Clinton County Conservation

The Heron

Quarterly Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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Clinton County Conservation Awarded 2010 Iowa's Most Outstanding Environmental Education Program

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

The Iowa Association of Naturalists (IAN) and the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition (ICEC) have awarded the Clinton County Conservation Board this prestigious award in the large program division for the fourth time in its nearly 40-year history. Conservation Education Coordinator, Mark Roberts nominated the Board for its continuing commitment to excellence. A synopsis of the nomination follows.

The Clinton County Conservation Board (CCCB) has been and continues to be a pioneer and a leader in interpretation in the State of Iowa. The CCCB started the third County Conservation Board Environmental Education Program in Iowa in 1973.

Tradition: The CCCB can boast 4 of the Iowa Association of Naturalists founders. Bob Bryant, then Director of the CCCB, now retired Director/Naturalist at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, and E. Lee Lee, Larry Dolphin and Sharon Kaufman, all naturalists in the early years of environmental education (EE) in this state. The CCCB helped launch their careers in the fledgling field of nature interpretation and they continue to influence the profession today.

Staff: The CCCB has sustained a high level of commitment and has shown a steady increase over the past 30 years. Today the Board employs 3 full-time interpreters plus internship program.

Professional Involvement: The CCCB continues their commitment to environmental education on a statewide basis by funding its employees' attendance to professional workshops and encouraging participation on committees. Serving professional organizations help CCCB staff grow within the profession and give the CCCB an avenue to influence interpretation outside their area.

Eden Valley Nature Center: The CCCB is involved in the operation of three nature centers. They own and operate Eden Valley Nature Center, a day-use type interpretive center located in Eden Valley Refuge. Located in the bluff-lined Bear Creek Valley, the center plays hosts to caving, IOWATER studies, rock climbing, hiking and other high adventure experiences.

Rock Creek Marina and Campground: Situated on the Mississippi River, this site has hosted teacher workshops, conservation board training and many field trips for local schools and interpretive programs for the public. The self-guided interpretive trail helps visitors understand floodplain ecology. We have 24 canoes that we use to teach canoe skills and to take floats on the Mississippi Backwaters and the Wapsipinicon River. We also take people onto the channel via pontoon for field trips teaching about the Mississippi as a recreational, commercial, and natural resource.

Blue Heron Eco Cruises: This program started in Fall 2002 and has only become more popular over time. In the past, groups that came on Mississippi River field trips at Rock Creek were limited to the backwaters in canoes, or very small groups in flat-bottom boats. The CCCB purchased a 30-passenger pontoon boat that serves as a vehicle to get groups onto the main channel as well as backwaters to get a much more complete picture of the river ecosystem as it functions today. Commercial navigation and industrial uses along the river contrast with wildlife and riparian forest in the Mississippi. We teach people about the many facets of our lives the big river touches and how people try to balance all the purposes the river must satisfy. We take groups as well as have weekly public cruises out of the marina.

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center ground breaking took place in January on this state-of-the-art center that will educate tourists as well as provide an excellent place for schools, clubs and retreats to explore our great Mississippi River heritage.

The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center (8,400 sq. ft.) will have nature and environmental exhibits that include:

- 10,000 gallon aquarium with Mississippi River fish
- Live reptiles and amphibians
- Crawl through live turtle exhibit
- Freshwater mussels
- Local river history
- Collection of State Record fish replicas
- State Record white-tailed deer replica
- Conservation education classroom and theater
- Banquet facility
- Clinton County Tourism Information Center
- Camp store and café

The Blue Heron Eco Cruise Pontoon

Soaring Eagles Nature Center: The CCCB also has recently entered into a unique partnership with a local, private nature center, Soaring Eagles Nature Center in Clinton. Eagle Point Nature Society manages the grounds and buildings and the Clinton CCB conducts the EE programs, creates displays and cares for the collections. The Center includes 3 miles of trails, an amphitheater, Clinton County's last one-room schoolhouse and remodeled 1938 barn known as the Nature Barn.

The Nature Barn

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center: The CCCB also co-manages with Scott CCB the Wapsi Center, a 225-acre preserve dedicated exclusively to interpretation of our natural resources. The cooperative effort stretches staff time, imaginative energy and limited funding. The Center features the *"Eagle View Eco Center", Osprey Aquatics Lab, Menke Astronomical Observatory*, two classrooms and 6 different habitat types (upland, lowland and coniferous forests, riparian wetlands, ponds, prairie, and blufflands). The Wapsi Center is currently making the transition to a regional residential facility, serving all of east-central Iowa and west central Illinois, with the first of two dormitories completed. This concept is unique among CCBs in Iowa. Another new asset is the Teams Course. Eleven permanent elements give groups an opportunity to learn how to work better together to solve problems. The elements boost self confidence and can be adapted to illustrate conservation concepts.

Prairies for Schools: *Recently named one of Pheasants Forever's top 25 habitat programs of all-time!* This program is another innovative, cross-organizational effort in which the CCCB is involved. The program restores diverse tallgrass prairies on school grounds and at nature centers throughout the county. It is a cooperative effort between the CCCB, the local chapter of Pheasants Forever and our schools. The schools provide the ground, Pheasants Forever provides money for seed and the CCCB provides all labor and equipment for establishment. To date, 21 such areas have been planted, 18 in schoolyards ranging from 1/4 to 3 acres and 3 at nature centers, the largest being 6 acres in size. The CCCB conducts a nighttime prairie burns at one of the schools and over 350 people attended.

Trumpeter Swan Restoration: The CCCB is the driving force for the Trumpeter Swan Restoration in eastern Iowa. To date the six adult pairs the Board has placed have produced over 150 young adults back into the wild. Trumpeter swan education and the "Trumpeting the Cause for Wetlands" theme plays a big part in many field trips.

Educational Publications:
The Heron, formerly Prairie Whispers, our quarterly newsletter designed for the public. All departments within the CCCB contribute as well as an extensive schedule of public activities.

In the Field is our teachers' newsletter that comes out each semester. It gives teachers ideas for field trips, in-class visits and EE activities they can do on their own. It also touts the "Teacher of the Semester" award winner. The $50 award recognizes great local teachers that emphasize EE.

The Guide to Interpretive Services in Clinton County is a 24-page booklet that outlines 100 different activities that the CCCB can lead for students. It also is cross referenced with educational standards for Iowa so teachers and their administrators can know their time will be focused and well spent.

Alliances: The entire program is on a tremendous growth curve and the CCCB is responding to this increasing demand with a larger commitment to the EE program each year. They also have consistently reached out to partner with other private and public conservation agencies to help further the effort of conservation and education. Our alliance with Scott County Conservation Board to acquire, develop and operate the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center is a cornerstone of our program. The partnership with the Soaring Eagle Nature Society is unique in the state. The effort not only expanded the CCCB's capabilities in the city of Clinton, but also saved one of Iowa's last private nature centers.

The Board consistently reaches out to its colleagues to band together for environmental education. In the past two years the CCCB has co-sponsored interpretive events with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Army Corps of Engineers, Clinton Community College, Bickelhaupt Arboretum, Scott County Conservation Board, Friends of the Wapsi Center, St. Ambrose University, Pheasants Forever, Clinton Izaak Walton League, Living Lands and Waters, Iowa State Extension, the Clinton Area Solid Waste Agency and a plethora of other groups.

