

The Heron

*Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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The Value of One Little Screech Owl

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

On March 14th, 2002, Greg Wolf (former CCCB Naturalist) and I were attending the Iowa Association of Naturalists meeting in Woodbury County (Sioux City) at the new Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and we heard a presenter from a relatively new organization called SOAR in Dedham, Iowa (www.soarraptors.org). The speaker was Kay Neumann, former Naturalist for Audubon County, Iowa. She had started the organization to work with injured birds of prey. I had known Kay for many years prior to that point and so did our current Director, Walt Wickham, who went to Iowa State University with her. Kay was speaking about her new vocation and was teaching the group how to handle injured raptors (hawks, owls, etc.) so we did not further injure the

birds or ourselves in the process of capturing them.

As it so happened, I had worked with live raptors in the education program for years. First with a red-tailed hawk and later with a couple of American kestrels and an eastern screech owl. Our screech owl, which we housed at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, had died a few months earlier. We had the bird for nearly four years, but now the cage was sitting empty. In the course of her talk, Kay mentioned that she had a male screech owl that was injured and it needed a permanent home. I elbowed Greg and he nodded back, that this was a perfect opportunity to acquire a new resident for the enclosure at the Wapsi Center.

We approached Kay following the presentation to volunteer a home for the bird. Our track record was very good, we had all the necessary permits, we had the facility and most importantly, we had an audience that could benefit from learning about raptors from the little owl. Looking back, maybe it was fate. Kay's place was right on our way back to Clinton County, so we stopped by and picked up our new colleague the very next day.

The owl had one of its wings missing. The theory was that it may have been feeding on road kill or it was simply flying by, when the antennae of a passing vehicle clipped the wing, severing the right appendage at the "elbow". The bird was found standing on the roadside, with the wing missing, by a passing motorist. The bird was lucky to even be noticed since a screech owl is only about 6 inches high and weighs only 5 ounces. The owl likely could have survived only a day or two on the ground even if a predator did not find it. Luckily, the motorist was concerned enough to contact SOAR to help the bird. We noticed one of its eyes did not dilate with the other and one of the ear tufts could not be raised or lowered. This indicated the bird likely experienced head trauma during its vehicle encounter.

Once we got our new bird back home, it was apparent that some modifications to its enclosure would need to be made. Screech owls spend most of the day hiding in hollow trees and our cage already had a hide box. But the box was high in the corner and there was no way the screech owl was going to be able to get into it. Being a bird, the owl would be most comfortable off the

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Otus, the Wapsi Center's 12-year veteran, educational eastern screech owl.

ground, so a handicapped accessible ramp was constructed so the screechy could walk down for water and food. Also, we typically fed the bird on a platform, but if the mouse fell off during feeding, the owl would need to walk down to finish its meal.

We also thought the bird would like to perch, so several perches were placed in the cage. They were arranged like a staircase so the bird could connect the dots and get up higher. The bird could manage the perches just fine, but almost exclusively used the hide box, at least during the day.

We rarely ever heard the bird make a noise in the day, except for snapping its beak at us when first picking it up. Being a small animal, attracting the attention of predators is not a good idea. It did occasionally make a call at night. Screech owls in the wild call to proclaim territory but also to let potential mates know where to find them during the spring breeding season.

We started using the owl in our "Birds of Prey" presentations immediately, along with a male American kestrel (small falcon) we had since November 1997. We still have that same kestrel. The two birds made a wonderful contrast. They both are similar in size and ate similar foods, but the owl being nocturnal (night active) and the falcon being diurnal (day active), the different adaptations made the comparison a lot of fun. The screech owl's physical adaptations are particularly impressive. They give the bird the ability to thrive as a predator even on the darkest night.

Physical Adaptations: (credit Cincinnati Zoo Website)

- ◆ Eastern screech owls have keen eyesight, which is helpful because they are strictly nocturnal.
- ◆ Coloration mimics tree bark perfectly, which helps to camouflage the bird, while it sits very quietly, pulling in feathers and stretching its body to resemble a tree branch.
- ◆ All owls possess a zygodactyl fourth digit (the ability to reverse the fourth digit on its foot so that the talon

either points forward or backwards as needed, a bit like our thumb).

