



The Heron

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River Clean-ups and Iowa Water Quality

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretative Naturalist

A large part of our job is meant to foster respect and stewardship toward our natural resources. We do this by exposing the public to those resources through every means available. We have seen private individuals pick up the torch for these resources through donations of land, capital and the organization of public events. Chad Pragrackie is an outstanding example whose passions inspired others. Locals Melisa Jacobsen and KJ Rebarcak began the Lower Wapsi River Clean-up Project (LWRCP) and Brian Soenen, formally of the Iowa DNR, who along with coworkers and other entities across the state created Iowa Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition).

Citizens who experience these places and events are drawn into a sharper awareness of their environment. Some have discovered the joy of volunteer efforts and found their voice is important when it comes to policy-making on the county, state and national levels. They expect that voice to be heeded and follow closely the actions of lawmakers. In this day of social media we're all next-door neighbors and neighbors don't miss a thing.

I can jump on the internet and get details concerning Governor Branstad trimming a REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) appropriation of \$25 million to just \$16 million. This would have been funded by a tax increase approved by the public through referendum and the Legislature. What do you call it when a public servant denies the public's will? REAP helps pay for trails, parks and other outdoor recreation and water quality infrastructure. Closer to home, when I asked Representative Norlin Mommsen (House District 97) to support REAP and the IWILL bill, he seemed to have no idea what it was. The governor also cut \$11.2 million in state money for water quality and conservation programs under the Department of Agriculture.

Then there's the Des Moines Water Works lawsuit against three northwest Iowa counties over water quality scheduled to be heard by a federal trial judge which begins Aug. 8, 2016. I can pull out quotes by lawmakers like Iowa Governor Branstad "...Des Moines has declared war on rural Iowa". Or facts like his initial proposal to fund water quality by drawing nearly \$5 billion from the fund known as SAVE, which is used to help school districts upgrade their facilities and infrastructure. What if, instead of taking quality schools away from Iowa students to fund water quality infrastructure, we insist on those responsible for the problem paying to fix it as the city of Des Moines has? The water quality issue is heating up and it may have those con-



nected to the problem a bit anxious. You can be sure the perpetrators will do all they can to cover up the problem as they have for some time.

"There's something happening here, but what it is ain't exactly clear... I think it's time we stop Children, what's that sound? Everybody look, what's going down". From "For What its Worth" by Buffalo Springfield.

For the last couple years, participants of Iowa's Project AWARE have seen DNR support for this highly successful program shrink. The governor-appointed administrators of the DNR have placed restraints on the program that may mean its end. First they complicated the application forms for prospective caterers wanting to engage in feeding the volunteers. Then moneys could no longer be spent on energizing snack foods for the participants. The last two years restraints on work hours for paid DNR staff caused the event to fall from a full week of citizen action to 2 half days and 3 full days. But the volunteers fought back this year with a half day clean-up of their own sponsored in part by the Clinton and Wapello County Conservation Boards. Jefferson and Lee CCBs also supported the project with equipment and educational programs.

Why now? Why take an award winning program that's raising all sorts of public environmental awareness and cut it? Maybe it was working against the interests of those in power. Was it exposing an overwhelmingly major source of our water quality problems? Was it teaching us too well the reason water quality is slipping to dangerously low levels and giving us too sensitive an ear for what's been passing for acceptable practices when in reality they're poisoning our water?

Iowa Project AWARE began in 2003 and I have been involved with it since 2004 missing only one year due to Lyme Disease. I've used 500 vacation hours to do so and there are many more like me out there as participation totals climbed to over 200 per year. But this year the project suffered perhaps due to the trimming of support. I can state that our pre-AWARE clean-up had 14 boats (10 of which were provided by Clinton CCB) on the water on July 11th

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Learn From My Mistake: Let Nature Take Its Course

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

Is it just me or does it seem like there has been more human and wildlife intervention in the news? A hugely publicized example was of a tourist taking a Yellowstone bison calf into their vehicle because it looked cold and abandoned as it huddled near their vehicle. These visitors that were trying to help got ticketed and after many unsuccessful attempts to reunite the calf with the herd by officials, it had to be euthanized. These people have been chastised; but think, what would you do? Some cases, it is hard, but best, to let nature take its course. In other cases, it is maybe best to intervene. Every week, Clinton County Conservation (CCC) receives calls for injured wildlife and people want us to do something about it.