Diversity: The strength of the CCCB EE program lies not in its size or budget. It is the steady, continual support towards an ideal. The CCCB is not just about environmental education, as it manages 23 areas totaling over 8,000 acres. These sites include campgrounds, hunting areas, preserves, historic sites, parks and county roadsides. Conservation education is just a piece of this management matrix, yet support for EE seeps into everything the CCCB does. It involves not only the EE staff, but park rangers, natural resource personnel and board members, who are called on as interpreters on a regular basis.

Conclusion: This top to bottom and side to side involvement sets the CCCB apart from many contemporary programs in Iowa. Thank you to IAN and ICEC for recognizing this excellence in education programming the CCCB demonstrates.

Jim Haring Awarded IAN/ICEC 2010 ~ Outstanding Volunteer

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

In January, Clinton County Conservation Board member and life-long conservationist, Jim Haring was awarded Iowa's 2010 Outstanding Volunteer in Environmental Education. Congratulations Jim! A synopsis of the nomination follows:

Jim has been a lifelong friend of conservation on a local, state and national level for his entire adult life. His father, Ralph, was a charter member of the Clinton Chapter of the Izaak Walton League and served as a role model for a lifetime of service. Jim Haring, 75, has been involved in river clean-up projects and river education since he was a boy.

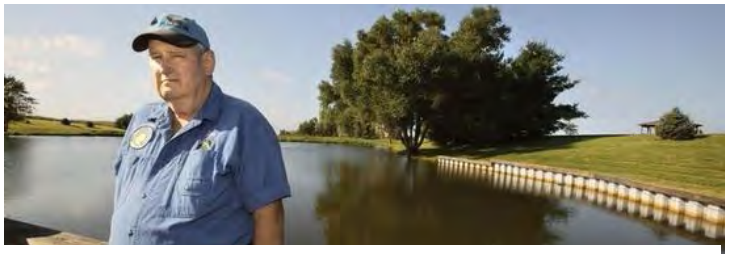
Jim has many things that would make him a fine candidate for this award. I will focus on his more recent achievements.

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. The Clinton County Conservation Foundation, with Jim Haring as its President, is getting ready to break ground on the $2 million project in Spring 2011. It is the culmination of an effort that started out as a dream over 10 years ago. Jim has spearheaded local fundraising efforts for the new education center and has served on the Architectural Committee where his knowledge as retired Chief of Maintenance for the Clinton School District has been invaluable to the project.

Clinton 3rd Grade Trees Forever Program. Jim visits many of the 3rd grade classes in Clinton annually talking to the kids about the importance of trees and giving each child a 15-inch seedling to take home and plant through Trees Forever. There at 15 sections of 3rd graders in Clinton with approximately 330 students. He also facilitates the donation of 100-200 trees to the Clinton CCB for planting in wildlife areas throughout the county and has helped coordinate the Clinton County "Branching Out" Program with Trees Forever, Alliant Energy and the CCCB.

Clinton County EnviroKids. Jim has been on board since the beginning of this award-winning summer program series. This ambitious collaboration was conceived and organized by various agencies and private businesses in Clinton County. Specifically, Bemis Clysar Inc., Clinton County Area Solid Waste Agency, and Lyondell Plastics Co. (Equistar). They enlisted the assistance of the Bickelhaupt Arboretum, a private facility, Izaak Walton League, a non-profit group, Soaring Eagle Nature Society, a private non-profit nature center and the Clinton County Conservation Board and Iowa State University Clinton County Extension, both government agencies. The program is about enhancing environmental education to area students ages 3rd-5th grades. This program is being sponsored by area agencies and industries whose main interest is the environment. Participating students can experience everything from a tour of a local manufacturing facility to a pontoon boat ride on the Mississippi River. This program showcases all aspects of the environment. Kids meet twice a month, June thru September at various locations. The program has a spin-off program in Scott County that started two years ago.

Clinton County Youth Outdoor Skills Day. This free annual event is for kids ages 11-18, and their families, that want a fun way to spend the day and a chance for a child to gain experience with a variety of outdoor skills. Kids learn about outdoor skills at various stations by various conservation organizations. All stations involve hands-on activities designed to give kids practical experience while keeping safety at the forefront.



Jim Haring at Ike's Haven, the Clinton Chapter's Headquarters. Designed and built (with lots of volunteer help) by Jim himself.

Stations

Pheasants Forever	*Shotguns*
Harvester Bass Club	*Fishing*
Whitetails Unlimited	*Muzzeloaders*
Wild Turkey Federation	*Turkey Hunting*
Clinton County Conservation	*Rifles*
Lyons Middle School	*Archery*
Izaak Walton League	*Lunch and Site Prep*

Parents and younger siblings are encouraged to attend with students. They are be invited to eat lunch free of charge along with participants. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Hunter's Safety Education Courses at the Ike's. Jim has been a leader in coordinating and teaching the course held typically twice a year for up to 50 participants per class, at the Clinton Izaak Walton League. The course features hands-on stations at shotgun, muzzleloader, rifle, archery and safety trail. The course is part of the Iowa DNR's Hunter Safety Education Program and the Clinton Ikes' event is recognized as one of the finest in Iowa.

Clinton County Conservation's Education Program. Jim has been a leader within the Conservation Board to increase the importance and effectiveness of the education program. During his 12 years on the Board, the education program has grown from 1 3/4 to 3 full-time naturalists plus internship opportunities for college students. The Eco Tourism Center will be the fourth nature center the CCCB is involved in. The Board's nature center at Eden Valley Refuge and partnerships with the Soaring Eagle Nature Society at Clinton's Nature Barn and with Scott County at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center give the program a tremendous variety of facilities, equipment, funds and people to work with to fulfill our goals.

Bestowing this award for what amounts to a Lifetime Achievement Award for Environmental Education Volunteerism to Jim Haring is the crown jewel to a 75-year journey in conservation. Jim has more experience in conservation than 99% of conservation professionals in Iowa yet has never accepted even one cent for his efforts to further conservations causes. From monitoring a nuclear power plant's environmental impacts to teaching kids to catch bluegills, Jim has done it all.

Jim would be the first to point out that he has not worked in a vacuum, that countless others have been part of these accomplishments over the years. That often he has not been the General, but rather a soldier in the battles of conservation. That humbleness is one of the things that endears Jim to people who know him. That and the fact that Jim, above all, is a person to do the work, not just talk about it.

Feral

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretative Naturalist

My epiphany for this article was rather late in coming but arrived in three highly visual waves. The first came as a co-worker and I passed the US Post Office in DeWitt. We noticed what looked like a very large cat on the hood of a parked car. Upon closer examination one cat turned out to be two apparently inseparable. Probably funny to everyone except the owner of the car. The next connecting wave came early another morning. As I scanned my bird feeders for entertainment, I saw a small songbird snatched from a feeder by a sharp-shinned hawk (above). I was in awe of the hawk's speed and accuracy in taking its prey while leaving the hanging feeder motionless. Some might have felt remorse for the captured bird, but I'm happy to feed nearly any kind of bird at my feeding station. This may seem unrelated to the other waves at first but it becomes an important connection. Lastly, driving to work I passed a pair of large dogs apparently hunting in the snow-filled ditch. This triggered the epiphany! My article would cover feral animals and their impact on the environment.