- ◆ The feathered facial disc collects sounds and concentrates them to the ear, allowing the owl to gauge direction and distance of possible prey.
- ◆ Owls have broad wings with large surface areas that help them to float through the air without flapping too much. Less flapping makes less noise.
- ◆ Short, rounded wings give the screech owl great maneuverability in tight spaces among trees.
- ◆ On both the longer flight feathers, there are comb-like structures at the edge of the feather that are responsible for muffling the sound of the air going over the wing; this essentially makes an owl silent when flying. Also, an owl's feathers can separate from each other on the same wing; therefore, the air flows over each of the individual feathers, which increases how silently an owl flies. Almost silent flight enables the birds to hear the tiny sounds, produced by their small mammal prey, and approach them undetected.
- ◆ An owl cannot move its eyes; it can only look straight ahead. Owls make up for this by being able to turn their heads 270° around, and almost upside-down. It is able to achieve this by having a long and very flexible neck. An owl's neck has 14 vertebrae; twice as many as humans.
- ◆ Owls use of parallax is facilitated by eyes and ears that are widely separated and forward facing; one of the most distinctive features of this family of birds. Parallax is the effect whereby the position or direction of an object appears to differ when viewed from different positions, like through the viewfinder and the lens of a camera or through two eyes (binocular vision).
- ◆ To protect their eyes, owls are equipped with 3 eyelids. They have a normal upper and lower eyelid, the upper closing when the owl blinks, and the lower closing up when the owl is asleep.

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SOAR is...

Saving Our Avian Resources (SOAR) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, established in 1999, dedicated to saving our avian resources through raptor rehabilitation, education and research. SOAR maintains all necessary US Fish & Wildlife Service and Iowa DNR permits to provide the rehabilitation and education.

Our Goals:

- ◆ *Establish a regional raptor rehabilitation facility to serve western Iowa.*
- ◆ *Use personal connections with individual, wild animals to bring attention to important natural resource conservation projects and issues.*
- ◆ *Conserve habitat, conduct needed research and provide educational opportunities.*

The third eyelid is called a nictitating membrane and is a thin layer of tissue that closes diagonally across the eye, from the inside to the outside. This cleans, protects and moistens the surface of the eye.

Behavioral Adaptations:

- ♦ Eastern screech owls are almost entirely nocturnal, unlike other owls that are sometimes active during the day. They are the most nocturnal of all North American owls.
- ♦ They live solitarily or in mated pairs.
- ♦ Roosting owls become motionless when disturbed; as if 'playing possum'.
- ♦ The screech owl rarely screeches (except when it defends its young). It has an extraordinary variety of courtship, territorial and defense calls that include a descending whinny, pleasant trills and purrs, and quavering or bark-like whistles.
- ♦ Screech owls, being a resident rather than migrant species, can put on large amounts of fat in autumn to prepare for winter and will even hide food in caches. They survive winters by remaining inactive during harsh weather, feeding primarily on stores of hidden prey.

If a mysterious trill catches your attention in the night, bear in mind the spooky sound may come from an owl no bigger than a pint glass. Common east of the Rockies in woods, suburbs and parks, the Eastern Screech-Owl is found wherever trees are, and they're even willing to nest in backyard nest boxes. These supremely camouflaged birds hide out in nooks and tree crannies through the day, so train your ears and listen for them at night.

credit Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

As you may have guessed by now, the reason I am writing this article is because our little screech owl, after nearly 12 years with us, finally passed. We do not know how old the bird was since it was an adult when we acquired it, but we do know that it led a good, long life while in our care. Wild screech owls have a 70% mortality rate. The wild ones that live to adulthood can live as long as 8-10 years.

At the end, the owl would not eat, it had cataracts in both eyes and really became lethargic. We contacted Macbride Raptor Center in Cedar Rapids and they examined the bird on Friday, December 13th, and they possibly would keep him for overnight for observation. The bird was getting old

and the worst case scenario would be that the owl would need to be put to sleep. Upon examination, including blood work, behavior, weight loss, green droppings, loss of sight (accompanied by "ticking"), and the age (~13 yrs. or more), the tough decision was made to euthanize the screech owl. Plans are to have the owl taxidermied and kept as an educational specimen at the Wapsi Center, continuing its legacy as an educational raptor.

