



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

1. Cool Weather Fishing – by Joe Wilkinson
2. Improved Water Clarity and Aquatic Plant Growth at Clear Lake Boost Fingerling Survival – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photo available upon request]
3. Des Moines River Water Trail Campsite Dedicated in Polk County October 2
4. Early Duck Season Provides Plenty of Hunting Opportunity – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photo available upon request]
5. Dean Roosa to be Recognized During 25th Annual HawkWatch Weekend
6. Replacing Klondike Dam Topic of Oct, 7 Meeting
7. Snowmobile Instructor Workshop
8. Public Meeting in Des Moines to Discuss Proposed Fish Restitution Rules
9. **Part 3 of a 3 Part Series on Fire Prevention: Is Your Landscape Fire Resistant?** [electronic image available upon request]
10. DNR Director’s Public Forum Heads to Hitchcock Nature Center in Council Bluffs

COOL WEATHER FISHING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

With the autumn cool down upon us, many anglers are getting set for their ‘late’ season. Shorter daylight periods and dropping temperatures trigger an instinct in most fish to increase their feeding activity...ahead of the winter weather that will slow down these cold-blooded creatures.

“They’re trying to put on winter (fat) reserves and the fishing activity really picks up to a new level,” says Joe Larscheid, fisheries bureau chief for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “We get some great fishing opportunities in the fall. I really encourage people to get out there and enjoy them.”

Duane Whiting of Ely would prefer spring fishing. However, drizzle and morning temperatures in the 50s didn't stop him from getting out for a few hours of chasing crappies on Lake Macbride. "Today, they were up above," motioned Whiting, as he pulled out his boat near the Macbride dam, west of Solon. "Caught them in about ten feet of water; in the brush."

As temperatures cool that water, anglers should slow down their presentation, usually going with smaller jigs, too; tipped with minnows, leeches, worms or whatever live bait works best on your water. "Your predators; northern pike, muskellunge, walleyes, largemouth and smallmouth bass; they all kick it up a notch," says Larscheid. "They're all hungry, cruising the shoreline on lakes, looking for food."

In the streams, too, fish are looking for lots of meals to head into winter. Stream flow is often lower in the fall; allowing better angler access. On smaller streams, hip boots or even cut off jeans can get you into log hides and pools. "Just simple gear; a sinker and a night crawler and you can catch lots of fish," says Larscheid. He suggests starting upstream and walking down; drifting bait into a log pile....or below rock riffles, where fish are staging for food.

Year-round fishing fans already have their license. More casual anglers might opt for a one-day (\$8) or seven day (\$12) license, to save a few dollars if they know they're only going to go out a time or two before ice-up. That would save a few bucks and, hopefully, hook them on a year-round license (\$17.50) for 2010.

Trout fishing under a canopy of fall color is attractive in northeast Iowa, too. Trout are stocked across nine-northeast Iowa counties. However, after September, stocking is unannounced. That spreads out anglers across the 50 streams which get trout from Iowa's three hatchery/rearing stations. "When it gets colder, there are less food sources hatching," explains Randy Mack, from the Manchester hatchery. "Fly fishermen might throw something that imitates nymphs that are along the bottom. Other anglers tend to use bait when things slow down.

And anglers are encouraged to head north during Iowa's fall trout 'season'. Fewer anglers in the northern counties mean far more 'fish per angler' in the later weeks of the year. Besides a regular fishing license, trout anglers pay an \$11 trout fee, as well.

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

Clear Lake Fish Populations Enjoy Increased Production

IMPROVED WATER CLARITY AND AQUATIC PLANT GROWTH BOOST FINGERLING SURVIVAL

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE---The forage is back. Fingerling nurseries are full. Clear Lake fish populations are returning to a healthy balance. That's the assessment of DNR District Fisheries Biologist, Scott Grummer as fisheries crews put a wrap on this year's annual Young of the Year Fish Surveys.

The fish production survey has been conducted at Clear Lake every year since 1972 and is designed to document annual spawning success and young fish survival, says Grummer. Nighttime net crews visit seven standard locations during August and return again in September to collect and inventory fish from a dozen species. Results are used to monitor reproductive success of all species, evaluate the annual success of walleye stockings, and aid in predicting future growth and abundance of sportfish.