The term feral comes from the Latin *fera*, which means "wild beast". But that only touches on what is meant here and we must infer to the modern definition "escaped from domestication and returned, partly or wholly, to a wild state". The term should not be used to describe the naturalization of a wild (i.e. non-domesticated) species. Some might think "Well so what? It's just another animal in the wild", but the presence of feral animals has a profound effect and can disrupt ecosystems contributing to endangerment and the extinction of native species.

Certain familiar animals go feral easily, while others are much less inclined to wander and usually fail if they are away from their domestic origins, due mainly to poor survival skills. You see they don't all make it; many die from lack of shelter, disease, parasites, malnutrition and predation. Common examples of animals with feral populations are goats, cats and pigs, but the list goes on and on. House cats return readily to a feral state if they have not been socialized in their youth. But, because of their dependency on us, domestic animals (such as cats and dogs) cannot properly fend for themselves for any significant length of time. So, for example, the average life span of a feral cat that survives beyond kitten-hood (most don't) is about two years for independent cats and five years for cats in a colony. In contrast, a cat that lives indoors under proper human care has a life expectancy of 15–22 years.

The degree to which animals become feral will vary as some species will detach readily from humans but do not stray far or spread, while others will disappear into the landscape looking for new territory and display active invasiveness. The final hurdle to success is persistence or longevity. This depends on their ability to establish themselves and reproduce reliably in the new environment.

Dogs can revert to wildness, becoming predators as effective as coyotes often running in packs like wolves. The dingo, of Australia, is the thought to be the world's oldest feral dog population with a history of at least 3,500 years. Successful feral animals are often considered to be pests in both rural and urban areas. Unlike coyotes or wolves, feral dogs have little or no fear of humans, are far more likely to challenge humans for territory and have been known to attack the young of large animals, including humans. Due to their instincts to kill not only for food, but sport, cats have devastating effects on bird, reptile, amphibian and mammal populations.

This effect is not limited to their prey, but extends up the food chain through competition with native animals like that sharp-shinned hawk. Cats multiply quickly making it difficult to control their populations. Animal shelters attempt to adopt out feral cats, especially kittens, but often are overwhelmed with sheer numbers and euthanasia is often necessary. In rural areas, excessive numbers of feral cats are often shot. In some urban areas the "Trap-Neuter-Return" method has been used as an alternate means of managing the feral cat population. The idea is thought to be more humane but only if we ignore the damage the released animals do to native species, even in large cities. Many other types of animals readily go feral including goats (one of the longest domestications), the dromedary camel (domesticated for over 3,000 yrs.), cattle (domesticated since the Neolithic era 1,150 yrs.), horses and donkeys (domesticated for about 7,000 yrs.). The hog has established feral populations worldwide, now including Iowa. Rock Pigeons, formerly kept for their meat or as racing animals, have established feral populations whitewashing sidewalks in cities the world over. Parrots, outside of their native habitats, are present in various parts of the world and adapting well to suburban environments.

Genetic pollution is another case against feral animals. Domestic breeds sometimes can produce fertile hybrids with native wild animals. This can threaten species with extinction. For example colonies of hybrid honeybees have escaped into the wild from managed apiaries allowing them to breed with native bees changing the offspring which will replace them. This may lead them to become more docile or more aggressive as with Africanized (killer) bees.

Cat Eating Bird by Pablo Picasso

Ecological impacts, as I have said, are realized through predation, spread of disease, competition with indigenous species and by hybridizing natives out of existence. Feral animals constitute a significant share of invasive species and can be a threat to endangered species. You may draw your own conclusions, but these are the facts and I for one will not allow my pets to run free. I care first for the welfare of my 3-year old daughter as well as all youngsters enjoying the outdoors, the pets themselves, indigenous wildlife and the ecosystems we all inhabit.

Winter is Just Too Darn Short :)

by Darin Voss, Natural Resource Technician

It's March, 15th and I hear a robin singing away outside of the window. This is a much welcomed song after enduring another brutal winter. It's just one more sign that spring will be shortly upon us. For the past couple of weeks, the ducks and geese have been arriving in great numbers as they make their way back north for the nesting season. The only reminder of winter are small snow piles here and there. While all the signs are pointing to spring I would like to reflect on where winter has gone. Many feel as though the winter months are long and slow, to me it feels like another winter has passed by all too quickly.

Some may ask, "what do you do all winter?" Being the first year for the natural resource technician position, I had plenty of inside work to keep me busy. Most of the winter I found myself in the office, shop or in an out-building cleaning seed. Many hours were spent in the office behind the computer writing management plans for the county wildlife areas. Recently, I have begun to write burn plans for our up coming burn season. If I wasn't sitting behind the computer, I was either on the phone, visiting face-to-face with landowners discussing habitat projects, filling out seed orders or taking reservations for equipment leases.

There is always plenty of work to be done in the shop during the winter months. This is a good time to perform general maintenance on equipment to make sure that it is all ready to go when spring arrives. General maintenance, repairs, as well as fabrications, are made to make the equipment more efficient. Another indoor job that took a good portion of my time was cleaning native grass and flower seed that was harvested last fall. I understand that cleaning seed by running it over a fanning mill one shovel full at a time doesn't sound all that glamorous. However, it is important to get the seed cleaned of chaff and other debris so it can be seeded using the prairie seed drills this spring.

Winter is also typically when we go to different conferences and trainings. During January, we attended the annual Iowa County Conservation Board Employee (IACCBE) Conference. This conference is for conservation employees across the state. There are many work sessions to choose from that pertain to your specific job duties. This is also a good opportunity to network with other conservation employees. Another training that several of us attended this winter was a fire line refresher course put on by the Iowa DNR. This was a good course that stressed safety and many other concerns that go along with prescribed fire and wildland fires. This course was needed to keep our S/130-190 prescribed fire certificates current.

Despite all the weather Old Man Winter threw our way, I was still able to get out in the field several times. Even with the spring thaw, there was still enough snow out there that a lot of areas had to be reached by foot. Although the conditions may have not always been great it was still good to get out of the office and get some fresh air. In January, a couple of days were spent, with the help of two other staff members, clearing brush and trees off of a fire break around the boundary of Sherman Park. There were also several forest reserve applications that needed to be inspected to make sure that the properties qualified. It seemed as though most of the applications appeared when the snow was the deepest. I didn't mind much, it just gave me an excuse to go tromping around in the snow and to enjoy the winter wonderland. Other outdoor activities involved scouting both private and county properties to learn what management practices were needed to better the habitat.

Now that I have reflected on where the winter has gone, let's jump back to the signs of the impending spring. Although the winter seemed to pass by quickly, I welcome the signs of spring. Hearing the red-winged blackbirds begin their spring songs and watching the pelicans return to the river remind me how nature seems to spring back to life this time of year. It is also that time of year where things will become very busy. It will be great to get out of the office and to get back outside to enjoy the spring weather after being cooped up inside for a good portion of the winter.

