



# OUTDOOR CONNECTION

STORIES, ADVICE, AND INFORMATION FOR OUTDOOR LOVERS

## CAMP AUTUMN ICE FISHING TOURNAMENT ANOTHER SUCCESS

184 visitors

\$15,022 raised



Lots of fishing activity last Saturday at Camp Autumn near Sutherland, Iowa.

Photo submitted

## WEATHER COOPERATES FOR FOURTH ANNUAL TOURNAMENT

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

Participants could not have asked for better weather conditions at the Camp Autumn Fishing Tournament and Fund Raiser held Saturday, February 11 on Camp Autumn Lake near Sutherland. A total of 184 people joined in on the fun for the fourth annual event. According to Adam

Lybarger, Camp Autumn tournament director, "Mother Nature blessed us with a beautiful weather for a day on the ice, and we are beyond thrilled with our record setting turnout and money raised for our camp scholarship program. Beyond that, though, it was great to see everyone enjoying the day and getting to know Camp Autumn a little better." Through the generosity of

Camp Autumn sponsors and the donations of fishing participants a total \$15,022 was raised for the Camp Autumn scholarship fund. The day began with registration and coffee and hot chocolate provided by Mud on Main Coffee House from Cherokee, followed by a morning of fishing for crappies, bluegills and largemouth bass, culminating with an awards ceremony and

a lunch of chili provided by Spencer Hy-Vee and spaghetti from By the Bucket of Spencer. Through efforts of the Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club (IGLFC), everything went smoothly for the participants. In addition to giving the first 60 youngsters a rigged ice fishing rod and reel combo, the club also provided shuttle rides out to the ice and back

for everyone as well as being the judges measuring & logging each fish caught. How was the bite? Lybarger noted, "Many experienced and first-time anglers saw a lot of action today with quite a few really nice fish caught in each of the tournament categories. We promote this as a great tournament for the seasoned angler as well as being a

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Update

## Eliminating Eurasian watermilfoil

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

The news early last fall that the exotic invasive plant Eurasian watermilfoil had been discovered on the lower Okoboji chain (all but West Lake Okoboji) was a shock to residents and nonresidents alike. According to Mike Hawkins, district Fisheries Biologist at the Spirit Lake Hatchery, the discovery was made in late August during the DNR's ongoing surveillance program for invasive species, which is done twice each summer at 153 different sites throughout the lakes as an early warning system for invasive species. The survey earlier in the summer had found nothing out of the ordinary.

Then in late August came the discovery. The largest area was around the boat ramp on Upper Gar. That was certainly problematic with all the boats entering and leaving. So, that area was treated with a herbicide immediately. Additional surveys showed Eurasian watermilfoil in multiple areas in East Okoboji, Minnewashta, Lower Gar, and of course, Upper Gar.

Hawkins explains what happened next. "What followed was an extraordinary effort to put together a plan (unique in its scale and timing) and to find the \$300,000 to pull off this monumental task of treating the entire lower system. As the Iowa Great Lakes area often does, we rose to the challenge."

The Okoboji Protective Association, East Okoboji Lakes Improvement Corporation, Dickinson County Supervisors, and Dickinson County Taxpayers Association matched the Iowa DNR's contribution in a matter of weeks. Other organizations and cities were also standing by if more funds were needed. Meanwhile, the DNR's biologists were working with consultants and product manufacturers to develop this very aggressive plan.



Application of Sonar A. S. taking place out from the Upper Gar boat ramp.

Photo courtesy Iowa DNR

It was determined that Sonar A. S. was the best choice for the treatment because it has very little impact on native aquatic plants, is extremely easy to apply and has the potential to eradicate Eurasian watermilfoil. According to

Hawkins, "Sonar A.S. and the active ingredient fluridone has an excellent safety profile. The EPA has labeled this herbicide for even the most sensitive areas and in lakes used as

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## Black-capped chickadees and their astonishing secrets

DES MOINES (DNR) — Black-capped chickadees survive the harshest winters with amazing adaptive behaviors and abilities. From adjusting their core body temperatures to shedding and adding brain cells to memorizing hundreds of locales of stashed foods, these tiny wonders have astonishing secrets.

