



OUTDOOR CONNECTION

STORIES, ADVICE, AND INFORMATION FOR OUTDOOR LOVERS

GET READY FOR NATIONAL PHEASANT FEST & QUAIL CLASSIC

By STEVE WEISMAN
Outdoor Editor

The much acclaimed and annual National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic, which is presented by Federal, is scheduled for Friday, February 17 through Sunday, February 19 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Hours will be noon to 7 p.m. on Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. According to the website, National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic is the nation's largest upland tradeshow and convention has something for everyone including hunters, landowners and bird dog enthusiasts. Coming attractions for 2023 include a Upland Film Festival, Public Lands Pavilion, Path to the Uplands Stage, Habitat Stage, Bird Dog Stage, and more than 400 unique vendors featuring outfitters, gear, food, and so much more! Tickets and more information can be found at PheasantFest.org.

Jared Wiklund, public relations manager for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, and a former Iowa resident who worked with more than 50 chapters in the Hawkeye State, says, "National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic is the Superbowl event of the uplands for 2023, featuring the most prolific dog trainers, upland gear, biologists, and seminar speakers that pheasant and quail country have to offer!"

This tradeshow and seminar series started in St. Paul, Minnesota at the RiverCentre in 2004. Since that time, National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic has grown into the largest gathering in the country designed for upland hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic last visited the Minneapolis Convention Center in 2020



There's something for all ages at this year's Pheasant Fest.

Photo submitted



Joe Henry, this year's IGLFC spring speaker, holds a 31-inch walleye taken during the summer on Lake of the Woods.

Photo submitted

IGLFC to host annual Club Fishing Seminar

By STEVE WEISMAN
Outdoor Editor

Need a break after all of this snow and wind? How about a chance for a good meal, an opportunity to learn more about fishing and the chance to win a few prizes? Well, this is your opportunity. The Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club (IGLFC) will be hosting its annual Club Fishing Seminar at the Hap Ketelsen Center in Everly on Wednesday, February 8 with doors opening at 5:30 p.m.

The evening meal starts at 6 p.m., with the fishing seminar to follow about 7 p.m. The club will also hold a silent auction and raffle. A cash bar will be available.

Terry Thomsen, IGLFC president, says, "The IGLFC has held this event for a lot of years. It's a great time to get together, share a good meal and learn some top open water tips."

This year's speaker is Joe Henry, Executive Director for Lake of the Woods in northern Minnesota and veteran fishing guide and tournament angler.

Henry notes, "It's an absolute privilege, and I am excited to be part of this year's Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club's annual meeting on February 8th. We will be sharing detailed fishing information about Lake of the Woods for both open wa-

ter and ice. We will also dive into nuances to pulling spinners for walleye success, which will be of benefit on any body of water."

A little about Joe Henry

As a long time guide, licensed charter captain, and tournament angler, Henry has made fishing a part of his everyday life. Joe "cut his teeth" on MN lakes and rivers and has guided and fished walleyes throughout the nation. Joe's home water is now Lake of the Woods, which he has fished for over 30 years.

Professionally, Joe has enjoyed a variety of leadership positions. He is an award-winning outdoor communicator and a board member for AGLOW, the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers. His professional background combined with his many fishing credentials lead him to his current role, Executive Director, Lake of the Woods Tourism where he recently received the 2022 Minnesota Tourism Professional of the Year award from Explore Minnesota Tourism.

Joe works closely with 60 resorts, area guides and a number of stakeholders who have an impact on Lake of the Woods and the outdoor industry. He is an active writer, appears in outdoor TV shows, produces

outdoor videos, digital media and speaks about fishing and outdoors across the Midwest.

Henry reflects on his love for the Lake of the Woods. "Lake of the Woods, including the Rainy River and NW Angle, is an incredible fishery with over 65,000 miles of shoreline, 14,552 islands and a myriad of fishing opportunities. It has a variety of species and big fish opportunities 12 months a year. We will bring to life this amazing fishery with a presentation including helpful images, videos and some lively discussion."

