



The Heron

Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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Goodbye IOWATER

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretive Naturalist



Yet another blow has fallen on the state's health as our government's apparent efforts to cut spending and resist tax increases sets another vital public interest back several decades. Are we now turning our backs on water quality? Have we ever made it the priority it should be? Water quality is something that affects all living things, from the largest mammal to microscopic organisms, from tiny duckweed to the tallest cottonwoods. It's something that our state is suffering from a growing lack of. Without drinkable water, the average human will survive 3 days. The quantity of water on earth will never change but its distribution and quality has and will continue to. The question is will it improve or further degrade? With 97.5% of the Earth's water tied up in saltwater resources, and nearly 2% of freshwater frozen in glaciers (for now), it is very important to manage, monitor and protect the remaining 0.5% of freshwater that is available to us. To humans, the absence of usable water is the same as having none at all.

IOWATER, Iowa's *volunteer* water quality monitoring program, created in 1998, gave citizens an active role in protecting water quality. Through monitoring the water resources in our backyards, we might have ensured the protection of our water resources by identifying those that are impaired and repairing them. An IOWATER volunteer was trained, equipped and allowed to monitor wherever and whenever they chose. The program brought people closer to their environment and gave them a sense of place within their watershed. This tie between ourselves and this life-giving resource was leading us to understand, respect and protect Iowa's waters. Where are we headed now?

The IOWATER mission was to protect and improve Iowa's water quality by raising citizen awareness, supporting and encouraging the growth, networking of Iowa's volunteer water monitoring communities and promoting water monitoring activities as a means of assessing and understanding Iowa's aquatic resources.

IOWATER was establishing programs to increase citizen awareness of, and responsibility for, local water resources. It provided a framework of information for citizen groups to use in actively promoting responsible decision making in protecting local water quality. It was assisting new partnerships across the state in designing and implementing water monitoring projects. It facilitated communication among volunteer groups, local landowners and government agencies, to promote sharing of data and resources. IOWATER developed a statewide volunteer database, available to all,

for baseline water quality information and establishing long-term water quality trends. It was integrated into conservation education programs in places like Clinton County.

In response to budget cuts and staff reductions, the Iowa DNR has announced, but has not yet implemented, a new volunteer water quality monitoring program. The new program aims to replace IOWATER. "This program will shift to a locally led focus to better serve partner communities, organizations and citizens," the DNR said in a June 20th, 2017 press release. DNR Program Planner, Steve Konrady tells us "the program shift is a response to staffing issues caused when the coordinator of the IOWATER project left and the natural resources agency was unable to find a replacement." For what reason? Insufficient pay, a difficult work environment, political issues? Delegating responsibility for monitoring efforts to local agencies through the new program should help fill the gap and resolve issues with the IOWATER database, which hasn't been updated for approximately two years because of budget issues. The DNR hopes people choose to make their data publicly available through the EPA's more robust system. "We hope that existing volunteers, if they're still active, get connected with a local project." The DNR is focused on shifting people to the new program. There isn't an existing database of watershed projects, but the DNR is working to create one. "That might take a while," Konrady said. "We'd be talking next year as far as when we'd know a summary of what groups are active." The DNR directs people to other lists of watershed projects in the state through its volunteer monitoring website. Many different groups can take over, "it can be a watershed project, a watershed management authority, a county conservation board, university or a city group that's looking to do this" The DNR expects that local agencies will make water quality monitoring efforts more sustainable and give volunteers more flexibility and ownership. Otherwise, not much will change in the work that's done. "The DNR will provide locally led project leaders with training if needed, and then local volunteers will get trained by, and work with, those leaders on sampling coordination and data reporting," said a DNR press release.

I wonder what makes Mr. Konrady think we have the budgets to do this at the county and municipal levels? Are we throwing away an established program for the hope of something better or is it just a way to dispose of squeaking wheels? Will the cure for this issue cost too much? For whom? My guess is it will cost us all.