Natural Resource Services Offered by CCCB

There are several natural resource services that Clinton County Conservation will now be offering to private landowners. As the natural resource tech., I will be in charge of the operation of these services. I would like to take this time to give a run down of the services and the fees that go along with them.

Service:	Rate up to 10 acres:	additional acres:
✔ No-till drilling	$38/acre	$32/acre
✔ Broadcast seeding	$34/acre	$28/acre
✔ Food plot planting	$34/acre	$28/acre
✔ Food plot drilling	$34/acre	$28/acre
✔ Food plot broadcast	$34/acre	$28/acre
✔ Mowing (full width)	$30/acre	$25/acre
✔ Mowing (spot)	$54/hour	$45/hour
✔ Disking	$24/acre	$20/acre
✔ Culti-packing	$24/acre	$20/acre

Clinton County Conservation, with Clinton County Pheasants Forever, is offering seed for corn or sorghum wildlife foodplots and corn snow fences at no cost to landowners. We can also order prairie seeds at a reduced rate through PF's buying power. PF also offers cost-share assistance on seed purchases.

Clinton County Whitetails Unlimited and Pheasants Forever are loaning out, free of charge, equipment especially designed to be pulled by an ATV. We don't loan tractors or ATVs. Call 563-847-7202 to reserve equipment and order seed.

Tractor Drawn Equipment (CCCB)	
✔ 10' "No Till" Prairie Grass Seeder	$10/Acre
✔ 6' "No Till" Prairie Grass Seeder	$10/Acre
✔ Kaylor Tree Planter	$20/Acre
Sorghum, Round-up Ready & Regular Corn (Pioneer & PF)	
✔ Foodplots	*Free*
✔ Living Snowfences	*Free*
ATV Drawn Equipment (PF & WTU)	
✔ Prairie Drop Seeder	*Free*
✔ Culti-packer	*Free*
✔ Disc	*Free*
✔ Broadcast Seeder	*Free*
✔ Brush Mower	*Free*
✔ Trailer	*Free*

Reminder: Contact CCCB to reserve food plot seed, there will also be big bluestem seed available free of charge!

Springtime Calendar of Events

April

1st ~ Egg-citing Eggs ~ 10:30 AM ~ Children's Discovery Center ~ This nature activity is for three to five year-olds to learn about animals that lay eggs! There will be real eggs and live animals along with a book and snack. This event is free.

4th ~ Night-time Prairie Burn ~ 8 PM ~ Manikowski Prairie, Goose Lake ~ Clinton County Conservation's Prescribed Burn Team will light up the night during this educational program. Fire is a natural part of a prairie's life cycle. Along with a spectacular show, the team of trained staff will explain the how, why and when of prairie burns. We will meet at the south entrance to the prairie located just north US 136 in Goose Lake on 370th Street right behind the High School. The rain/wind date is April 11th.

5th ~ Woodcock Watch ~ 7:30 PM ~ Sherman Park ~ Watch the dynamic display of the American woodcock at Sherman Park's north entrance. This is our 26th year watching the woodcocks' courtship "Skydance", and they usually give a good show. Walking over rough terrain may be involved.

6th ~ OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls) ~ Cargo for Conservation ~ 1 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ This is an information kit designed to increase awareness and understanding of the effects of illegal wildlife trade on protected animals and to encourage actions to reduce that trade's harmful effects. View a variety of items captured by the US Customs Service and collected by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. A discussion will be lead by one of our interpretive naturalists. Refreshments will be served and a short hike offered following the presentation.

6th ~ Egg-citing Eggs ~ 2 PM ~ Children's Discovery Center ~ This nature activity is for elementary school-aged children to learn about animals that lay eggs! There will be real eggs and live animals along with a book and snack. This event is free.

7th ~ 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 and all are encouraged to sing, tap their toe, slap their knee or just listen. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations to support the center are always welcome.

9th ~ Saturday at the Arb, Wild and Wonderful--Upper Mississippi River Refuge ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ This Refuge was established in 1924 to protect the important natural resources of the Upper Mississippi River. Ed Britton will focus on the variety of wildlife and habitat programs conducted on the Refuge.

9th ~ Natural Dyed Eggs ~ 2 PM ~ Wapsi Center ~ This program takes a natural spin to the centuries-old craft of dying eggs. Bring a dozen hard-boiled eggs and the whole family for this history-rich how to. Walk-ins are welcome, but pre-registration would be appreciated by calling 563-328-3286 by Thursday, April 7.

16th ~ Volunteer Workday ~ 9 AM-12 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Volunteers work on a variety of projects both in and outdoors. Some of the work is heavy while other opportunities are light work. Come be a part of the transformation from a local nature center and dog park to a regional destination.

16th ~ Earth Day Expo/Quad Cities Earth Week Fair ~ 10 AM-4 PM ~ QCCA Expo Center ~ The Quad Cities Earth Week Coalition is hosting its 8th Annual Earth Week Fair at the QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island, IL. This event is free to the public and will feature over 60 booths offering hands-on activities, demonstrations, make-and-take crafts, literature, videos, quizzes and other interactive projects. For more information: *www.qcearthweek.org* or contact Erin Robinson-Vorac at 563-388-1403 or *evorac@wastecom.com*

16th ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Opener ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ The Nature Center will be open from 1-4 PM on Saturdays, now through October. Take a wildflower hike at 1:30 PM to explore the spring colors. As always, we are looking for volunteers to open the Nature Center on Saturdays. No experience is necessary. Call 563-847-7202 for information.

16th ~ Rock Creek Water Trail Float ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Participants will be shuttled to the US 67 bridge crossing Rock Creek. The put-in is undeveloped making it slightly difficult to launch, but the paddle out the mouth of the creek into Schricker Slough, Sodus Slough and finally up Shaff Creek to the marina is on calm waters through a variety of wetlands. The waters will be cold and you should bring an extra set of dry clothing. Dry bags will be provided for each county canoe. Registration is free but limited, call 563-847-7202 to reserve your spot and any paddling equipment you need.

19th ~ Whip-poor-will Night Hike ~ 8 PM ~ Sherman Park ~ 2740 160th Ave, Calamus ~ Experience the calls of the many interesting creatures of the night including the whip-poor-will and learn their mysteries. A naturalist will lead through the winding, hopefully moonlit trails of the park from its upland areas to the banks of the Wapsipinicon River.

21st ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 7 PM ~ Wapsi Center ~ Join us at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Center.

22nd ~ Celebrate Earth Day ~ Find your personal way to show the earth you care.

23rd ~ Wildflower Hike ~ 11 AM ~ Wapsi Center ~ Join a naturalist on a woodland hike and enjoy the first flowers of spring. These flowers can only be seen this time of year before the forest floor is shaded by the foliage of the trees. Bring a camera.

23rd ~ Wild Edibles ~ 1 PM ~ Wapsi Center ~ Spring is the time for harvesting tender leaves and flowers. Learn how to identify nutritious and edible plants that can be found in your own backyard. This session will include a hike, taste testing and recipes. Please call 563-328-3286 to register.

23rd ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ The Nature Center will be open by volunteer hosts. The center features live local reptiles, rocks & minerals, Iowa habitats & artifacts.

26th & 30th ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7-9:30 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Arrowhead Hunting Club, Goose Lake ~ Visit *www.iowadnr.gov/training* for required sign-up.

