

OUTDOORS DIGEST | Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

**Bowfishing Mentor**

**Program in Ponca**  
NORFOLK, Neb. — The Bowfishing Mentor Program at Ponca State Park is currently open for registration. The course will be taught over four nights, June 4, 11, 18 and 19 from 6-8:30 p.m.  
Limited to 25 registrants, students must be 10 years old as of January 1, 2015. Students will learn basic bowfishing skills, including knowledge on archery equipment; how to find, identify, and shoot fish; and cleaning and cooking fish.  
The program is sponsored by the Nebraska Big Game Conservation Association and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Program is free and most gear will be provided. Participants should bring insect repellent, sunscreen and polarized sunglasses.  
Ponca State Park is located at 88090 State Spur 26E, Ponca, NE 68770. To register, contact Nick Tramp, nicktramp@myunitedagent.com.

**Neb. Game & Parks Plans Statewide Birding Activities In May**

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Pete Ricketts will declare May as Nebraska International Migratory Bird Month during a ceremony May 13 at Warner Chamber at the Nebraska Capitol. Family bird walks, breakfast birding outings and other educational, family-friendly events are planned statewide throughout the month of May to celebrate.  
Since 1993, International Migratory Bird Day has been celebrated nationally on the second Saturday of May. In Nebraska, the celebration has been extended throughout the month of May. It is a chance for conservationists, natural resource agencies, families and individuals to celebrate birds and bird migration.

Nebraska is situated in what is known as the Central Flyway, a migration route used by hundreds of species of birds each spring and fall, which makes it an excellent place for bird watching. In addition, outdoor recreation including bird watching provides Nebraska's economy with more than \$700 million annually through travel and equipment.  
"Nebraska has truly outstanding birding opportunities, and we're thrilled that Gov. Ricketts recognizes and supports the importance of migratory birds in Nebraska," said Lindsay Rogers, a wildlife educator for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. "Birding is a wonderful family activity that parents, grandparents and children of all ages can do together. Birding also is a great way to spur interest in nature and conservation in both youth and adults."  
Dozens of parks, nature centers, museums and other entities across Nebraska will host guided birding tours, bird counts, educational programs, bird-related crafts and more. For a complete schedule and description of events statewide, visit NebraskaBirdMonth.org.

**Toast Neb. Wine Festival May 1-2 At Mahoney SP**

LINCOLN, Neb. — Sample any of the more than 120 Nebraska wines while listening to local bands perform May 1-2 at the second annual Toast Nebraska Wine Festival at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park.  
The festival, which will highlight 19 Nebraska wineries, also will include more than 22 artisan and food vendors, in addition to wine and chef demonstration sessions.  
Area bands performing that weekend include Tony from the Beaten Path, Ro Hempel, Bottle Tops, Belles and Whistles, and Avaricious.  
Guests can enjoy a variety of wine sessions that include: Wine Styles, Food and Friends; Cheese and Wine Pairings; Chocolate and Wine Pairings; Basement Wine Making; and Wine 101. Chef demonstrations include a wasabi and ginger pancake topped with a sesame-encrusted sheared ahi, as well as a flambe presentation.  
More information is available at ToastNebraska.com.

**Neb. Paddlefish Applications Period Ending**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The last day to apply for a Nebraska archery paddlefish permit for the July 11-Aug. 9 season is Tuesday.  
The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission says archery paddlefish permits are issued through a preference system. An applicant will receive a point if he or she is unsuccessful in being awarded a permit. Anyone who doesn't apply at least once during five consecutive years will lose all points.  
Permits remaining following the first drawing will be sold beginning at 1 p.m. Central on June 1. Applicants must be at least 12 by the second Saturday in July.

**U.S. National Field Archery Championships In Yankton Sept. 25-27**

USA Archery will hold the U.S. National Field Championships in Yankton from Sept. 25-27.  
The tournament, which will feature archers from across the country, will shoot an unmarked field archery round on Sept. 27 and a marked field round on Sept. 27.  
For more information, visit teamusa.org.

# Hunting For Mushrooms

BY GARY HOWEY  
Hartington, Neb.

It won't be long before outdoorsmen and women will be infected with a disease, which will spread quickly throughout in the upper Midwest. It's been known to infect men, women and children, infecting young and old alike.