Rescuing Frogs at Princeton Marsh

by Kelly J. McKay, Ornithologist

While birding at the Princeton Wildlife Management Area (Scott County) on July 8th, I discovered a large number of half-grown frog metamorphs in the pump pit of the water control structure. These frogs were trapped since the openings to both the river and marsh were closed and the water level in the pit was six feet below the surface. The walls of the pit were smooth concrete making it impossible for the frogs to climb out of this trap. As a result, they were forced to swim constantly being unable to get out of the water and rest. Eventually, I believe the frogs began tiring and drowning since I could see that a large number were already dead. The entire pit was covered by a heavy metal grating which was bolted into the concrete, making it impossible to access the pit and rescue the survivors. However, a 3-4 inch gap in the grating allowed me to drop a couple of small logs into the pit which I believed would allow the surviving frogs to get out of the water to rest.

I returned the next day with a long handled aquatic sampling net to attempt a rescue of the remaining live frogs. I was amazed to find the two small logs I had dropped in the day before were now covered in frogs, sometimes two or three high! I spent the rest of the day recovering a large number of the dead (Figure 1) and rescuing as many survivors as possible. I placed the rescued frogs in a bucket until I had 50-75 individuals (Figure 2), then I carried them down to the marsh wetlands and released them. The vast majority of both dead and live frogs were northern leopard frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*), with very small numbers of green frogs (*Lithobates clamitans*) and bullfrogs (*Lithobates catesbeianus*).

The next day (July 10th) I called Bruce Ehresman (Iowa DNR) to tell him about the situation. Bruce was deeply concerned and said he would contact the DNR Regional Wildlife Biologist (Kurt Kemmerer) to inform him. Meanwhile, I spent three more days (July 12th, 15th & 16th) rescuing the remaining trapped frogs and a single large garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*). Additionally, on July 12th I also rescued approximately 2,500 young bullheads (*Ameiurus sp.*), 500 various other young fish and minnows, as well as 3,000-4,000 very small unidentified tadpoles from two water flow tubes connecting the north and south marsh units. However, since there was water flow through these tubes I am not certain that these animals were actually trapped.

Overall, I spent five days (nearly 30 hours) rescuing 622 young frogs and recovering 761 dead individuals. I met one of the DNR managers for the site at the water control structure on July 20th. We talked about what could be done to prevent this from re-occurring. However, since we are unsure how the frogs became trapped to begin with, a remedy was not clear. Furthermore, since virtually all of the surviving frogs were now rescued, the immediate situation was over. Nevertheless, a re-occurrence in the future is certainly possible since the DNR personnel responsible for managing this site are stationed more than an hour away in Jackson County at the Green Island

Wildlife Management Area. Severe budget cuts to the DNR means staff can make far fewer trips to the various sites they are responsible for managing.

As natural resource agency budgets are slashed and gutted at the federal, state, and county levels, indirect negative impacts to our natural resources may become more commonplace. With frog and toad populations precipitously declining around the world, incidents like this are extremely serious. What we don't know is how widespread of a problem this is at water control structures on federal, state, and private lands throughout the Midwest. If this incident is the rule and not the exception, we may be talking about several hundred thousand frogs a year in jeopardy!

In closing, I would like to make a plea for everyone to be vigilant when you are at your favorite natural area that contains water control structures. In today's political climate and the all-out assault we are witnessing against our environment, I truly believe the citizenry is going to have to take a more active role in monitoring and safeguarding our precious natural resources and environment.

Figure 1, right. Some of the dead frogs recovered from the water control structure at Princeton Marsh.



Figure 2. Some of the live frogs rescued from the water control structure at Princeton Marsh.

Telling the Story - Clinton Co. Conservation Foundation

by Dave Stedwell, CCCF and Friends of Rock Creek

Help us to continue to build on the story...

The Clinton County Conservation Foundation has been in existence since 1997. It is a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to support the programs and facilities of the Clinton County Conservation Board. The group is comprised of Conservation Board Members, Conservation Staff and community leaders.



Over the years the Foundation has assisted in many projects and events:

- They are instrumental in funding the Hunter Safety Camp.
- They have supported the “Fishing Has No Boundaries” program.
- They have established a Bus Scholarship Program to help schools pay for busing costs to our educational nature centers for field trips. Since starting the scholarship in 2009, they have brought over 35,000 students to our Clinton County parks, reimbursing local county school districts well over \$20,000
- They helped purchase the Blue Heron pontoon boat back in 2002. The boat provides nature-based cruises that are free to the public. There is a continuing need to raise money to fund fuel and maintenance for the boat.



