



# OUTDOOR CONNECTION

STORIES, ADVICE, AND INFORMATION FOR OUTDOOR LOVERS

## FURHARVESTER SEASONS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Market trends affect number of furharvesters

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

Fur trappers and hunters in Iowa are making final preparations for the 2023 furharvester seasons that open Saturday, November 4. So, what will this year bring? To gain a true picture of furharvester data and population trends, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) monitors population trends of Iowa furbearer species in three different ways: 1) Annual Furharvest Reports, 2) the Spring Spotlight Survey and 3) the Iowa Bowhunter Observation Survey. The result is an annual report entitled "Trends in Iowa Furbearer Populations and Harvest."

According to Vince Evalsizer, furbearer and wetland biologist for the Iowa DNR, "Trapping in today's world is highly regulated. That annual regulated fur harvest (trapping and predator hunting) is considered to be a valuable wildlife management tool. It can help to keep some populations in check in today's modern world thus reducing the spread of disease or parasites such as distemper, parvo, worms, and mange among themselves and our pets. It also helps reduce human/wildlife conflicts such as livestock and poultry depredation, damage to bird feeders, gardens, orchards, apiaries, etc."

Furharvester license numbers should be similar to the last couple of years in that 14,000 to 15,000+ range. Evalsizer says, "The average number of licensed furharvesters in Iowa follows the current fur market trends. Usually, when fur prices increase, the number of furharvesters in the state increases in subsequent years, and the opposite happens in years when fur prices are lower." The last big spike came back in 2011-2013, when harvest values rose significantly. In those years, between 20,000 to 21,000 furharvesters purchased furharvester licenses.

Evalsizer notes that several variables can affect population numbers. Yearly and even long-term weather patterns and events, habitat, and disease can profoundly impact furbearer populations and harvest success in Iowa. According to this year's annual report, "Precipitation, water levels and the timing of freeze-up especially affect aquatic furbearer harvests throughout the state. Species like muskrat and beaver populations can be cyclic and historically fluctuate following wet/dry periods, which can also result in fluctuating annual harvests."

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**Above:** Although often thought of as a lone and individual activity, this furharvester mentor has two youngsters helping check traps.  
*Photo by Mick Klemsrud*

**At left:** Youngsters get to experience the feel of prime pelts at the Knoxville beginner trapping workshop.  
*Photo by Craig Swee*

## Righting a wrong

Congress takes back legislation which hurt shooting sports



Steve Weisman  
Outdoor Editor

In late July, a wide range of national news media reported that the U. S. Department of Education was going to withhold critical funds for elementary and secondary schools nationwide with hunting and archery programs in their curriculum.

I was shocked! Throughout the country, this would destroy what so many people across the country felt were excellent programs. I couldn't believe it. Here in Iowa, the archery and shooting sports have grown unbelievably! Middle school and high school students are excelling in what is a safe

environment mentored and coached by adults who have earned accreditation to coach those sports. Coaches teach life skills such as discipline, safety, teamwork, ethics, mental focus, self-discipline and self-confidence. Both junior colleges and four-year institutions have started shooting programs and are offering scholarships. Now here it was in late July, and funding had been permanently cut!

I talked to my wife, and we could not believe just how crazy this decision was! As I researched, I found that the decision was made on their interpretation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), which Congress passed, and President Biden signed last year and went into effect in late June of 2022. The BSCA was in response to several recent mass shootings.

Bottom line? That meant that funding for shooting sports that came from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was totally cut!

There was certainly a lot of blowback across the country from students, parents, shooting and outdoor organizations, but at that point, the funding was blocked.

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## Northern Iowa shallow lake management update

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

During my weekly outdoor radio show (Following the Great Outdoors) on KILR-95.9 FM, this past Friday, I had the opportunity to have Mike Hawkins, Iowa DNR Fisheries Management Biologist in the Spirit Lake District on as my special guest. He and his team manage public fishing waters in Clay, Emmet, Dickinson, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Plymouth and Sioux counties. Our discussion included looking at the incredibly successful shallow water lake management program and about their special walleye fingerling netting and subsequent release into lakes that last spring's walleye fry release didn't do as well.