Gary HOWEY

The cause of this infectious disease is a fungus that goes by the name of morel mushroom and once they start

to poke their

heads out of the ground, men and women will leave their home, jobs and families, heading for the river bottoms, island and hills on mushroom hunting excursions.

Morels, which found throughout our area, are easy to recognize, delicious to eat, which makes them the most popular wild mushroom in the upper Midwest

They are elongated with an off-white stem, a crown covered with white ridges with dark brown pits. They can vary from off-white to gray in color. The easiest way to explain what a morel looks like is to look for a mushroom growing on the ground that resembles a cone shaped brain.

Morels appear in the spring of the year when temperatures reach 50 degrees, with the largest numbers found when temperatures hit the mid 50's.

There are several things that mushroom hunters use as an indicator letting them know when it's time to start looking for morels. The old timers say that mushroom hunters don't need to start hunting until the oak leaves are in the mouse or squirrel's ear stage.

Really, I can honestly say I haven't known anyone who's measured a squirrel or mouse ear, but I've been told they're about half the size of your smallest fingernail.

In our area, there are several things indicating the mushrooms will be up. If you have a lilac bush in the area, keep an eye on it, when the lilacs are blooming, it's a good bet you'll find morels.

Other indicators include when the crab apples start to



PHOTO: DUSTIN LUTT

There are three different types of Morel mushrooms, the Yellow or Common grey Morel as seen in this photo, the White Morel and the Black Morel

bloom or around the week of Mother's Day.

Others use the almanac to figure out when they may appear. If you look in the almanac, take the average date for the last frost in your area and then add two weeks to that date, you should be pretty close to the peak morel season.

Moisture, sunshine along with warmer temperatures has a lot to do with when morels appear.

A week of 55-60 degree daytime temperatures after the frost is gone with no freezing temperatures at night will generally be a good time start looking for morels.

Along with warm temperatures, moisture is also important. Many mushroom hunters say that the best time to hunt for morels is after a rain, when temperatures are around 60 degrees with high humidity.

Morels appear earliest in sandy areas, on south facing slopes or in fields that have been burnt as these areas warm up quickly, retaining heat longer.

One of the most asked questions pertaining to mushrooms are where do you find them?

The first morels show up on islands in the river, sandy areas and fields with dead or dying trees.

My most successful hunt was along the river, early in the season in a cornfield that

hadn't been planted yet. The field was loaded with them. It was a new field cornfield and until a year or so before had been a wooded area. The decaying roots from the old elm and cottonwood trees that were grubbed out, making them ideal places for the morels to take root.

I've also found mushrooms around trees that had been declining for several years, eventually dying and were now lying on the ground. Mushrooms seem to appear around these dead cottonwood and elm trees about the time that their bark starts to fall off.

The first morel is always the toughest to locate because they blend very well with the forest or vegetated ground. Once you've found one, kneel down, looking closely because morels are like Perch, if you find one you generally find a bunch.

One thing, when it comes to finding morels, there's no set rules as to where the morel might be located. Conditions change from day to day during the spring and a hillside that was barren on Monday may get a rain shower or warmer temperatures, causing the hillside to be loaded with morels by Wednesday.

My preferred method for locating mushrooms isn't very scientific; it's the old wonder around aimlessly method, picking my way

through the vegetation until I spot one.

It's a good idea to stop from time to time and kneel down; getting a better view of the area as many times morels will be pushing up through the leaves and can be hard to see.

For years, morel hunters have hit the woods with bread sacks, ice cream buckets and other non-porous containers. Some seem to believe that these things have lead to less morel mushrooms.

Mushrooms reproduce through spores, which need to be returned to the ground in order to grow and if they are picked, placed in a solid container like those mentioned above, we may be denying the morels the opportunity to disperse their spores and re-seed the area.

In order to allow the morels to throw their spores, it's not a bad idea to use collection bags that are porous such as onion bags or some type of a bag that allows the spores to be release back into the air.

Mushroom hunters or shroomers as they're called down south have their own language and in mushroom hunters' jargon, a bunch of morels is known as a "mess".

Once you've found a mess of mushrooms, they need to be cleaned up and prepared. The first thing you'll want to do is to split the mushroom

in half from the top to the bottom. The rinse them off over running water as the crooks and crannies of the mushroom may contain sand or insects. After you've rinsed them thoroughly, you'll want let them set in water for a short period in order to flush sand, debris or stubborn insects out of them.