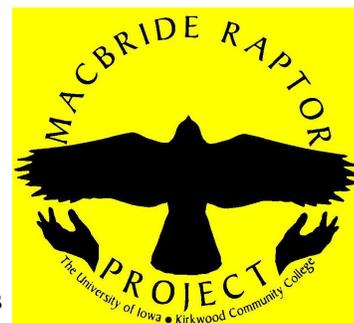
The bird was my personal favorite to work with. It was so small, cute and non-threatening it was a favorite with the students too. I always could bring the bird, sitting on my gloved hand, right out into the crowd so kids could get a really up close look at him. I even would have a volunteer sit up front in a chair, put a glove on them, with an ankle leash to the owl, and let them hold the screech owl for a minute. I think that really made a lasting impression as well as providing a lot of photo ops over the years!

All told, the eastern screech owl appeared at over 756 separate events, usually with multiple presentations per event, seeing 44,892 people, most of which were elementary students. To put that into perspective, that is about 5 full years worth of educational field trips and public events for one of our full-time Naturalists! That is a lot of impact.

In private, the bird was known as Otus, after its scientific name *Otus asio* (ornithologists have since renamed it the less interesting title of, *Megascops asio*), but I have never used the name Otus in public. I feel strongly that a pet-like name gives the impression that the bird is a pet. It never was. It was a wild animal that through an unfortunate accident, spent its life in captivity. It served its species and all raptors by becoming an ambassador.

What is the value then of this one little screech owl? I can't say for sure, but I have a feeling that the awareness he raised of habitat needs and to problems that owls face, plus the experiences that he gave to people, is priceless.

Thanks for all your support and care given to the Eastern Screech Owl while at the Wapsi Center. The bird brought much awareness in the life it had here at the Center and he will be missed. Dave Murcia, Director, Wapsi Center.



Fishing Has No Boundaries Update

Fundraising has begun and the FHNB Eastern Iowa chapter is well on their way! We are still in need of volunteers for the event being held at Rock Creek on June 7th, 2014, both to help on land as well as individuals who are willing to be captains with boats, either fishing or pontoon style. If you are interested in being a part of the first annual FHNB event at Rock Creek, or would like more information regarding Fishing Has No Boundaries, please contact Allie McGraw at eifhnbinc@gmail.com. The next fundraising event for FHNB will be held on January 23rd at Noodles & Company in Davenport, time yet to be determined.

www.fhnbinc.org



January, February & March Conservation Education Events

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

January

16th ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center ~ 6 PM ~ Gander Mountain, Davenport

18th & 19th ~ Free Ice Skating Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

18th ~ Winter Sports Clinic ~ 11 AM - 2 PM ~ Emma Young Park, Clinton ~ This is an introduction to the outdoor winter sports of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Boots, skis and poles will be provided for free. Our new equipment will provide a better experience.

18th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ This "coffee house" style music event offers local talents and guests an opportunity to gather together for a variety of music in a casual setting.

25th & 26th ~ Free Winter Sports Equipment Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Limited number of ice skates, skis and snowshoes available for use within the park.

26th ~ Snowmobile Radar Run ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Eastern Iowa Sno-riders snowmobile club will once again hold this annual event on the backwater ice at Rock Creek Marina, ice permitting. Anyone is welcome to race their snowmobile against a radar gun. A \$10 donation is requested per run, with proceeds going to the Spina Bifida Foundation of Iowa. Spectators are welcome. Bad ice date is February 2nd. Check www.easterniowasoriders.com.

28th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ The *Friends of Rock Creek* are a group of citizens dedicated to improving the park and its facilities through volunteering and planning events. New members and guests are always welcomed!

February

6th ~ Music in the Loft ~ 7 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. The entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations are welcomed.

8th & 9th ~ Free Cross Country Ski Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Miss. River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek



8th ~ Winter Survival ~ 10 AM - 12:30 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Take a minute to learn about the many challenges winter has and have fun doing it! This family fun program will teach you how to build fires, boil water and build shelters all while having fun outside! All children must be accompanied by an adult and registration is required for this free event. Space is limited, sign up at www.mycountyparks.com or call 563-847-7202 by February 1st.