### Shallow lake restoration update

For the past 17 years, the Iowa DNR has worked yearly to "turn the switch" on shallow water lakes. Once healthy and vibrant ecosystems, for a variety of reasons have become nothing but a shell of what they once were. Most have become devoid of plant life, have very poor water quality and are overrun by rough fish such as bullheads and carp.

The good news is through an aggressive lake restoration plan, these water bodies are brought back to life by "turning the switch." To "turn the switch" is usually at least a three-year process that most often takes a drastic drawdown (simulating a drought situation), an elimination of the rough fish and a chance for the vegetation to rejuvenate itself. This is followed by refilling and native fish stockings.

In northwest Iowa, sever-



DNR personnel add more fingerlings to the basket for weighing and then transporting to the trucks with oxygenated tanks.  
*Photos courtesy Iowa DNR*

al shallow water lakes are at different stages of this renovation. Renovation of Little Swan Lake, a 371-acre shallow water lake north of Superior, has been a longer process with work beginning 2016. Initially, success was limited because of several consecutive wet years. However, now in 2023, the fruits of the labor are showing

with excellent water quality, good emergent vegetation and a growing fish population of perch, bluegills, northern pike and largemouth bass. The fish have reached angler-keepable size. Duck hunting has also improved on the connecting slough to the west of the lake.

Three other lakes Elk Lake  
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## More than \$3 million in REAP grants recently approved

DES MOINES — The Natural Resource Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources approved 22 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grants during its October meeting. The grants totaled more than \$3 million.

Established in 1989, the Resource Enhancement and Protection program has funded nearly \$389 million for city, county and state park projects that have included water quality improvements, habitat protection, roadside prairies, historical development and conservation education.

The following grants were approved at the Oct. 12 meeting.

### Reap City Parks & Open Spaces

#### Small Cities Category

- City of Hills, Songbird Sanctuary Park - \$50,000
- City of Winthrop, Winthrop City Park Enhancement - \$50,000
- City of Dunlap, Pleasant View Trailhead and Park Improvements - \$75,000
- City of Springville, Emmons Park Phase Three Expansion - \$75,000
- City of Conrad, Conrad South Main Trail Extension - \$35,054

#### Medium Cities Category

- City of Lisbon, Pleasant Grove Heritage Park Prairie Reconstruction - \$11,900
- City of Perry, Frog Creek Campground Land Acquisition - \$100,000
- City of Fairfield, Pleasant Lake Habitat Restoration - \$71,903
- City of Monticello, Monticello Hwy 151 Trail Expansion Phase I - \$75,000
- City of Grimes, Wallace Farm Park - \$125,000
- City of Milford, Clay County Connection Phase II - \$75,000
- City of Eldora, Memorial Park Trail Connecting the Iowa River Valley - \$75,000
- City of Polk City, Connecting the Neal Smith Trail to the High Trestle Trail - \$100,000
- City of Fort Madison, Connecting Fort Madison Phase IV 48th Street Connector - \$50,326

#### Large Cities Category

- City of West Des Moines Parks & Recreation, Raccoon River Greenway 1st Street River Access - \$200,000
- City of Des Moines, Gray's Lake Park Paddle Craft Marina Development - \$300,000
- City of Iowa City, Ashton House Project GREEN Gardens - \$200,000
- City of Urbandale, Walnut Creek Regional Park - \$150,000
- City of Ottumwa, Trail Connector into Ottumwa Park - \$81,176

### REAP County Conservation Boards

- Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, Hitchcock Nature Center Addition - \$450,000
- Dickinson County Conservation Board, Little Sioux Savanna Addition - \$300,000

### Private Public Cost-Share

- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, McCoy Wildlife Management Area Addition - \$240,000
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area Addition - \$172,875

To learn more about REAP, consider attending a local REAP assembly. REAP assemblies are held across the state every two years, and are a great opportunity for local citizens to learn more about REAP, work with like-minded citizens who are also interested in natural resource work, and share ideas on how REAP can work better for your county or community.

Attendees have the chance to identify opportunities for regional projects, and review and recommend changes in policies, programs and funding.