One example was someone wanted us to do something about the **bats** flying around (not in) their house because they were worried about disease. I called and left a message stating that a little brown bat can eat 1,000 mosquitos an hour! Mosquitos harbor more disease than bats so it is a good thing there are bats. Yes, bats can carry rabies but only a small percentage and they do not live very long because they are so small that the disease kills them fast.

Another recent example is that there is a **Canada goose** that can't fly at Lake Malone. As of now we are not doing anything because it may have an injury that will hopefully heal without our intervention or maybe it is molting and unable to fly because it is replacing its flight feathers. They will actually chose a place like Lake Malone that has clear, open, mowed areas (to be on the lookout for predators since they are vulnerable) that have food and water sources in close proximity to be able to walk to and from those areas. For now it is safe at the lake, able to eat, swim in the water and hopefully recover.

But even professionals like myself can make a mistake. Though a little embarrassing for me, I will share an instance that I should not have intervened. It was Monday, April 18th, I got a text from Brad Taylor, the resident Park Officer at Rock Creek, that there was a **barred owlet** on the ground in the campground. No big deal, we know it happens all the time. We often tell people to leave it because it may have fell out of the nest but the parents are still there protecting and feeding it.

On Tuesday, I stopped by Rock Creek and one of CCC's seasonal workers had been watching the owlet. He was concerned for its wellbeing because he hadn't seen the parent owls and it looked pathetic with its half downy and half adult feathers soaked from the cold rain we had just received. Also, the location was not ideal for a defenseless owlet to be on the ground. It was in middle of a very popular spot for camping and the forecast looked good for a big crowd that upcoming weekend. So, against my better judgement, I packed the owlet up and called The RARE



Robin caught in fishing line this spring at Rock Creek.

Group, (Raptor Advocacy, Rehabilitation and Education) the "local" rehabilitator center for raptors such as eagles, hawks, owls, etc. Since they operate with just volunteers, I did not get a call before I left Rock Creek and the concerned seasonal was not able to take it to the rehabber, like I assumed he would when I boxed him up. I had a lot of things to do that upcoming week so to save time, I decided to take it with me since my home is 45 minutes closer to Iowa City. When I arrived home, I received a call from one of the volunteers and he asked me to send a picture of the owlet. When I opened the box, there were droppings and a pellet (regurgitated bones, fur, etc., from food that was eaten). Right away, I knew that I had made a mistake. Even though the seasonal hadn't seen the parent owls, they were still caring for it on the ground. But I was still concerned because of the location. The rehabber said the best thing would be to return it to the wild so it could learn to be wild. If I took it to the clinic it could become imprinted on humans and may not be able to be rereleased into the wild.

He suggested to move the owlet to a close, but more secluded, spot. We responded that **it doesn't exist in that location. Close camping in that section...not going to happen, we depend on that income. Rope off the location...that might not be best, let's not draw attention to something that we want left alone.** Last resort, put the owlet in nest box up in a tree, next to some branches...**that was doable!**

So after a few conversations with the Brad and the rehabber, I decided that I needed to right the wrong by getting that owl back as soon as possible. Thankfully, Brad was able to convert a wood duck box into an owl box and install it that night. Unfortunately, the owl jumped out of the box a couple of days later. We tried; it was up to fate now. We did not see it on the ground after the weekend. Maybe it climbed back into the tree or was eaten by a predator. To be honest, after all the effort, I was content with letting nature take its course. Fortunately, we have seen quite a few young barred owls this year, so maybe it is one of them. In fact, a Rock Creek angler rescued one that was caught in fishing line.

In hindsight, I should have followed my instinct and left the owl alone, then called RARE for their expertise (they real-



Owlet at Rock Creek



Brad and his family installing the owl box.