12th ~ Skunky Skunks ~ 2 PM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ This presentation is for K-3rd graders to find out more about those adorable but stinky skunks. There will be a story, short presentation, activity & craft. Free of charge.

14th ~ Skunky Skunks ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ This presentation is for children ages three to five. This event is free of charge.

15th & 16th ~ Free Snowshoe Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

15th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Free live music!

15th ~ 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. Call Mark Roberts at 563-349-0956 for tickets.

20th ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center ~ 6 PM ~ Gander Mountain, Davenport

22nd ~ Free Ice Skate Day ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

23rd ~ Cabin Fever Fun Day ~ 10 AM-3PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Is your family getting bored stuck inside all winter? Participants 12 years old and up can experience a fun way to use up those old t-shirts that accumulate in your closet. Bring about a dozen of your old t-shirts and a pair of fabric scissors, we will weave a simple rug for you to use at home. For participants, 4-11 years old, you will hang out with a naturalist learning all about snow through an interactive program and craft. After lunch we'll go outside and enjoying some fun winter activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and ice skating! Your family will head out in the park and use the GPS to track down ingredients



for our favorite bonfire snacks' mores, by the fire and enjoy them with a cup of hot cocoa! Cost for this program is \$5 for kids 12+ and \$2 for kids under 12. Registration is required, visit www.mycountyparks.com to register by February 14th.

25th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

28th ~ Aquarium Scuba Diver ~ 11 AM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Park Ranger, Ryan Waltz will brave the hostile depths of the 8,000 gallon river fish aquarium. He will be doing maintenance and cleaning. It is fascinating to watch the fish interact and react to Ryan while he is in the tank with them.



March

1st & 2nd ~ Free Cross Country Ski Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Miss. River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

2nd ~ Youth Hunter Education Challenge - Open Try-outs ~ 1 PM ~ Wapsi Valley Izaak Walton League, DeWitt ~ Y.H.E.C. is a weekend-long event that takes place each June. The event is held at Camp Wesley Woods, Indianola. 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).

6th ~ Music in the Loft ~ 7 PM ~ Soaring Eagle

8th & 9th ~ Free Snowshoe Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

8th ~ Camanche Ducks Unlimited Dinner ~ 5 PM ~ Imperial Lanes, Camanche ~ Single \$40, Couple \$60, Youth \$20. Contact Chris Huling 563-242-5870 for tickets.



8th ~ 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 for tickets.

11th ~ Spring Break Day Camp for Boys ~ 9 AM - 3 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Some area schools are on Spring break and we are trying something new. We are planning a full day of activities that are fun and active. Depending on the weather we will choose from activities such as snowshoe hiking and ice skating if the weather is right or we will do archery, tomahawk throwing, slingshots, games, handling animals and more. Lunch will be pizza, treat and soda from the Camp Store. Cost is \$10. Attendance is limited to 25 boys in 5th or 6th grades. You must register on www.mycountyparks.com by February 6th.



15th & 16th ~ Free Ice Skating Weekend ~ 8 AM-3PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

15th ~ Pancake Breakfast ~ 8-11 AM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ A free-will donation will get you all the fresh pancakes, sausage and scrambled eggs you like. The center hosts school children as well as offering family oriented events, nature trails and a nationally recognized dog park. All of this is made possible through your tax deductible donations. **A maple syruping demonstration will be on-going throughout the morning.**

15th ~ Birds of Prey ~ 1 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ We will have our live great horned owl and our American kestrel at the center for a up-close encounter.

15th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Free live music!

18th ~ Springbreak Day Camp for Boys ~ 9 AM - 3 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ See description from March 11th. Kids may only attend one of the two camps. Cost is \$10. Attendance is limited to 25 boys in 5th or 6th grades. You must register on www.mycountyparks.com by February 6th.

20th ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center ~ 6 PM ~ Gander Mountain, Davenport

22nd ~ Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ Wheatland Community Center ~ The Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever is planning a night of fun & fund-raising. They will have games, door prizes, auction and a pork dinner. Tickets are \$10. People need not be members to attend. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 for tickets.