View from above at the St. Paul Ice Show.

Photo submitted

# ICE FISHING OPEN HOUSES UPCOMING

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

How can an outdoor person get bored here in northwest Iowa? I mean right now we have hunting seasons going like crazy, the fall fishing is only getting better as the lake water temperatures fall! Oh, but that's not all. Nope! Because the "pre-ice fishing craze" is just around the corner.

It always comes in early November and into December across the Midwest...major ice fishing shows such as the Dakota Angler Ice Institute in Sioux Falls (Nov. 10-12) and the St. Paul Ice Show (Dec. 1-3).

They are always fun to attend, but right here in northern Iowa we will have four ice fishing open houses that are close by and have lots to offer: November 3-5 at the Clear Lake Bait and Tackle in north central part of the state; Saturday, November 4 at Stan's Bait and Tackle; Saturday, November 11 at Kebele's; Saturday, November 25 at The Hook Up (Oak Hill Outdoor).

Matt Johnson, Ice Team Manager and Clam Pro Staff Director, notes that these local events are extremely important to the ice fishing industry. "The combined efforts of ALL events are truly what make the ice fishing industry tick. So many independent

retailers like these in northern Iowa have stepped up to the plate over the last several years to give our ice fishing community more opportunities to enjoy the sport, gather information, and ultimately equip themselves with the proper tools to do the job. I can't say enough positive things about these smaller/independent retail events popping up. "They are fast becoming an integral part of the success of ice fishing."

### Looking at the northern Iowa venues

First off is The Clear Lake Open House/Ice Season Kickoff at Clear Lake Bait and Tackle, which is located on HWY 18 East in Clear Lake. Set for November 3-5, those in attendance can expect special deals, special guests, product reps and pro staffers to help put anglers into the perfect gear just for them. The weekend will also include product demonstrations and seminars.

Next up, Stan's Ice Kickoff at Stan's Bait and Tackle located on the north end of Milford Set for Saturday, November 4, the Ice Kickoff is now in its 7th year. The day will run from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lots of deals and specials, along with pro staffers and dealer reps on hand. A highly anticipated

event at Stan's Ice Kickoff will be the annual fish fry hosted by the Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club (IGLFC).

Kabele's Trading Post, which is located on the north end of Hill Avenue in Spirit Lake, will host its 11th annual "Shop with the Pros Fish and Hunt" day on Saturday, November 11 running from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Several pro staffers and manufacturer reps will be on hand, along with a wide range in-house special discounts with the highlight being a special \$1,000 Kabele's Shopping Spree winner drawn toward the end of the day.

The Hook Up at Oak Hill Outdoors, located across the road to the south of Perkins at the north end of Milford, will host its 4th annual Ice Extravaganza on Saturday, November 25 with doors opening at 8 a.m. The day will be filled with deals, in-store specials and pro staffers and product reps on hand to answer questions and provide demonstrations. In addition, Oak Hill Outdoor will be having live music with Neon Horizon starting at 4 p.m.

### A look at regional multi-state ice fishing open houses

First up is the 15th annual Dakota Angler Ice Institute at the Sioux Falls Convention Center, November 10-

12. Since its inception in 2008, it has become the second largest ice fishing show in the country. Organizers believe it will be the largest Ice Institute ever. Johnson is amazed by the efforts of Todd Heitkamp to expand his vision for an ice fishing event.

Johnson reflects, "What Todd Heitkamp has done with the Dakota Angler Ice Institute in Sioux Falls is beyond noteworthy. He's taken a vision where his goal was to educate via a seminar setting and he's grown it into one of the largest ice fishing shows in the country. His formula for the event also makes it very easy for the consumer and vendor, where a vast majority of the products displayed are his own, and for sale right at the point of contact. Many shows set up vendor booths and then direct people to buy elsewhere, where the Dakota Angler Ice Institute streamlines that process and makes the consumer's job a whole lot easier. Plus, the seminars continue to draw a crowd where other shows and events have seen a decline in this category. Kudos to Todd on turning this into a sought-after event!"