Great horned owl after successful rehabilitation.

ly are top notch volunteers, very educated and helpful). It would have saved time for everyone involved.

Even though we would like to let nature take care of nature, sometimes CCC makes exceptions. On Friday, June 11th, CCC received a few calls saying there was an injured **great horned owl** on the side of US 61. So on my way to Rock Creek I picked up the owl that had an obvious concussion. I called RARE and we arranged

a time on Saturday morning for me to drop it off. A month later we were able to release it back into the wild! I believe it is important to rescue these predators as they have a lot

of human-made obstacles to overcome and are one of the few large predators that Iowa has left to maintain healthy ecosystem by regulating populations of opossums, skunks, rabbits, mice and insects. And as the food chain goes, there are far less predators than prey species.



So my take-away lesson is this; consider letting nature take its course when you see wildlife that “needs help”, it likely does not need help at all. If you are unsure, feel free to call CCC for advice but be prepared for us to say, “let nature take its course.”

Summer Dining, a New Form of Weed Control

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

In August, my family will celebrate our one-year anniversary in our new home. Last year we purchased a 100-year old house on roughly two acres of land. What was once a farmstead is now our home with a beautiful park-like yard filled with a variety of trees and flowers. With our “park” comes many responsibilities. Mowing, planting and weeding have become my life at our new home. I have never been one to spray for weeds or to obsess over every weed that sprouts up between my purple coneflowers or tomato plants, but in order to keep our “park” looking nice and neat, this work must be done! Gardening has always been a passion of mine. Prior to living in this new home I never had the space, or the growing season, in northern Wisconsin, to produce a vegetable garden or to plant my annuals of choice, so I am determined to be successful with our new acreage.

One weed that has been a royal nuisance this summer for me and many others is what I’ve recently discovered to be Purslane. This dark green-leafed plant with a waxy appearance and reddish stem grows along the surface of the ground. It has a very shallow root system and is easily pulled from its growing space...if you can keep up! I have never noticed this plant before, and yet it grows EVERYWHERE! In the cracks of your sidewalks, in the shade of your Black-eyed Susans and Iris as well as in your garden

wrapped around your acorn squash. I have pulled more purslane than I care to admit and I decided there had to be a better way to control this weed.

So I did my research, and was pleasantly surprised to find out that purslane is an edible weed! It is high in omega-3 content making it well worth hunting for and adding to your dinner plate. It has a crispy texture and peppery taste and adds a nice crunch to salads. It is also used as a thickening agent for soups and stews. I have found out that you can bread it and fry it as well as add it to any fresh salad. I’ve decided that summer dining may be my new favorite way of weed control! One of my favorite recipes I have found has turned out to be quite easy and delicious! Most of the ingredients I grow in my garden and the purslane is now growing freely in my yard. If you find yourself fighting this weed, try eating it instead...enjoy!

Mexican Purslane Stuffing

1 large bunch of purslane (large handful)

1 tbsp. Vegetable oil

1 small onion, finely chopped

1 medium-size ripe tomato, diced

1 jalapeno chile, finely chopped

2-3 tsp. Soy sauce

1 egg beaten

1. Steam or blanch the purslane until tender-crisp (3-5 min.). Drain thoroughly, transfer to a plate covered with paper towels and blot dry.
2. In a large pan, sauté garlic and onion in vegetable oil until soft. Add tomato and chile, and sauté until the mixture becomes sauce-like. Season with soy sauce. Sauté until the mixture is warm and the flavors blend well.
3. When ready to serve, add the beaten egg to the warm mixture in the pan and mix gently. The egg will bind the mixture loosely but should not harden into scrambled eggs.
4. Serve in warm pitas, tortillas or by itself.

For recipes, www.prairielandcsa.org/recipes/purslane.html



Events Calendar - Free Family Fun in the Outdoors!

August Events

4th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join us for a presentation geared for children ages 3-5 with their guardians and siblings. All presentations feature a book and hands-on activities.

