



The Heron

*Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
Volume 38 ~ Number 1 ~ February - April 2016*

Riverbank's Rising

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

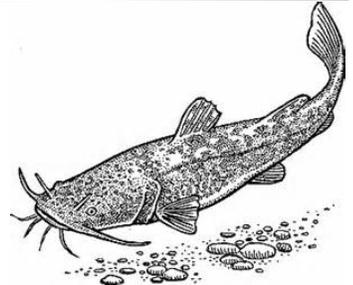
Visitors this winter to the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will be able to see a new display taking shape. Work has started on a riverbank diorama in the Nature Gallery.

The display will be a full-scale model of a Mississippi riverbank. It will feature a bank hide that you can explore under the exposed tree roots where many creatures hang out, from water snakes to muskrats and even giant flathead catfish! A sand bar and an embankment with sand prairie habitat and bank swallow nests will also be created.

A team effort is taking place to raise the riverbank up, creating it out of wood, foam, paint and plaster. Our team leader is artist extraordinaire, Susan Holgersson. Susan is the our very own Walt Disney because she makes our dreams come true. Her experience with set design for plays and her museum work has proved to be a perfect combination for the Eco Tourism Center. She already has painted the 360 degree mural in the Nature Gallery, put the finishing touches on the mussel tank, created the john boat and the great cottonwood tree.

Susan can't do it alone. Our Park Rangers at Rock Creek, Brad Taylor and Ryan Waltz, spent countless hours on those displays as well and will do the same for the riverbank display. They do all the carpentry, welding, wiring and other building that is required. Also, our naturalist staff has the duty of brainstorming not only what educational things we want in the display but also how it will be interactive with visitors and how we want the overall project to look when completed. As various phases are being worked on Jessica, Jill, Chuck and/or myself are called in

to check on the functionality and look of the project. Since we are often the end users, it works well to have us inspecting the work as we move forward.



The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is also involved since the non-profit organization has the honor of paying the bills. This means they have to be kept up to date on progress and changes as we go along. They also, of course, are on board from the beginning with the overall plan.

The Foundation has paid for 96% of the building costs as well as 100% of the cost of displays, minus staff time. They have acquired their funds from a vast array of donations, grants and fundraisers. The recent banquet the group held at the Eco Tourism Center netted nearly \$13,000; enough to pay for the entire riverbank display! They also make money from events like the annual catfishing tournament and the upcoming Barn Quilt Workshop (see calendar of events).

The sketch below is a rough blueprint for what we will be building over the next couple of months. Our creative team is always coming up with tweaks that make the display more dynamic and interactive, so don't hold us to the original plan! The Nature Gallery will remain open during the process so people can enjoy Turtle Island, the Giant Cottonwood and Mussel Beach. You also can check on our progress and watch as the *Riverbank's Rising*.



Six Days in the Apostle Islands

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretative Naturalist

I've been paddling for 41 years now and have experienced many places without ever leaving the mid-west. But there are as many trips ahead of me as behind, I hope. Last summer I scratched one more paddle off my bucket list with the insistence of my wife and support of my closest friends. A kayaking adventure on Lake Superior among its Apostle Islands is not one to miss.

We began with maps and questions of equipment, then there was the training I clearly lacked. My long time paddling partner Jim narrowed down my shopping list as he freely lent me an 18' Kevlar kayak, spray skirt, dry bags, paddles, map bag, paddle float and other gear. This left me with a wet-suit, jacket, booties, gloves, neoprene socks, rescue rope and a helmet to purchase. Yes, a helmet!

Jim also handed me a DVD series concerning paddling technics. These included bracing, sculling and strokes that I was familiar with as a certified kayaker, but also included instruction on launching, paddling through, riding on and landing in surf. My jaw went slack as I watched paddler after paddler get dunked and tossed by crashing waves. And so the helmet. So I became determined to learn to administer a roll to add to other self rescue technics I was already familiar with. I had hope, as I had managed this in white-water craft, but that was 20 years ago.