The biggest of them all is the 30th annual St. Paul Ice Fishing and Winter Sports Show presented by Clam Outdoors located at the St. Paul Convention Center. Held Friday, December 1

through Sunday, December 3. Visitors can shop more than 190 exhibits with products and services geared toward winter sports enthusiasts. A full range of seminars and the chance to visit with some of ice fishing's top pro staffers.

Johnson says, "This is truly the Super Bowl of ice fishing shows! No doubt this is the largest ice fishing show in the world, with over 25,000 people attending on average and some years even surpassing 27,000! Packed full of vendors, retailers, exhibits, seminars, food, and more, the St. Paul Ice Show is the crown jewel of the 'ice shows.' I know there are a lot of people that travel in from all over the country and Canada to attend this show, and they lock it in on their calendars months in advance. This year is the 30th anniversary of the show, so expect more big things to happen and you can bet it will be packed full of booths again! Always one that the industry looks forward to every year!"

Are you excited yet? As the dates draw closer, check out individual websites/Facebook pages to learn more.

No ice, but some great ice fishing venues coming up in the next six weeks! Looks like it's time for ice show road trippin'!

### UPDATE, Continued from Page 5B

(260 acres), Diamond Lake (143 acres) and Trumbull Lake (1183 acres) have received fish and are approaching angler acceptable size. However, they are about a half a year behind Little Swan Lake. Elk and Diamond lakes have been stocked with largemouth bass, bluegills perch and northern pike, while Trumbull Lake has been stocked with perch and northern pike.

### West Swan update

West Swan (379 acres), which is located southeast of Gruver, is just into the renovation stage and is currently in a drawdown. Before the drawdown, the DNR was able to utilize adult perch netted in West Swan Lake for stocking in the (above) lakes.

A carp barrier has been constructed between Ingham Lake and West Swan Lake and new drawdown structure is being installed at the outlet of West Swan Lake. The lake is currently drawn down about 3.5 feet. According to Hawkins, during the hot weather this past summer, a mid-summer rough fish kill took place. Following that summerkill, a host of raptures including eagles and turkey vultures appeared to feast on the dead fish. In addition, an array of shorebirds have also been frequenting West Swan Lake enjoying the exposed mudflats.

Although it did not kill all the carp and bullheads, it did make it to the point that Hawkins is hoping to get a good natural winter winterkill. Oxygen checks will be made periodically to determine how the natural winterkill is working. If needed, spot chemical applications could be made if some survivors are found.

Native fish will be stocked and the lake will hopefully be refilled by late 2024.

### Relocating walleye fingerlings

Many anglers often ask, "Where the DNR raises its fry to fingerling size?" Some are raised at the Spirit Lake Hatchery, but the DNR also uses Welch Lake, a 60-acre lake as a big rearing pond. Walleye fry are introduced in the spring and then netted in the fall and re-stocked in lakes where the spring fry stocking has not produced as well as desired. Two lakes this year for stocking of fingerlings are East Lake Okoboji and Lost Island Lake. For some reason, these are the only two lakes in the Spirit Lake district that are in need of fingerling stocking. Although it won't fill the loss of this year's fry, the hope is that the fingerlings will help fill the gap.

Just this past week DNR personnel spent a day seining 86,000 fingerlings (6-7"). That was approximately 5,800 pounds of fingerlings captured, weighed in baskets and put in aerated tanks on trucks.

## Fall community trout stocking started October 21 across the state

DES MOINES - Eighteen lakes across Iowa are geared up to receive trout this fall. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) release between 1,000 to 2,000 rainbow trout at each location as part of its cool weather trout program that brings trout to areas that cannot support them during the summer months.

"Grab your neighbors, friends and kids and try trout fishing this fall," said Joe Larscheid, chief of the Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau. "It's time well spent. The fish are here, easy to catch and good to eat."

The fall community trout stockings are a great place to take kids to catch their first fish. A small hook with a night crawler or corn under a small bobber or small simple spinners such as a Panther Martin or Mepps is all you need to get in on the fun.

Bringing trout to cities and towns offers a "close to home" option for Iowans who might not travel to northeast Iowa to discover trout fishing. A family friendly event is often paired with the stocking to help anglers have success and fun while fishing. Check the Iowa DNR Trout Fishing website to see which lakes are having events.

