



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

Iowa Duck Season Opens Saturday

BLUE-WINGED TEAL WILL MAKE OR BREAK HUNTER SUCCESS

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The first segment of Iowa’s 2009 split duck hunting season begins Saturday, September 19. Regardless of which region of the state hunters choose to go, the success of early season September outings will hinge largely on the abundance [or scarcity] of blue-winged teal.

Big things come in small packages. One of the attributes that makes this pint-sized species so recreationally important is that teal are readily accessible to duck hunters of all ages and at all levels of expertise. Although blue-wings will utilize a variety of wetland habitats, they prefer shallow well vegetated marshes. Find a secluded pothole containing two or three inches of water covered with duckweed and surrounded by cattails, and you can rest assured that you’re standing smack in the middle of teal country. No massive blind boats or expensive equipment required here. A light bag of decoys, a good pair of waders, and pocket full of shells are all that’s needed. All things considered, the blue-winged teal presents the perfect kickoff to fall hunting.

Regardless of weather, blue-winged teal are the very first ducks to move south each fall. No bird is tastier, but getting them to the oven means getting an early start to your season. Here Today; Gone Tomorrow is the blue-wing's credo.

The teal's sudden, warm weather migrations are nothing new. A news brief posted in the Clear Lake Mirror Reporter at the end of August, 1896, reported that a local hunter named John Berkley had gotten his early season off to a roaring start by shooting 73 of the ducks. The newspaper noted that this was the best report they had received so far, but that during the previous week "a great many hunters" had visited Clear Lake and that the fowlers had been fairly successful.

More than a century later, the ever popular blue-winged teal is still drawing the attention of Iowa hunters and is still the very first duck most youngsters bring to bag. I was no exception to the rule, and my first blue-wing encounter occurred in the fall of 1959 on a backwater pond of the Winnebago River.

It was just Dad and I, and the hunt actually began with the Friday night campout that remains a family tradition. As a duck crazy, revved up 10-year-old, I couldn't sleep a wink that night. All I could think about was the ducks.

Little more than 50 yards in width, the shallow pond barely contained enough water to float a good decoy. Nevertheless, Dad predicted that come morning, the place should be buzzing with teal. As it turned out, he knew what he was talking about.

Saturday morning finally arrived and the place was indeed buzzing. As I followed Dad through the vegetation that led to the water, the air was alive with crisp whistle of wings and swish of ducks splashing down. As we appeared at water's edge, the place literally erupted with birds.

Back then, everyone carried their decoys in burlap potato bags --- that's all there was. We had two bags worth that morning, and our spread consisted of an odd assortment of Saint Louis Air Ducks and Herter's balsa wood mallards and pintails. It took Dad forever to toss them out.

A fresh bundle of leafy willow spears provided a blind and the hunt was on. Like most youngsters of the day, I was packing a full-choke, .410 single-shot shotgun. I had no more than settled into the blind when the first ducks appeared. They were blue-winged teal, on the deck and traveling at warp speed. The ducks spotted the decoys and upon executing a hard right bank, came scorching back toward the spread. Within seconds the teal --- all 15 or 20 of them --- were noisily splashing in among our wooden counterfeits.

Completely mesmerized by the sight, I remained frozen in time. Snapping back to reality, I suddenly realized that here was an easy opportunity to collect a duck dinner. I made my move at about the same instant the teal made theirs. By the time I managed to shoulder the .410 the birds were long gone. All that remained were a set of converging ripples on the pond's surface.

I was ready to cry. Dad laughed, which made things all the worse until I finally laughed too. The ducks kept coming, and I eventually got plenty of shooting. My fourth blue-wing finally hit the water as I was mowing through my second box of shells.

Forget the lousy shooting. I was totally elated. On my very first duck hunt I had bagged my very first limit of ducks. I celebrated by watching Dad bag his limit of four blue-wings with four shells.