So my training sessions would include working on a roll, which I never completed, brushing up on other rescue



moves and just plain getting familiar with a different boat. I decided I would use Jim's kayak on every paddle leading up to our trip. I struggled with the seat settings and suffered a lot of back strain due to improper adjustment of the back rest which I threw out of adjustment every time I sat down until I learned to be more careful. Each time I went out for practice I packed the boat with all the gear I would have along on the trip.

After months of preparation I was as ready as I would ever be. When we launched that bright, clear, quiet Sunday morning from the beach at Little Sand Bay, Wisconsin, I had no idea just how much I would rely on every bit of training, experience, talent and pure bravery I could muster. Each day brought challenges and they seemed to escalate at a constant rate.

By the end of the trip we had faced an irate landowner (well placed signs are a thought), mosquitoes, poor landings and one ridiculous camp-site, gale force winds, showering whitecaps and an unplanned 48-hour stay on Ironwood Island. I also drove off an unsuspecting bear that stumbled upon me as I quietly read a book at 4 AM on a moonlit pebble beach of Oak Island.

If this has left you wanting more details then check our schedule of events for presentations of our experiences.

Always Willing To Lend A Helping Hand

by Jessica Steines, Interpretative Naturalist & FORC Liaison

I love to see the volunteers I have the opportunity to work with. Lucky for me, it is not uncommon for me to see Bill and Connie Dohrmann at Rock Creek Marina and Campground camping, going out boating and coming back in from boating toting a bucket with fish ready to be fileted. All things they enjoy doing together with their family and friends. When I see them, they seem to have a smile on their face enjoying life, Rock Creek and the Mississippi.

My first memory of the Dohrmann's helping as volunteers was for the photography workshop, held at the Eco Tourism Center, that nearly 200 people attended and lunch was provided. This was a new event, in a new building with a new group of volunteers! To say the least, it was a little hectic. But I remember Michelle, the Camp Store Manager saying that she was thankful to Bill and Connie that day for helping with the lunch, it would not have gone smoothly without them. They were able to do what needed to be done without being told and in an organized way. I don't know if they know it, but from then on I dubbed them the food specialists and invaluable as volunteers.

Ever since that fateful day they have always been there, letting me know if they are available and asking if there is anything they can do. I never hesitate to call, they are always willing to lend a helping hand when they can and with a smile on their face.

They joined FORC to help promote the center as they have

been coming to Rock Creek for many years. Way back to when it was known as Hansen's Landing. Now they enjoy helping with the kids activities, landscaping and as they put it, "wherever more hands are needed." And more hands *are* needed.

Bill and Connie are amazed at the number of students that use Rock Creek that come from all over the region. They say, "volunteering is a great way to interact with the youth and making new friends as the members are a friendly bunch. The group only meets once a month, all ages are welcome as are new ideas for Rock Creek." So if you are willing to lend a helping hand, you will fit right in. If life doesn't allow you to lend a helping hand right away, then come see us at Rock Creek at one of the many events, we would love to see you!

I am glad the Dohrmann's became part of the *Friends of Rock Creek* because Rock Creek is a part of them. Lending a helping hand comes naturally to Bill & Connie.



Above: Bill and Kayleen showing off their great smiles. Below: Connie helping out with s'mores.

The Public Eye on Bobcats

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist



Predator versus prey, a common concept that naturalists often include in their programming. When you include the general public's thoughts, the concept can become quite controversial. How do predators affect the population of prey species? Are they a threat to humans or domesticated animals? Why not eliminate all predators to ensure pheasant, deer, turkey and other game animal populations thrive for better hunting opportunities? Many questions arise.



I was following social media the other day and the topic of bobcats arose on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Facebook page. There was recently a spotting of a bobcat family caught on a trail cam near Earlham, just southwest of Des Moines in Madison County. The comments from the general public sparked my curiosity about this animal. Like many predators, there are a lot of misconceptions of this animal. Many people fear this predator. Not because it is a large or even an intimidating animal, but more of the lack of knowledge regarding the basic ecology of this wild cat.