4th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876 to reserve your free seats.

5th ~ Critter Catching ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We will have nets to use to catch frogs, fish and insects in the water just outside of the Eco Center. Also, adults can check out pond nets for kids anytime the Center is open!



5th ~ Creek Stomp ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Join in on a creek exploration! Spend time collecting critters out of Bear Creek. Buckets and nets will be provided.

6th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Come tour the varied exhibits of this gem of a nature center. Native American, early settlement and natural artifacts fill the center and the live animal exhibits are always a hit with the youth. We're hoping volunteers hosts step forward.

6th ~ Live Animal Encounters ~ 1 PM & 3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come into the Eco Tourism's Nature Gallery to touch, hold and have photo ops with the live animals. Children must be accompanied by an adult.



6th ~ Millin' Around ~ 1-5 PM ~ Sawmill Museum & Rock Creek ~ From July 9th to August 27th, enjoy a day of Millin' Around for free, thanks to a sponsorship from the Curtis-Armstrong Foundation. Every Saturday, those who pre-register will tour three Gateway area attractions: Fulton's Dutch Windmill; Clinton's Sawmill Museum; and the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center with an Eco Cruise on the river. To register, visit www.thesawmillmuseum.org/millingaround or call the Sawmill at 563-242-0343 for assistance in registering. All group sizes are welcome.

6th ~ Saturday Night At the Movies ~ Dusk ~ Eden Valley ~ The campground at Eden Valley will show family movies on the big screen for campers/park visitors.

7th ~ Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM ~ Join us at the Eco Tourism Center for a craft activity inspired by nature.

8th ~ Monday Morning Bird Club, Eco Cruise ~ 9 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Something new for bird enthusiasts! Join us for early morning excursions onto the Mississippi, throughout the summer, with a different mission. The cruises will idle through the backwaters looking for and recording bird species in the Rock Creek area. Call 563-259-1876.



11th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

11th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

12th - 14th ~ Back-to-School Blues ~ Rock Creek

♦ **Friday ~ Half Price**

Canoes ~ 3-5 PM ~ Get

your family together and spend some quality time on the water. Stop in the camp store and check out a canoe or kayak to use in the backwaters.

♦ **Friday ~ Critter Catching ~ 6 PM** ~ We will have nets to use to catch frogs, fish and insects in the water just outside of the Eco Center.

♦ **Saturday ~ Live Animal Encounters ~ 1 PM & 3 PM** ~ Come into the Eco Tourism's Nature Gallery to touch, hold and have photo ops with the live animals. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

♦ **Saturday ~ Millin' Around ~ 1-5 PM ~ Sawmill Museum & Rock Creek** ~ www.thesawmillmuseum.org/millingaround or call the Sawmill at 563-242-0343.

♦ **Sunday ~ Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM** ~ Join us at the Eco Center for a craft activity inspired by nature.

12th ~ Beginning Archery ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ We will set up our archery targets in the campground and give kids and their parents a chance to try their hand with a bow.

13th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

15th ~ Mussel Beach Cruise ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Blue Heron will take participants out to learn about and wade and dunk for the 15 species of freshwater mussels that live there. Call 563-259-1876 for reservations.



17th ~ Nature Games ~ 11:15 AM & 1 PM ~ Camanche Library ~ Come to the library to play games with an animal twist! There will be live animals and artifacts to help illustrate the way nature works! Craft and snack!

18th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

18th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

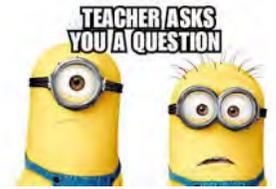
18th ~ Music & Moonlight Cruise ~ 8:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Local talent plays their favorite tunes as we drift along quietly on the gentle current of the Mississippi River. Seats fill fast, so call 563-259-1876.

19th ~ Critter Catching ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We will have nets to use to catch frogs, fish and insects in the water just outside of the Eco Center.

19th ~ Saturday Night At the Movies ~ Dusk ~ Eden Valley ~ The campground at Eden Valley will show family movies on the big screen for campers/park visitors.