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IOWA'S YOUTH AND DISABLED HUNTER DEER SEASON BEGINS SATURDAY

CHARITON – The Iowa deer hunting tradition will be passed on to about 8,000 youths who are participating in the youth deer hunting season, which opens on Sept. 19. This season provides an opportunity to teach deer hunting, wildlife behavior, and safe hunting practices to resident youths while they are under the watchful eye of a licensed adult.

For many young hunters, this will be their first experience hunting deer, and mentors are encouraged to take the needs of the new hunter into account when planning the hunt.

The goal of the hunt should be a positive, enjoyable, and ethical experience, and harvesting a deer should be considered a bonus, not define the success of the hunt.

“Our experienced hunters understand that harvesting does is crucial to sound deer herd management, and we need to pass that principle along to the next generation of hunters. Killing a buck should not be portrayed as being more important than taking a doe,” said Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The youth season runs through Oct. 4. Concurrently, disabled deer hunters who meet certain criteria will also have the opportunity to enjoy this early season opportunity.

The youth deer season usually has mild temperatures and biting insects. Hunters should be prepared in case they youth harvests a deer by bringing bags of ice to cool the deer cavity and by having a locker that can accept the deer for processing.

The deer, for the most part, are still in their summer movement patterns which make them a bit more predictable than they will be as autumn progresses. Clover and soybeans are currently attractive to deer and some activity is beginning to show up around pin oaks as well. Trails connecting feeding and bedding areas are also good bets with deer in summer patterns that are keeping their activities to a minimum.

Hunting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. All hunters are reminded that if an antlered deer is killed, the transportation tag must be placed on the animal's antler. It is recommended that the tag be placed on the antler beam either at the base or between two points.

All deer taken must be reported using the harvest reporting system by midnight the day after the deer is recovered. Harvest reporting is a very important part of the deer management program in Iowa, playing a vital role in managing deer populations and hunting

opportunities. Hunters can report their deer on the DNR website (www.iowadnr.gov), by calling the toll free reporting number (1-800-771-4692), or at any license vendor.

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

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WHEN LEAVES TURN COLORS, FISH TURN ON

Shorter days, cooler nights and fewer bugs are signs that autumn is getting closer. Fish are starting to go on a feeding frenzy to prepare for winter and next spring's spawn. For anglers, that means some of the best fishing of the year is right around the corner.

Joe Larscheid, chief of the DNR's Fisheries Bureau, says fall is a close second to spring as the top season to fish because the fish will get into predictable patterns making them easier to locate.

"Panfish, especially yellow perch, will form large schools as the water temperature cools so look for a lot of boats in one area. In the rivers, fish will move to the deepest holes for the winter so fishing the outside bends of the river is a good strategy," Larscheid said. "Fall is often overlooked as a prime fishing time because many of us are in hunting mode or are busy with school activities, but there is excellent fishing to be had and most of our trophy fish are caught in the fall."

Using live bait, particularly minnows, and a slower presentation are keys when fishing in cooler water. Targeting areas of a lake or river where the water is warmer can also improve success. In lakes, shallow water along the north shore will be warmer and in lakes and rivers, areas where small creeks enter will be warmer.

With school back in session, not only will the competition for the best fishing spots be less, but the campgrounds will also be less busy. Combining a fishing and fall camping trip to a state park when the leaves are turning makes for a perfect outdoor weekend.

"Catching fish during the day and sitting around the campfire at night in the fall in my book makes for a great weekend," Larscheid said.

For the latest information on fishing, camping, hunting and fall colors, go to www.iowadnr.gov.

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Alliant Energy customers invited to purchase trees for \$25

SIX OPERATION RELIEF EVENTS PLANNED IN IOWA FOR FALL 2009

DES MOINES – Iowans looking for a cost-effective, yet eye-pleasing way to reduce home heating and cooling costs are encouraged to participate in Operation ReLeaf. Operation ReLeaf is a residential tree planting program that promotes long-term energy and natural resource conservation.

Operation ReLeaf is a partnership initiative funded by Alliant Energy and administered by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources with assistance from local partners, which include county conservation boards and county extension offices.