Weighing only one-half ounce, chickadees consume as much as 30 times the amount of food in winter as it does in the summer, using a strategy known as scatter hoarding to maintain that diet.

Chickadees would store one or two bits of food - tree-inhabiting caterpillars, insects, spiders and seeds - in hundreds or thousands of places over several acres during warm-

er months. In far northern latitudes, they may hoard a half-million items. Caches are usually within feet of where the food is found. Sunflower seeds from feeders are taken farther away, secretly stashed from competitors. Before stuffing and concealing the item in rough bark, branches and crevices, chickadees will remove larvae heads, moth wings and the shells of large seeds.

How does it remember the hundreds of hiding spots of newly hidden food caches? In October, chickadees grow new cells in the brain's hippocampus, critical to memory. By spring, millions of these cells die as hidden food dwindles and memory is less vital.

Surviving a cold Iowa winter requires more than down

and fat, so chickadees shiver to maintain minimal body temperatures. By gradually lengthening times between shivers, body temperatures drop as much as 10 degrees, requiring 20 percent less in caloric needs.

By reducing metabolism at night, an extra layer of fat is added by morning. On cold nights, modest energy stores last until dawn by lowering their normal 108-degree temperature to 86 degrees through controlled hypothermia. This nocturnal semi-hibernation slows metabolism rates by 25 percent.

Iowans can support this amazing little bird and the 1,000-plus other species of songbirds, bald eagles, salamanders, turtles, monarchs and bees and more that make up the

majority of wildlife in Iowa by contributing to the Chickadee-checkoff on their state income tax form.

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. It is one of the only funding sources for the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Diversity program, which is responsible for these species.

The Fish and Wildlife check-off is on line 57a of the 2022 IA 1040 Iowa Income Tax Return. Once located, donating is easy: simply write-in the amount to

donate and the sum is either automatically deducted from the refund or added to the amount owed.

Funding helps to improve wildlife habit, 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.

New this year, donors who miss donating on the tax form, can donate to the non-game program on the web at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/donations>.



Prairie Ridge Photography

Photo courtesy Bill Beardsley Prairie Ridge Photography

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# Outdoor Connection

## Blizzard cancels Iowa's DNR's public meetings at Okoboji's Maser Monarch Lodge

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

The mid-week winter storm certainly threw a monkey wrench into a lot of events and activities. It also caused the Iowa DNR to cancel the public meetings scheduled in Ventura, Algona and Okoboji that were to be held last Wednesday (February 22). Other parts of the state were able to hold their regularly scheduled meetings on Wednesday or that were held on Thursday.

According to Todd Bishop, chief of the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Bureau. "The presentation recaps the recently completed hunting and trapping seasons and discusses potential regulation changes and we include the HYPERLINK "mailto:wildlife@dnr.iowa.gov" at "blank" wildlife@dnr.iowa.gov email for you to send your comments, concerns or opinions regarding the proposals or on any other topic that falls under the Iowa DNR's wildlife umbrella."

I've attended several of these meetings over the years, and I have found them to be a good way to take a look at the past year in hunting and trapping and to get.

So, what's next? Unfortunately, for the canceled sites, there will be no makeup date. However, the Iowa DNR will have the presentation available on its website www.iowadnr.gov beginning next week for review and comment.

At least in this way, we can go online and catch up with what we missed and still make any recommendations or suggestions that we wanted to make at the regular public meeting.

All of the comments collected from these public meetings will be considered along with other related comments received by the Iowa DNR prior to proposing changes to hunting rules and regulations. Proposed rules will be presented to the Natural Resource Commission during a regular public meeting for consideration and additional public comment.

## Hunters harvest nearly 110,000 deer during 2022-23 season

DES MOINES — Iowa's 2022 deer harvest increased seven percent over the 2021 season, due, in part to the new Excess Tag January Antlerless Season approved by the Iowa Legislature last spring.