20th - 21st ~ Lower Wapsi River Clean-up ~ Sherman Park ~ A canoe-based cleanup covering

Toronto to McCausland. Come for one or both days. Base-camp is Sherman Park. Primitive camping is free to participants. T-shirts and catered meals available. For more information go to www.lwrcp.org or email coordinator@lwrcp.org. Contact Melisa Jacobsen at 563-349-0811 with any questions.



20th ~ Eighth Annual Rock Creek Catfish Classic ~ 7 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is hosting this tournament to raise funds for the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center displays. Costs are \$50/boat and \$10 for the Big Fish Pot. Prize money is determined by the number of entries with a minimum 70% payout guaranteed to the top 3 boats. Check-in will begin at 6 AM and weigh-in at 1 PM sharp. A limit of 10 channel cats, at a 12" minimum length, will be weighed per entry. Sign up and rules at www.mycountyparks.com/County/Clinton/Events.



20th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

20th ~ Millin' Around ~ 1-5 PM ~ Sawmill Museum & Rock Creek ~ www.thesawmillmuseum.org/millingaround or call the Sawmill at 563-242-0343.

20th ~ Live Animal Encounters ~ 1 PM & 3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Children must be accompanied by an adult.

20th ~ Campfire Jam ~ 9 PM ~ Sherman Park ~ 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 11 PM. This is a free event although donations to support the Lower Wapipinicon River Clean-up are welcomed.



21st ~ Bonnie's Scenic Fishing Tournament ~ 6 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Contact Paul Seiler at 563-219-1538.

21st ~ Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM ~ Join us at the Eco Tourism Center for a craft activity inspired by nature.

22nd ~ Monday Morning Bird Club, Eco Cruise ~ 9 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Something new for bird enthusiasts!

23rd ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We would love for you to be a part of Team Rock Creek!

25th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

25th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876 to reserve your free seats.

26th ~ Critter Catching ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We will have nets to use to catch frogs, fish and insects in the water just outside of the Eco Center.

27th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

27th ~ Millin' Around ~ 1-5 PM ~ Sawmill Museum & Rock Creek ~ www.thesawmillmuseum.org/millingaround or call the Sawmill at 563-242-0343. Season finale!

27th ~ Live Animal Encounters ~ 1 PM & 3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Children must be accompanied by an adult.

27th ~ Jens-Wendt Observatory Open House ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park ~ Starts at dusk (must be clear skies) in Sherman Park, park in the north parking lot. View the skies through a 20-inch telescope. Courtesy of the Quad City Astronomical Society, www.qcas.org.



28th ~ Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM ~ Join us at the Eco Tourism Center for a craft activity inspired by nature.

30th ~ Tunes in Town ~ 6-8 PM ~ Lincoln Park, Dewitt ~ At the band shelter there will be a live music concert. There is also a food vendor and the special guest is Clinton County Conservation naturalist Jessica Steines. She will bring a couple live animals and for people to see, touch and hold!

September Events

1st ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

2nd ~ Campfire Jam ~ 9 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ 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 10:30 PM. This is a free event although donations to support Eden Valley Nature Center renovations are welcomed.

3rd ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

3rd ~ Live Animal Encounters ~ 10 AM & 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Children must be accompanied by an adult.

3rd ~ Garage Sales ~ 8 AM-Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ It's time to clean out the closets. All registered campers are invited to have a campsite garage sale. Please stop in the camp store to register your sale.

4th ~ Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM ~ Join us at the Eco Tourism Center for a craft activity inspired by nature.

8th ~ Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

8th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

10th ~ 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, Harvester Bass, Wild Turkey Federation, Clinton Ikes, Clinton County Sportsman's, 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.



10th ~ Half Price Canoes ~ 9-11 AM ~ Rock Creek

10th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

15th ~ Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

15th ~ Music and Moonlight Cruise ~ 7:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Local talent plays their favorite tunes as we drift along quietly on the gentle current of the Mississippi. The cruise is free and seats fill fast. Call 563-259-1876.