“All trees are purchased through a bidding process to promote local nurseries,” says Paul Tauke, Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau Chief and State Forester. “This is a great way for homeowners to get a quality tree at an affordable price.”

Through the program, 2,500 high quality landscaping trees will be offered to Alliant Energy residential customers for just \$25 each this fall. The trees typically retail for \$65 or more and will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Alliant Energy will sponsor six Operation ReLeaf events this fall in the following communities: Mason City on October 15, Keokuk on October 3, Marion on October 10, Toledo on October 8, Decorah on October 1, and Ames on October 22. Tree species offered will vary at each event and include shade trees, ornamentals and conifers.

Operation ReLeaf participants must be Alliant Energy residential customers. Advanced order is recommended and advance purchase is limited to two trees per household. In the event there are extra trees available on distribution day, those trees will be released for purchase at that time. Order forms are available online (www.alliantenergy.com/releaf).

For more information, contact Emma Bruemmer with the Iowa DNR at 515-281-6749.

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DES MOINES RIVER IN BOONE COUNTY DEDICATED SEPTEMBER 19

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will designate the Des Moines River Water Trail in Boone County September 19 in conjunction with the area’s 4th Annual Dragoon River Romp cleanup event. This is the state’s sixth water trail designation this year, and 10th since the program started in 2006

“The designation will be a great start to our Dragoon River Romp cleanup,” said Andy Hockensen, Boone County Conservation manager. “The cleanup typically attracts more than 100 participants.”

Last year 152 volunteers removed more than six tons of trash from the river and its banks—more than three tons were recycled.

“The River Romp is more than just a cleanup, it’s an opportunity to get more people down to the river, and a chance to educate them about illegal dumping.” said Lois Powers,

Keep Boone County Beautiful coordinator. For more information about the cleanup and to register contact Lois Powers at 515-433-0591.

The dedication and cleanup is scheduled for 8:15 a.m. at the Hwy. 30 river access. Keeping with tradition, the event coordinators have arranged for the firing of canon that signifies the start of the cleanup.

“It’s appropriate to tie the water trail dedication in with this successful cleanup event,” said John Wenck, DNR river programs outreach coordinator. “The folks who volunteer care about the river, and we’re lucky to have local leaders who have organized such a successful event.”

For more information on Iowa water trails, see www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/.

Media Contact: John Wenck, river programs outreach coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at 515-281-8969

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DNR DIRECTOR’S PUBLIC FORUM HEADS TO CLEAR LAKE STATE PARK IN CERRO GORDO COUNTY

MEDIA CONTACT: Tammie Krausman, DNR, at (515) 402-8763 or Tammie.Krausman@dnr.iowa.gov.

CLEAR LAKE– Iowa Department of Natural Resources Director Richard Leopold will hold a public forum at Clear Lake State Park main lodge in Clear Lake on Thursday.

Leopold is holding forums across the state again this year to discuss natural resource issues with Iowans.

“I really look forward to hearing from Iowa’s citizens. Last year, we got great feedback and ideas from more than 300 attendees,” said Leopold about the seven forums held last year. “Our relationship with Iowans is something we highly value within the DNR and we will work together on the things most affecting our natural resources.”

Each public forum begins at 6 p.m. with Leopold outlining the DNR’s top priorities, the environmental report card, providing an update on budget cuts and discussing local issues. Another hour-and-a-half will be devoted to answering questions from the public.

Leopold has hosted more than 200 people at forums at Honey Creek Resort, Dolliver, Macbride, Bellevue and Lake of Three Fires State Parks so far this summer.

Upcoming public forums scheduled for Leopold are as follows, listed alphabetically by city:

Clear Lake

Clear Lake State Park Lodge
Thursday, Sept. 17, 6 p.m.

Council Bluffs

Hitchcock Nature Center
Wednesday, Sept. 30, 6 p.m.

Sioux City

Stone State Park Lodge
Thursday, Sept. 24, 6 p.m.