23rd ~ Animal Care Clinic ~ 10AM - 3 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Do you love animals, especially reptiles? Would you like to learn to take care of them? If you answered yes, this clinic is for you! We will introduce you to all of the animals at the Eco Center and how we care for them. There will be presentations, some cleaning and lots of hands-on opportunities with the animals. Kids must at least be 12 years old for this free event. Register on www.mycountyparks.com, space is limited. Lunch will be available for purchase at the camp store or you can bring your own.



25th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek

26th ~ Ruby and the 3R's ~ 2 PM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ This puppet show is for K-3rd graders to see how Ruby the puppet reuses, reduces and recycles for a way to help the Earth. This presentation includes a puppet show and upcycling craft. This event is free of charge.

28th ~ Ruby and the 3R's ~ 2 PM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ This puppet show is for children ages 3-5.

April Sneak Peek

1st ~ Woodcocks & Whippoorwills ~ 7:30 PM ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance

3rd ~ Music in the Loft ~ 7 PM ~ Soaring Eagle

White Feathers and Fur

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

So it is a wonderfully, snowy, blustery New Year's Day and my husband and I are making lunch for our family. As we are going about our business, my husband looks out the window and says there are about 6 turkeys in the field to the west. Intrigued, I look out and inform him that I see 11, but as I speak he is retrieving our binoculars to get a better view. As he focuses the lenses he says, "Hey, your white, er smoke-phase, whatever you call them, are out there." So I turn down the heat on the stove to observe these uniquely colored turkeys myself. They are hard to see because they are about 200 yards away and are remarkably camouflaged in this weather and we quickly lose sight of them, which is good because lunch was getting done a little too well!



About two years ago, we started seeing these turkeys with white or light gray feathers tipped with black and their tail feathers sporting brown. They are much lighter than a normal colored eastern wild turkey. There are two theories on why this color phase of wild turkeys exist. One theory is that rogue domestic turkeys have bred with the wild variety, while the other theory is that it is natural genetic color mutation. According to an article in Minnesota's Star Tribune, Bill Marchel states, "there is no hard science (that the first theory) is true but what is known is that the wild turkey has four distinct color variations from what is considered the usual plumage. They are the smoke phase, the erythritic or red phase, the melanistic or black phase, and the true albinos, which are pure white with pink eyes. Although these color variations are uncommon, the smoke phase is the most frequently seen. Recessive genes or mutations account for the color abnormalities. Possibly 1 out 100 turkeys are smoke-phase."

Though these "snowy" phased turkeys blend in great on this snowy day, it makes me wonder if they are more susceptible to depredation the majority of the time when Iowa is not snow-covered. Don't they stick out like a sore thumb? I thought we would not see them after a year but we have been seeing them off and on for more than three years. Are they the same ones? A turkey's lifespan does average about three years, so probably not. It is probably in this small population's genetics. In my limited experience and others, most smoke-phased turkeys are females and that

females can have broods that produce both the smoke-phase and "normal" colored young. Which makes me wonder why not more smoke-phased males? According to the Iowa DNR the annual survival rates average 57% for females and 35% for males. So more females survive year to year, so maybe it is not internal that more females are genetically likely to be smoke-phase, maybe it is the external, environmental factors. I hope someone takes on some kind of experiment of this interestingly popular color phase of turkeys. According to the forums online, I believe it is definitely something people want to know more about. Like, how many smoke-phase turkeys are out there? What are the survival rates? What is the male to female ratio? And most importantly, put to rest the debate if the color phase results from tainted genetics due to domestic turkeys or naturally occurring genetic mutations. Until that study, we may never know!

Loving it...Here are some more examples of white coloration.

It is not exactly white but still interesting. A couple of years ago, on the Iowa Bird Listserve there was a sighting in Rock Island, IL., of a cogynandromorph northern cardinal. In other words, a cardinal that was half male and half female and you could see it split right down the middle with the one side covered with the bright red male feathers and the other with the subtle female feathers. Unfortunately scientists were unable to capture the bird to retrieve genetic information but they were able to observe it. They noted that it did not associate with other cardinals and did not make vocalizations.



