



# IOWA OUTDOORS

## IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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

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### **CAMPERS FIND SOLITUDE WHEN OTHERS ARE AT WORK**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

After a lap around the campground, I pulled over in the northeast corner. Not much company tonight. Just the campground host and two other campers had claimed spots in Pilot Knob State Park's 56-site campground on this Wednesday night. As I staked out my little, red one person tent, I realized we were set up as far away from each other as we could be.

The Labor Day weekend promises full campgrounds at most state and county parks. However, if you are looking for a little elbow room after the holiday crowds, weekday camping fills the ticket.

That changes by location, of course. A couple weeks ago, I drove though the campground at McIntosh Woods State Park. Even at mid-week, it was half full. Across the water, Clear Lake State Park, too, had about 16 RVs, tents and pull behinds. A lot of campers were in town for the Pyrotechnics Guild International convention, either exhibiting or watching.

"That's a lot of the reason we came this week," acknowledged camper Larry Bunkofske of Burt. "We are going to go over and check out (the nightly fireworks displays)."

Now retired, Bunkofske and his wife opt for weekdays when they pull in with their fifth-wheel unit.

"Less of a crowd. It's more quiet. You have your pick of the spots," listed Bunkofske. "We leave the weekends for people who still have to work. That way, we don't get in their way and they won't be in ours."

That's a common preference of the weekday crowd. All park amenities are still there. You just share them with fewer people.

“We do have a few regulars through the summer, but I notice they’re not even here tonight,” campground host Carol Barnes mentioned back at Pilot Knob. “Overall, it’s nice and quiet through the week.”

It’s also a chance to see someplace new. Other than a quick drive-through and hike up the steps of Pilot Knob’s stone tower, I had never been to the park. With woods, trails and great views, it’s a nice choice for hiking and wildlife watching.

The water factor comes into play, too. At Pilot Knob, there are fish in a 2-acre lake, convenient for sure, but not really a water destination. In contrast, three hours away at Lake Macbride State Park, 800 acres of water keeps things busy all week long.

“There’s the beach, fishing, boating, boat rental. All our services are still available,” lists park ranger Gwen Prentice. Half a dozen campsites were taken on the north side on a Monday afternoon. “It is quieter on the weekdays. That’s why people come,” said Prentice. “Also, we are close to Interstate 80. We get campers who just pull off for the night.”

Labor Day seems to mark the unofficial “end” to Iowa’s summer camping season. If the weather holds out, many of those state—and county—parks will still pack them in for a few more weekends. Always a great excuse to get away, those parks pack a special attraction, if you can manage a mid-week night under the stars.

### **If you go...**

State park rates are the same, weekend or weekday. Reservations for half of all campsites are available, too. Prices range from \$9/night for a non-modern, non-electric spot to \$19 for a modern, electrical one, with water and sewer hookups. After Sept. 30, those prices go down \$3 per night. For information, go to [www.reserveiaparks.com](http://www.reserveiaparks.com).

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## **FOUR IOWANS PLEAD GUILTY TO MULTIPLE WILDLIFE VIOLATIONS**

Four Iowa men pleaded guilty to multiple counts of waste and abandonment of deer in a case that happened in the Loess Hills area of western Iowa.

Karl F. Johnk, III, of Smithland, pleaded guilty to taking four deer out of season, illegal possession of two bobcats and loaded firearm in a motor vehicle. Johnk paid \$7,200 in fines and lost his hunting privileges for three years.

Ethan Wolf, of Mapleton, pleaded guilty to eight hunting violations involving deer and bobcat. Wolf paid \$2,500 in fines and lost his hunting privileges for three years.

Heath Brown, of Paulina, pleaded guilty to illegal take of bobcat and taking one deer out of season. Brown paid \$1,800 in fines and lost his hunting privileges for one year.

Andy Wray, of Mapleton, pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to take bobcat out of season and paid \$182 in fines.

In February 2008, Iowa conservation officers received reports of multiple deer that were shot from the road and abandoned in the Mapleton/Castana/Smithland areas of Monona and Woodbury counties.

During the investigation, a task force of conservation officers from western Iowa, troopers with the Iowa State Patrol and deputies from the Woodbury County Sheriff’s Department executed search warrants at three residences in Woodbury and Monona counties. Firearms, ammunition and wildlife were seized including two bobcat carcasses, which were still protected in western Iowa at that time.