The first comment on the picture was a man who stated the fact that bobcats take all the young deer leaving the population not as strong. Although later stated that he was joking, I'm sure this is a valid concern for other hunters. The DNR responded with this "while bobcats will take an occasional fawn in the spring/summer and are capable of handling an older deer, it is not a common occurrence. Studies done in Iowa on bobcats showed their diet consisted of 95 percent rabbits, mice, voles and squirrels, especially during the fall and winter months." This also ties in with the thoughts of this cat feasting on the pheasant population in Iowa. One man writes "More killing machines to decrease our pheasants." But once again, research shows the true diet of this cat is primarily small mammals, not birds. And although it seems logical that a cat would eat a bird, according to the DNR, "weather, particularly during the nesting season, and habitat are the most critical factors when it comes to building pheasant numbers."



Another person expressed their fear of the animal and said, "if you are a hunter or hiker it may be wise to carry a handgun for protection against these animals." The DNR responded saying "as long as it's legal for the season they are hunting. Keep in mind that bobcats in general tend to avoid people, and that there are seasons and limits on bobcats."

According to the 2015-2016 hunting regulations, the season for bobcats was November 7 - January 31, 2016. Fur harvesters must contact a conservation officer within 7 days of taking a bobcat to receive a CITES tag. Bobcat season is in southern and certain western counties. Only one bobcat is allowed per season per licensed fur harvester, either hunted or trapped. See *Iowa Hunting & Trapping Regulations* for more information.

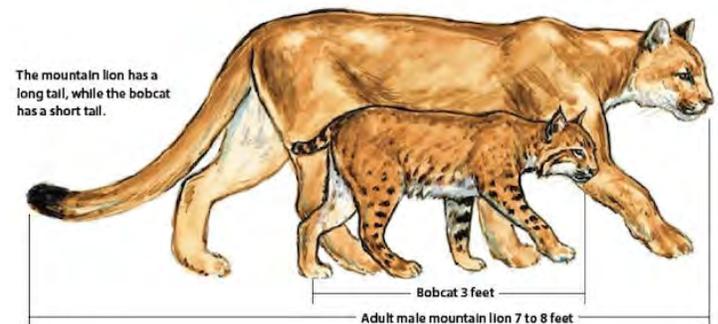


Not all comments were negative towards this post of bobcats. One woman was just curious if she'd be in danger if ever encountered by one.

The DNR replied "It's not common to see a bobcat, as they're pretty secretive, so enjoy the chance to see one! Bobcats are generally not a threat to people, pets or livestock. Unless the animal is not behaving normally, it will simply exit the area once it sees a person. If the animal has lost its fear of humans or acts or looks like it is "sick," call local law enforcement (DNR, sheriff, or animal control). Thanks for your question."



Bobcats are one of three native wild cats (lynx and mountain lion) originally found in Iowa. Often confused with the mountain lion, bobcats have many different identifying characteristics. Bobcats are much smaller, ranging 15-26 pounds. The mountain lion weighs on average 115 pounds. Also, the bobcat has the short bob-like tail and spotting on the coat. Mountain lions tails are much longer.



Bobcats have had a long road, originally found statewide, they are now more common in the southern central part of the state (yes, they are in Clinton county!). Over hunting and habitat loss caused the bobcat population to drop dramatically and in 1977, they were listed as an endangered species in Iowa. Once protected from hunting, the bobcat population began its slow but steady increase. Many people believe bobcats were stocked by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources but this is untrue. Bobcats have made their comeback in Iowa virtually on their own. The Iowa DNR has not engaged in any type of restoration program, such as release of animals in the State. They have only received protection from trapping, hunting and negligent poaching.

Events Calendar - Free Family Fun in the Outdoors!

"A hypocrite is the kind of politician who would cut down a redwood tree, then mount the stump and make a speech for conservation." Adlai E. Stevenson

February

Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather conditions allow, check the local media for cross-country skiing and snowshoe outings throughout the winter. For those with e-mail, write cjacobsen@clintoncounty-ia.gov and place yourself on our "Adventurers" list. Adventurers will receive a short message whenever last-minute snow events are planned.