"Water temperatures fluctuated wildly during the 2008 spawning season and fish production was poor," said Grummer. "This spring we had more consistent water temps, increased clarity, and excellent growth of aquatic plant life. The result was a phenomenal spawn which resulted in more than a hundred fold increase in fish production over last year.

"Clear Lake's yellow bass population provides a very important forage base for larger predators, like walleyes, and yellow bass are also very popular with anglers," noted Grummer. "Yellow bass enjoyed an extremely successful production effort this spring and those young fish will play an important role in supplying recruitment as aging adults begin to leave the population."

Other survey highlights include banner spawning success for yellow perch, bluegill, spot-tail shiner, and crappie. Production levels for each of those species reached or exceeded the long term [1972 -- 2009] average. Walleye survival increased by 300 percent during 2009 and now hovers slightly below the long term average. No [zero] young of the year black bullheads were observed at any of the survey stations.

"The 2009 survey results are extremely encouraging," says Grummer. "In addition to being observed in large numbers, fingerlings from all fish species are also in excellent body condition --- very robust. Walleyes are currently measuring up to 6 ½ inches in length, which is as good a growth rate as anyone can expect. Perch are measuring three inches, and yellow bass are at 2 ½ inches.

"We also saw a real surge in underwater, aquatic plant life this summer which is very important for providing food [aquatic insects] and cover for fry and fingerlings," said Grummer. "Survey sites harboring substantial plant beds are the locations where we surveyed the greatest numbers of young of the year yellow perch, bluegills, and largemouth bass. At areas containing no plant life, we encountered no perch, bluegill, or largemouth bass fingerlings.

"There's no question that it was a very successful production year at Clear Lake," says Grummer. "Future year classes of sportfish will receive a huge benefit from this year's hatch."

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DES MOINES RIVER WATER TRAIL CAMPSITE DEDICATED IN POLK COUNTY OCTOBER 2

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will designate a water trail campsite on the Des Moines River Water Trail at Yellow Banks County Park on October 2.

The Des Moines River in Polk County was designated as a state water trail earlier this spring, but the idea of a paddle-in/paddle-out campsite came as an addendum.

“It became apparent to us that there was a lack of suitable camping opportunities for paddlers along the Des Moines River between Saylorville and Red Rock,” said Loren Lown, Polk County Conservation natural resources specialist. “Yellow Banks seemed like an ideal place.”

The campsite is within 150 feet of the river and includes fire rings, picnic tables, and a shelter area. Reservations for this campsite will soon be available online through www.mycountyparks.com.

The dedication will take place at 6 p.m. at the campsite. Robin Fortney, founder of Central Iowa Paddlers, will be leading a paddling excursion from Pleasant Hill Access (north side of river at Hwy. 65 and Vandalia Road) and arriving at the campsite in time for the dedication. If you are interested in floating this 4-mile stretch of the river, meet at the Pleasant Hill Access at 1 p.m. —you must have your own canoe or kayak.

“This is probably my favorite stretch of the water trail,” said Fortney. “It’s beyond the city limits and offers greater opportunities for wildlife viewing.”

“Primitive campsites accessible from the river are very popular amenities on our water trails,” said John Wenck, DNR river programs outreach coordinator. “It offers paddlers greater solitude and the opportunity for multi-day tripping without the need for daily shuttles.”

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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[Electronic photo available upon request]

Timely Rainfall Sets the Stage for Future Outings

EARLY DUCK SEASON PROVIDES PLENTY OF HUNTING OPPORTUNITY

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Lots of ducks. Lots of hunters. Lots of shooting. That's the way most Iowa waterfowl hunting enthusiasts are summing up the results of the September 19 kickoff to the first, five-day segment of the 2009 Iowa duck season.

But the fact that wild ducks were in plentiful supply didn't necessarily mean the pickings were easy. As late summer weather turned hot and dry across much of the state, potholes and marshes began to shrink across northern Iowa's marsh country where wetlands dropped to more than a foot below normal crest by mid-September. The end result was greater concentrations of ducks at remaining pools, which led to a corresponding concentration of hunters. At Cerro Gordo County's Union Hills Waterfowl Production Area, for example, DNR Waterfowl Biologist, Guy Zenner, reported a parking lot 'car count' of 64 vehicles. Other public areas noted similar hunter densities.