17th ~ Half Price Canoes ~ 9-11 AM ~ Rock Creek

17th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

17th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This "coffee house" style music event offers local talents and guests an opportunity to gather together for music in a casual setting. Donations to support the center are welcomed.

- 22nd ~ **Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**
- 24th ~ **Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley**
- 24th ~ **Half Price Canoes ~ 9-11 AM ~ Rock Creek**
- 26th ~ **Public Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park ~ View skies through a 20-inch telescope, if the skies are clear, www.qcas.org.**
- 27th ~ **Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**
- 29th ~ **Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**

October Events

- ◆ **September 30th - October 2nd ~ Halloween Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ Adults must accompany Children.**
- ◆ **Friday ~ Decorate Your Campsite ~** We will be awarding prizes to the most spook-tacularly decorated campsite. Judging will be on Saturday during hayrides.
- ◆ **Saturday ~ Pumpkin Carving ~ 10:30 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, participants are encouraged to bring their own.
- ◆ **Saturday ~ DIY Household Halloween Crafts ~ 12:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~** There are many ghoulish crafts to be done with household items! Make a haunted Halloween luminary to light for the trick-or-treaters or find your creative side with other Halloween items! All materials will be provided!
- ◆ **Sat., ~ Face Painting & Balloon Animals ~ 1:30 PM**
- ◆ **Saturday ~ The Witch's Brew ~ 3 PM ~** See this live animal presentation that makes up the witch's brew.
- ◆ **Saturday ~ Trick or Treat! ~ 5-6 PM ~** We invite our camping children to get dressed in their Halloween best to trick or treat throughout the campground. We ask campers to please pass out candy to our little ghouls and goblins.
- ◆ **Saturday ~ Lighted Blue Heron Rides ~ 6 PM**
- ◆ **Saturday ~ Lighted Hayrack Ride ~ 6 PM ~** Join us aboard a wagon for a lighted ride around the park to view the decorated campsites.
- ◆ **Sunday ~ Eco Center Fun ~ 9 AM ~** Join us at the Eco Tourism Center for a nature inspired craft.



- 1st ~ **Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley**
- 6th ~ **Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek**
- 6th ~ **Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek**
- 6th ~ **Music in the Loft ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~** Local talents play a wide variety of music. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along for this "coffee house" style jam. This is a free event although donations to support the center are welcomed.
- 7th ~ **Bluegrass & Old Time Gathering Paddle Trip ~ Noon-4 PM ~ Eden Valley Refuge, Baldwin, Iowa ~** Maquoketa River/Canton Access to Millerton Access (5.6 miles) .We'll meet at Eden Valley Refuge Nature Center at 11:45 register and car pool to the Access. We'll take a

stretch at Buzzard Ridge Wildlife Area and some will hike to the overlook and back. Soon, the park will be filling with music around many campfires as the Bluegrass & Old Time Gathering begins. **You must register for the paddling event by calling 563-259-1876 by noon, Sept. 30th.**

7th - 8th ~ **Thirty-fourth Annual Bluegrass & Old-time Music Gathering ~ (Sat) Noon-9 PM ~ Eden Valley ~** October 7th, we will have a big jam around the campfire all evening and then more on Saturday, the 8th. Once you attend, you will never want to miss it again! Call Mary McAndrew 563-343-7002 for more information. FREE.

8th ~ **Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley**

8th ~ **Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~** Pheasants Forever's Clinton County Chapter is holding its annual fundraiser. The group provides local wildlife habitat. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 for tickets.

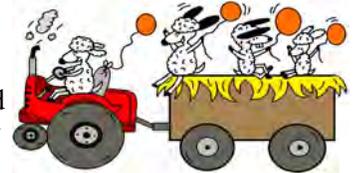
13th ~ **Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek**

15th ~ **Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~** Season finale! We will reopen in April 2017.

15th ~ **Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~** This "coffee house" style music event offers local talents and guests an opportunity to gather together for music in a casual setting. The entire family is welcome. This is a free event. Donations to support the center are welcomed.