29th ~ Arbor Day ~ Did you know that Arbor Day is the only federal holiday that looks to the future? Planting a tree shows faith in that future! It's also a great way to commemorate a birth, death, anniversary or other special event.

30th ~ Arbor Day/Earth Day ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ We are combining two important Earth friendly days into one event. A short program on the importance of trees and the proper planting of trees.

30th ~ Flower Preservation ~ 10 AM ~ Wapsi Center ~ Come learn the art of preserving flowers in this fun and informative session. The program will include a make-n-take press, unique uses for dried flowers and instructions on drying flowers with a microwave! All materials are provided at no cost, but supplies are limited. Please pre-register at 563-328-3286.

30th ~ Paper Making ~ 1 PM ~ Wapsi Center ~ Not your ordinary paper making project! Create beautiful paper using additives from nature. Perfect for stationery and adding that personal touch to all occasion cards. Come learn about paper making techniques and processes. Space is limited; call 563-328-3286 to register.

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

30th ~ Star Party ~ 8:30 PM ~ Sherman Park ~ Join the Quad Cities Astronomical Society at Sherman Park's north entrance to explore the night sky. Check *www.qcas.org* for last minute sky conditions.

May

5th ~ 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 and all are encouraged to sing, tap their toe, slap their knee or just listen. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event although donations to support the center are always welcome.

7th ~ Saturday at the Arb, Posies in a Bag or Boot ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ A fun make and take annual flower planter using decorative purses and old boots.

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

7th ~ Menke Astronomical Observatory Open House ~ Dusk ~ Wapsi Center ~ Treat your mother to a Mother's Day Eve viewing of a crescent moon in the southwestern sky and the planet Saturn to the southeast. Saturn will be prominent in the sky for most of the summer, and its rings are spectacular even in small telescopes.

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

16th ~ Spring Prairie Walk ~ 1 PM ~ Manikowski Prairie ~ Join Natural Resource Technician Darin Voss and some folks from a local garden club to see a carpet of beautiful pale pink and purple hues of shooting stars, as will bird's foot violet and hoary puccoon. This limestone prairie provides an excellent opportunity to explore part of Iowa's heritage. Meet at Manikowski Prairie's north entrance. Turn north off Highway 136 onto Z34 in Goose Lake north 1 mile then east 1/4 mile on 137th St..

17th ~ Night Float in Princeton Wildlife Area ~ 8:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Participants will shuttle from Rock Creek Park to the south landing of the Wildlife Area. There we will put-in to the marsh and make our way north. The group may then decide whether to portage the level into Grant Slough for the return trip or simply turn around. Expect to see wildlife and early flowering plants like marsh marigold and spring cress. The waters will be cool and you should bring an extra set of dry clothing. Dry bags will be provided for each county canoe. Registration is free but limited, call 563-847-7202 to reserve your spot and any paddling equipment you need.

21st ~ Volunteer Workday ~ 9 AM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Call 563-357-0759 to lend a hand.

21st ~ Walnut Grove to Syracuse Float ~ 1 PM ~ Walnut Grove Park ~ We will meet promptly at 1 PM to unload boats then shuttle vehicles to the take-out and return to launch. This is a 10.2-mile trip passing the undeveloped Muhl Bridge landing after 5 miles. The banks are mainly wooded and several interesting geological features will be passed. This is a great stretch for wildlife viewing and beach combing. The waters will be cool and you should bring an extra set of dry clothing. Dry bags will be provided for each county canoe. Registration is free but limited, call 563-847-7202 to reserve your spot and any paddling equipment you need.

21st ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

26th ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Every Thursday evening through October, Clinton County Conservation will be offering naturalist-guided eco cruises aboard the newer, bigger, better and faster Blue Heron pontoon boat on the Mississippi River. Call 563-259-1876 to reserve a spot. Requested donation is $5/person.

28th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

28th ~ Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park ~ Join the Quad Cities Astronomical Society at Sherman Park's north end to explore the night sky. Star parties are dependent on the weather. To confirm a party will be held, check *www.qcas.org*, after 4 PM on the day of the party.

June

2nd ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek~ Call 563-259-1876.

3rd - 5th ~ Free Fishing Days ~ Let's go fishing! During these three days, Iowa residents may fish and possess fish (within legal limits) without a fishing license.

3rd ~ Snakes of Iowa ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Meet in the campground, near the playground to see and touch more then 10 different species of Iowa snakes. This event will be in the Nature Center if there is poor weather.

4th ~ Second Annual Stream Stomp ~ 9 AM ~ Various Locations Across the County ~ This is a citizen volunteer clean-up effort lead by volunteers and assisted by several local organizations. Plans are being laid and you can help. Contact the project coordinator Melisa Jacobsen at 309-737-9016 or register by calling Brad Seward at the Clinton Area Solid Waste Agency at 563-243-4749.

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

4th ~ Hayrack Rides ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Good times aboard this hayrack ride. An adult must accompany children.

7th Arts at the Arb, String Quartrio ~ 7 PM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ Bring a lawn chair & enjoy the outdoor performance.

9th ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek~ Call 563-259-1876.

11th ~ Free Canoeing ~ 10 AM-6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rock Creek's 10 canoes will be available to use free of charge all day in the Mississippi River backwaters surrounding the park.

11th ~ Saturday at the Arb, Photographing Nature Part One ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ This is a two part class for new and novice photographers. It will include instruction on composition of landscape photos and how to take close up photos of flowers and plants.

11th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

11th ~ Hayrack Rides ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Good times aboard this hayrack ride. An adult must accompany children.

14th - 17th Tracking Tots Outing ~ 9 AM-Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ Youth from 3 to 5 years of age will be introduced to the natural world through collecting hikes, games and crafts. Parents and guardians are encouraged to stay for the activities and a short pontoon ride at 11 AM will complete the morning. A fee of $5 per day is required. A complete information packet and registration form will be mailed to inquiring parents/guardians by ***calling 563-847-7202 before June 1st***.

14th & 18th ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7-9:30 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Clinton Izaak Walton League, Six Mile ~ Visit *www.iowadnr.gov/training* for required sign-up.

16th ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM~ Rock Creek~ Call 563-259-1876.

16th ~ Moonlight & Music Cruise ~ 9 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come enjoy an evening of homespun music as presented by local musicians and vocalists aboard the Blue Heron Eco Cruise Boat. Interested musicians must reserve a chair by calling 563-357-0759. To reserve a passenger seat call 563-259-1876. Refreshments will be served. Requested donation is $5/person.

17th ~ Making a Difference for Nature ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Blue Heron pontoon ride and mini clean-up on an island with a PowerPoint presentation showcasing local volunteer efforts after at 9 PM.

18th ~ Volunteer Workday ~ 9 AM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Call 563-357-0759 to lend a hand.

18th ~ Saturday at the Arb, Photographing Nature Part Two ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ A critique of photos taken at the previous class. Plus new instruction.

18th ~ Wapsipinicon Float ~ 1 PM ~ Syracuse Boat Landing ~ East of Wheatland, off 235th St. ~ We'll meet here for a 6.3 mile trip down to Sherman Park, just north of Dixon. We'll pass many tributaries, side channels and explore several beaches hunting for shells, rocks and fossils in the sand. Wildlife also abounds with blue herons to muskrat. Call 563-847-7202 by noon on June 17th to register or reserve equipment. The county's canoes are available on a first call basis and is free of charge.