Thomsen sees the evening as a great opportunity for club members, noting that the seminar and meal are both free for IGLFC members and their families. The cost is \$10 for non-members. "This is a great time for current members to sign up for 2023 if they haven't already done so. We certainly welcome non-members, and we'll gladly get them signed up, too."

Thomsen continues, "One of the IGLFC's major goals continues to be to recruit youth to the sport of fishing, encouraging connection to the outdoors and fishing as a lifelong passion. We also want to help families connect with the outdoors and enjoy fishing as a family activity."



A host of activity will be had at the Pheasant Fest.

Photo submitted

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A handful of hearty souls could be found set up for ice fishing on Ingham Lake in January. Emmet County Conservation Board director Eric Anderson said most ice fishermen can catch walleye crappie or perch on Ingham and High lakes located east of Wallingford.

Photo by David Swartz



Number of donors to the Chickadee Check-off continues to decline

DES MOINES — Last year, more than 6,200 Iowa taxpayers helped wildlife conservation with donations to the Fish and Wildlife Fund on their state tax form, which is nearly 1,000 fewer than who donated in 2020, and represents about 0.4 percent of total taxpayers in Iowa.

The donors contributed nearly \$150,000, which was a decrease of roughly \$25,000 from 2020. “Donations on the 2020 tax form were especially generous so it’s maybe not a surprise it declined but we’d hoped that higher level could be maintained,” said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Diversity program. “However, we are extremely thankful for those who donated to wildlife conservation with their tax refunds this cycle. The funds are vital to our work on habitat development and restoration programs for some of Iowa’s most vulnerable animal species.”

The Fish and Wildlife Fund, commonly known as the “Chickadee Check-off,” is a mechanism the Iowa Legislature created in the 1980s for Iowans to donate to wildlife conservation on the Iowa state income tax form. Before this time, so called “non-game” wildlife had no dedicated funding.

Non-game wildlife are the 1,000-plus species such as

songbirds, bald eagles, salamanders, turtles, monarchs and bees and more that make up the majority of wildlife in Iowa. The Chickadee Check-off is one of the only funding sources for the Iowa DNR’s Wildlife Diversity program, which is responsible for these species.

Funding helps to improve wildlife habitat, restore native wildlife, provide opportunities for citizens to learn about Iowa’s natural resources and much more. Recent projects have been investigating the nesting success of barn owls and determining the status of the endangered rusty-patched bumblebee.

“One thing to be aware of if you’re interested in donating is that the tax check-off line is pretty inconspicuous and can be easily missed. Be sure to remind your tax preparer that they have a client that wants to donate,” said Shepherd. Once located, donating is easy: simply write the amount to donate next to the Fish and Wildlife Check-Off, line 57 on Form 1040, and the sum is either automatically deducted from the refund or added to the amount owed. “If every Iowa taxpayer donated just \$1, it would mean \$1.6 million for wildlife and nature conservation,” Shepherd said.

New this year, if hopeful donors miss donating on the tax form, they can still make a donation to the non-game program on the web at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/donations>.

Ice fishing and open water fishing similarities

By Bob Jensen

FISHING THE MIDWEST FISHING TEAM

At first glance, it would seem like ice fishing and open water fishing are two entirely different things. You dress differently, you use different equipment, and the transportation to your fishing spot is different. In the summer, we get to the location on the water by boat or wading. In the winter we drive a truck, snowmobile, four wheeler or walk to the hot-spot. But when it’s time to, put a lure in the water, there are lots of similarities in ice fishing and open water fishing. Following are some of those similarities.

Let’s start with lure color. Regardless of open water or ice, water clarity often helps determine what color lure will be tied on. In clear water, natural colors will usually be most productive. In stained water, brighter patterns that incorporate orange, chartreuse, or glow will be good starting points. However, those gaudy colors can also be good in clear water. In clear water, remember that the amount of light will influence lure color: Natural colors at mid-day when the skies are clear, brighter colors on cloudy days and early and late in the day when light is less.

An interesting thing about



A Tikka Mino (pictured) is one of just a few lure types that are outstanding fish-catchers in open water or through the ice.