"A lot of hunters chose to participate in the new season, and the harvest was on par or a little above the other firearms seasons," said Jace Elliott, state deer biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "Hunters reported more than 2,500 deer taken during the Excess Tag January Antlerless Season, thanks, in part, to favorable weather across the state."

Overall, hunters tagged deer at a rate of 30-35 percent which is similar to previous years, for a total reported harvest of more than 109,600 deer.

Deer harvest varied regionally, with the north central and southeast regions seeing an in-

crease over 2021. "The north central deer population is recovering over the past decade and is trending in the right direction," Elliott said.

In the far western counties and southwest region saw a decline in harvest, likely due to the recent outbreaks from EHD and from floods in the Missouri River valley. "The deer herd has shown that, given time, it can recover from EHD outbreaks," he said. "And 2022 was a mild year with respect to EHD in that area."

The deer population model indicates the herd size is stable to slightly increasing and is within the goal of the Iowa deer study advisory committee.

The Iowa DNR has deer harvest information by county by year dating back to 2006 online at <https://gooutdoorsiowa.com/RealTimeHarvestReport.aspx>.

## Oxbow restoration project at Cedar Rock Wildlife Area

DES MOINES — Staff with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Cedar Wapsi Wildlife Unit were working to install wetlands on the Cedar Rock Wildlife Area when the opportunity to restore an oxbow on the Wapsipinicon River came along.

"There are not a lot of oxbow ecosystems out there and they are difficult to restore," said Jason Auel, wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR. "This would not have been possible without federal partnership and federal funding — it was not a cheap restoration."

The oxbow restoration was selected as a flood mitigation project by the Upper Wapsi River Watershed Management Authority. It identified a six-acre oxbow filled in by five feet of siltation to be excavated to its original riverbed. It would be connected to the Wapsipinicon River on the south end.

Contractors worked during last winter and eventually removed roughly 26,000 cubic yards of silt. That material would be used by Buchanan County for fill as part of its Quasqueton Diagonal road expansion project and incorporated back to Cedar Rock Wildlife Area as part of the restored prairie.

As soon as the oxbow was holding water, the wetland plants returned — arrowhead, bidens, smartweed, cattails.

The improved habitat is benefiting ducks, geese, turtles, frogs and more. All that remains for the project is for the last of the excavated silt material to be removed for the highway project and the disturbed area seeded to prairie.

Away from the river, the management plan includes restoring prairie on the old crop fields and then eventually creating an oak savanna using seedlings from the State Forest Nursery. The young oaks were planted in the prairie, then caged to give the young trees a head start. Once the trees are established, the cages will be removed to let Mother Nature take its course.

Auel said the next step is to create a forest management plan to address the tree community on the wildlife area and the adjacent state park.

"It's a fairly well used public hunting for deer and turkey," he said.

The maintained firebreaks cover around 2.5 miles and are popular places to take a walk along the prairie and through the timber.

The 153-acre Cedar Rock Wildlife Area is near Cedar Rock State Park, which is home to the Walter House, a home designed by noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright and gifted to the Iowa Conservation Commission in 1981 by Lowell and Agnes Walter.



A crowd of more than 100 people attended the recent IGLFC fishing seminar.

Photo by Steve Weisman

## Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club's Spring Fishing Seminar

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

For members of the Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club that attended the annual spring supper and fishing seminar at the Hap Ketelsen Community Center in Everly on Wednesday, February 8, it was an evening of great food, telling the normal fishing stories, participating in a general raffle topped off by a top-notch fishing seminar by Joe Henry, executive director of Lake of the Woods Tourism.

After a meal of pulled pork sandwiches and chips, IGLFC president Terry Thomsen shared a summary of club activities. The early January Wild Game Feed raised \$4,200 that goes directly to the annual Jim McDonnell Memorial Scholarship. Thomsen stressed, "We encourage seniors to apply this spring for consideration for this year's scholarship. Since 2012, over \$20,000 has been awarded."

