidents in Iowa,” Wisecup said. “It is important to know where everyone is during the hunt. At the end of the day, we all want a safe, successful hunt.”

Still, when hunters can set foot into their favorite grassy field, creek bed or corn stubble, it’s to enjoy the day; work their dogs and spend time with friends and family outdoors.

They also spend money while they’re at it. Figures from the latest U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service outdoor recreation survey support that. “Pheasant hunting, quail hunting, have always been a big part of the state’s history...and economy,” assesses Bogenschutz. “(In a year) the economic impact in Iowa was over \$220 million. And that generated about \$9 million more in state and local taxes.”

While just getting out is Priority One for most hunters, it helps to see pheasants within shooting range. Weather—ranging from snow and ice to summer floods—has been the short term villain behind our lower bird counts. Over the long term, though, shrinking habitat rates as the top concern. In 1990, Iowa had 8,500 square miles of suitable pheasant habitat. In just 15 years, that had shrunk to 5,800 square miles. Just this October 1, another 130,000 acres came out of the Conservation Reserve Program.

That’s why the outlook for pheasants and quail is shifting from field edges to Capitol hearing rooms. A special task force is tackling various strategies to improve upland game numbers. Their recommendations are due on lawmakers’ desks in January 10.

“A couple things the committee has discussed include a statewide CREP (conservation reserve enhancement program),” relays Bogenschutz. “That might allow the state to put in some money...the USDA to add some and let the state focus on a special concern... pheasant and quail habitat in this instance.” That could allow special incentives for landowners to either improve year-round habitat or hunting on their land.

Iowa Pheasant Season	Oct. 31 – Jan. 10, 2010
Shooting hours	8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Daily Bag Limit	3 rooster pheasants
Possession Limit	12 rooster pheasants

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[Electronic photos available upon request]

Although Timber Rattler Populations Have Dropped By More Than 50 Percent In Thirty Years
--- The Venomous Reptiles May Offer More Public Benefit Than People Realize

IOWA CONSERVATION OFFICER WORKS TO HALT RATTLESNAKE DECLINE

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

McGREGOR---It's the end of October and air and ground temperatures are cooling rapidly. For the cold blooded reptiles that inhabit the rugged bluff country northeastern Iowa, it's time to head for underground denning areas.

Prowling the winding back roads of Clayton County, DNR Conservation Officer Burt Walters is currently observing the slow speed migration. Today the skies are mostly clear, a somewhat rare event this autumn, and snakes are on the move. So far this morning, Walters has spotted more than 50 snakes --- mostly red-bellied, little brown, and a handful of garters, all enroute to the safety of limestone fissures that will offer winter protection.

But the species Walters hopes most to encounter is the timber rattlesnake, a formidable creature most folks choose to avoid. Walters is a natural born native of the McGregor hill country, and has been actively studying these intriguing pit vipers for more than 20 years. Alarmed by the rattlesnake's dramatic decline, he conducts an ongoing crusade aimed at educating the public on the biological importance of what he considers to be a desirable member of the Iowa outdoors.

"It's alarming," says Walters. "At the denning sites that I know of, rattlesnake populations have been reduced by at least 50 percent since the 1980s and are still declining."

The scenario is the result of a complex chain of events, and no single factor is solely responsible for the decline, says Walters. Habitat destruction is listed among the culprits. As more and more homes are built atop scenic bluffs and ridgelines, there are less and less places for timber rattlers and other wildlife to live. Also included among habitats in decline are the so called "goat prairies" that once flourished along the near vertical slopes of bluffland ridges and are now vanishing as cedars and other invasive shrubs take over. Historically, landowners would set fire to the goat prairies hoping the flames would destroy snakes, says Walters. Quite to the contrary, the fires enhanced prairie growth which attracted native mice, voles, and insects which provided an ample food source for rattlers, skinks, and other Iowa herpitiles.

There is also a problem with snake poachers. In spite of being legally protected, rattlesnakes are still being harvested by poachers who supply the exotic pet trade --- mostly for people who still think it's cool to have something dangerous in their home.