The popular program is supported by the sales of the trout fee. Anglers need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily limit is five trout per licensed angler with a possession limit of 10.

Children age 15 or younger can fish for trout with a properly licensed adult, but they must limit their catch to one daily limit. The child can purchase a trout fee which will allow them to catch their own limit.

Locally, Scharnberg Pond, which is located southeast of Everly, will be stocked at noon on November 8.

- Here is the complete trout stocking schedule:
- Oct. 21, Marr Park Pond, Ainsworth, 1 p.m.
  - Oct. 21, Emma Young Pond, Clinton, 10 a.m.
  - Oct. 21, Lake of the Hills, Davenport, 10 a.m.
  - Oct. 26, Ottumwa Park Pond, Ottumwa, 11:00 a.m.
  - Oct. 27, Prairie Park Fishery, Cedar Rapids, 10 a.m.
  - Oct. 27, Liberty Centre Pond, North Liberty, 10:30 a.m.
  - Nov. 1, Moorland Pond, Fort Dodge, Noon
  - Nov. 1, Big Lake, Council Bluffs, 3 p.m.
  - Nov. 2, North Prairie Lake, Cedar Falls, 11:30 a.m.
  - Nov. 2, Heritage Pond, Dubuque, 11:00 a.m.
  - Nov. 3, Sand Lake, Marshalltown, 12:30 p.m.
  - Nov. 3, Terra Lake, Johnston, Noon
  - Nov. 6, Ada Hayden Heritage Park Lake, Ames, Noon



A nice trout taken on a black hair jig at Scharnberg Pond near Spencer shortly after fall stocking.

Photo by Steve Weisman

- Nov. 8, Scharnberg Pond, Spencer, Noon
- Nov. 9, Bacon Creek, Sioux City, 1:30 p.m.
- Nov. 9, Lake Petocka, Bondurant, Noon
- Nov. 17, Triumph Park West, Waukee Noon
- Nov. 22, Blue Pit, Mason City, 11 a.m.



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## Check docks and equipment for invasives

DES MOINES — The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds lake property owners to check their boat and trailers, and docks and lifts, for aquatic invasive species before storing them for the winter.

Aquatic invasive species, everything from zebra mussels to Eurasian watermilfoil, move from one waterbody to another by hitchhiking on boats, in bait buckets and on other equipment used in the water. They can create serious problems for Iowa waters and negatively impact the quality of outdoor recreation experiences.

Fall is a great time for lake property owners to check their boats, docks and lifts for new infestations of aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels,” said Kim Bogenschutz, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Iowa DNR. “As you bring each item out of the water, visually inspect areas that have been submerged for months. Touch smooth surfaces to check for juvenile zebra mussels that feel like sandpaper when you run your hand over a surface they’ve attached themselves to and are often invisible to the human eye.”

Aquatic invasive species often grow quickly and spread fast when brought to a new lake or stream due to lack of natural controls.

How to Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species

CLEAN any plants, animals, or mud from your boat and equipment before you leave a waterbody.

DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before you leave a waterbody.

DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before you move to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot or high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least five days.

Never release plants, fish or animals into a water body unless they came out of that waterbody and always empty unwanted bait in the trash.

Iowa law also requires boaters to drain all water from boats and equipment before they leave a water access and to keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport. It is also illegal to introduce any live fish, except for hooked bait, into public waters.

Learn more about aquatic invasive species, including a list of infested waters in the current Iowa Fishing Regulations or at [www.iowadr.gov/ais](http://www.iowadr.gov/ais).

## Plastic baits in cold water

By BOB JENSEN  
FISHING THE MIDWEST FISHING TEAM

It was about this time of year ten years ago when a friend and I made a plan to go fishing. Walleyes would be the target. We would meet at the boat ramp. I asked if I should pick up some minnows.

My friend said that I could if I wanted to, but we probably wouldn’t need them. Since minnows had always been a big part of my walleye chasing, and since I resist change, I picked up a couple dozen minnows.