18th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

18th ~ Saturday Night At the Movies ~ Dusk ~ Eden Valley ~ The campground at Eden Valley will show family movies on the big screen for campers and park visitors.

20th - 23rd ~ EDIWILD 2010 ~ Educators in the Wild Workshop ~ Where the Wild Woods Are ~ Discovering Iowa's Woodlands ~ This is a 4-day workshop (including evening activities) to facilitate the incorporation of environmental education into the school curriculum. The workshop will use an interdisciplinary approach of teaching and will emphasize Iowa's woodland habitat.

This year's activities, tours and topics include Iowa's woodlands past, present and future, history of Arbor Day, tree planting, tree personality test, grist mill tour, fern hike, timber management, woodland systematics, tree & leaf ID, woodland flora & fauna, orienteering, Bats-Moths-&-Owls-Oh-My!, woodland invasive species, native woodland cultures, woodland soils, Project Learning Tree activities, *The Lorax*-based curriculum and much, much more!

If you are interested and would like to register, contact the Wapsi Center at 563-328-3286. A brochure will be sent to you which includes a registration form, daily activities and locations, plus other details.

23rd ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876.

24th - 26th ~ Hunter Safety Camp ~ 7 PM (Fri.)-5 PM (Sun.) ~ Wapsi Center ~ Standard hunter safety courses are 10 hours long. In this event, we will go far beyond the basics. In addition to all of the hunter education standards, we will be teaching advanced shooting techniques, bowhunter safety, trapping, waterfowl, turkey & raccoon hunting, dog training, caring for game in the field, first aid, wildlife ID, calling and a whole lot more! All these activities will allow students to actually participate, not just listen to speakers or watch films. The course is open to kids, age 11-16. They don't need to have received the Hunter Education Certificates already. Cost per student is $20 for dorm stay, meals, ammo and targets thanks to donations from Clinton County Pheasants Forever ($500), Scott County Pheasants Forever ($500) and Clinton Area Whitetails Unlimited ($200) plus donations from Clinton CCB & Grand Mound Sportsmen's Club. Overnight chaperones will be provided by participants' parents. Space is limited to 50 kids, so sign up early by calling 563-847-7202.

25th ~ Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM ~ Eden Valley

25th ~ Hayrack Rides ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Good times aboard this hayrack ride. An adult must accompany children.

25th ~ Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park ~ Join the Quad Cities Astronomical Society at Sherman Park's north end to explore the night sky. Star parties are dependent on the weather. To confirm a party will be held, check *www.qcas.org*, after 4 PM on the day of the party.

28th - July 1st ~ K-2 Youth Camps 9 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Our summer day camps are geared to provide youth with a better understanding of the outdoors. Youth will play games, collect artifacts on a hike, complete a craft and take a cruise on the Blue Heron Eco Cruise boat. A fee of $10 per day is required. A complete information packet and registration form will be mailed to inquiring guardians by ***calling 563-847-7202 before June 1st.***

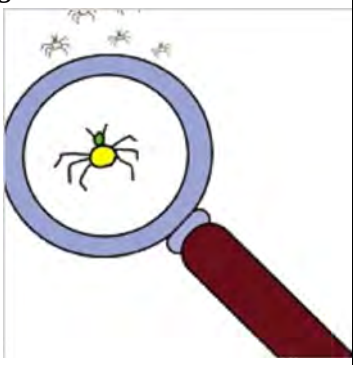
30th ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876.

July

Summer Sneak Peak ~ more events to come in the summer newsletter, due out July 1st.

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

6th - 8th ~ Middle School Overnight ~ Noon ~ CCCB Headquarters ~ This 48-hour trip down the Wapsipinicon River will challenge youth to recognize their place in the outdoors. It will incorporate team building, nature study, leave no trace camping, canoeing and orientation skills. Participants must attend an evening of community building on June 27th, 6-9 PM with a guardian in order to register. Cost for this camp is $40. ***Call 563-357-0759 by May 1st for more information.***



7th ~ Sunset Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876.

9th ~ Bus Trip: Morton Arboretum (Lisle, IL) and Distinctive Gardens (Dixon, IL) ~ Call Bickelhaupt Arboretum for details, 563-242-4771.

12th ~ Arts at the Arb, Travis Hosette Sings Sinatra ~ 7 PM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ Bring a lawn chair and enjoy the outdoor performance. (Rain date July 14).

19th - 22nd ~ EnviroKids Day Camp (3rd - 5th Grades) ~ 9 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Youth will set up camp each day arranging their site. They will be introduced to backpacking and paddling including packing their gear into backpacks. They will learn to collect safe drinking and cooking water and cook their own noon meal on a camp stove. Each participant will clean-up after the meal and be taught the practice of leave no trace camping. They will fish, play team games, shoot archery, canoe, complete a service project and take a cruise on the Blue Heron Eco Cruise boat. Cost for this camp is $10 per day. Participants may purchase an EnviroKids T-shirt for $5. A complete information packet and registration form will be mailed to inquiring parents/guardians by ***calling 563-847-7202 before June 1st.***

25th - 29th ~ High School Wilderness Trip ~ Noon ~ CCCB Headquarters ~ This 96-hour trip down the Wapsipinicon River from Anamosa to Syracuse Wildlife Area will challenge youth to recognize their place in the outdoors and experience real Iowa wilderness. It will incorporate team building, nature study, leave no trace camping, canoeing and orientation skills. Participants must attend an evening of community building on June 27th, 6-9 PM with a guardian in order to register. Cost for this camp is $200. ***Call 563-357-0759 by May 1st for more information.***

30th ~ Kids' Fishing Tournament ~ 9 AM-Noon ~ Malone Park ~ Kids, ages 12 and under, are invited to test their angling skills. Sunfish are thick in the 10-acre lake, with bass, bullheads and catfish in good numbers. Plaques will be awarded for the greatest weight of fish in two age groups, ages 10-12 and ages 9 and under. There will also be door prizes for all. Registration starts at 9 AM, with fishing from 9:30-11 AM; weigh-in and casting contest will follow.

2011 Clinton County EnviroKids

This is a series of events for kids in 3rd to 5th grades, younger kids are welcome if accompanied by and adult. Clinton CCB partners with several other agencies on this award winning program. All events are 9 AM – Noon unless otherwise noted. Direct questions to Judie Petersen, 563-357-6932. There is a one time $5 registration fee that covers all of the events.

June 11th ~ Learn all about planting seeds and composting with the Clinton County Master Gardeners and ISU Extension at Soaring Eagle Nature Center in Clinton.

June 25th ~ Discover the fascinating world of trees and birds with a hands-on scavenger hunt at Bickelhaupt Arboretum.

July 15th ~ Enjoy a free Clinton LumberKings baseball game on "Going Green" night. EnviroKids will be given special treatment. Check-in at the park is 6 PM.

July 16th ~ Tour LyondellBasell to see how plastic is made and do some fun experiments!

19th - 22nd ~ EnviroKids Day Camp ~ 9 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ see earlier description.