20th ~ **Sunset Eco Cruises ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~** Call 563-259-1876 to reserve your free seats. Season finale!

22nd ~ **Fall Fest ~ 4 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~** Bring the whole family out for an evening of autumn fun. We'll be carving jack-o-lanterns, roasting hot dogs and marshmallows to the tunes of John Denver and others, leading spooky-fun night hikes and pulling a hay rack through Eagle Point Park spotting whatever lurks in the darkness. And it's all free of charge. A jar for donations will be set out.



25th ~ **Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**

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.

November Sneak Peek

3rd ~ **Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek**

14th ~ **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.

5th ~ **Third Annual Clinton County Conservation Foundation Banquet ~ Doors open at 5 PM, Dinner to follow ~ Rock Creek ~** Come enjoy a night at the beautiful Eco Center to raise money to benefit it! There will be plenty of action with silent bids, auction and raffles, plus, a smoked Prime Rib Dinner. Call the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at 563-259-1876 for ticket information.

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powered by 31 volunteers. Emma, my partner for the day, and I tied 2 canoes together to increase our capacity and filled the boats bringing them down to where they threatened to sink. Each canoe can safely carry 705 lbs. so together we had approximately 1,410 lbs. Many of the other boats did as well or better which should bring the total near 15,260 lbs. Still more refuse lined the river banks than could be hauled in due to a greatly reduced number of boats and a very tight schedule. You can expect the actual totals for both clean-ups to appear on our Facebook page once they are released.



Patience is a Virtue

by Darin Voss, Natural Resource Technician

When I first moved to this area in 2005, I worked as the Roadside Vegetation Technician for the county. I spent a lot of time in the summer months spraying ditches of the secondary roads. Traveling 5 mph in search of noxious weeds may have gotten a little monotonous at times, but it did give me the opportunity to really see what was going on throughout the county in terms of habitat and wildlife populations. During the late summer months, especially on heavy dew mornings, many animals would go to the roads to dry off or get grit. This made for great wildlife viewing throughout the county. The species I will focus my attention on is the ring-necked pheasant.

As an avid pheasant hunter I was interested in the local pheasant population and became a member of the Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Shortly after joining, I became the Habitat Chair which only elevated my interest in the pheasant numbers. The first couple of years it was very common to see several broods of pheasants on any given morning during those late summer months of spraying. I also saw good numbers on county wildlife areas.

Fast-forward to 2010, as I made a career change from Roadside Vegetation Technician to Natural Resource Technician with the county conservation, the pheasant population had also gone through a change and not for the better. With five consecutive winters of above average snowfall and extremely wet nesting seasons between 2007 and 2011, the pheasant populations were decimated. Not to mention the severe ice storm in 2007 that caused a high mortality rate. It was somewhat of a "perfect storm" so to speak.

It was apparent that populations had decreased in drastic fashion. The 2010 August roadside survey conducted by the Iowa DNR showed the lowest count since the survey began in 1962. The over all harvest number was also at an all time low. That same year there were a quarter million roosters harvested compared to just over a million in 2003.

On a personal level I did not have to look at the roadside survey results or harvest numbers to know the pheasant numbers in this area were way down. With my new position, I spent a lot of my time on our wildlife areas throughout the seasons. During my first couple of years it was rare to hear a rooster cackle in the spring, see hens with broods in the early summer or watch dogs flush pheasants in fall.

It was at this same time that I would receive phone calls

Science tells us the average person can survive for three minutes without air, three days without water and three weeks without food. Why then is it we're more concerned about our next meal than quality water? The truth is out there and we may soon see it. Until then the enemies of public safety, especially in the case of water quality, can worry that there is a growing population of educated and informed citizens who will continue to work towards beautifying our rivers and streams, fight for clean, clear waterways and speak their minds to their representatives whose job it is to listen and vote appropriately, representing not their own, but the public majority's wishes.



and emails from land-owners concerned with what happened to all the pheasants and what they could do about it. I would tell them to concentrate on providing good habitat and hope mother nature would cooperate. If you provide the correct habitat, eventually numbers will rebound when weather conditions become more favorable. It is easy to get frustrated when results don't appear over night. The key is to have patience and keep the end goal in mind. Another thing to remember is that there are many other beneficiaries to improved habitat.