- They help out in many small and indispensable ways that don't receive much attention. They also have produced a spin-off, the volunteer group “Friends of Rock Creek” that is open to anyone who wants to help out.
- Their biggest claim to fame to date, of course, is the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. The group raised more than \$2 million to build the center at Rock Creek through donations, grants and fundraisers. As many visitors know, the building is beautiful and functional. Since the original construction, a number of educational exhibits, including “Turtle Island,” have been added.
- They are currently spearheading a capital campaign to add critical education space and amenities to Eden Valley Nature Center.



With that in mind, the group will hold its annual Fall Fundraising Banquet in the Community Room at Rock Creek on Saturday, November 4. Following the lead of groups like Pheasants Forever and Whitetails Unlimited, the Foundation is planning an evening that will feature auctions and raffles along with a mouth-watering prime rib dinner. Prizes to tempt you will include great outdoor experiences, gear to enjoy the outdoors, weekend getaways and wildlife art. Proceeds from this year's banquet will go towards educational programming and the Eden Valley addition. Our Foundation Board Members, Friends of Rock Creek, CCCB Board Members and our conservation staff are going to be working hard to provide a top-of-the-line banquet experience for you.

Please consider attending the event, purchasing pre-event raffle tickets, becoming an event sponsor, or making a donation of a prize that can be auctioned off. Contact the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek by calling 563-259-1876.

Autumn's Family Favorites!

September Events

2nd ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

7th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

9th ~ Youth Outdoor Skills Day ~ 9 AM - 3:30 PM ~

Clinton Izaak Walton League ~

Looking for a way to open your child's eyes to a life of adventure in the great outdoors and gain experience with outdoor skills?

Kids, ages 11-17, will learn about safety and skills at stations staffed

by various conservation organizations such as Whitetails Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Wild Turkey Federation, Clinton Ikes, Clinton County Sportsmen, Iowa DNR and Clinton County Conservation. All stations will involve hands-on activities designed to give kids experience while keeping safety at the forefront. Parents and younger siblings are encouraged to attend. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Cost is \$10 & receive a T-shirt & lunch. Call 563-242-6939 to sign up.

9th ~ Half Price Canoes ~ 9-11 AM ~ Rock Creek

9th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

13th ~ Building Better Birders Field Class & Eco Cruise

~ 6:30 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ World Class birder, Kelly McKay, will lead this free class for people wanting to improve their bird watching skills. The cruises will idle through the backwaters looking for and recording bird species in the Rock Creek area. An optional hike through the park for "extra credit" will be offered following the cruise portion.

Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 to sign up!

14th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

16th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

19th & 23rd ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7 - 9 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~ Visit <http://register-ed.com/programs/iowa> for required sign-up.

21st ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

23rd ~ Half Price Canoes ~ 9-11 AM ~ Rock Creek

23rd ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

26th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Lead a group, work with live animals, gardening and more! We would love to see what you have to offer!

27th ~ Building Better Birders Field Class & Eco Cruise ~ 7 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call the Eco Tourism Center at 563-259-1876 to sign up for our Season Finale!

28th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

30th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

30th ~ Public Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park ~ View skies through a 20-inch telescope if the skies are clear, www.qcas.org.



October Events

5th ~ Fall Color Eco Cruises ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek

6th-8th ~ Halloween Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ Adults must accompany children during activities. All activities originate at the Eco Tourism Center.

Friday ~

Decorate Your Campsite ~ Get into the holiday spirit by decorating your campsite for Halloween. We will be awarding prizes for the creative Halloween campsites.

Saturday ~

Trickery Triathlon ~ 9:30 AM

Orientation, 10 AM Race Begins ~ Frightening fun will be had by all triathlon participants as teams of four will compete in an outdoor skills race that includes a canoe paddle, short run and a fire building challenge. All teams must include one person over 18 years of age. Entry fee is \$15/team and registration is required online by Oct. 5th. Visit www.mycountyparks.com to register your team. Please include name, age and life jacket size (youth 50-90 lbs. or adult) of each participant. Please contact Jill Schmidt with any questions at 563-847-7202.



