

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Boating Skills Class June 8

A six-hour boating skills class will be held at 9 a.m. Saturday, June 8, at All Seasons Power Sports, located at 3609 West Highway 52, Yankton. There will be a lunch break at noon, and then finish with the final test.

All Nebraska boaters born after Dec. 31, 1985, and at least 14 years of age, must complete this course, pass the test and have a valid boating certificate in his or her possession when operating any boat or jet ski.

All Nebraska and South Dakota boaters are welcome to take this class, which could save a life or prevent an accident, and possibly get you a reduction in your boat insurance premium.

To register for this Nebraska Boating Skills and Safety course, call Ted at All Seasons Power Sports at 665-7433.

Game And Parks Unveils Online Help For Family Fishing

LINCOLN, Neb. — A new section of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's website is all things fishing. The user-friendly Go Fishing Program page is a one-stop location of all the information anglers of all experience levels need. The goal of the newly-launched page is to encourage more people to go fishing.

Visit OutdoorNebraska.org/GoFishing to buy a fishing permit and read blogs, stocking reports and how-to fishing tips. Watch instructional videos and check out maps to plan a family fishing trip.

"Going fishing is never just about fishing," said Daryl Bauer, Game and Parks fisheries outreach program manager. "It's about having fun with friends and family, enjoying the fresh air and sunshine and making memories that last a lifetime."

Visitors to the website can find a schedule of Family Fishing Nights, which are held across the state throughout the summer. Game and Parks staff and volunteers will be there to offer hands-on fishing tips and have loaner fishing poles and tackle for those who have none.

"Fishing is an easy and fun family activity," Bauer said. "It's a great way to enjoy the outdoors. We want to do what we can to encourage Nebraskans to give fishing a try, or get back out there if it's been awhile since they've wet a line."

Game And Parks Reminds Boaters, Anglers Of AIS Regulations

LINCOLN, Neb. — Boaters and anglers play a key role in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission reminds recreationists that regulations are now in place to help prevent the spread of these species.

AIS are defined as any waterborne, non-native organism that threatens the diversity or abundance of native species, the ecological stability of impacted waters, or threatens a commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activity.

It is now unlawful:

- for a boat that has been on a body of water to leave a launch area with water remaining in any compartment, equipment or a permanently attached container that may hold water. Baitfish containers are allowed but anglers are encouraged not to transport water from one waterbody to another. The boat livewell must be drained at the launch area, so anglers are encouraged to bring a cooler with ice to transport their catch to the cleaning station or home.
- to possess, import, export, purchase, sell, transport or release any AIS into Nebraska waters.
- to fail or refuse to submit to an inspection of a boat upon the request of an authorized inspector, conservation officer or peace officer.
- to refuse to permit or prevent proper decontamination of a boat.
- to leave a launch area with aquatic vegetation from the body of water still attached.
- to use felt-sole boots or waders in Nebraska waters.

Boaters on major Nebraska reservoirs likely will be contacted by seasonal employees who will conduct interviews and boat inspections. Education and compliance by all boaters and anglers are a must.

Boaters who clean, drain and dry their boats following each use will lessen the chance that AIS will get spread to other bodies of water. In addition, anglers should clean their waders of dirt, sand, mud and vegetation following each use.

Living History At Fort Kearny SHP May 25-27

LINCOLN, Neb. — A living history demonstration of an 1860s soldier camp will be re-enacted at Fort Kearny State Historical Park on May 25-27.

The demonstration is from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. May 25-26 and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on May 27, with a cannon firing at 2 p.m. each day. There will be wood carving and pine needle basket demonstrations.

A park entry permit is required. Fort Kearny is located south of Kearney off Link 50A.

Northwest District Birding Day Set For May 29

LINCOLN, Neb. — Birders of all ages and experience levels are invited to join the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for Northwest District Birding Day on May 29 at Buffalo Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

Groups of birders will leave from the WMA parking lot at 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. Participants should bring binoculars, field guides, insect repellent, sunscreen and clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather.

Interested persons should call Game and Parks' N

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

2013 Spring Turkey Season Made More Challenging By The Weather

BY GARY HOWEY

Outdoorsmen Adventures

As anyone in the upper Midwest can tell you, this has been a strange year, weather changing every couple of days, making it a tough spring to bag a turkey.

One day the hens were off by themselves, then the heavy wet snow came and the birds were bunched back up, they were confused as was I and my hunting partner.

Turkey populations are way up throughout the area and because of this, you'd think there'd be a lot of competition for the hens, making the Toms more aggressive and vocal, not so.

I'd received permission hunt several different locations, many of them out of the way with little or no access, which made them harder to get into, making me think the birds living there would be less spooky.