1st-4th ~ Make Your Own Barn Quilt ~ 6 - 9 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Barn quilts are fun to see when you are driving down the road and really dress up a place. Now you can make one for you or someone else for a gift. You may make a 2'X2' (\$40-valued at \$75) or a 4'X4' (\$90-valued at \$175). Register is required and space is limited, please call 563-847-7202 by Wednesday, January 27th.

3rd ~ The Fabulous Fox Snake ~ 10 AM ~ Camanche Public Library ~ Naturalist Jess is going to bring in one of her favorite critters into the library to let your children get to know some of the live animals that you can see at the Eco Tourism Center. There will be a book, craft and snack.



4th ~ Music in the Loft ~ 6 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will provide entertaining instrumental and vocal offerings of a wide variety of music. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along for this "coffee house" style jam. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations to support the center are welcomed.

5th ~ Clinton Ducks Unlimited Dinner ~ 5:30 PM ~ Gil's Ballroom, Clinton ~ You are invited to the annual Clinton DU Dinner, a live auction will follow raffles and dinner. Call Kevin Goodsmann, 563-212-3393 for tickets.

6th ~ Cross Country Ski Day ~ 9 AM- 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of skis get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our skis or bring your own to get a great winter workout while having fun. Please call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 to check on snow conditions and availability.

6th ~ Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help provide public hunting, wildlife habitat and the future of the hunting tradition. See the largest trophy deer display in the county. Each child receives a special prize. Deadline to purchase tickets is January 29th. Call Jeff Beckwith at 563-249-7358 for tickets.

7th ~ Winter Waters Fun Day ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Our winter sports equipment will be available free of charge from 1-4 PM and stay for a free chili or Mac and Cheese supper from 4-5 PM. After that stay for our indoor presentation of "Six Days in the Apostle Islands" an adventure on the waters of Lake Superior. Booths will be set up with information on this and other paddling opportunities.

9th ~ Six Days in the Apostle Islands ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This presentation will reflect on the adventure, beauty and hardships of a week on the waters of Lake Superior. We'll display maps & gear telling the experience of two long-time friends in this National Wilderness.



13th ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of snowshoes get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our snowshoes or bring your own and try your skills at a nostalgic winter activity. Please call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 to check on snow conditions and availability.

18th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Pre-schoolers and their parents can enjoy a nature-related story followed by a craft or nature activity. Siblings welcome!

19th ~ Turtle Talk ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Naturalist Jess will share her love for animals by bringing a few live turtles for your child to see, touch and hold (if they want)! There will be a story, activity and snack. This event is free of charge.

19th ~ Owl Prowl ~ 6 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Join a Jackson County naturalist in learning about owls of Iowa and their adaptations that make them great nighttime hunters. Following the program inside at the nature center, we'll head out on the trails, to call the owls. Dress for the weather. Plan to hike 1-2 miles. All ages welcome.

20th ~ Ice Skating Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of skates get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our skates or bring your own and try your skills at a nostalgic winter activity. Sizes and availability are limited. Please call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 to check on ice conditions or available sizes.

20th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Step up and lead or just play/sing along, sit and listen or get up and dance. There is enjoyment for all and all are welcome. Come and go at will but the music may linger until 4 PM. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations to support the center are always welcomed.

22nd ~ 6 PM ~ Full "Snow" Moon Night Hike ~ Sherman Park ~ We'll meet at the parks north parking lot off the end of 274th Street. From there we'll move north through the woods searching for signs of wildlife and with a clear sky finding the constellations of winter and hearing some of the myths. If snow is present our snowshoes will be available for use. After an hour and about a mile of hiking we'll retire to the basement of Sherman House for refreshments and a warming fire. No registration is necessary just show up dressed for the cold.



23rd ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join this great volunteer group that supports the eco center through volunteering for events, hosting events and much more!