Pumpkin Carving ~ 11:30 AM ~ Come carve your pumpkin at the Eco Center! We will supply all the carving tools and a place to make a mess! We will have a limited supply of donated pumpkins on a first come and first serve basis, participants are encouraged to bring their own.

Spooktacular Crafts ~ 1 PM ~ Creepy crawly crafts will be provided for people of all ages under the deck.

Face Painting ~ 1:30 PM

The Witch's Brew ~ 2:30 PM ~ See this live animal presentation that makes up the witch's brew.

Trick or Treat! ~ 5-6 PM ~ We invite all our camper ghouls and goblins to trick or treat through the campground. We ask our campers to please pass out candy.

Lighted Blue Heron Pontoon Rides ~ 6 PM

Lighted Hayrack Ride ~ 6 PM ~ Join us aboard our hayrack as we drive through the campground looking at the decorated campsites. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Campsite judging will take place at this time.

Sunday ~

Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM ~ Join us at the Eco Center for a Halloween inspired nature craft.

7th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

12th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek



13th - 14th ~ Thirty-sixth Annual Bluegrass & Old-time Music Gathering ~ (Sat) Noon-9 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ October 13th, we will have a big jam around the campfire all evening and then more on Saturday, the 14th. Once you attend, you will never want to miss it again! Call Mary McAndrew 563-343-7002 for more information. FREE!

14th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Season finale! We will reopen in April 2018.

14th ~ Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Clinton County's PF chapter will be hosting their annual fundraising banquet to raise money to provide local wildlife habitat as well as hunting and educational outdoor skills opportunities for people of all ages. This banquet will serve the Millennium's famous buffet and will include many prizes to be won, including a *1 in 10 chance to win a gun!* Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 for tickets.

17th ~ Painting Class with "Fresh Paint" ~ 6-8 PM ~ \$35 ~ Rock Creek ~

This is a "Paint and Sip" class (BYOB). It's a 2 hour event...step by step painting instructions on a 11x14 canvas with *Fresh Paint* by



Christine Boeve. Autumn themed & all materials provided. Space is limited, register at www.mycountyparks.com.

19th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876 to reserve your free seats. Season finale!

24th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

28th ~ Fall Fest ~ 4 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ 3923 N. 3rd St., Clinton Iowa ~ Bring the family out for hot dogs, chips and s'mores at the fire, pumpkin carving and face painting in the Nature Barn, a freaky-fun night hike and hayrack ride around the north end of Eagle Point Park. A free-will donation will be taken at this otherwise free event.



30th ~ Winter Hours ~ Rock Creek ~ We will be returning to our winter hours. The Eco Tourism Center will be open Thursday ~ Sunday, 8AM-4PM, through the winter. A naturalist will have the Nature Center portion of the building open Monday ~ Wednesday, 10 AM-2 PM.

November Events

3rd ~ Music at the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local musicians will play, sing and lead you through a night of music, dance and fun. Musicians interested in playing, contact Chuck at 563-357-0759. All are welcome.

4th ~ Bald Eagle Eco Cruise ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This will be the public's last opportunity this year to take an Eco Cruise on the Blue Heron Pontoon Boat. The American bald eagles will start to congregate along the Mississippi for the winter and we hope to see several of the birds during the cruise. Call 563-259-1876 to register.



4th ~ Third Annual Conservation Foundation Banquet ~ Doors open at 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come enjoy a night at the beautiful Eco Center to raise money to benefit education! There will be plenty of action with silent bids, auction and raffles. Purchase tickets at the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center or by calling Rock Creek at 563-259-1876.

7th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek ~ Join us every Tuesday this winter for a presentation geared for children ages 3-5 with their guardians and siblings. All presentations feature a book and hands-on activities.

14th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek

15th ~ Birds of Prey ~ 11:15 AM & 2:15 PM ~ Camanche Public Library ~ Discover the world of these amazing flying predators. Meet one of these birds up close and personal!

16th ~ Wild Things After School Camp ~ 3:30 - 5:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Welcome to Wild Things, an after school camp for children in 1st - 5th grade. This new camp is different from other camps as it is unstructured (for the most part) but supervised! All day, your child is told what to do, when to do it and how to do it, so when they get home, all they want to do is sit in front of the TV and zone out. We want to give your child the opportunity to do what you may have done as a child....to simply play in the woods. Register on www.mycountyparks.com only \$5.