When we met at the lake, I asked what the plan was. My fishing partner said that we would be using jigs tipped with plastic tails. I had used plastic for walleyes in the past with success, but always when the water was warmer. On this day, again because I resist change, I started with a jig/minnow. My boat-mate went with the jig/plastic combo. My boat-mate caught more walleyes than I did.

At the time, the conventional fishing wisdom was that plastic was good in the summer months, but not so good in the cold waters of the fall and winter seasons. After an afternoon of fishing, I once again learned that conventional fishing wisdom is not always wise. Since that day, plastic tails on jigs have become a big part of my autumn and early winter open water fishing. Rage Swimmers have fooled lots of walleyes into biting, and Mr. Crappie Shadpoles have become the bait of choice for anglers looking for crappies and perch in cold water.

A few years later, I made plans to go ice fishing with another friend. Same thing: Friend says we don’t need live bait. We’ll use plastic. Again, same thing: I still resist change, so I brought minnows and waxworms along.

My friend caught more fish than I did. His hands stayed warm because he didn’t need to handle cold, wet minnows, and he had less stuff to carry as we moved from hole to hole. Since that day, plastic tails on jigs have become a big part of my ice fishing adventures.

Maki plastics are extremely soft baits, so they wiggle with just the slightest rod motion. And, although they’re very soft, they’re quite durable. You’ll generally catch several fish on one bait. Maki Baits have become the go-to for many of the most successful ice anglers.

There are several reasons why many successful anglers prefer to use plastic tails instead of live bait in open water or through the ice. Most of those reasons have to do with convenience. In some areas, live bait, minnows in particular, can be hard to find. In other places there are restrictions on where minnows can be used and how they can be transported.

Color can be a very important consideration when it comes to catching fish, and this is a factor that really shines when using plastic. Plastic baits are available in virtually any color that an angler could want. It works well to use a jig head of one color with a tail of another color. By doing so, we’re showing the fish two different colors and increasing the odds of showing the fish the color that they are most likely to eat at that time.

My experiences with plastic baits and my resistance to use them in cold water have taught me two very important things when it comes to fishing success. Plastic baits catch fish year ‘round, and I need to quit being so resistant to change.

Even when the water is cold, crappies eat plastic baits.

Photo by Bob Jensen



The old crazies take a selfie during a get-together this past summer. (L to R back row) Bill, John, Darial and Suzanne. (Front row) Steve and Joane.

Photo by Steve Weisman

## PREPARING FOR A NOVEMBER EXCURSION

By STEVE WEISMAN  
OUTDOOR EDITOR

We live in a beautiful area of the Midwest with lots of things to do and sites to see. Each of the seasons brings something special for us.

Yet, like so many other Americans, my wife and I enjoy going to other destinations. One of those that we can drive to and offers so many options is Branson, MO. It has three major lakes, nearly 50 theaters and hundreds of shows, theme parks, eateries and shopping venues. A town of 11,000 residents, the city draws over 7,000,000 visitors per year.

### The trip

Six of us older couples will be rendezvousing there for a week: November 5-12. Yes, it will be incredibly busy because that is the week of Veteran’s Day, and Branson puts out the welcome mat for America’s veterans. That was my idea, though. I wanted to experience patriotism at its best! We’ll just have to be more prepared in advance to get done what we want to get done! Bear with me, as I share our itinerary.

Our lodging will be at the Nantuckett, which has an awesome view of Lake Table Rock.

### Fishing

A real magnet to me is Lake Taneycomo. It flows right through the heart of Branson, and when Table Rock Dam was completed back in the late ‘50s, the water coming into

Lake Taneycomo is from the bottom, coldest part of Table Rock, making it the coldest lake in Missouri and prime candidate for one of the greatest trout fisheries in the country. So, the three of us (Bill, John and me) are heading there for a day of trout fishing with guide Bryan Wilson. My guess is the gals (Suzanne, Joanne and my wife) will head to Branson Landing right on the shores of Lake Taneycomo with over 100 specialty stores, restaurants and the Landing’s Winter Wonderland season beginning.

### Entertainment

Suzanne, one of our members, has been a horse owner for 66 years! She’s been riding on her own since age 3. So, my thought? We need to go to the Dolly Parton Stampede and dinner show. The show features some of the greatest horse and horse riding talent, but I think that Suzanne (and I think all of us) will really enjoy the Horse Walk, where we can walk through the stable where the 32 horses (stars) of the show are on display.