Photo by Bob Jensen

color differences under the ice and in open water: Fish under the ice seem to go for the “Wonderbread” color better than they do in open water. Here are a good number of ice fishing lures that come with the red, yellow, and blue dots that signify the Wonderbread color, but not very many open water lures. Maybe they’d go for the Wonderbread color in

open water if there were more open water offerings in the Wonderbread color.

Lure size and action are other areas where open water and ice considerations are similar. When the fish are active, winter or summer, a larger, faster moving lure will often be better. When the fish aren’t so willing to bite, a smaller lure moving slower will frequently be what

it takes to make them open their mouths.

A popular way to get fish to bite when they’re under the ice is called “pounding”. Pounding is when you bounce your jigging spoon off the bottom of the lake. When done over sand, pounding creates a small cloud of dust which attracts nearby fish.

When done on rocks, it cre-

ates a clicking noise which, again, can attract fish to the area. Compare this to casting a crankbait in open water that runs close to the bottom. As it moves, it often bumps into the bottom which creates dust or noise, which again hopefully attracts a nearby fish.

Another ice/open water similarity: Stable weather is usually best for fishing. Fish under the

ice can feel weather changes as can fish in open water, and those weather changes can make them more willing or less willing to bite. If there are several days of stable, warmer weather, and if you can, go fishing.

Last thing: Fishing pressure can affect the fish catching. Although there might be reports of fast fishing on a particular body of water or a particular spot on a body of water, sometimes that body of water or that spot gets a lot of fishing pressure. It’s often best to find a different lake or fishing spot away from the groups of anglers. There might be fewer fish, but the fish that are there will often be more likely to bite.

When it comes right down to it, although ice fishing and open water fishing look a lot different, when you compare how and where you present your lure, ice fishing and open water fishing have a good number of similarities. Often, the most successful open water anglers are also the most successful ice anglers. Keep the above ideas in mind and you can become successful at catching fish through the ice or in open water.

Elk appearing on trail cameras in Iowa

DES MOINES — Elk seem to be visiting Iowa more frequently each fall, and thanks to social media, their visits are now shared at the speed of downloads among tens of thousands of people among the various social networks.

Most of these sightings are in western Iowa due to the proximity of the larger wild elk herd found in the Black Hills of South Dakota and in central and western Nebraska. These visitors tend to be young males conceivably searching for new territory. And this fall was no different. “I had reports coming in weekly to my office all fall,” said Josh Gansen, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Saylorville Wildlife Unit covering nine counties in central and west central Iowa.

The number of individual elk visiting the state is likely very low, state experts say, and the frequency of reports in the fall are based on these elk covering a lot of distance and appearing on different trail cameras.

“It’s to the point that it’s no longer uncommon,” Gansen said.

The elk rut (breeding season) out west is in September and October, which is around the same time as the juvenile elk have been showing up in Iowa. The Iowa DNR is collecting scat and muscle tissue for DNA analysis to learn more about these animals, including where they are coming from, said Doug Chafa, wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR’s Missouri River Wildlife Unit in western Iowa.

Elk were native to Iowa, but left as the state was settled. While there isn’t a population in Iowa, they, along with moose, are protected in Iowa Code, which includes a \$1,000 fine if illegally killed. That does not exclude the right of a person from dispatching an elk that is causing property damage or from causing physical harm.

“Three or four years ago, we had an elk that was trying to get into a penned livestock area damaging the fence in north-

west Iowa, and it had to be dispatched,” Chafa said.

However, most elk wander in and out of Iowa with no issues. But not all. This fall, an elk was hit and killed on I-80 and another was found dead within sight of Hwy. 20, east of Sioux City. The Woodbury County elk was a 1 to 1-1/2-year-old adolescent animal weighing approximately 450-500 pounds which is significantly larger than a white-tailed deer.

“An adult elk can weigh between 750-800 pounds with hooves as large as your hand,” Chafa said. As a comparison, a five-year-old buck white tailed deer can weigh up to 250 pounds at its heaviest.