16th ~ T-shirt Rugs - 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This is a great way to use up those old t-shirts that accumulate in your closet. By using a 33-inch hula hoop, about 12 t-shirts and a pair of fabric scissor, we will weave a simple rug for you to use at home. Baskets, chair pads and coaster instructions will be given. There is no fee unless you need to purchase a hula hoop. Register at www.mycountyparks.com.

17th ~ Turkey Talk ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Did you know that turkeys can run up to 25 mph and fly as fast as 55 mph! Bring your kids to learn this and more with hands-on animal artifacts and a mount!

18th ~ Fall Refuge Hike ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Ever seen beyond the trees that line the banks across from the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center? View wildlife and the habitat of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife & Fish Refuge on this naturalist-led hike. We'll use the Blue Heron to cross the chilling waters and hike the trackless wilderness using map, compass and GPS to guide us, all supplied by Clinton County Conservation. We'll even have binoculars and a spotting scope along. This is a free event and you may register with Chuck at 563-357-0759.

18th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Musicians interested in playing, contact Chuck at 563-357-0759. All are welcome.

21st ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek
23rd & 24th ~ Eco Tourism Center Closed ~ Rock Creek ~ The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will be closed in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.

28th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek

28th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

December Events

1st ~ **The Regal Red-tailed Hawk ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton** ~ Red-tailed hawks can live 20 years in the wild! The live red-tail at the presentation is around 2 years old. Bring your children to see this regal raptor up close and have hands-on opportunities with real animal artifacts.



5th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek

7th ~ **Wild Things After School Camp ~ 3:30 - 5:30 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~ See earlier description.

7th ~ **Music at the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle** ~ Local musicians will play, sing and lead you through a night of music, dance and fun. Musicians interested in playing, contact Chuck at 563-357-0759. All are welcome.

8th ~ **An Animal Encounter ~ 10 AM ~ Eco Center, Rock Creek** ~ Preschoolers and their parents can enjoy an animal encounter through games, crafts and live animal presentations. This program is free and siblings are welcome!

12th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek

12th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

15th & 16th ~ **Fifth Annual Young Ladies Lock-in ~ (Fri. 6 PM - Sat. 10 AM) ~ Rock Creek** ~ Join Naturalists Jill and Jessica for a night full of fun at the Eco Tourism Center! This lock-in is for 5th & 6th grade girls and will be filled with "lock-in like" activities such as crafts, movies, games and a night hike. Registration is required, visit www.mycountyparks.com to register your child by December 10th. Cost is \$10/girl and space is limited so register your child today!



16th ~ **Reason for the Season ~ 12:30 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~ Ever wonder why we have some of the traditions surrounding the end of the year? Come discover their roots in the sun, woods and the longest nights of the year. We'll have the *Stellarium* software, Sun Scope and STARLAB up and running to help explain it all. People that bring along an empty paper towel tube can make a solar observation device.



16th ~ **Riverside Holiday Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~ Local musicians will play, sing and lead you through a night of music, dance and fun. Musicians interested in playing, contact Chuck at 563-357-0759. All are welcome.

19th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ MRETC, Rock Creek

20th ~ **Animals in Winter ~ 11:15 AM & 2:15 PM ~ Camanche Public Library** ~ The world completely changes for our wildlife in Iowa. Come and learn how these animals adapt to survive.



24th, 25th & 26th ~ **Eco Tourism Center Closed** ~ Rock Creek ~ The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will be closed in observance of Christmas.

January (Sneak-A-Peek)

1st ~ Eco Tourism Center Closed ~ Rock Creek

4th ~ **Music at the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle** ~ Local musicians will play, sing and lead you through a night of music, dance and fun. Musicians interested in playing, contact Chuck at 563-357-0759. All are welcome.

17th ~ **Build an Ice Fishing Rod ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~ Local rod builder, Garry Land will be on hand to help you build your very own, unique ice fishing rod for only \$30. Space is limited so register today at www.mycountyparks.com



Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Rock Creek Marina & Campground

Open Every Day, All Winter!

