



## **Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Policy Recommendations**

The Iowa Chapter supports policies that ensure that the animals that are hunted, fished, and trapped are able to sustain their population levels. To that end, the Chapter supports expanding and protecting natural areas. The chapter also supports policies that ensure that Iowa's streams, rivers, and lakes meet water quality standards and that habitat along the banks is restored. Healthy natural areas provide habitat for wildlife and fish that, in turn, provides animals that can be sustainably harvested.



### Providing adequate funding for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to protect public natural areas and to acquire additional public land

- A significant part of ensuring that the wildlife that are hunted, fished, and trapped are able to sustain their population levels involves ensuring that they have appropriate and adequate habitat. To that end, the Chapter supports the DNR acquiring additional natural areas and expanding the natural areas that have already been protected.
- Annually fully funding REAP at \$20 million and extending it beyond 2026 and retaining current funding formulas. REAP funds are used to purchase natural areas for parks and recreation areas.
- Increasing the sales tax by 3/8 of a cent to fund the Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund while retaining the current funding formulas. The constitutional amendment providing the framework for the Trust Fund passed with 63% of the voters approving the amendment in November, 2010. The overwhelming support for the constitutional amendment is a clear indication that Iowans want to invest in parks, recreation, and clean water.
- Adequately funding staff to maintain the parks and natural areas, including removing invasive species from the properties.
- Adequately funding biologists who can study the plants and animals living in Iowa.
- Keeping access to state and county parks free to all who want to enjoy and recreate in them.
- Acquiring additional natural areas, both prairies and woodlands. A concerted effort should be made to connect the public lands so that a corridor is available for wildlife to travel. The corridors can also be used by plants to expand their populations.
- Keeping public lands in public hands. In some urban areas in Iowa, developers regularly request that public parks be privatized and used for commercial and industrial buildings or housing.

### Restoring lakes, streams, and rivers to provide wildlife habitat and to protect water quality

- Restoring the prairie pothole region to enhance habitat for ducks, geese, and other water species. The Chapter supports expanding Dunbar Slough in Greene County and including it in the Southern Prairie Pothole National Wildlife Refuge.
- Restoring wetlands and minimizing fill placed in floodplains.
- Restoring channelized streams with meanders and riffles that will provide habitat for fish and aquatic insects that some species of fish eat.
- Removing dams and restoring rivers to restore fish runs.
- Implementing measures to prevent pollution from entering water bodies and establishing enforceable criteria. In order to protect public health, the water in Iowa's rivers, streams, and lakes needs to be free of pollutants and need to meet water quality standards. Polluted water can reduce the number of fish in a water body and their ability to reproduce leading to a loss of recreation opportunities. No one wants to wade in, paddle on, or swim in a stream or river that smells of sewage or manure. Water polluted with manure and sewage can lead to the growth of harmful bacteria and other microbes, which can be a health threat to people exposed to the water.
- Implementing measures to restore water quality in those streams, rivers, and lakes that are currently degraded.
- Increasing monitoring of fish populations for toxic levels of pollutants, including mercury and PCBs in order to protect the public health and to ensure that the fish are safe to eat.

### Protecting turtles from over-harvest

The current regulations for the non-commercial harvest of turtles – common snapping turtle, smooth softshell turtle, spiny softshell turtle, and northern painted turtle – need to be closely monitored to ensure a sustainable harvest. Previously unlimited commercial trapping resulted in significant population declines. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources established a season on the harvest of turtles and set limits in the amount of turtles that can be harvested.



*Snapping turtle. Photo by Mark Rouw.*

- The Chapter supports on-going population studies of turtles, with a special review of the sustainability of both the commercial and non-commercial harvest.
- The Chapter supports a closed trapping season from January through July 15 for both commercial and non-commercial harvest of turtles. The closed season will protect the turtles during their spring reproductive cycle (breeding, developing eggs, and nesting) to ensure that turtles are not extirpated from the waters in Iowa.