Thomsen also shared the club's goal of getting youngsters involved in the outdoors and fishing. "Last year, through a variety of programs, we worked with over 600 youngsters. This year it looks like we will be reaching over 700 youngsters through a wide range of programs. One of our big ice fishing events is the Camp Autumn's 4th Annual Ice Fishing Tournament, where our volunteers will be helping people get down to the lake, setting up shelters and helping measure fish. Plus, the first 60 youngsters get a rigged ice fishing rod and reel."

More kids' activities are set for open water season. Wednesday, May 3 will be the annual Kids' Fishing Clinic at Stolley Park in Spencer with a second Kids' Fishing Clinic held at the Iowa Great Lakes on Wednesday, May 17 at a site to be determined. Thomsen continued, "This summer club volunteers will be working with Hannah Dibble and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in Dickinson County with a series of five youth fishing workshops (June 6, July 11, July 31, August 1 and August 7). Of course, we are always looking for club volunteers to help with these programs."



Joe Henry shares valuable information about fishing the Lake of the Woods.

Photo by Steve Weisman

miles of shoreline. It is really three fisheries in one: the Rainy River, Big Traverse Bay and the Northwest Angle."

The Rainy River offers quality walleye fishing from pre-spawners migrating from LOW into the Rainy River for the annual spawn. As spring approaches, anglers will watch the weather for open water that will signal ice free boat ramps. However, Henry says there are those who will push the envelope and slide smaller aluminum boats over the ice along the shoreline and then out into the open water. This can be as early as the third week of March. Henry notes that the Lake of the Woods Tourism Bureau gives daily updates on the ice/open water situation. Before fishing these areas, make sure to know the limits, slot sizes and when it's catch and release. When it comes to early spring walleye fishing, Henry's go-to presentation is "a good jigging rod and a box of bright colored, glow and gold jigs. The faster the current, the heavier the jig needs to be."

The water is stained, so you don't need to be worried about weight as much. You might start with a 1/2-inch and move heavier. The emerald shiner is a staple of the LOW chain with a huge run occurring in the fall. Bait shops will catch these, freeze them and sell them throughout the year. According to Henry, "Work slowly upstream into the current, pull the jig forward and thump the bottom. Another option is using a 3-way rig and slowly pulling crankbaits upstream."

Fishing for sturgeon is becoming more and more popular, and anglers target the deepest holes in the river, which makes good electronics a must. With the chance to hook into a monster fish of 30, 40, 50, 60 pounds and maybe even one topping 100 pounds, there's a reason for its popularity. There are open and closed seasons, so make sure to know the regulations.

Henry suggests going with heavy equipment for sturgeon with up to a 3-5-ounce "no-roll" sinker, a heavy fluoro-carbon leader and a 4/0 circle hook tipped with a glob of two to three juicy nightcrawlers. Henry's tip on the circle hook? "No huge hookset. Just reel up the slack and sweep the rod tip. It's cool. The circle hook will slide up and into the corner of the fish's mouth."

A future column will discuss fishing early summer, fall and winter on the LOW!

### The main event

There is no doubt that Joe Henry can spin a yarn, and for over an hour, through his PowerPoint presentation and

action videos, he transported the crowd to the Lake of the Woods (LOW) known as the Walleye Capital of the World. As executive director for the past 11 years, Henry has the

enviable job of helping people understand the LOW and its surrounding area, along with working with 60 LOW resorts.

LOW is truly a go-to destination, and as Henry noted

its immensity is incredible. "There are 317,000 acres just in Minnesota. Including the Canadian side, the entire lake is over one million acres with 14,552 islands and 65,000

# Outdoor Connection



Ice fishing expert Kevan Paul took this larger than average white bass through late season ice.

Photo by Bob Jensen

## Time for late ice fishing

By Bob Jensen  
FISHING THE MIDWEST FISHING TEAM

The days are getting longer and warmer. Longer days and warmer temps at this time of year mean that some really good ice fishing is not far away. Here are some ideas for finishing the ice fishing season successfully.