"Collecting can have a very serious and rapid impact on populations," says Walters. "Timber rattlers have a low reproductive potential and it takes a male anywhere from 5 to 7 years to mature. It takes a female from 7 to 11 years to mature and after that she'll only bear young every third year. When people take snakes from communal den sites it doesn't take long to have an effect."

Those effects became painfully apparent this spring as Walters inspected an Allamakee County den site. Trails leading to the site had been marked with strips of blue plastic flagging, certain evidence that rattlesnake poachers had already paid a visit to the den. Look as he might, Walters could only find two surviving rattlesnakes at a site that should have held dozens.

Although scenes like that are disheartening, Walters hasn't given up the crusade to educate Iowans on the virtues of this venomous reptile. Since the late 1980s, he's traveled up and down the Mississippi River showing live reptiles and giving "snake talks" to countless school groups [more than 65 on the best years], service and conservation organizations, and just about anyone else who cares to listen to his message. One of the biggest events, he says, was the EMS Venomous Bite Day. Held for two years at Calmar, the program played to a completely packed house each time and remains one of his most requested presentations.

"One of the things I stress is that timber rattlesnakes just want to be left alone," says Walters. "They are not highly aggressive, and most people will never see one. They are, in fact, a very valuable and desirable member of the wildlife community. Their venom is currently being used in experiments with heart disease, arthritis, and other human ailments. At this point, their benefits to humans may even surpass what people currently realize."

There are encouraging signs that the education is beginning to pay dividends. One of those was the overwhelming public support for legislation that has now protected timber rattlesnakes in their northeastern Iowa strongholds. By contrast, similar legislation aimed at protecting remnant populations of timber rattlers in central Iowa failed miserably due to profound lack of public support.

Earlier this fall, Walters was notified by police radio that a four-foot long timber rattler was causing something of a stir among of users of the Guttenberg City Park. When he arrived sometime later, the hefty reptile was being held at bay by a group of onlookers. Walters promptly captured the snake and safely returned it to a nearby den site.

"Incidents like that give me hope," says Walters. "Until recently, people would have immediately killed that snake on the spot. Today, I think more and more people are beginning to realize that that isn't the thing to do anymore and that timber rattlers are a natural part of the wildlife community."

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BREEDING SEASON, HARVEST KEEP DEER ON THE MOVE

Most drivers in Iowa can relate to the heart pounding near miss of a deer that came out of nowhere to appear in front of them on the road then disappears as quickly into a field, timber or the darkness. It is a reminder that deer are out there, and to slow down and pay extra attention to avoid a collision.

Deer are on the move in the fall because instinct and diesel fuel has changed their normally mundane routine. The breeding season is in full bloom by early November, causing

bucks to temporarily lose their normal reclusiveness and look for does ready and willing to breed. If that was not enough, then add in the annual crop harvest with combines and tractors working the fields all hours of day and night, pushing deer from their usual feeding and bedding areas.

"We say it every year, the best way to avoid hitting a deer is to slow down, to avoid traveling around dusk and dawn if possible, and to make the extra effort to scan the ditches from fence line to fence line looking for deer," said Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

When daylight savings time ends on Nov. 1, suddenly, the drive home from work will be at dusk when deer movement is high.

"In the unfortunate situation where a collision cannot be avoided, it is usually safer to hit the deer than to leave the roadway or swerve into oncoming traffic," he said.

The number of road-killed deer reported by the Iowa Department of Transportation in 2008 was down 16 percent from 2007. Statewide, deer populations are declining but the decrease in last year's reported road-kills cannot be attributed solely to these population declines. Since 2004, there has been a declining trend for both indices in Iowa.

For more information, contact Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist at (641) 774-2958.

HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK TO BE HOME FOR ISU SOLAR HOUSE

AMES/MORAVIA, Iowa – After successfully competing in the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., Iowa State University's student-designed and built solar house has found a permanent home: Honey Creek Resort State Park at Rathbun Lake in southern Iowa.

The Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources has purchased the 800-square-foot, energy-efficient, solar-powered Interlock House for use as an interpretive center at the park. Iowa State also will have access to the building for energy performance monitoring. During the Solar Decathlon competition, Oct. 9-18, the house produced more energy than it consumed. Researchers want to evaluate the building's performance for a longer period of time.