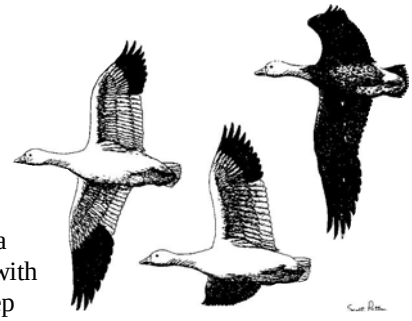
August 13th ~ Have some fun on the pond at Clinton Izaak Walton League. Enjoy fishing, canoeing and hayride. Lunch will be provided by the Ikes.

August 27th ~ Tour the Clinton Area Solid Waste Agency and learn about where trash goes and recycling.

September 10th ~ Hop aboard the Blue Heron pontoon boat at Rock Creek for a cruise and a beach clean-up. We will also be doing GPS geocaching and S'mores back at the park.

Headin' North

by Brad Taylor, Park Officer, East District



After a long, cold and snowy winter, the sight of spring is finally here. Warm temperatures are finally melting all the snow that has piled up this winter. As the snow melts, ducks and geese follow the snow line north. The spring migration is on. The sight of Canada geese and ducks is the norm. Waterfowl are heading to their breeding grounds to Canada, Minnesota, South and North Dakota and Iowa.

Most ducks and geese head south for the winter. They will stage in large flocks in refuges. Geese and mallards are a little hardier than most and will only fly south until they find open water. If they can find open water along a river, some will never leave Iowa. As the snow begins to melt, they start to head north. The bigger migration is on the western side of the state, but many ducks and geese fly the eastern part as well.

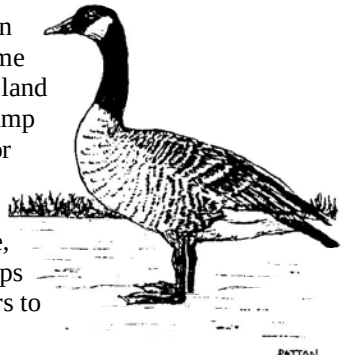
If you get a chance to view ducks up close in the spring, you might notice that they are much more colorful than in the fall. The drakes, or male ducks, will begin molting in mid summer and by fall most will have lost their breeding colors. By next spring all will be in their breeding plumage and as bright as ever.

Ducks and geese will begin their mate pairing in January and February. By the time they reach their breeding grounds to the north, their pair bonds are made and they are looking for a place to raise a family. Most waterfowl species are monogamous, which means they only have one mate. Pheasants for example are polygamous, which means they will have many mates. Geese and especially swans will usually matefor life.

With the spring migration there is also an opportunity to hunt snow geese. The past several years biologists have been worried about the snow geese's breeding grounds in the tundra. The geese have been so prolific that they are literally eating themselves out of house and home. The tundra is very sensitive and snow geese will pull the plants from their roots and it takes several years for the plants to grow back. To try to help balance the population, the US Fish & Wildlife Service has issued a spring conservation season with liberal bag limits to help keep snow geese in check. This gives hunters a rare chance to waterfowl hunt in the spring as these white geese are moving north.

If anyone has seen large flocks of snow geese, it can be an awesome site. Flocks of thousands of birds will be staging in large refuges waiting for a good south wind. When the weather is right they start moving north. This gives hunters a chance to intercept them as they stop to refuel in corn fields along the way. Hunters use huge spreads of decoys that consist of 500 to 1,500 decoys to lure these weary birds into shooting range.

Spring is a great time to sit in a field and watch the birds go by. Various species of ducks and geese also frequent these same fields giving a great opportunity to view many waterfowl species on the great migration north. If you get a chance, some good waterfowl viewing areas in Clinton County can be had at Ringneck Marsh and Goose Lake Wildlife Area, along with Princeton Wildlife Area in Scott County. Some birders may not realize that public land purchased, using Federal Duck Stamp and State Habitat Stamp dollars, for habitat is to benefit waterfowl and non-game species. So even if you don't hunt but like to view wildlife, purchasing these inexpensive stamps will help all wildlife for many years to come.



East District Update

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Under Construction ~ The biggest news at Rock Creek is the construction of the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. Construction began in February. Completion date is projected to be mid-December. With construction in progress all summer, I would like to stress the importance of respecting the contractors and their equipment. This is not only for your safety but for them to do their job efficiently.

Online Reservations ~ Another new service we will offer is an online reservation system for the cabins and several camp sites. This system will be up and going on April 1. Check out www.mycountyparks.com.

Wood Duck Cabin Renovation ~ This past winter we did some work in the Wood Duck cabin. We insulated the ceiling and finished it with car siding. This helps give the cabin a more finished look while making it more efficient in the winter months.

We are looking forward to a very busy camping season and hope everyone can make it down for a weekend of camping on the "Big River."

West District Update

We have quite a few projects in the western parks that will benefit park hikers and campers.

Eden Valley Refuge ~ A group of 10 AmeriCorps workers will be replacing all 80 railroad tie steps on the Bear Creek Nature Trail with recycled plastic ties. The work will be done in April as part of a joint effort with Jackson CCB.

Sherman Park ~ The pit toilet in the campground finally fell down this spring due to frost heaving. A new shower house with flush toilets will be built by some awesome volunteers and our West District staff over the year. We hope that it will be ready next spring. Until then we will have to get by with porta-pottys.

Walnut Grove Park ~ Twelve new electric campsite will be constructed around the playground loop this spring. Our hope is they will be ready for the Fourth of July weekend.

It will be a hectic camping season and we ask for patience with all our construction. We hope you enjoy the new amenities we have added over the past several years. See you in the parks!

Illegal Take: Trumpeter Swan Shootings in Iowa

by Jacob Newton, ISU Trumpeter Swan Restoration Committee, "Trumpeting the Cause" Newsletter

Trumpeter swans have been making an astounding return to our local watersheds. Their resurgence has had much acclaim. However, they are still not secure in their return, which makes the instances when swans are shot particularly concerning.

As of 2010 the highest cause of known mortality for swans in the state was shooting. Fifty-seven swans were shot by poachers, fifty-six perished due to power-line collisions, the second most common cause of mortality. However, not all shootings result in mortality. Last year, there was a non-fatal case at Goose Lake Wildlife Area that resulted in a female swan surviving but having to have its wing amputated. The female was nine years old at the time. Just this year Johnny Kirkbride, a Mason City man, was charged with, and has pleaded guilty to, the shooting deaths of two trumpeter swans near Nora Springs, one of the most common wintering locations for trumpeters in the state of Iowa. For those of us in the swan community, we must ask why one would want to shoot a trumpeter swan?

Most shootings are accidental, with the swans being mistaken for game species such as Ross' and snow geese, or the swans are imbedded in a flock of geese, such as what happened in Tama County in 2005 when four swans were shot. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has attempted to mitigate such events with public postings to point out the diagnostic differences between the trumpeter swans and geese, specifically the immense size difference and the distinct black bill and white plumage. DNR officers admit that there really is no excuse for mistaking a trumpeter swan.

However, there is a more insidious reason for shooting these majestic organisms. Some may choose to kill swans for the thrill of it. The idea being that shooting and killing something so rare, and in the case of trumpeters something so large, provides a thrill for the perpetrator.