Even through the ice and snow, fish seem to be able to sense a change in the seasons. Mother Nature tells the fish that it's time to start thinking about spawning, so, under the cover of ice, they start to head in the direction of where they will spawn. They don't just

take off and go there, they take their time and leisurely head for their spawning areas. As they travel, they eat a little more than they have been.

Walleyes, northern pike, perch, crappies, bluegills, pretty much all fish that live in the Midwest will be getting hungrier and easier to catch right now. You don't want to completely abandon the off shore structures and deep weedlines that you've been fishing the past few weeks, but you need to remember that the fish will soon start to leave those spots. When the action starts to slow on those locations, you need to

start moving to keep up with the fish. Pay attention to your sonar. If you're seeing fewer fish marks than you have on recent trips, it's time to think about heading to the areas that the fish are headed to.

There will still be an early-in-the-day and a late-in-the-day bite, but on a lot of bodies of water, the bite has the potential to be pretty good all day. Not on all lakes, but some lakes.

This time of year you need to keep moving until you find the fish. Try different depths, different structures, just keep moving until you find fish activity. When you find them, sit

on them until they move, then you move too.

That's the key to ice-fishing year 'round, but perhaps more under late ice. Keep in mind that the fish are headed toward the areas where they'll be spawning in a few weeks. You should be headed to those areas as well.

Remember that the fish have seen lots of baits by now. If you've got something on the end of your line that's been working, keep using it until the fish tell you they want something else. Then go to a different color or a different size or impart a different action on the

lure. If you've got a bait that hasn't worked all year, give it a try. Maybe the fish will decide that it looks pretty good to them now.

There's a new bait called a Jointed Pinhead Pro that the fish haven't seen much of that will be very productive under this year's late ice. Use the smallest size for bluegills, larger for perch and crappies, and even larger for walleyes.

The late season ice fishing can be outstanding, but like most things, don't try to get too much of a good thing. If you're not sure about the ice being safe, don't go out. If no one

else is out there, you shouldn't be either.

Keep an eye on current conditions. If it starts to get really warm during the day, you should head for shore. Venturing onto the ice when it's not safe can be very exciting in a way that you don't want to be excited. Be safe, move until you find the fish, experiment with lures and how you present those lures, and the last few weeks of ice-fishing could be memorable and exciting for you in a very good way.

When you add license plate

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drinking water sources. There are no restrictions on fishing, swimming, or irrigation during or after the application. In fact, the EPA label does not have applicator personal protective equipment requirements."

Another positive, it has been successfully used to eradicate Eurasian watermilfoil on smaller lakes and ponds in Iowa since the 1990s. Hawkins says, "However, this effort on 2,240 acres is one of the largest and most logistically challenging of its kind ever performed in the nation."

### The plan

On September 20-21, the Iowa DNR made the first application of a targeted herbicide treatment. For success, the herbicide must stay in contact with the plant for a long period of time, preventing it from making food from sunlight, eventually starving it. The concentration of the herbicide must be maintained into the spring of 2023 to accomplish this.

Hawkins explains, "Water samples are pulled from each lake segment every couple of weeks and additional doses are calculated and administered to each lake section as needed. The herbicide and the application method are designed to have minimal impacts on native plants. Because of the timing of the treatment, another invasive plant, curlyleaf pondweed, will also be mostly eliminated in the treated areas. However, because this plant forms a kind of seed bed, the

treatment will likely only have one year of control."

### A mid-winter update

Hawkins says, "A week after the first application, we took our first FasTest consisting of taking a two-ounce water sample in the middle of each lake segment. The samples are sent to the herbicide manufacturer's laboratory in North Carolina for analysis. Initial concentrations looked very good and well within our target range. We have been taking samples every few weeks and adjusting the concentration with small amounts of herbicide as needed. During the latest round of samples on December 20, the herbicide concentrations in all lake segments was between 3.4 and 4 parts per billion. This is exactly where we wanted to see it. Our staff have been very pleased with how things have been going."