The second option is going to see Queen Esther at the Sight & Sound Theater, which is world renowned for its Biblical shows. The story of Queen Esther comes from the Old Testament and takes place during the Persian Empire. Part of the appeal of Sight & Sound are the special effects the use of live animals.

Our third show comes on our

final evening in Branson, and we needed to have a show that would kick off the Christmas spirit. Our choice is the Texas Tenors: Deep in the Heart of Christmas! I remember seeing them in 2009 when they were on America’s Got Talent. Now they are multi-E Emmy Award Winners. The cool thing for us is we get to go backstage before the show for a quick interview and photos.

### History

All around the United States, there are opportunities to look at the local history and to visit museums. South of Branson at the Top of the Rock is the Ancient Ozarks Natural History Museum. From pre-historic creatures to galleries showcasing the American West and civil war and incredible collections of Native American artifacts and artwork, we’ve been there before, and it’s a good 2-3 hour excursion.

In the same area, is the 2.5-mile Top of the Rock Lost Canyon and Nature Trail. Using a golf cart, it’s pretty cool to follow a trail created to highlight stunning rock formations, waterfalls, and views of Table Rock Lake.

### So much more

You know how it is when you’re on vacation. This is just a sampling of the things we will be doing for the full week. When we get back, I’ll share the fishing and the different opportunities that we enjoyed.

## FURBEARERS, Continued from Page 5B

However, the continuous dry conditions throughout much of the state this past summer and in some areas remain dry heading into winter, make it tough for muskrats to raise litters and overwinter successfully.

### A look back at 2022-23 – specifically coyotes

For 2022-23, furbearer prices and number of pelts sold in Iowa followed current, national furbearer market trends. Average pelt prices did increase slightly from that previous year for all species except muskrats, mink, bobcats and coyotes. For coyotes, the average pelt price isn’t even half of their value from just three years ago. The trends of coyotes are extremely interesting. Back in the 1930s, the coyote harvest was next to nothing with only 517 coyotes sold throughout that entire decade. Harvests increased in the 1940s and averaged 374 per year. This continued to grow and by 2018-19, the coyote harvest was the highest on record at 18,676. The harvest for 2018-19 was nearly twice as high as the harvest in 2016-17 (9,283). In 2021, changes to the coyote fur market drastically lowered their demand in the fur trade. Subsequently, coyote harvest has been much lower in 2021 and 2022.

One other notable trend has to do with the gray fox. While coyote numbers are stronger than ever, a sad and fairly drastic population decline is occurring with the gray fox with its numbers dropping from the 1930s-40s of around 1,300 animals and then increasing to an all-time high of 3,093 gray fox harvest in the 1979-80 season. Over the last 40+ years, the numbers have plummeted to just four gray fox harvested and sold in 2022-23.

Evalsizer notes the Iowa DNR is currently conducting a pilot research project on the causes of the gray fox population decline, while similar studies have also been initiated in neighboring Midwest states.

### Dollar value fluctuations

The total dollar value for all species of pelts sold in Iowa increased slightly from the previous year from \$228,594 to \$292,282. Mink, muskrat and raccoon were below the 5-year and long-term pelt price averages in 2022-23. Meanwhile red fox prices in 2022-23 were slightly above the 5-year average of \$8.41 at \$10.12, but slightly below the long-term average of \$11.98.

These numbers, however, pale in comparison to when the market was stronger back in 2013. That year the total harvest value in Iowa was \$6,034,386.

### Current fur market in Iowa

For the upcoming 2023-24 season, according to the “Trends in Iowa

*“We have had all ages come to the workshops. Trapping has no age or gender limitations as all play equally on the same field. Whether young or old, male or female, trapping requires a dedication and interaction with wildlife to assist in management for healthy populations.”*

—Craig Sweet

Iowa Trappers Association President

Furbearer Populations and Harvest” document, the overall wild fur market outlook again looks fairly weak but may trend upward slightly from the previous year in some categories of fur such as beaver, river otter, and badger. However, that is an unbelievable drop compared to when the market was relatively strong from 2010-13.