"At Honey Creek, our focus is on helping people enjoy the outdoors and appreciate the natural resources we have in Iowa," said Patricia Boddy, DNR deputy director. "The Interlock House will not only provide us with a place to do this but help interpret what it means to be a good steward of our resources. We are extremely grateful to Iowa State for this opportunity."

"We're so pleased that the DNR is able to make the Interlock House available to all Iowans, while allowing it to also be used for student research," said Elizabeth Hoffman, executive vice president and provost at Iowa State. "Showcasing the house at Honey Creek

State Park is a tribute to the extraordinary work of very dedicated Iowa State students, faculty and staff.”

More than 75 Iowa State students and 17 faculty from 11 departments worked nearly two years on the Solar Decathlon project under the leadership of Ulrike Passe, assistant professor of architecture. Iowa State was one of 20 select student teams from four countries that competed to design, construct and operate highly energy-efficient, completely solar-powered houses. After the houses were built on their respective campuses, they were dismantled, transported to Washington, D.C., and reassembled for the competition and public tours.

The teams were judged in 10 competitions. Iowa State placed 12th overall, 3rd place in marketability/livability/buildability, 4th in communications, 5th in engineering and 6th in net metering (the house was 6th best in producing more energy than it consumed). Iowa State’s house was the only one in the competition that was entirely ADA accessible, employing universal design concepts.

The DNR is preparing a permanent foundation for the Interlock House to be placed in the next few weeks and an open house is planned for Earth Week, April 18-24, 2010. The house will accommodate numerous outdoor and environmental activities for visitors to the resort state park once installation is finalized next spring. Visit www.honeycreekresort.com for more information about classes and activities hosted at the Interlock House as well as other resort events and specials.

About the Interlock House

- Size: Footprint of 800 square feet
- Dimensions: 19 feet x 38 feet
- Height: 16 ½ feet
- Structure: 2 x 6 wood frame construction with modifications for energy efficiency
- Windows: Double panes of glass with a third separating-layer consisting of a plastic film between two chambers of low-conductivity gas. Frames are fiberglass.
- Insulation: Biofoam spray
- Insulation values: Window R-12, Walls R-49
- Floor: Warmboard radiant sub floor
- Heating system: Solar thermal evacuated tubes for radiant heating and passive solar
- Cooling system: High-efficiency air conditioning combined with dehumidification
- Dehumidification: Liquid desiccant system custom designed by ISU students
- Water heating: Solar thermal evacuated tubes, radiant floor heat
- Electricity: Solar photovoltaic modules (solar panels), both thin film and crystalline, and custom tracking system of photovoltaic louvers (above the sun porch) that will follow the sun, maximizing solar energy utilization.
- Lighting: Interior — LEDs, fluorescent and passive day lighting
- Exterior cladding: White cedar that is certified for sustainable forestry in Wisconsin
- Anticipated energy production: 1100 kWh of electricity per month on average

- Anticipated energy consumption: 600 kWh of electricity per month on average.

ISU contacts:

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TEAM FROM HONEY CREEK RESORT'S GOLF COURSE TO COMPETE IN NATIONAL TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

MORAVIA, Iowa – The golf team from The Preserve on Rathbun Lake, the golf course at Honey Creek Resort State Park, will play in the National PGA McGladrey Team Championship on Oct. 26-28 at Pinehurst Resort and Spa in North Carolina. The Preserve team beat out 18 other Iowa teams to advance this past August.

The McGladrey Team Championship, an event sponsored by the PGA of America, is comprised of more than 20,000 participants across the country. The Preserve on Rathbun Lake's team includes Darin Fisher, PGA, Head Golf Professional and Director of Golf Operations for The Preserve; Jim Campbell; Joe Bates; and Kevin Pickerell. The format of play is a net two-man best ball for the team.

According to Fisher, only 41 teams advance to the national tournament at Pinehurst.

"We are thrilled to represent the Preserve and Iowa in this prestigious event, and look forward to competing on a national level," said Fisher.