On the same listserve there are sometimes sightings of leucistic red-tailed hawks. These birds are not totally white, but mottled. Leucism is a condition that inhibits melanin distribution in animals, to different degrees and is genetic.



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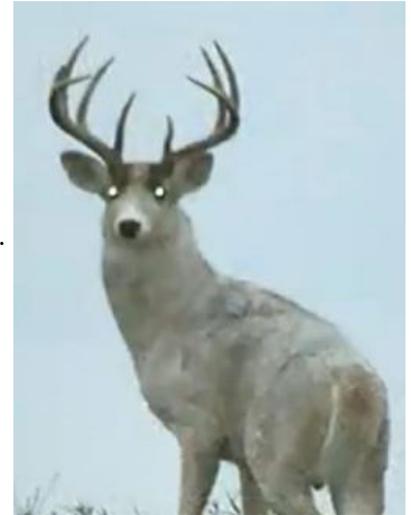
It seems that everyone is familiar with the seasonal color changes of the snowshoe hare and arctic fox on the nature channels, but there is a secretive animal in our own backyard. It is our three weasel species (least, long-tailed and short-tailed). During the winter, the weasel changes from its brown summer color to entirely white furred, except for the black of its eyes, nose and tip of the tail. The black tip on the tail attracts predators to the less vital part of the body. (Note: least weasels are completely white, including their tail.) The color change in the weasels occurs gradually from early October to early December and then again from February to late April. Experiments have shown these changes seem to be genetically controlled, not environmentally influenced as its coat will continue to change color according to the northern seasons.

During December people traveling on 350th Avenue west of Low Moor could see a flock of trumpeter swans that ranged from 10 to 40 individuals. At first glance it only looked to be just a few birds but as you viewed them through binoculars, more appeared, as you could start to make out the gray cygnets (young swans) with their all white parents. The birds were feeding on waste grain with their black bills or were resting in the snow covered field. Cygnets will retain their gray color for one year.

When some snowy owls made a unusual migration down to Iowa a couple of years ago and you were lucky enough to

see one, you could make an educated guess on their sex and age by the amount of white they sported. The females and/or younger the snowy owl the more black barring it bears. So as a male snowy owl gets older there is less black barring and becomes closer to pure white.

Just this summer Iowa was a buzz about an white 10-point buck roaming near Prairie City, Ia. People had been watching it grow over the last 5 or 6 years, though who knows if it was the same one because this area has quite a few white or partial white deer. This community won't see this deer in the future because it was poached on December 19th. It was illegal because in 1987 a law was passed making it illegal to harvest a predominantly white deer in Iowa. The hunter said he did not know that it was white when he shot the deer nor of its legal status. Although this was not a true albino deer, the odds of which is 1 in 100,000! With 450,000+ deer in Iowa the odds of a few existing is there, spotting one is another story!



Thanks For Making the Holiday Tree Jubilee, Jubilant Indeed!

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist and Friends of Rock Creek Member

On behalf of the Clinton County Conservation family, we would like to thank part of our family, the Friends of Rock Creek, for putting on this great event. This event was created by the Friends to raise money to improve Rock Creek and the Eco Tourism Center for all visitors. This year, the \$2,600 raised will go towards the Nature Gallery. We would like to thank the many area businesses and patrons for their support and donations; the Friends couldn't have done it without you!

Some special thanks go to the businesses and people that donated items for bid, they include; Scenic Design by Holgersson, Flowers on the Side, Whisk Away Bakery, the Eastern Iowa Chapter of Fishing Has No Boundaries, Inc., Touch of Country, Clinton Floral, Wilson's Floral and Gifts, Beckwith Roofing, Wide River Winery, Citizens First Bank, The Old Crow, Clinton County Conservation, Calamus Crafts and Consignment, Sherry Sharp, Brenda Jacobs, Kim Rixen, Piper Wiesner, Will Wiesner, Ruth Keiller, Jen Kasterke, Nancy Rockroth, Peg Kieffer, John Schnack with tree decorated by Jill Schnack and Diane Coleman and Jim Haring with tree decorated by Tom and Sharon Powell. We would also like to thank Eric Williams for being Santa and Gloria Friederichsen for donating sugar cookies and decorating items for the kids to enjoy.