Large wildlife always catches people’s attention, and Chafa said if you encounter an elk, give them plenty of room and don’t approach it.

“Take a moment to enjoy seeing a wild elk in Iowa,” he said. “As long as these animals are not causing any problems, our position is we are going to leave them be.”



Camp Autumn Fishing Tourney slated for Feb. 11

By STEVE WEISMAN
Outdoor Editor

The fourth annual Camp Autumn Ice Fishing Tournament and Fundraiser is set for Saturday, February 11 with registration taking place at 9 a.m. and the fishing going from 10 a.m. to 1p.m. with a complimentary chili and spaghetti lunch to follow. The tournament will be held at Camp Autumn, a 30-acre private lake located about 13 miles southwest of Everly. Camp Autumn has an excellent population of crappies, bluegills and largemouth bass, and last year's third annual event was a huge success with over 150 participants of all ages and levels of ice anglers. The goal is to enjoy the lake and support a great cause.

According to Adam Lybarger, director of Camp Autumn, there is no registration fee to fish the tournament. However, free will donations will be accepted with all of the money raised going towards scholarships for children to attend Camp Autumn, a therapeutic camp for children in northwest Iowa.

Lybarger adds, "We are thrilled to be able to open our lake to the public and provide a family friendly way for participants to connect with the outdoors and support a great cause. All the money raised from the tournament goes to our scholarship program providing the needed funds for kids to come to camp this summer and receive the respite that is so needed during these trying times!"

The tournament is a catch, measure and release event with prizes awarded in three categories: largemouth bass, crappies and bluegills. In addition to the main prize categories, there will also be opportunities to win special challenges sponsored by our Autumn's Heroes sponsors. Lybarger says, "Between prizes, give-a-ways, food, coffee & hot chocolate, we plan to give a way around \$5,000 stuff to this year's attendees. All of which is made possible by our generous sponsors!"

The Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club (www.iagreatlakesfishingclub.org) is partnering with Camp Autumn. The club will be providing ice shacks, heaters and fishing gear (on a first come-serve/rotating basis), providing transportation from the parking lot to the main area of the lake, providing official tournament judges to measure



DNR Conservation Officer Joe Yarkosky shares ice safety tips with young anglers at last year's tournament.

Photo submitted

and log fish caught. The club is also providing the first 60 youngsters with a free ice fishing rod and reel and also putting on a Kids Demonstration to teach the youngsters about ice safety and the basics of ice fishing.

Lybarger says about the IGLFC. "The club has been a huge supporter of Camp Autumn from the very beginning and we are so grateful for their continued support with our summer camp program, lake habitat management, and of course this tournament & fundraiser. We are so grateful to have this club as not only part of our local community, but also our Camp Autumn family!"

IGLFC president Terry Thomsen looks forward to the Camp Autumn outing. "The IGLFC appreciates Camp Autumn sharing its facilities with the general public. Our hope is that lots of angling veterans and families alike take advantage of the chance to enjoy this excellent fishery. In turn, we hope that folks will show their generosity in donations to Camp Autumn."

A host of local businesses and individuals have come together to help sponsor the event. In addition to the IGLFC, other sponsors in the fishing industry include Great Lakes Guide Service, No Limits Outdoors, Oak Hill Outdoors, Pure Fishing, Legends Guide Service, Stan's Bait and Tackle and Bobber Down. Area businesses including Spencer Hy-Vee, Snook's of Okobojo, Mud on Main Coffee House & Roastery, By The Bucket, City View Farms, Northwest Bank, Valero Renewable Fuels, AgState, Royal Lions Club, C&B Equipment, and Darwin & Brenda Johnson are also generous sponsors.

Lybarger appreciates all of the sponsors. "We are beyond grateful for the Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club and all of our sponsors. I truly believe this is one of the best events of the winter here in Northwest Iowa and that is directly due to their generosity and support."

The second level is the Camp Champion and a \$500 commitment. In addition to the benefits of the Proud Supporter, the

still be printed and displayed by Camp Autumn. Plus the Autumn's Hero will be designated as the sole sponsor for an additional prize category/contest. A custom ice fishing rod designed by Dan Gay Custom Ice rods will be made with their business's logo on the handle and color matched threading on the eyelet of the ice rod. This personalized custom ice rod will be awarded to the winner of that special category/contest.