A week before the opener, I'd scouted the area, I knew where the birds were roosting and their strutting zones, which meant Plan A was in place. Two days before the opener, I decided to scout a couple of other locations and as I drove by my Plan A spot, something seemed different, maybe it was the bulldozer in the field, or the pile of trees pushed up against the bluff or it might have been the tractor and disk kicking up dirt where there used to be roost trees and strutting zones.

Like in many areas, more habitat had bit the dust. Scratch Plan A, I now needed to come up with Plan B. Plan B was wooded draw near Newcastle, Neb., an area that had paid off big for us last season.

I and my partner Larry Myhre met at the Copper Stop in Newcastle at O-Dark-Thirty the 2nd week of the season, hoping to get in, tip over our birds and get out just as we did last season.

As we made our way, under the cover of darkness, something seemed different, the gates were open, the was little if no sign that the pasture ground was being used and as the sun finally poked it's brightly colored head up in the eastern sky, we could see why. The place was bare, very little grass with very little waste grain in the surrounding fields.

Not to be detoured, we set up our decoys and when ever the wind died down did some calling.

Larry thought he heard a gobbler off in the distance, so we toughed it out for another half hour and then moved to try another set closer to the north property line. As on our first set up, nothing, not a cluck, putt, purr or gobble.

It wasn't hard to figure out why we weren't getting any re-



TEAM OUTDOORSMEN ADVENTURES PHOTO
Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre, Sioux City, Iowa, with his first bird of the season that topped the scales at 22 pounds.

sponse to our calls as there wasn't a food source near by, the drought last year had done a number on the crops, as it had to the mast crops in the wooded area we were hunting.

We needed to make a move, so we put Plan B into action and headed west to another property near Maskell where the land owner had some birds using his property.

Upon arriving at the field, we made several sets, and as before, not a peep, so we glassed from several locations.

I spotted one Tom on the property across the road, but since we weren't sure if it belonged to our landowner, we packed up and headed towards Bow Valley where we'd make our third and final set.

Well, we were about to kick in Plan C, rats, I've never had to go to Plan C, it was obvious we'd need to spend more time in the field than we had in the past.

As we always do, before entering the property, we glassed it from a high vantage point, as before, there was nothing to be seen, so we grabbed out gear and made our way into across the creek out into the CRP field.

The deer house sat on a bank with the creek to the rear, CRP

out front and a wooded draw going off to the south east.

As before we put out our two hen decoys, I set up off to the left with Larry calling to my right facing the short grass along the edge of the heavier CRP grass.

Larry, using his Roost'em box call, called softly as to not spook any birds that may be close by.

After a short pause, he'd pick up the volume of his calls, yelping louder with each rendition, then switching to his slate call, putting and purring, hoping to draw a response from a lone-some Tom.

This was a late season hunt, so you never know how the birds will respond, as many of the Toms we've seen or called to simply strutted, some coming our way slowly, while others just simply hightailed it, heading for

parts unknown.

Other times, they'll gobble once and come in, or gobble their head off, responding to every call and when things really get tough, to just mysteriously appear, not making a sound.

There have been times when calling, when you may not get a gobble, but you may hear a low drumming sound, which is the sound a gobbler makes when he's inhaling as he puffs up his chest, drags his wings and fans his tail, when he struts.

The worse case scenario is when you hear this sound coming from a Tom moving in behind you.

On this hunt, we were prepared for anything, yet didn't expect it to happen quite as fast as it did.

Larry had just finished his

third group of calls and as I scanned to the right, when he caught a glimpse of something moving in from the ravine. Whispering, he said "right, right" and moving the camera ever so slowly, I focused my attention in that direction as the fan of a mature Tom came into view.

Unlike some hunters, who call to the bird all the way in, Larry would go silent keeping the Tom's eyes pinned on the decoys, not the area the calling was coming from..

The gobbler took a few steps, looked towards the decoys, came out of strut, took another and then went into full strut. He did this several times before coming out of strut, completely ignoring our decoys and started feeding away from us.

When this happens, you'd best be ready cause it's down hill from here.

As the big bird took a couple of steps, moving away, my partner took aim and dropped him in his struts.

It was a mature Tom, weighing in at 22 pounds, it sported a 9 1/2-inch beard with 1-inch spurs, our biggest of the season so far.

During the late season, anything can happen, so don't give up to soon, even if you don't get a response to your calls, as late season birds may have used up all their gobbles and simply walk in.

Before you get up and leave, listen closely while looking your area over several times to make sure a Tom hasn't slipped in quietly, as many a turkey hunt is screwed up by hunters who give up to soon or just by getting up and leaving without looking the area over closely.

This has been a tough season as the weather has jumped back and forth, making the 2013 season one of our toughest. Our team has managed to tag three birds and with the seasons running into late May, we may still have the opportunity to fill our three remaining tags in Nebraska and Iowa.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. Howey is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series which can be seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. If you're looking for more outdoor information, it can be found at www.outdoorsmenadventures.com

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