### Policy on trapping with body-gripping devices

On May 19, 2012, the Sierra Club Board of Directors approved the following policy regarding trapping with body-gripping devices:

Use of body-gripping devices \* – including leghold traps, snares, and Conibear® traps – are indiscriminate to age, sex and species and typically result in injury, pain, suffering, and/or death of target and non-target animals.

The Sierra Club considers body-gripping, restraining and killing traps and snares to be ecologically indiscriminate and unnecessarily inhumane and therefore opposes their use. The Sierra Club promotes and supports humane, practical and effective methods of mitigating human-wildlife conflicts and actively discourages the use of inhumane and indiscriminate methods.

Sierra Club recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples under federal laws and treaties granting rights of self-determination and rights to pursue subsistence taking of wildlife.

\*Body gripping device – includes, but is not limited to, any snare (neck, body, or leg), kill-type trap (such as the Conibear®), leghold trap (including steel-jaw, padded, offset), and any other device designed to grip a body or body part. This definition includes any device that may result in injury or death because of the mechanism of entrapment. Live cage and box traps, and common rat and mousetraps shall not be considered body-gripping devices.

#### Ensuring sustainable hunting, trapping, and fishing

- Hunting, trapping, and fishing quotas and seasons should be set by Department of Natural Resources staff based on monitoring populations and scientific studies.
- Particular investigations need to be undertaken for the bobcat and otter to determine if the populations are not over-harvested. Both the bobcat and otter were extirpated from the state and are now allowed to be trapped. The otter was reintroduced and the bobcat returned to the state from surrounding states. The bobcat populations should be allowed to continue spreading throughout Iowa, with particular emphasis on allowing the bobcat to expand into northeast Iowa.
- Each hunted, trapped, and fished species needs a management plan that details the populations and expected population changes, contemplates habitat restoration need for the population to sustain itself, and identifies how the changes in Iowa's climate are affecting and will affect populations and hunting seasons. Although duck and goose populations have been extensively studied, most of the other animals that are hunted have not been studied.
- Placing the black bear and cougar on the furbearer list, with a closed season. Both the black bear and cougar were extirpated from the state. Both species periodically make appearances in Iowa, often resulting in the animals being killed.
- Encouraging hunters to migrate from lead shot to non-toxic shot. Likewise the Chapter supports migrating from lead fishing tackle. Animals can ingest lost fishing weights and pieces of lead shot, mistaking them for food or grit. Small quantities of lead can poison a bird. Eagles regularly face a slow painful death after ingesting lead they obtain from deer carcasses and gut piles. Dove hunting is particularly dangerous as hunters use large quantities of small shot with poor success rates in hitting a dove.

Consequently the Chapter supports a banning lead shot for hunting doves on public property owned by the state of Iowa.

- Because of the risk of ingesting lead shot and the toxicity of lead, the Chapter supports a policy that would ban donations of deer to the Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program that have been harvested with lead shot.
- Requiring private game farms to double-fence their animals to ensure that the captive game animals are not released into the wild and to help prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease through the wild population of deer.

#### Ensuring that fish and turtles are safe to eat and free of toxins

- The chapter supports increased monitoring of fish populations for toxic levels of pollutants, including mercury and PCBs in order to protect the public health. The testing should also include turtles. A number of water bodies in Iowa are currently under fish and turtle consumption advisories because the levels of toxins (such as PCBs and mercury) are so high that consumption of those fish poses a health risk. The Department of Natural Resources' goal is to test fish in each lake in Iowa every 10 years and each river every 5 years. Funding levels need to be increased so that the DNR can meet that goal. Iowans need to know that the fish and turtles they catch and eat are not exposing them to toxins.

#### Protecting the biodiversity of the animals living in the state.

- Studies need to be undertaken to determine what is causing the population crash of the gray fox and to undertake habitat restoration to encourage the population to be restored.
- Additionally habitat needs to be restored for the jackrabbit.
- Planting prairie plants in all road ditches. In addition to providing for animal corridors, the benefits of prairie in the ditches are reduced costs for mowing, reduced herbicide usage, and the ability of the ditch to hold and absorb more storm water.



*Jackrabbit. Photo by Lowell Washburn, Iowa  
Department of Natural Resources*