27th ~ Cabin Fever Day Camp ~ 9:30 AM-2:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join Naturalists Jill and Jessica for a day full of winter fun! We will spend the day learning about winter both inside and out! Children should come prepared to spend time outside participating in activities such as snowshoeing, animal tracking and cross country skiing (depending on snow conditions). This day camp is for 3rd-5th grade children and registration is required. Visit www.mycountyparks.com to register your child, cost is \$10/child. If you have any questions please call 563-847-7202.

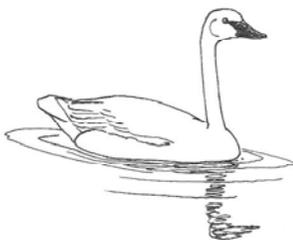


March

2nd ~ Trumpeter Swans

Restored! ~ 9 AM ~ Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton ~ As

part of their *Wild Winter Wednesday* Program, Mark Roberts will be presenting on the successful Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program in Clinton County that has been ongoing for over 20 years. Light refreshments served prior to the presentation. The event is free and the public welcomed. For the full slate of *Wild Winter Wednesdays* events, see www.cityoffulton.us



3rd ~ Music in the Loft ~ 6 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will provide entertaining instrumental and vocal music in the loft of the barn. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along for this "coffee house" style jam. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations to support the center are always welcomed.

4th ~ For Goodness Snakes ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Naturalist Jess will share her love for animals by bringing a few live snakes for your child to see, touch and hold (if they want)! There will be a story, activity and snack. This event is free of charge.

5th ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of snowshoes get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our snowshoes or bring your own and try your skills at a nostalgic winter activity. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 to check conditions.

6th ~ Youth Hunter Education Challenge - Open Tryouts ~ 1 PM ~ Wapsi Valley Izaak Walton League, DeWitt ~ Y.H.E.C. is a weekend-long event that takes place each June. Youth compete in 8 events, learn about the outdoors and have fun with other young people that have similar interests. The events include four shooting events (archery, muzzleloader, shotgun and small-bore rifle) and four non-shooting events (wildlife id, orienteering, hunter safety trail and a written exam). This "tryout" day is so that kids and parents can come and experience a Y.H.E.C. practice to see if it is a good fit for them.

11th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Trivia Night ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come for a fun night of trivia to raise funds for the Friends of Rock Creek Their mission is to support Rock Creek by promoting the site through volunteering and events at the Eco Center. A table for 8 people is \$80. Register for your table at www.mycountyparks.com. Bring your own snacks and beverages.

12th ~ Wild Turkey Federation Banquet ~ 6 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help raise funds for turkey habitat and public hunting. Call Mike House at 563-357-9251 or email mike.house@adm.com for tickets.

12th ~ Camanche Ducks Unlimited Dinner ~ 6 PM ~ Imperial Lanes, Camanche ~ Contact Ruth Marsh 563-212-8133 for tickets.

18th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Pre-schoolers and their parents can enjoy a nature-related story followed by a craft or nature activity. Siblings welcome!

19th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Step up and lead or just play/sing along, sit and listen or get up and dance. Come and go at will but the music may linger until 4 PM. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations to support the center are always welcomed.

20th ~ Our Feathered Friends Return! ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Spring is here and that means our feathered friends are returning! Children and their parents will learn about a variety of birds that are found living along the Mississippi River and even in your backyard! Children will learn how birds make a living and make their own bird feeder to take home. We will also go for a short walk through the park to look for any returning birds that may be around! This is a free program and open to the public, all children need to be accompanied by an adult.



22nd ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join this great volunteer group that supports the eco center through volunteering for events, hosting events and much more!

25th & 26th ~ It's Spring!!! Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ Spring is finally here so celebrate with some camping. All our cabins are heated. Cabin rentals are discounted this weekend only. Two night minimum required. Please call the camp store at 563-259-1876 to get the discount.

30th ~ The Benevolent Box Turtle ~ 10 AM ~ Camanche Public Library ~ Naturalist Jess is going to bring in one of her favorite critters into the library to let your children get to know some of the live animals that you can see at the Eco Tourism Center. There will be a book, craft and snack.