Camp Store + Nature Gallery, Thurs. - Sun. ~ 8 AM - 4 PM
Nature Center Only, Monday - Wednesday ~ 10 AM - 2 PM

We Rent Cross Country Skis, Snowshoes & Ice Skates!
Rent our 200 seat Community Room!

- ◆ Watch Big Fish in the Huge River Aquarium
- ◆ Climb Through a Giant Hollow Tree
- ◆ Feel Mussels in Our Touch Tank
- ◆ Investigate Underwater Turtle Island
- ◆ Explore a Mississippi Riverbank
- ◆ Discover "It's A Small World"

3942 291st St., Camanche, 563-259-1876



The catch of the day at "Fishing Has No Boundaries" Event held at Rock Creek on August 12th.

Reality TV ~ Pool 13 Bald Eagle Trio Webcam

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

Since 2004, the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Army Corps of Engineers have been monitoring the real wildlife drama of area bald eagle nests and the eagles that use them near Lock and Dam 13 using a webcam. I find it fascinating that we have an *Animal Planet* segment happening in our own backyard that has as many twists and turns as any reality TV show. I think you maybe interested in it as well.

The first few years were hard for the original pair of bald eagles. In 2004 and 2005 the monitored nest and eggs were destroyed by high winds. Then in 2006, one mate died because of a collision with a powerline. After that the other mate subsequently abandoned the nest and two eggs. Mother nature did not give them as many blows in 2007 and 2008, as two and then three chicks fledged respectively. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles in life and in 2009, one chick was able to leave the nest but collided with a powerline and died. In 2010, three more chicks fledged. In 2011 the eagles relocated the nest and eggs were laid but the parents abandoned the nest and to top it off, the tree then collapsed due to strong winds.

Many times in monogamous bird pairing, if a nest is unsuccessful, the birds will find a new mate. In 2012, a pair of eagles rebuilt a nest in an old location near Lock and Dam 13. Two eggs were laid and eventually hatched, but because the male did not do his share of incubation and feeding, both chicks survived only three days of life. Birds of prey, like eagles, hatch at different times because the eggs are incubated and hatched 35 days after being laid. Resulting in first hatched eagles to be bigger than their siblings and sometimes out competing them if food is scarce. It was concluded that the new male was probably young and inexperienced. He just couldn't get into the swing of things.

Again, since the nest was not successful, the female found a new mate and a new nest location in 2013. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 there were three adults around the nest and successfully fledged young. In 2013, the one eagle kept his distance but hung around the nest. The next year, the extra eagle seemed to take a more active part, but we didn't know just how active since there was vegetation blocking the nest view. Finally, in 2016, there was video evidence of a female and 2 male trio sharing all aspects of nesting, from building the nest, to copulation and to raising young.

Now, 2017 started out promising but has an unknown ending. On January 26th, 29th and February 1st eggs were laid. Consequently, on March 7th and 9th eaglets hatched. The third egg did not. This year, the trio did not have the hardship of wind on the nest. This time it was competition and aggression from other bald eagles that caused all the problems. On the evening of March 24th, two adult bald eagles attacked the nest for over an hour. The webcam recorded two eagles battling down on the ground with their talons. When it ended, both eagles walked out of the sight of the webcam. Unfortunately, the female did not return to the nest.

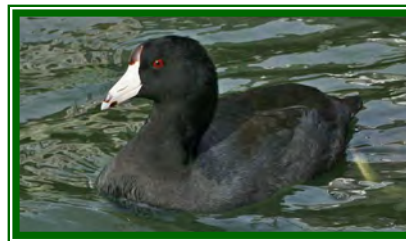
The battle for the nest does not stop there. On the 26th of March, a pair of bald eagles attacked



Two males & one female trio. USFWS photo.

the nest again! Both males defended the nest, resulting in no injuries. Then in the late afternoon on March 28th, a lone bald eagle came after the nest again. The two males defended the nest and far up into the sky for an aerial battle that ended with the attacker being chased off.

In April, the website said that attackers were getting bolder and the video caught a sub-adult in the nest with one of the males fighting. Though the males had their talons full with competing eagles they still had time to bring American coots along with fish to the nest to feed the young. By the beginning of May, the attacks on the nest were waning and the size difference of the eaglets lessening. Around three months of age, the eaglets became branchlings, hopping from branch to branch, strengthening their wings and getting some air/wind to get away from those pesky gnats that we all dread that time of year. On the afternoon of May 30th, the eaglets fledged at the same time as the Mississippi



American coot, the meal of choice for feeding eaglets this year.