In spite of the crowded conditions and keen competition, DNR conservation officers reported that most hunters were successful in bagging ducks, and that most hunters harvested several birds on Saturday. Some hunters even managed to attain their six-duck limits during the first 10 to 15 minutes of legal shooting and had literally bagged their decoys and were leaving the marsh by the time sun appeared on the eastern horizon. By the time the Saturday opener concluded, the first day harvest averaged about five ducks per hunter, said Zenner.

For most hunters, migrating blue-winged teal became the bread and butter species for the early, September season. According to the results of a statewide waterfowl survey conducted just two days prior to the opener, blue-winged teal represented nearly half [46 percent] of the total ducks present in the state, followed by wood ducks [32 percent] and mallards [14 percent]. Greatest teal densities were surveyed in the north central and northwestern regions of the state. One notable exception was a concentration containing nearly 3,000 teal surveyed on southwest Iowa's Riverton Wildlife Unit.

Initial hunter interviews revealed that 4 out of every 6 ducks bagged on opening day were blue-winged teal. Farther to the south and east, wood ducks and mallards comprised a larger percentage of the opening day bag. Generally speaking, the closer hunters were to the Mississippi River, the greater those percentages became.

Although overall hunter numbers decreased by nearly 50 percent on Sunday, large numbers of ducks were still reported. Hunting success was fair on Monday and Tuesday, but increased on Wednesday as a new wave of southbound blue-winged teal invaded the state.

On Thursday night [Sep. 24], a widespread band of precipitation dropped from two to five inches of much needed rainfall across much of northern Iowa. Potholes and shallow marsh areas that had been completely dry were restored to crest levels in a matter of hours. This important weather event will set the stage for improved hunting conditions as ducks, geese, and snipe continue to migrate into Iowa during the remainder of the season.

Iowa's split duck season resumes October 10 in the state's North Zone [north of Highway 30] and on Oct. 17 in the South Zone.

DEAN ROOSA TO BE RECOGNIZED AT 25TH ANNUAL HAWKWATCH WEEKEND

The 25th annual HawkWatch will be held on Oct. 2, 3 and 4, at Effigy Mounds National Monument, near Marquette. This year, Dean Roosa, of Ames, will be recognized for initiating the hawk banding station at Effigy Mounds that is still active today.

As former state ecologist for DNR, Roosa will also be presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his ongoing conservation stewardship of our natural resources. Other members of the initial team will also be recognized for their early efforts at the hawk banding station including Jim Brown, of Guttenburg, Tim Mason, of McGregor, Dave McIlrath, of West Branch, and Jon Stravers, of Harpers Ferry. Dave Kester, of Marquette, will be included for his ongoing support and banding efforts at the station.

Activities will kick off with a Mississippi River music cruise by Jon Stravers on Friday at 5 p.m. from Lawler Park in Prairie du Chien, Wis., for \$25. Passengers are encouraged to bring their own snacks and beverages. Further information can be found at mississippiexplorer.com or call Stravers at 563-586-2621.

On Saturday, a bird walk with internationally renowned birder, Dennis Carter, will take place at 8 a.m., then HawkWatch activities until 4 p.m. On Sunday, activities continue from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Bluffs of Upper Mississippi River provide beautiful backdrop to this family oriented event. Raptor presentations are given hourly throughout the day, and kids can learn about raptor diets by dissecting raptor pellets. Binoculars and spotting scopes will be provided to assist raptor enthusiasts in identifying as many as 11 raptor species including broadwings, redtails, Swainsons, sharp-shinned, and Coopers hawks. Northern harriers, ospreys, and eagles can be included with all three falcons: kestrels, merlins and peregrines.

A raptor banding stations is staffed where migrating raptors are lured, banded, and released. The releases occur at the Effigy Mounds Visitor's Center, so event participants can appreciate sharing the same air space with migrating birds. For further information check with conservation partners at National Park Service:

<http://www.nps.gov/efmo/planyourvisit/upload/2009%20HawkWatch%20Program%20Sheet.pdf>
563-873-3491 or Iowa DNR at 712-330-0526.

Media Contact: Pat Schlarbaum, wildlife diversity technician, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Boone Research Station, 515-432-2823.