Firearms and bullets recovered from deer carcasses were sent to the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation Forensic Laboratory for analysis.

**MEDIA CONTACT: Gary Sisco, Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-420-1486 or Stacey Sisco, Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 712-301-6735.**

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## **YOUTH WATERFOWL FIELD DAY, MENTORED HUNT PLANNED FOR POLK COUNTY**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is teaming up with several state and local outdoor groups in sponsoring a Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day Sept. 26 and mentored waterfowl hunt Oct. 4 at the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in Polk County.

The Sept. 26 field day will feature demonstrations on dog training, duck calling, waterfowl ID, gun and blind safety, duck cleaning and preparation, waterfowl ecology, archery and trap shooting. Snacks and drinks will be provided. Each participant will receive a duck call and a hat or tee-shirt. The cost for the day is \$5 per youth. Hours are 12:30 p.m. to roughly 5 p.m.

The youth hunt will be Oct. 4 at the controlled waterfowl area at Chichaqua. A maximum of 16 kids will be allowed. Youths must attend the field day to participate in the hunt, unless other arrangements are made. Each blind will hold two kids, a caller/dog handler and a game warden. Decoys will be provided, but kids are encouraged to bring waders to help set decoys if they wish. The day will start at 5:15 a.m. with breakfast at the Chichaqua Longhouse. Hunters must be between the ages of 12-15, and have attended hunter safety. The cost for the hunt is \$10 per youth.

For more information or to register for the events, visit the Polk County Conservation Board website at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com), or call 515-323-5300.

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## **DNR CORRECTS IOWA FISH & GAME MAGAZINE ERROR**

Information published recently in the *Iowa Fish and Game Magazine* incorrectly reported that landowners and tenants who obtain reduced fee deer and turkey tags were required to re-register their land with the DNR every three years to remain eligible. Registered landowners, tenants or eligible family members may receive the reduced fee licenses indefinitely, provided registration information and eligibility status remains valid.

DNR officials will, however, periodically review and verify existing landowner/tenant registrations. In addition, landowners and tenants are encouraged to submit a new registration form if personal information changes, or deactivate their account should they no longer be eligible for reduced-fee landowner/tenant files.

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## **FISHING REGULATIONS RELAXED AT COUNCIL BLUFF'S BIG LAKE**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will relax fishing regulations at Big Lake Park in Council Bluffs effective immediately. This action will allow anglers to more freely harvest fish before a planned late fall renovation. The lake's water level will be lowered 2 to 3 feet by mid-September and will remain at this level through the fall.

Anglers with a valid fishing license will be allowed to harvest any size or number of largemouth bass, channel catfish and all other fish species from Big Lake. Any number of fishing poles or jugs will be allowed. Anglers must remain in sight of these lines at all times, and follow all other fishing regulations and area rules. Dynamite, poison, electric shocking devices or any stupefying substances will not be allowed. It is illegal to sell fish or stock captured fish into public waters. Liberalized fishing regulations for Big Lake will remain in effect until the date of the planned renovation in late September.

The fishery renovation is just part of a process to improve the lake's water quality. Throughout fall and winter, the Big Lake Rehabilitation construction project will be completed. The project will stabilize eroding shoreline and deepen small areas of the lake. Access to the lake will be improved by extending the side walk around the lake.

The lake's water elevation will be allowed to return to normal after the construction project is completed, and fish will be restocked in the spring. Users should expect limited access to the lake until normal lake water elevation returns in 2010. Fall and winter trout stocking will be shifted to Sauganash Pond in the Western Historical Trails Center.

DNR officials also remind anglers it is very important that anglers never transport and release common carp, gizzard shad or any fish species into any water system.

For more information contact Iowa DNR Fisheries at 712-769-2587.

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## **NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET SEPT. 10 IN MILFORD**

MILFORD – The Natural Resource Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 8:30 a.m., Sept. 10 at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory in Milford.