Additional information, registration links and a list of prizes can be found under events on the Camp Autumn Facebook page (www.facebook.com/campautumn).

Why the name Autumn?
Autumn's Center and Camp Autumn are named in honor and memory of three-year-old Autumn Elgersma of Orange City, who died on October 31, 2013, two days after being hospitalized for injuries she received from her daycare provider. Since her passing, Autumn's light has continued to shine through her story and the impact it has made on northwest Iowa. Autumn's mother, Jennifer, along with her husband Phil, and children Faith and Jared, are dedicated to creating awareness on child

abuse and serving as an ambassador to help protect our community's children.

About Camp Autumn
The camp itself is located on a beautiful property near Sutherland, Iowa with 73 acres of land and water. This gives a lot of space to hike and explore and even a lake for campers to enjoy recreational activities during a warm day at camp.

Camp Autumn is a therapeutic day camp owned and operated by Seasons Center for Behavioral Health. Seasons Center for Behavioral Health is a comprehensive behavioral health center offering a broad range of psychiatric and be-

havioral health services to the people and communities in Northwest Iowa since 1959. Seasons currently has office locations in 11 counties, including: Buena Vista, Carroll, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Sioux and Woodbury.

Lybarger adds, "When youngsters come to work with us at one of our 12 offices across northwest Iowa, they receive evidence-based therapy and treatment. Here at Camp Autumn, we serve youth ages 4-21 with behavioral and mental health needs."

have already been coming in, but Lybarger notes that these opportunities will be available for 2024, too.

The first level is the Proud Supporter with a \$100 commitment. The donor's name will be listed in text on event posters to be placed in businesses and on community boards around northwest Iowa. The donor will also be acknowledged in all press releases, on the event's Facebook listing and to all participants the day of the tournament.

The highest level is the Autumn's Heroes and a \$1000 commitment. In addition to the benefits of the Proud Supporter and the Camp Champion, the Autumn's Hero have the opportunity to provide their own banner or pop-up during the day of the tournament. If none its available, the donor's logo will

Camp Champion will have its logo listed on all even posters, the logo will be displayed during the tournament on the ice and inside during registration and at the awards ceremony following the tournament. There will also be acknowledgment during all live radio/television interviews.

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Missouri, Big Sioux rivers paddlefish fishing season opens Feb. 1

The paddlefish snagging season on the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers opens Feb. 1 and goes through April 30 (sunrise to sunset).

Anglers fishing for paddlefish must have a valid Iowa fishing license, along with a special paddlefish license and unused transportation tag(s).

Please keep track of your catch and effort and complete the electronic survey after the paddlefish season whether you harvested a fish or not. The information collected will help the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) evaluate the success of the season and determine what potential changes/modifications may be needed.

If you catch a jaw-tagged fish

(numbered band in the lower jaw), call the phone number on the tag and report the tag number, date of capture, capture location and eye-to-fork length. The Iowa DNR and other state fisheries agencies tag paddlefish to better understand and manage populations. Tagging provides valuable information to estimate population size, fish movement and growth.

Ongoing drought conditions and low river levels might affect Missouri River boat ramp access.

For more information about Iowa's special paddlefish season regulations, visit the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/paddlefish.

CLASSIC, Continued from Page 1C

with nearly 32,000 in attendance.

What's on this year's docket

It's one of those whirlwind weekends with seemingly something going on each day. One of the coolest events is the annual Bird Dog Parade that kicks off the three-day event at 11 a.m., approximately one hour before the general showroom floor opens. Over 100 dogs representing over 40 different sporting breeds will be part of the parade.

The weekend is truly a pheasant/quail enthusiast's mecca with a special Friday Night Upland Rally (sold out), the National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic Banquet on Saturday night (sold out) and a special Women, Wine and Wild Game on Sunday morning.