I will admit that it was pretty frustrating to have good habitat but still very few pheasants. It is always easier for me to preach patience than it is for me to adhere to my own advice. However, I am finally starting to see the dividends pay off. I started to see a little turn around in 2014 beginning with spring burning. There was one burn in particular where we had seven hens and two roosters flush towards the end of the burn. It was really encouraging to see some hens had made it through the winter. By the fall of 2015, it was noticeable that local pheasant population was definitely on the rise in Clinton County. I made a comment to my hunting buddy last fall that if we have another mild winter and good nesting season that we could see some really good numbers in 2016.

This spring we flushed pheasants on almost every burn we conducted, many of these were hens. I was also hearing roosters cackle all over as I was prepping and planting food plots during the early spring. Now all we needed was a good nesting season. From what I have been seeing so far, I would say that we have had successful nesting on our areas. Virtually every time I have been on our areas throughout the last month and a half I have seen at least one brood, and as many as three, on one area in a given day. It has been to the point where I have had to be really careful not to run any over as I travel along our trails. I have honestly not seen anything close to these numbers since prior to 2007. I believe that the major contributing factor is the couple of mild winters and good nesting seasons in a row.

It has been very exciting and rewarding to see that with continued habitat improvements, or at the very least maintenance and a little cooperation from mother nature, populations can rebound with time and patience.

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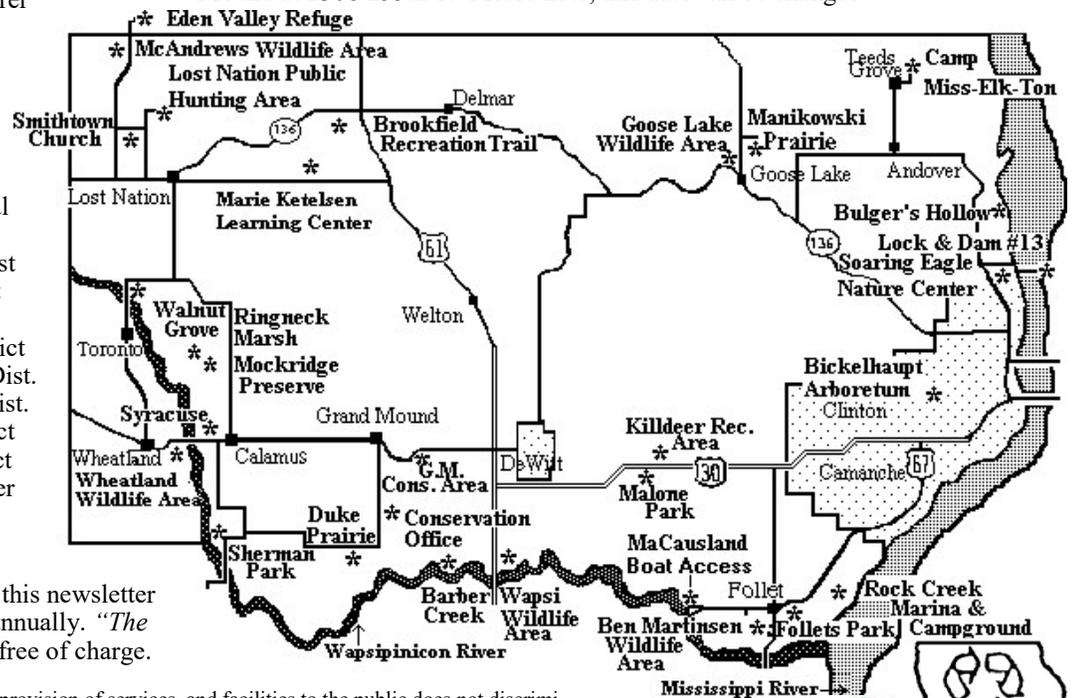
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BOARD MEETINGS

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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