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Be Firewise: This is the first of a three part series on fire prevention

[Electronic image available upon request]

FIREWISE ON THE FARM

For more details visit www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/fire/firewise.html

Des Moines – As harvest preparation accelerates farm activities, fire safety details could be hastily overlooked. Before the harvest gets into full swing take time now to incorporate the following six steps to keep your farm ‘firewise;’ these simple steps can save time and money.

1. Properly prepare machinery to reduce the chance of a field fire from an overheated bearing (check the manufacturer’s recommendations). A spark from an improperly lubricated combine can instantaneously ignite dry plants and field debris.

Check that all fire extinguishers carried on the machinery are fully charged with loose powder inside. If the powder is not loose, remove the extinguisher from its bracket then thump the canister with a rubber hammer until the powder moves when shaken.

Make sure the extinguisher is appropriate for the size of the machinery. You may need larger and/or additional extinguishers. Also make sure you have the correct extinguisher for the type of fire to be extinguished. There are two types of extinguishers, the powder extinguisher for electrical and petroleum based fires and the water extinguisher for vegetative fires. This means that both kinds of extinguishers may be necessary.

2. Keep equipment clean. Check and remove combustible harvest debris from motors, exhausts, ledges, and brackets several times a day. A portable gas-powered leaf blower is great for blowing debris from the various surfaces of the combine.
3. Service grain storage and drying equipment. Storage facilities are like a bank vault. Protect their contents by properly servicing all bearings, belts, motors, and drags. Dryers frequently cause fires, so before drying grain have a qualified service technician perform the necessary maintenance. Also keep weeds mowed around the facilities to discourage a fire from spreading.

Again, all extinguishers should be handy, fully charged, and the proper size and type for the area.

4. Turn off interior lighting in overfilled bins. A grain fire will start if the grain surrounds the bulb. Turn off the light's breaker to avoid accidentally turning the light on. This also applies to hay storage facilities.
5. Handle hay properly. Improper hay storage commonly causes or complicates farm fires. Preventative measures greatly reduce this risk.

Planning proper hay storage is crucial. Store hay away from combustibles such as gasoline, fertilizers, and pesticides, as well as open burning areas like burn barrels, brush piles, and vegetative burning. Arrange round bales in groups of 10 or fewer and place at least 100 feet away from structures. Leave 30 feet of mowed grass, bare ground, or rock between the bale groups, creating a solid fire break.

Many hay fires occur by spontaneous combustion of moist hay, usually within six weeks after baling. Plan to bale hay at its driest stage and do not bale in the morning dew or too soon after a rain.

Check stored hay frequently for hot hay or an internal hay fire. Be aware of a caramel or strong burning odor, a visible vapor or smoke, a strong musty smell, and/or hay that is hot when touched. If any of these occur, call the fire department immediately and do not move the hay. Moving it exposes overheated or smoldering hay to oxygen, speeding the fire.

6. When tilling in the fall, till a 30 foot break around building sites, remote bin sites, and outside storage facilities to minimize fire spread. Again, remove weeds and other combustibles around structures and stored equipment.

If a fire occurs, call 911 immediately. Provide clear, concise directions to your location. Many field and bin sites do not have 911 addresses, so be prepared to identify an intersection or landmark to direct responders.

To help control field fires until firefighters arrive, remain calm and act swiftly. Quickly dig a fire break approximately 15 feet wide around the fire. Be cautious when doing this as smoke will starve and stall a motor and will make hazards and bystanders hard to see. To assist with a structural fire, make sure there are no flammable objects nearby and if the circuit panel is safely accessible turn off the building's electricity. If time allows, evacuate any livestock to a distant pasture. Also, if possible, spray high-pressure water on any surrounding vegetation or structures, discouraging spreading embers. Do not take risks.

After using any equipment to fight a fire, check air filters, ledges, nooks and crannies for burning debris. For more detailed information, visit www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/fire/firewise.html.

Remember, in a fire emergency, call 911 immediately. Do not wait until all your means of fighting the fire are exhausted. Every minute impacts your losses.

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