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REPLACING KLONDIKE DAM TOPIC OF OCT. 7 MEETING

LYON COUNTY, Iowa – An open house regarding a proposal to reconfigure the damaged Klondike Dam and its surrounding area will be held from 6 to 8 p.m., October 7, at Lake Pahoja Park in northwestern Lyon County. Anglers, paddlers, and anyone else interested are encouraged to attend.

Klondike Dam is a popular area for fishing on the Big Sioux River. Jointly owned by the states of Iowa and South Dakota, with an adjacent recreation area owned by Lyon County Conservation Board, it also provides a water supply function. Because of a mix of safety, water supply, angling, boating, and other considerations, a rock-arch rapids of the style commonly being built in Minnesota will be presented for public consideration and review. It is often selected as a way to achieve a balance of recreational, ecological, safety, and public infrastructure needs.

“Because of recent damage to the dam and the temporary repairs, the plan has changed from the one presented to the public in May,” said Nate Hoogeveen, Iowa DNR river programs coordinator. “Any reduction in the pool is a problem that would affect the water supply. The new plan includes demolition of the existing dam and construction of rock arch rapids from the pedestrian bridge upstream. This revised plan will improve angler access, enhancing the overall fishery without degradation fishing at the site while maintaining the pool level. It appears to be a sensible option for this area, but we are interested in knowing what the public thinks before proceeding.”

Several groups representing various functions that need to be met for this structure will be present, including the Lyon County Conservation, South Dakota Game, Fish, & Parks, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Lyon and Sioux Rural Water System.

After getting a chance to speak one-on-one with experts in water supply, fisheries, and dam safety, members of the public are encouraged to express opinions.

Media contact: Nate Hoogeveen, Iowa Department of Natural Resources river programs coordinator, 515-281-3134.

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SNOWMOBILE INSTRUCTOR WORKSHOP

PANORA – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Raccoon Valley Snow Chasers are sponsoring a workshop for snowmobile instructors on October 10, from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the Panora Gym on Hwy. 44, next to the community center, in Panora.

This workshop is designed for both new and experienced instructors and will include updated administrative rules and paperwork forms and requirements, course materials,

teaching techniques, and the new online DNR Training Center. This training is one of three steps to becoming a certified instructor. The other two are to possess an education certificate in the snowmobiling course and to apprentice with an experienced instructor. An individualized plan will be developed for all instructors to move them through the certification process.

Pre-registration for the course is required. Contact Rhonda Fowler at the DNR at 515-281-3208.

For directions, contact Eric Chrystal at 515-201-8604.

For more information about the DNR's snowmobile Education Program, go to www.iowadnr.gov/law/snowmobile/education.html.

For more information about the Raccoon Valley Snow Chasers, go to www.raccoonvalleysnowchasers.com.

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PUBLIC MEETING IN DES MOINES TO DISCUSS PROPOSED FISH RESTITUTION RULES

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is holding a public meeting to receive comments on proposed rules covering compensation to the state and public for damages to natural resources and wildlife resulting from water pollution or a hazardous condition.

Proposed rule changes updates the definition of "AFS" to state the American Fisheries Society's Special Publication 30 shall be used to assess the value of fish loss and revises the fish species to be valued at \$15 per fish unless the AFS publication requires a higher value, in which case the higher value shall be applied.

The public hearing is scheduled for 2 p.m., October 6, in the fourth floor west conference room, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., in Des Moines. Any persons who attend the public hearing and have special needs, such as hearing or mobility impairments should contact the Department of Natural Resources at (515)281-6976 and advise of specific needs.

For more information, contact Martin Konrad at (515) 281-6976 or Tamara Mullen at (515) 281-8934.

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Be Fire Wise: This is the third of a three part series on fire prevention [electronic image available upon request]

IS YOUR LANDSCAPE FIRE RESISTANT?

DES MOINES – Living in Iowa’s beautiful countryside can be both exciting and relaxing. The changing seasons with wildlife at your backdoor can be breathtaking. Then again, a wildfire at your backdoor can also be “breathtaking” but not in the same way. This is not the side of nature you want to experience unprepared.