River was flooding. Though flooding can be a hardship for finding fish it actually gave the eagles an easy food source of pelican and cormorant chicks who were unable to escape the rising water on their low-lying island nesting colony.

At this time, the webcam is down until fall. Hopefully, it will be at the right place when a pair of eagles comes back in the new year to start the nesting ritual of adding to the already bulky nest. So what does 2018 have in store for these eagles? Will the males stay together? Will one or both bring back a female? Will the competing eagles win over the territory? Maybe great horned owls will battle for the nest. I am excited to tune into the Pool 13 Bald Eagle Nest Webcam found on <http://stewardsumrr.org/> to see!

We all know that nature can be finicky and so can technology. It costs money to move the webcam when the eagles use a different nest, to replace it when the tree topples over, to repair it when it is broken (from nature or time), or troubleshoot problems when floodwaters rise. So please consider giving a donation to the non-profit, Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge to keep this wildlife reality TV show up and running!

Clinton County Conservation
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2308 255th Street
Grand Mound, Iowa 52751
Phone: 563-847-7202
Email: conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov
Web: www.mycountyparks.com

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“Building Better Birders” ~ August 2017

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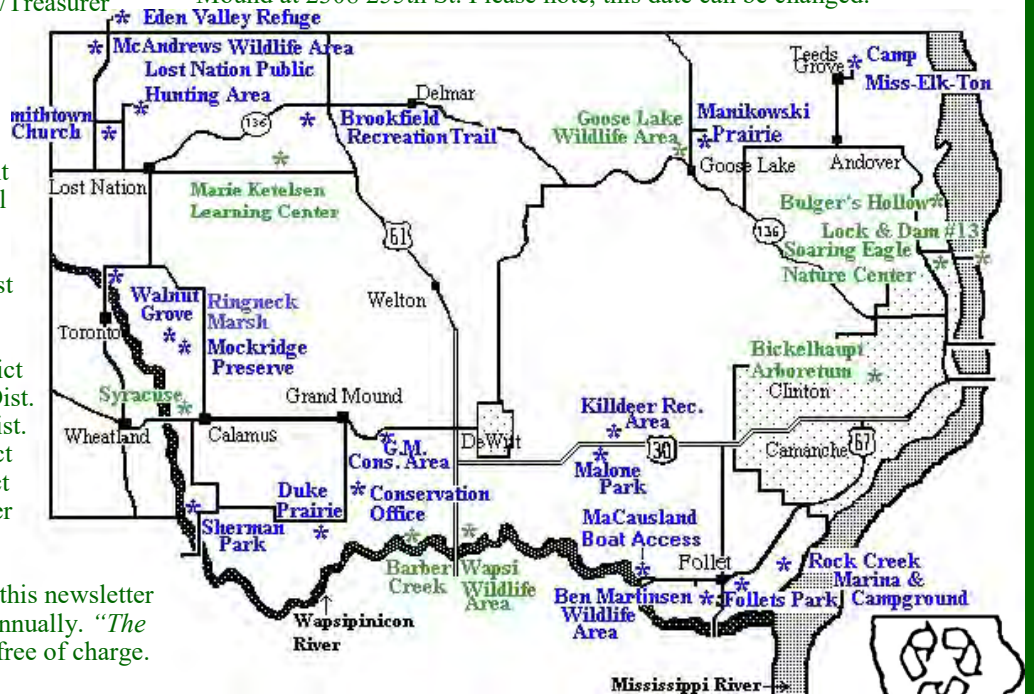
MAILING LIST

Clinton County addresses can receive this newsletter at home, free. Others are charged \$5 annually. “The Heron” is on our website or emailed, free of charge.

The Clinton County Conservation Board in the provision of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subject to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Clinton C.C.B. or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

BOARD MEETINGS

The Clinton County Conservation Board meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome. The Board regularly meets the second Tuesday the month, at 6 PM, in the Conservation Office, located 1 mile south of Grand Mound at 2308 255th St. Please note, this date can be changed.



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