Don't let them soak in water for an extended period as they will soak up the water and become spongy.

Then, this is the best part of mushroom hunting, when you get the skillet or deep fat fryer out, batter and season them, then fry them up and eating them.

There are numerous ways to prepare morels including, fried or in mushroom soup. One of my favorite ways to prepare the morels is to fry them up in some type of batter. An excellent batter is made by combining equal parts, beaten eggs with milk and crushed up saltine crackers.

After rinsing them, let the mushroom drip off on a dry towel, then dip in the mixture made from the beaten eggs and milk, coating them thoroughly. Place the coated morel into a pan and cook in butter until crisp. Don't over cook them, as they will dry out.

Morels are best when prepared fresh, but if you have a good mushroom hunting season and would like to preserve or save some of them for future use, mushrooms can be dried, frozen or blanched.

Morel hunting is excellent ways to get outside, to not only enjoy the outdoors but and enjoy the bounties that Mother Nature provides.

This spring while you're out walking along the creek, river or hillsides look around as morels can be found throughout our area and you never know where they might appear.

They're excellent eating and a great way to start out the season!

*Gary Howey, Hartington, Nebraska, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, seen on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota and Northeast Nebraska. In Northwest Iowa, it airs on KCHE 92.1 FM. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.*

## For Minn. Hunters, Turkey Season Means Hitting The Road

BY DOUG SMITH

(c) 2015 Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Tom Glines was heading to Hawaii to attend a wedding when he thought: Why not kill two birds with one stone?

"I asked my wife if I could go turkey hunting while we were there," he said. She agreed.

"I didn't fly out with my gun, but I brought camo clothing," said Glines, 59, a regional director of the National Wild Turkey Federation. "I only had 12 hours to hunt." A local turkey federation member lent him a gun, and Glines bagged a Rio Grande gobbler.

"It was a trip of a lifetime," he said.

Glines, a Coon Rapids, Minn., resident who has shot turkeys in 28 states, is among scores of Minnesota turkey fanatics who travel out of state to hunt gobblers. And while thousands of hunters will be in the woods starting Wednesday when Minnesota's turkey season opens, many others already have or will exit the state this spring and head elsewhere to pursue gobblers.

Why?

"I like the challenge," Glines said. "I've talked to hundreds of hunters who go to the same fence post on the same farm and shoot a turkey. To me, that's kind of boring. It's interesting learning about a new culture, people and area. In Kansas, I ate lunch at a converted Pony Express station. In Oklahoma, I shot a turkey on a ridge near a pump jack that was pumping oil.

"I hunted Tennessee and Kentucky last year. This year, I'm going turkey hunting in New Jersey, just because I've never been there. My bucket list is to hunt every state. They call that the 'super slam.'"

He's already notched a "grand slam" — bagging all four subspecies of wild turkeys in the U.S. — Eastern, Merriam's, Rio Grande and Osceola. And a "royal slam," which includes those subspecies and the Gould's bird, found in Mexico.

His favorite place: "The Black Hills of South Dakota has always been special to me," he said. "I've probably hunted there more than any other place."

Many Minnesota turkey hunters travel to neighbor-

ing states simply because one hunting season here isn't enough to satiate their appetite for gobblers. Here are details on popular destinations:

**Nebraska**  
If you're willing to buy three licenses, you can shoot three wild turkeys in Nebraska. Each nonresident license costs \$96 (plus you need one \$20 habitat stamp). The state has Merriam's in the west, as well as hybrids and the Eastern

subspecies. There is some public land, but otherwise plan on knocking on doors to get permission to hunt private land.

**Iowa**  
One of the priciest turkey tickets around is available for nonresidents who want to hunt Iowa gobblers. The cost: \$102 for a license, \$13 for a habitat stamp and \$112 for a small game license. Yes, that's \$227 in license fees for a gobbler. But more than 440 Minnesotans have bought licenses this spring.

Limited public land is available.

**South Dakota**  
South Dakota offers seasons in the prairie units and the famed Black Hills, where two-thirds of the land is public and Merriam's roam the Ponderosa pines. It's huge country, and be prepared for some hiking. Last year, more than 1,100 Minnesotans hunted turkeys there. A license to hunt the Black Hills costs \$100 and can be bought over the counter.



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