Commission and DNR staff will meet at 1 p.m., Sept. 9 at Gull Point State Park to begin an extensive tour of the area. A 6 p.m. commission dinner at the Fillenwarth Beach main dock at Arnolds Park will follow. The tour and the meeting are 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 September meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Aug. 13 Meeting
- Director's Remarks
- Agreement between Iowa DNR and ADLM
- Construction Projects
  - Big Creek State Park, Polk County—Flood Damage Repair
  - Red Rock WMA, Warren County—Pump Station and Dike Repair
  - Lake Darling State Park, Washington County—5 sediment ponds
  - Lake Darling State Park, Washington County—8 sediment ponds
- Small Construction Projects Contracts
- Land Acquisition Projects
  - Burr Oak Lake, Emmet County—Bert and Shelly Refsell
  - Steamboat Rock, Hardin County—Marvin and Sue Luiken
  - Wapsi River Greenbelt, Bremer County—Luella Selck
  - Algific Talus Slope Easement, Clayton County—Bonnie Tuecke and Carole Tuecke
  - Algific Talus Slope Easement, Clayton County—Bonnie Tuecke
- Land Management Projects
  - Chapter 18 Lease Renewal, Muscatine County—Mississippi River

- Easement Issuance, Appanoose County—Honey Creek Resort State Park
- Land Conveyance, Pottawattamie County—Council Bluffs Riverfront
- West Lake Okoboji, Exchange Proposal, Dickinson County
- Budget Requests for FY2011
- Contract with Ducks Unlimited, Inc. for Little Storm Lake Restoration Project
- Contract with City of Clear Lake for a Storm Water Improvement Project
- Lost Island Lake Rock Reef Agreement
- Chapter 88, Fishing Tournaments—Final
- Chapter 81, Fishing Regulations--Final
- Chapter 15, General License Regulations—NOIA
- Hardwood Timber Sale Shimek State Forest
- Hardwood Timber Sale Yellow River State Forest
- Contract with Prairie Rivers RC&D for Federal Excess Firefighting Equipment and Fire Training
- Concession Contract Amendment—Big Creek State Park
- USDA Community Facilities Grant—Purchase Body Armor and other Specialized Emergency Response Law Enforcement Equipment for State Parks
- FY2010 Low-head Dam Public Hazard Cost-share Program
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Oct. 8, Monroe County

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## **NATURE TAKES CENTER STAGE AT HONEY CREEK RESORT STATE PARK THIS FALL**

From kayaking to campfire stories, visitors to Honey Creek Resort State Park are sure to enjoy the numerous nature programs and activities planned this fall.

“Young or old, novice or expert, there’s something for everyone in Honey Creek’s menu of outdoor activities,” said Michelle Wilson, Honey Creek project manager for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “We want people to enjoy nature at Honey Creek Resort, which is really the showcase of the state park beyond our lodge facilities.”

Two full-time nature interpreters are on staff at the resort, creating programs and activities to build visitors’ appreciation of Iowa’s natural resources. Activities are scheduled throughout the week, or visitors can request a specific program for their group or family.

“The outdoor education program really sets Honey Creek apart from other resorts in the region,” said Wilson. “The DNR is excited to share nature experiences so visitors who might not have other opportunities can find fun ways to be outdoors.”

A dozen nature programs are planned for Labor Day weekend, according to Kenneth Hamilton, DNR nature interpreter. The schedule includes:

- Wed., Sept 2, 3 p.m.: Fishing on Rathbun Lake
- Thurs. Sept. 3, 3 p.m.: Kayaking
- Fri., Sept. 4, 3:30 p.m.: Skins and Skulls
- Fri., Sept. 4, 5:30 p.m.: Kayaking 101
- Fri., Sept. 4, 7:15 p.m.: Full Moon Paddle
- Fri., Sept. 4, 7:30 p.m.: Full Moon Night Hike
- Sat. Sept. 5, 11:00 a.m.: Kayaking

Sat. Sept. 5, 1 p.m.: Bug Boxes

Sat. Sept. 5, 2 p.m.: Bicycle Scavenger Hunt

Sat. Sept. 5, 3:30 p.m.: Ice Fishing

Sat. Sept. 5: 6:45 p.m.: Park Protectors

Sat. Sept. 5: 7:30: Smelly Skunk Tails (around the Campfire)

All are welcome to take part in the programs, whether staying overnight or visiting the park for the day, although some programs may require reservations because participation is limited. For information, contact the Honey Creek Resort interpretative staff at 877-677-3344.

Additionally, rooms are still available during Labor Day weekend and for many nights in September, especially during the week. For reservation information, call toll-free at 877-677-3344 or visit the website [www.honeycreekresort.com](http://www.honeycreekresort.com)

For more information, contact Michelle Wilson at 515-281-8675.

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