Demand is still primarily from China and Russia, with several other smaller countries buying fur. Continued instability both politically and economically with China and Russia, plus several countries of Europe and the Middle East – have created a general decline for demand in the global fur market. At the same time, a lot of fur from last year has been held over, as sellers look for a better market.

High quality furs are still prized in the fashion/style industry. Demand for ranch mink, oil prices, current fur inventories, and other factors can give some indication how the wild fur markets will trend for the upcoming year. The trim trade for long haired pelts such as coyotes trended down sharply again last year and may remain that way this upcoming year. The market for raccoon pelts remains weak which is unfortunate because an increased effort to harvest raccoons in Iowa is needed. Prices for beaver, bobcat, badger and otter are expected to remain somewhat decent for 2023-24. Demand for muskrat, striped skunk, opossum, red fox and weasel may remain similar to recent years for this upcoming season.

### Increasing furharvester numbers

With many older, veteran furharvesters giving up fur trapping and hunting, there is great concern by both the Iowa DNR and the Iowa Trappers

Association (ITA) for the need to address this downward trend. To do so, in 2023, the two organizations put together a series of eight workshops held in different areas of the state for beginners, both adult and youngsters, who wanted to learn the basics of trapping Iowa.

According to ITA president, Craig Sweet, the results of the beginner trapping workshops have been excellent. “We have had all ages come to the workshops. Trapping has no age or gender limitations as all play equally on the same field. Whether young or old, male or female, trapping requires a dedication and interaction with wildlife to assist in management for healthy populations.” He continues, “Participants get to be involved in hands-on interactive trapping activities, which is something that youngsters are really liking.”

Sweet also believes that through the approach of the ITA and the results of the basic trapping workshops, “Trapping is not dying as seen with those who participate in our Beginner Trapper classes around the state. It can involve any or all family members. Over time, all trappers become family and family forever.”

ITA membership continues to increase with 1325 members currently signed up with the goal to continue increasing membership by getting youngsters and families interested in trapping. Sweet says, “A huge goal is to work together and assist with promoting and protecting trapping. We want to educate the public in wise usage and management of all wildlife species through education and ethical participation. Trapping has no age or gender limitations as all play equally on the same field.”

### YouTube videos draw huge following

Trapping and YouTube...why not? Justin Deaver and Luke DeMeulenaere two of the ITA members, have helped spearhead the drive to begin the official ITA YouTube channel with ITA trapping videos going live this past mid-September. They are designed to be both informative and fun, where you might see everything from the snare beginner basics all the way to information for the seasoned vet targeting their species of choice, not only in Iowa but across the country.

Sweet says the response not only in Iowa but across the entire country has been incredible. “What this has done has really exploded our membership with memberships to the ITA coming from across the country. At the same time, we want our ITA get-togethers, workshops and our convention to be family events. We are finding a lot of youngsters wanting to be part of trapping and the ITA.”

To learn more about the ITA, go to their website at [www.iowatrappers.com](http://www.iowatrappers.com).

## WEISMAN, Continued from Page 5B

### Decision reversed

I learned a long time ago that sometimes decisions are made with good intentions but with miss-directed and bad, sometimes even severe, consequences. That’s what this turned out to be!

However, the collective voice of the American public spoke loud and clear...to legislators from both parties throughout the country. And, yes, it was a profoundly loud outcry, but as we all know, it takes time to reverse something like this. BUT the power of the people is still real, because on Friday, October 6, President Biden signed the Protecting Hunting Heritage and Education Act.

This act effectively protects funding for schools that provide hunter education, archery, shooting sports and other programs. It was definitely bipartisan legislation that reversed a definitely huge mistake! It was a unanimous vote in the Senate and a 424-1 vote in the House.

Sometimes I get so frustrated with the constant division between our two parties. It just seems that they care more about their own party and how they can mess up the other party, but when I see how they came together to right this wrong, it makes me think that maybe, just maybe WE can come together for the betterment of the people and the United States of America on so many other issues like, say, the budget! I certainly hope so!



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