About the Preserve Golf Course on Rathbun Lake

The Preserve's 18-hole championship golf course is located at Honey Creek Resort State Park, the newest destination resort in Iowa. The links-style course lies along scenic Rathbun Lake. Nestled within the natural setting the course features a natural landscape, bentgrass, greens and fairways, which make the Preserve a premiere golf destination.

The Preserve offers a driving range, putting green and Club Car golf carts equipped with the latest GPS technology. Players will enjoy the area's natural scenery and year-round amenities at the resort.

Golf packages and events are still available throughout the fall, including Stay and Play packages and a Chili Open series into November. Golf reservations can be made by calling 641-724-1400.

For more information visit www.honeycreekresort.com or call 877-677-3344.

Contacts: Darin Fisher, (641) 724-1400, mail to: darinf@honeycreekresort.com or Libby Weimer, (320) 654-6307, mail to: lweimer@centralgroupcompanies.com

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TROUT STOCKING AT HERITAGE POND SET FOR OCT. 28

DUBUQUE – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will stock 1,500 rainbow trout in Heritage Pond around 11 a.m., on Oct. 28. This will be the first of three trout stockings at the Dubuque pond during the fall to spring period.

The trout are raised at the Elkader hatchery. Anglers who want to fish for the trout are required to purchase a trout stamp (\$11) in addition to an Iowa fishing license. The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.

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TROUT STOCKING AT BANNER LAKE SET FOR OCT. 29

INDIANOLA – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will stock 1,500 rainbow trout in South Banner Lake around noon on Oct. 29. The DNR stocks the 59-acre lake three times during the fall, winter and early spring to offer a different type of fishing experience in central Iowa.

Summerset State Park is the only trout fishery in central Iowa. The trout are raised at the Elkader hatchery. Anglers who want to fish for the trout are required to purchase a trout stamp (\$11) in addition to an Iowa fishing license. The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.

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TROUT STOCKING AT NORTH PRAIRIE LAKE SET FOR OCT. 30

CEDAR FALLS – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will stock 1,500 rainbow trout in North Prairie Lake around 11 a.m., on Oct. 30. This will be the first of three trout stockings at the Cedar Falls lake during the fall to spring period.

The trout are raised at the Elkader hatchery. Anglers who want to fish for the trout are required to purchase a trout stamp (\$11) in addition to an Iowa fishing license. The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET NOVEMBER 5 IN DES MOINES

DES MOINES – The Natural Resource Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m., Nov. 5, fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., in Des Moines.

The meeting is open to the public.

Members of the commission are Kim Francisco, Elizabeth Garst, Gregory Drees, Janelle Rettig and Tammi Kircher. The Director of the DNR is Richard Leopold.

The following is the agenda for the November meeting.

- Oath of Office for New Commissioners – Dennis Schemmel and Margo Underwood
- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Oct. 8
- Director's Remarks
- Honey Creek Resort State Park Update
- Construction Projects
 - Meredith Marsh WRP, Hancock County – Replace and Add Drawdown Structures
 - Upper Iowa Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Winneshiek County – Coon Creek WMA, Lundy Bridge
 - Green Island WMA, Jackson County – 4th Ditch Damage Repair
- Small Construction Projects Contracts
- Land Acquisition Projects
 - Management Agreement, Pocahontas County – Lizard Lake Access
- DNR Office of Realty Services, Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report
- Hardwood Timber Sale French Creek Wildlife Area
- Contract with the IDALS DSC for Conservation Reserve Program Landowner Incentive in Northeast Iowa

- Contract with MSA Professional Services for Diagnostic and Feasibility Study of Blue Lake, Monona County
- Lost Grove Lake Update
- Chapter 13, Permits and Easements for Construction and Related Activities on Public Lands and Waters – Notice of Intended Action
- Chapter 54, Restriction on Removal of Plant Life – Notice of Intended Action
- Coordinated Effort to Increase Effectiveness of the EWP
- Contract with Inter-Fluve, Inc., for Littleton Dam Wapsipinicon River Restoration Project
- Fish and Game Trust Fund Update
- 2010 NRC meeting Recommendations
- Donations
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Dec. 10, Polk County

For more information, contact Melissa Speed, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-8650.