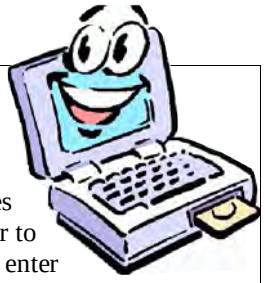
Never the less, most perpetrators are caught because of the watchful eyes of passionate and caring members of community, as well as legal waterfowlers who are a consistent and welcome source of information on poachers. Waterfowl hunters also provide the bulk of the funding for further research and habitat through the purchase of waterfowl stamps, licenses and excise taxes which fund 80% of the Trumpeter Swan Restoration Project. In the most recent case with the Mason City man, he was turned in via the *Iowa Turn In Poachers (I-TIP 800-532-2020*) line, which allows interested parties to provide anonymous tips to local law enforcement and the Iowa game wardens. In the Mason City case, an anonymous tipster gave the DNR the suspect's license plate number and the make of his car. This resulted in Kirkbride's arrest and subsequent plea of guilty. Kirkbride was fined $795 and ordered to pay $3,000 in damages.

Experimental Fall Release at Boock's Pond

The experimental fall release of three cygnets at Bob and Mary Boock's pond, north of Wheatland, looks to be very promising. Bob pond has developed into a staging area for swans to gather in the early fall. Three cygnets from the Chicago Botanical Center were released in early October and were adopted by a lone free flying trumpeter. We would assume, under the guidance of an older experienced adult, the newly released cygnets should have a much greater survival rate.

Online Campsite and Cabin Reservations

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director



Over the years, the conservation office has received a lot of comments from park users about the need for some sort of internet based online reservation system for cabins and campsites. What I most frequently hear is that people don't want to pack up all of their gear and travel to one of our parks only to find out that all of the campsites have been already taken. They then have to travel to another park or worse yet, abandon their plans and go back home. The CCCB has been taking cabin reservations by phone for some time now, but it is inconvenient in that reservations can only be made during office hours, and it can tie up a lot of our staff time as well. I've evaluated a lot of reservation systems, but until recently, we have not been able to find a good system, one that would meet all of our needs as well as the public's.

Well, the wait is finally over. We are now in the final stages of developing an online reservation system! Initially this will include the Rock Creek and Eden Valley cabins and 20 of the campsites at Rock Creek. If all goes as planned, beginning April 1st, you will be able to log on to *www.mycountyparks.com*, follow the link to Clinton County, and reserve your cabin or campsite from your computer. The reservation process is really pretty simple. At the website, you will be able to browse cabin or campsite availability, amenities and view pictures of the facilities. It is set up similar to other online shopping sites in that you must create a user account prior to making a reservation. This requires you to enter the usual information such as your name, address, email and phone number. This is saved so that you don't have to re-enter it each time you want to log on to make a reservation. Reservations can be made 24/7, for up to one year in advance on campsites and two years in advance for cabins. We will still have the ability to offer discounted rates for rentals to organized youth groups such as Boy Scouts and church youth groups. Youth groups will need to phone the office in order to receive a youth group discount.

Since this is a whole new direction for both the conservation staff, and the park visitors, I am sure that initially there may be a few bumps to iron out to make everything run smoothly. In the long run though, I think that most people will be satisfied. After the system has been in use for a season, we will re-evaluate to determine if any changes are needed and to see whether we might want to expand the system to more campsites, other parks or facilities. I think this change will make things better for you as a park visitor. I welcome questions and comments from you, our customers, on this. You can contact me at *wwickham@clintoncounty-ia.gov* or by phone at 563-847-7202.

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

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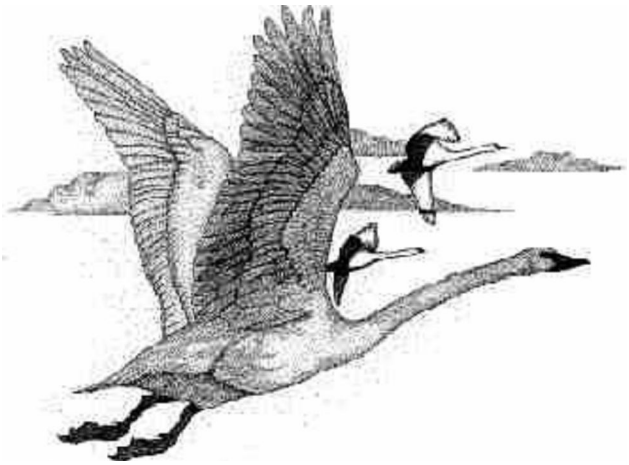

Trumpeter Swan, America's largest bird

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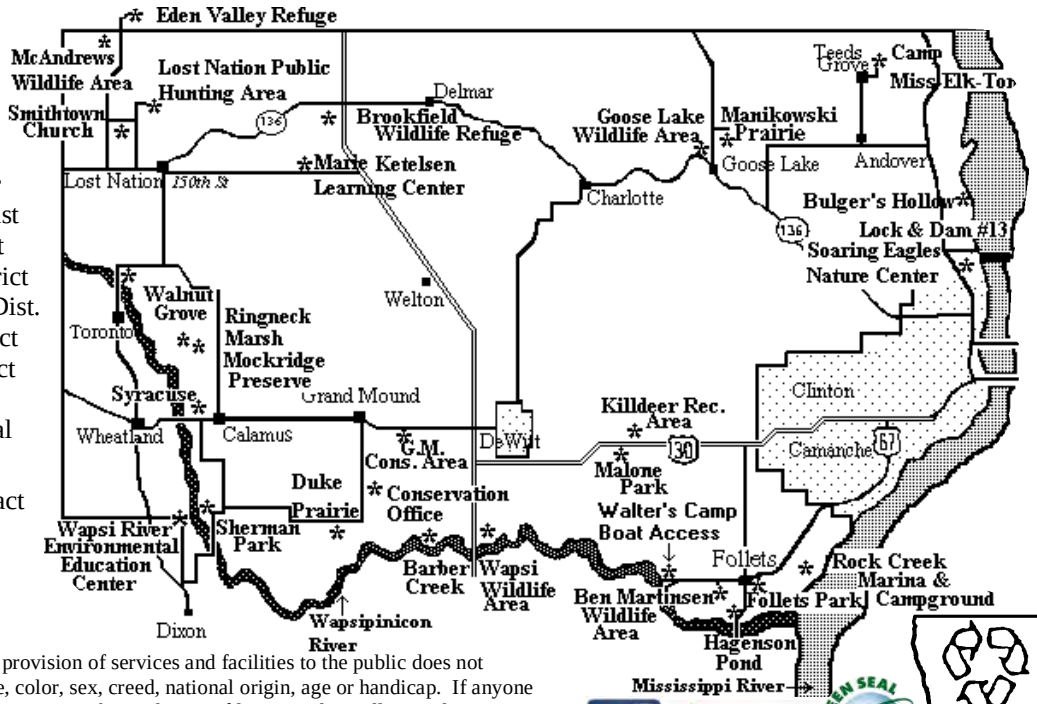
MAILING LIST

If you'd like to get *"The Heron"* contact the CCCB. It is mailed to County addresses free, others are charged $5 Annually. It is also 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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