April

1st-3rd ~ Winter Camping ~ This will be the last weekend for winter camping rates (\$5 discount) at Rock Creek and Eden Valley. Take advantage of these low rates.

2nd ~ Twenty-first Annual Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ Wheatland Community Center ~ Clinton County Pheasants Forever is planning a night of fun & fund-raising. Tickets are just \$15. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 for tickets.

7th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Pre-schoolers and their parents can enjoy a nature-related story followed by a craft or nature activity. Siblings welcome!

7th ~ Music in the Loft ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will provide entertaining instrumental and vocal offerings of a wide variety of music. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along for this "coffee house" style jam. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event. Donations to support the center are always welcomed.

10th ~ Eco Center open 7days/week ~ Rock Creek ~ The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will now be open 7 days/week. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for hours.

14th ~ Spring Migration on the Mississippi Flyway ~ 5:30 PM ~ Bulger's Hollow ~ Waterfowl are migrating back north the Mississippi River's Lake Clinton at Bulger's Hollow is a perfect place to view the spectacle! Naturalists will have spotting scopes set up in search of returning waterfowl including ducks, cormorants, pelicans, swans, herons, cranes and eagles. We will have spotting scopes set up and have binoculars to loan so you can get a bird's-eye view. At 6:30 PM Our paddlecraft will be on hand for those who wish to venture out onto the water for a closer look if conditions are right. No need to sign-up.



15th-17th ~ Spring Fling Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ This winter was very unique and we all have a little Spring Fever going on. Join us for *Spring Fling Weekend*. Cabin rentals are discounted this weekend only. Please call the camp store at 563-259-1876 to get your discount. Two night minimum required.

16th ~ Spring Fling ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Spend the day celebrating Spring! At 10 AM there will be a FREE egg hunt for ages 1-12 by the back playground (weather permitting). Join Naturalist Jill Schmidt at 11 AM to expand your knowledge of trumpeter swans in Iowa! This program will share information regarding the return of this magnificent bird to our state and how their current population is doing. Composting is an easy and fun way to utilize your food waste! Get your hands dirty and learn how to make a simple compost bin for your home during a program at 12:30 PM. There will be other fun things going on throughout the day including live animals, crafts and other family friendly activities!



16th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This coffee house style music event offers local talents and center guests an opportunity to gather together for a variety of music in a casual setting. Step up and lead or just play/sing

along. Sit and listen or get up and dance. There is enjoyment for all and all are welcome. Come and go at will but the music may linger until 4 PM. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event. Donations to support the center are always welcomed.

16th ~ Pancake Breakfast ~ 8-11 AM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Enjoy a fresh, hot breakfast and the company of citizens who care about outdoor education and recreation in the Gateway Area. There is no charge but donations are gratefully welcomed.

19th ~ Woodcock Watch ~ 7:30 PM ~ Sherman Park ~ Some of the most memorable and anxiously awaited sights and sounds of spring are those demonstrated by these seldom heard and seen birds. You can sit by a warm fire after a short presentation and watch their sky dance while listening for their calls. Or get up on your feet and attempt a close encounter of the strangest kind. The terrain can be rough, the reward is entertaining.

21st ~ Live Animals ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come to meet and greet the live animals of the Eco Tourism Center.

23rd ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Season Opener ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ We will have cookies and lemonade for guests on this special day. A naturalist-guided flower walk will start at 1:30 PM to see what is in early bloom and to appreciate the beauty of the spring woods. The Nature Center will be open from 1-4 PM on Saturdays, now through October. Volunteer Hosts are needed, especially in Spring and Fall.

26th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join this great volunteer group that supports the eco center through volunteering for events and more!

26th & 30th ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7-9:30 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~ Visit www.iowadnr.gov/training for required sign-up.

30th ~ Basic Archery ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Archery is a great sport to learn. It is a skill that can be improved upon and something that can be done for an entire lifetime. If you are in 4th grade (children must be accompanied by chaperone) or older (adults are welcome too) and would like to learn how to shoot a compound bow please sign up at www.mycountyparks.com. The cost is \$10/person for bow and arrow rental.