Special areas are set up for all weekend. Habitat Help Desk is an area of the show dedicated to helping landowners meet their

life-saving field care for your bird dogs. Training will cover trauma management, bird dog nutrition and how to safely remove bird dogs from traps encountered in the field.

Grouse Trail is an all-weekend opportunity sponsored by the North American Grouse partnership will give attendees the chance to learn more about these magnificent gamebirds, the habitat challenges they face and how participating partners are collaborating with Pheasants Forever to conserve critical upland habitat.

Special workshop entitled Landowner Workshop will be held on Friday, February 17 from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Soil experts, precision agriculture experts, farm bill experts, farm lease experts and land stewardship experts. There is no cost, but people must pre-register to attend the workshop. The goal for the workshop is for landowners to leave this event with an un-

derstanding of why taking care of their soil will result in better wildlife habitat ... and with skills to create wildlife habitat on their property, a toolbox of options for better communication with their renter and an understanding of why we are merely stewards of this land for the next generation.

Wicklund adds, "From veteran bird dog owners to new hunters who are finding their way into the field for the first time, National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic is a place where everyone can find their path to the uplands while connecting with other hunters, industry leaders, and professional wildlife biologists. A relatively short drive from Iowa, I hope upland bird hunters will join us to 'extend your season' and learn about all the wonderful things the organization is accomplishing for public land bird hunters in the Midwest and beyond."



Teaching outdoor skills courses scheduled this summer

DES MOINES — The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sponsoring four courses on how to teach outdoor skills for K-12 teachers, naturalists and other educators this summer.

Hands-on sessions (indoors and outside) will provide introductory skills instruction and development, teaching materials and lesson plans. The cost of each course varies. Create an account on the AEALearning website to find the cost, registration deadline and requirements for each course.

Introduction to Basic Outdoor Skills, June 27-28 at Kent Park Conservation Center, Oxford or July 11-12 at Swan Lake Education Center, Carroll

Participants will receive introductory instruction and lesson plans for planning outings, map reading, hiking, paddling, fishing, archery, campfire cooking and basic firearm safety/shooting. Registration fee includes meals (lunch and dinner on day 1 and lunch on day 2) and materials.

Fish Iowa! Basic Fishing, June 12 at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, Dixon or June 14 at Bigelow Park, Salix

This blended course will acquaint participants with the Fish Iowa! Basic Spincasting teaching module and a variety of other resources to teach fishing in a variety of settings. Participants will learn to teach fish identification, fishing locations, casting techniques and cleaning and cooking fish. Participants will experience lake/pond fishing (including fishing from a kayak and/or canoe) and be introduced to a variety of Aquatic WILD activities. Peer

teaching and small group work will be used to develop appropriate teaching strategies for individual teaching situations. Individuals who register for this class must complete online course work prior to the in-person session.

Archery, June 28 at Olofson Shooting Range, Polk City

Participants will learn basic archery and archery instructional skills, as well as maintenance of archery equipment. Participants will receive National Archery in the Schools instructional materials. Individuals who register for this class will receive information via email to register for the "Basic Archery Instructor" online course. (Completion required between June 21-27, 2023.)

Hunter Education, July 10-11 at Olofson Shooting Range, Polk City

Learn the requirements to become a certified hunter education instructor, including firearm handling and safety, hunter education class requirements and policies and procedures. Registration fee includes lunch, supplies and teaching materials. Bring a laptop or tablet to access online resources.

Educators can earn license renewal for all six courses. Graduate credit is also available for the Introduction to Basic Outdoor Skills and Fish Iowa! Basic Fishing sessions.

Register for the how to teach outdoor skills courses through the AEALearning website at <https://aealearning.truenorthlogic.com/>. You will be asked to create an account if you do not already have one. After you login, enter "outdoor skills" in the course search to find registration information for each course.

Outdoor Connection

WILDLIFE PHOTOS

Photos by Mike Fredrickson

FEBRUARY '23



Red-breasted nuthatch



Snow buntings just south of Ft. Defiance. Snow bunting breeding ground is the high arctic.



Pheasant south of Fort Defiance



Buck helping itself to bird feeders



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