One patron wrote in an email, "I just wanted to pass along what a wonderful time my family had at the Jubilee on Saturday. What a wonderful event! My daughters had so much fun decorating cookies and ornaments and mostly talking with Santa!!! My mother-in-law and I actually ended up purchasing a few of the trees that were up for auction! I had never been out to the Eco Tourism Center and what a great place! Just wanted to pass along what a great time we had!" For us, this is what it is all for! Thank you!



- ◆ camping and cabin rentals (winter camping \$7 & \$12)
- ◆ cross country ski, ice skate and snowshoe rental (weather permitting)
- ◆ community hall rental
- ◆ food & beverages
- ◆ hot drinks, ice & bait

cabin reservations online at:
www.mycountyparks.com

Email us:
rockcreek@clintoncounty-ia.gov



ECO TOURISM CENTER

Winter Hours

Open Thursday-Sunday
8 AM-4 PM
(closed Mon.-Wed.)

Rock Creek
Marina & Campground
563-259-1876

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

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Cross Country Skiing Fun at Rock Creek!

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 Jim Haring, Clinton
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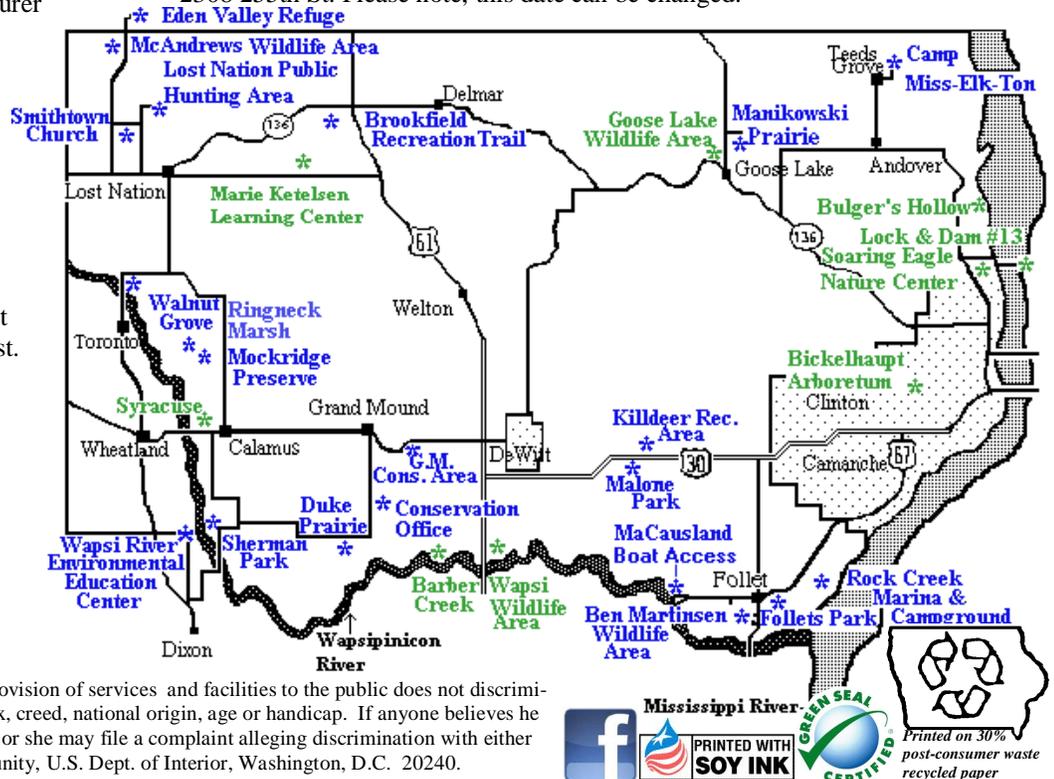
Walt Wickham, Executive Director
 Karen Brix, Administrative Assistant
 Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator
 Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretive Naturalist
 Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist
 Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist
 Chip Brown, Park Officer, West District
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 Ryan Waltz, Park Ranger, East District
 Darin Voss, Natural Resource Tech
 Robert Schaefer, Maintenance, Central

MAILING LIST

Clinton County addresses are 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.






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