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

May Sneak-a-Peak

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

14th ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM

On The Horizon...Summer Camps!

All of our day camps run from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM at Rock Creek. Cost is \$45 for all three days.

June 14th-16th ~ Creature Camp for K-2nd graders

June 21st-23rd ~ Creature Camp for K-2nd graders

June 28th-30th ~ Child vs. Wild Camp for 3rd-5th grades

July 5th-7th ~ Child vs. Wild Camp for 3rd-5th grades

July 19th-21st ~ Kanoe Kids Camp for Middle School

The Cottonwood Star Legend

by Pat Schlarbaum, Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program

Here's a legendary story that you might share sometime, especially with the young at heart. This works well with owl prowls after dark or enjoying a star-studded night watching for shooting stars or the aurora borealis.

From the Plains Indians: Cheyenne and Arapaho

All things come from Mother-earth. Stars are no exception. They form secretly in the earth and then drift along just under the surface until they find the roots of the magical cottonwood tree. They enter the roots and slowly work their way up through the tree. Finally they come to rest in the small twigs at the end of the branches. Here they wait patiently until they are needed.

When the "Spirit-of-the-Night-Sky" decides she needs more beautiful stars to light up the heavens, she calls on the Wind-Spirit to help her. The Spirit-of-the-Wind sends his blustery gusts in all directions. Soon the wind shakes the magical cottonwood trees so hard that the twigs begin to break off. Then, as each twig breaks away, the stars are released; and even more escape when the twigs break again as they hit the ground. Now new stars race up into the night-sky where each one is carefully put into a special place. Now, when the Spirit-of-the-Night-Sky has enough new stars, she tells the Wind-Spirit to stop; and the wind settles down to a gentle night breeze. Of course, the Spirit-of-the-Night-Sky wants to thank the Wind-Spirit for his help so she asks all the new stars to twinkle brightly for him. This way the Wind-Spirit can see where all the new stars he helped escape have been placed.

So, if you want to add a new star to the night-sky, gather some cottonwood star twigs and snap a few to make sure you have good ones. Then wait for a clear night. When your special night comes, find a spot where you can see lots of stars. Hold your twig up toward the night sky and snap it. After you snap, check the ends of your twig to see if you have a star pattern showing. If you do, then you have put a new star in the sky. The star pattern is the shadow that the new star leaves behind.

Look up at the night sky again, and if you look very carefully, in the same direction that you released your new star,



you will see it twinkling brightly. This is your 'thank-you' from the Spirit-of-the-Night Sky, for adding a beautiful new star to her heavenly kingdom.

How to find Your Stars

The stars are found by snapping the small dry twigs which have fallen from a cottonwood tree. Look for the growth wrinkles in the bark. There will often be several on one twig. The wrinkles look a little like the wrinkles in a flex soda straw. Hold the twig close to the growth wrinkles and snap it quickly. Some twigs may be too green or too rotten, but many will produce a five point secret star. (Twigs from a year ago are best—this year are too green and older than one year are too decayed.) With a little practice, you will know which twigs have the stars hiding inside. You can see the star best if you shade it from the sun and look straight in at the broken end. You can also enhance some stars by rubbing them on fine sandpaper. A sand-ed star will usually show up better if you moisten it.

Reprinted with permission from Fall/Winter 2015—2016 edition of Wildlife Diversity News, A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program, The Chickadee Check-off folks.



Advanced Reservations

Did you know that you can book your campsite or cabin in advance at www.mycountyparks.com?

Rock Creek: 6 cabins and 8 campsites .

Eden Valley: 3 cabins and 2 pack-in only campsites.

Rock Creek:	Wood Duck Cabin ~	\$50/night
	Camping Cabins ~	\$35/night
	Campsites ~	\$25/night
Eden Valley:	Bunkhouse ~	\$50/night
	Camping Cabins ~	\$35/night

mycountyparks
.com



Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center

Let us host your next gathering!