The Iowa DNR is again reminding rural landowners to be “firewise” by using rural wisdom to keep your property fire resistant. Be aware that fires in rural and forested areas are hard to control and cannot be handled in the same manner as city fires. Usually rural homes are many miles from a fire station. In many rural fire departments there are fewer firefighters available than in city fire departments, and usually these firefighters are volunteers. Volunteer firefighters leave their jobs to respond to a fire, this adds extra reaction time to the emergency call, allowing the fire to spread. Properties that have not been maintained properly complicate the hazard. The solution to this dilemma is in your hands, literally. When you take the time and energy to make your property fire-resistant, you reduce the risk of a fire starting or one spreading to your home. Your preparation may not only save your property and family, but your community as well.

Making your surroundings fire safe does not have to cost money, just a small investment of time. The goal is to limit flammable vegetation and materials surrounding the home, and to have space between individual and/or groups of plants and trees. Get some friends and neighbors together and help each other make improvements. Everyone has something at stake and it will make the work easy and enjoyable.

In “Be Firewise Part 2, Wildland/Urban Landscape” steps were given to help you prepare your property and buildings against an unexpected wildfire. By now you should be making strides in preparing your property. Use the following checklist to reassess your property’s needs. For more detailed information, visit the Iowa DNR website, www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/fire/firewise.html, or contact Iowa DNR Wildland Fire Supervisor, Gail Kantak, Gail.Kantak@dnr.iowa.gov.

1. The buildings and the 30 foot zone surrounding the house:

- Remove all dead leaves, pine needles, and stems from the landscape, gutters, and under the deck.
- Remove limbs that hang over the house – they are flammable and they drop debris which can easily catch a spark.
- Install metal screens on all chimney, attic, fascia, and foundation openings to prevent embers entering the building.
- Move any stacked firewood or propane tanks to at least 100 feet from the house.
- Landscape with materials that are nonflammable, such as rock, pavers, annuals, high-moisture perennials.

- Box in the undersides of overhangs, bay windows, decks, and balconies with fire-resistant materials.
 - Make sure the house numbers are at least 4 inches tall and easily visible.
 - Attach a hose rack with a 100 foot hose to the house; attach the hose to an outside faucet.
 - Carefully space low-growing plants or trim and shape overgrown plants.
 - Mow and trim the lawn regularly.
 - Keep wood mulch moist.
 - Prune trees so that the lowest limbs are at least 6 to 10 feet above ground.
 - Prune branches overhanging the driveway to a 14 foot overhead clearance.
 - Plan and practice an escape route with your family and pets.
 - Place fire extinguishers in the kitchen, garage, and machine sheds; keep them properly maintained.
2. Move to the next zone, 30 to 100 feet from your home.
- Organize trees into clusters of two or three, spacing the clusters 30 feet apart; if there are individual trees space them 20 feet apart. Try to mix deciduous and evergreen trees.
 - Again, trim tree branches 6 to 10 feet above ground and remove woody debris.
 - Do not use a burn barrel for trash or yard debris. Start a compost pile instead.
 - Create firebreaks such as driveways, gravel walkways, and open lawns.
 - Make sure driveways are at least 12 feet wide for emergency vehicles; driveways with sharp curves need to be 20 feet wide.
3. Now move to the zone that is 100 to 200 feet from the home.
- Thin out the vegetation, but not as thin as in the 30 to 100 foot zone. Share the cost of a wood chipper with neighbors and chip your tree trimmings. Use the chips as mulch.
 - Remove heavy accumulations of woody debris such as wood piles or brush piles.
 - Remove any evergreen seedlings growing among taller trees; they act as ladders for a fire to climb to the treetops.
 - Strategically prune tall trees so the treetops are not touching.
 - If the driveway is longer than 150 feet, provide a turn-around for emergency vehicles.
 - Install visible house numbers and/or 911 address at the entrance of the driveway using nonflammable building materials.
 - For easy visibility, keep vegetation trimmed around the entrance to your property.

Do not let an unexpected wildfire destroy your reason for living in the country. Be rural wise. Be firewise. Take the time and effort to make your property safe so that you can relax and enjoy the breathtaking beautiful Iowa landscape. Your investment is in your hands.

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DNR DIRECTOR'S PUBLIC FORUM HEADS TO HITCHCOCK NATURE CENTER IN COUNCIL BLUFFS

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

COUNCIL BLUFFS – Iowa Department of Natural Resources Director Richard Leopold will hold a public forum at the Hitchcock Nature Center, in Council Bluffs on Wednesday.

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.”

The 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.

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