### The future

Herbicide concentration monitoring will continue through spring. Spring rains and snowmelt will dilute the concentration requiring more product to be added. As the Eurasian watermilfoil germinates early this spring, it will get its final dose - eliminating anything left over after the fall treatment period. Plant sampling throughout the spring and summer will give an indication of whether it has been wiped out. As more data is gathered, the DNR and project partners will provide the community with updates.

## Importance of Resource Enhancement and Protection

DES MOINES - REAP stands for Resource Enhancement and Protection. It is a program in the State of Iowa that invests in, as its name implies, the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources. Iowa is blessed with a diverse array of natural and cultural resources, and REAP is likewise diverse and far reaching. Depending on the individual programs, REAP provides money for projects through state agency budgets or in the form of grants. Several aspects of REAP also encourage private contributions that help accomplish program objectives.

REAP is funded from the state's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of the natural resource license plate. The program is authorized to receive \$20 million per year until 2026, but the state legislature sets the amount of REAP funding every year. This year REAP was appropriated \$12 million. When you add license plate

and interest income, its total budget is about \$12.5 million.

These funds go into eight different programs based upon percentages that are specified in the law. These percentages or what many people call the REAP formula, are shown in the following pie chart.

### REAP Fund Allocation

- First \$350,000 each year goes to Conservation Education
- 1% of balance goes for DNR Administration
- Remaining balance is then divided as follows:
  - Roadside Vegetation 3%
  - Historical Resources 5%
  - State Land Management 9%
  - City Parks and Open Space 15%
  - Soil and Water Enhancement 20%
  - County Conservation 20%
  - State Open Space 28%

The following four state agencies administer REAP programs:

- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation
- Department of Cultural Affairs, State Historical Society
- Department of Transportation

### TOURNEY, Continued from Page 5B

family friendly event and a perfect opportunity to try ice fishing if you have never done so before. The volunteers from the fishing club and I were thrilled to see multiple kids catching their first fish through the ice and even a few kiddos catching their first fish ever here today!"

Listed below are the tournament winners in each category based on combined total length of the angler's five biggest fish.

Top placers in the bluegill division:

- First place, Cole Budach, 42.5"
- Second place, Grayson Hermstad, 41"
- Third place, Mason Sexe, 40.5"

Top placers in the crappie division:

- First place, Brock Jones, 58.25"
- Second place, Haden Stell, 53.75"
- Third place, Chase Budach, 50.3"

Top placers in the bass division:

- First place, Danie Babb, 40.5"
- Second place, Ryder Parsons, 31"
- Third place, Melody Collett, 29"

A special prize, a guided fishing trip with Shane Akin, owner of Great Lakes Guide Service, was also awarded to the youngster who caught the single largest fish of the day, Henry Peters, 16.75" large-mouth bass.

Special Challenge Winners: Snook's (of Okoboji) Ice Hole Challenge - Candace Daniels

Everly, Hartley & Peterson Lions Club Challenge Hole (3 winners/single biggest fish) - Harrison Daniels, Gemma Halverson and Harrison Daniels

Northwest Bank Lunker Account Challenge Hole (Weight) - Ryan Pyle (heaviest bag); Melody Collett (heaviest single fish)

Northwest Wealth Management - Guess the number of minnows in the investment tank - Gary Guntrson

Valero Renewables (Albert City & Hartley) Casting Challenge - Victor Rodriguez

Community State Bank Bass Challenge (Most # of bass caught, regardless of size) - Daniel Babb

City View Farms Around the World Challenge (Must have submitted at least 1 fish in all three tournament categories) - Daniel Babb

Lybarger reflected, "This event is the highlight of the winter for me, but it does take a lot of work to put on an event of this size. There is just no way we could do it without the generosity of our sponsors, volunteers and, of course, the participants showing up. A special thank you to the Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club and all our volunteers who work so very hard to ensure the tournament runs smoothly and that everyone has fun!"



Prize winners for the 2023 Camp Autumn Fishing Tournament

# Outdoor Connection



# WILDLIFE PHOTOS



Photos by Mike Fredrickson



MARCH '23



Squirrel on feeder



Turkey



Black-capped chickadee and goldfinch



Downy woodpecker



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