- * Wedding Receptions
- * Graduations
- * Family Reunions
- * Birthday Parties

Community Room Rental

- * Rental Hours: 7 AM-10 PM
- * Seating for up to 200 people
- * Use your favorite caterer or self-cater
- * \$250/day or \$50/hr + \$100 deposit
- * Tables, Chairs & AV Equip. included

3942 291st Street, Camanche
563-259-1876

Clinton County Conservation
P.O. Box 68
Grand Mound, Iowa 52751
Phone: 563-847-7202
Email: conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov
www.clintoncounty-ia.gov
www.mycountyparks.com

Address Service Requested

Pre-sorted STD
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 CLINTON, IA 52732
 Permit No. 164

CLINTON COUNTY CONSERVATION

BOARD

Gloria Friederichsen, Grand Mound, President
 Jeff Beckwith, Clinton, Vice President
 Kim Rixen, Clinton, Secretary/Treasurer
 Judie Petersen, Goose Lake
 John Schnack, DeWitt

STAFF

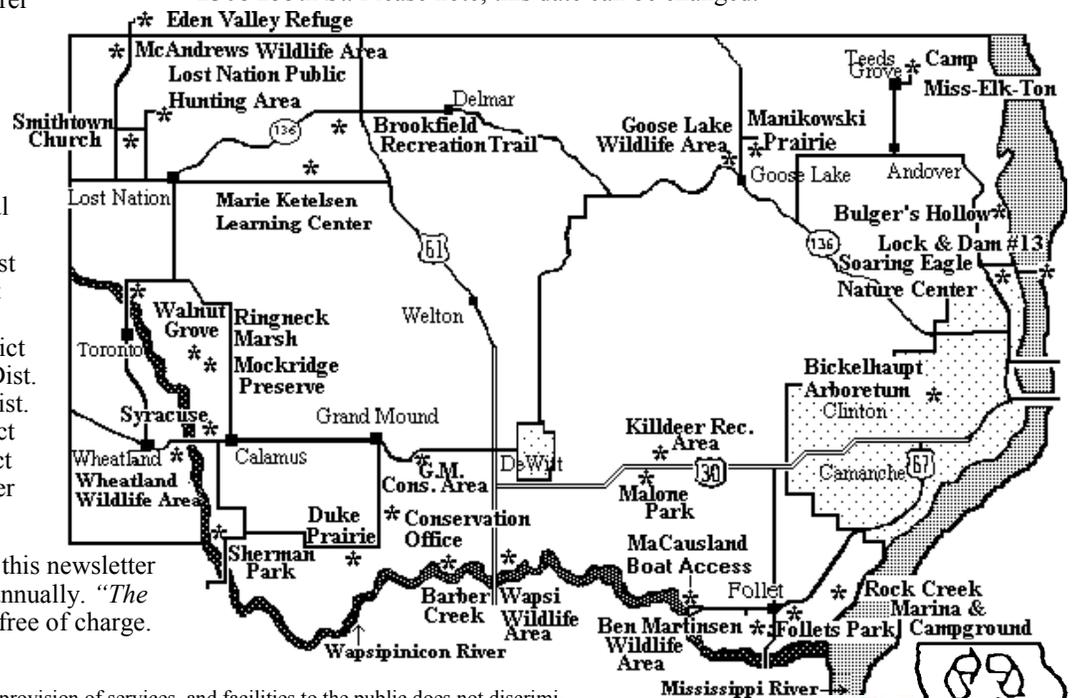
Walt Wickham, Executive Director
 Karen Brix, Administrative Assistant
 Darin Voss, Natural Resource Tech
 Robert Schaefer, Maintenance, Central
 Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator
 Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretive Naturalist
 Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist
 Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist
 Chip Brown, Park Officer, West District
 Dave Schneden, Maintenance, West Dist.
 Allen Ketelsen, Maintenance, West Dist.
 Brad Taylor, Park Officer, East District
 Ryan Waltz, Park Ranger, East District
 Michelle Stearns, Camp Store Manager

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.

BOARD MEETINGS

The Clinton County Conservation Board meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome. The Board 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.



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.

