



The Heron

Quarterly Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
Volume 33 Number 3 Summer 2012

Thanks for all you do!

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

It has often been said that more can be accomplished if we all work together than if we simply try to go it alone. This applies to almost every aspect of life-- family life, your workplace, politics, religion and nearly everything in-between. I've learned that this is also very true in the county conservation board's endeavors. The Clinton County Conservation Board (CCCB) has been able to complete some otherwise insurmountable tasks by partnering and working together with others. Regrettably, I think we sometimes take the hard work of others for granted and don't say thank you nearly enough. Over the years, I have had the pleasure of working with a number of outstanding individuals, groups and organizations who, in some way, have shared in our goals and have helped to move the CCCB forward. I would like to take this opportunity to point out some shining examples and to publicly say thank you to some of our supporters.

Some of our strongest and longest lasting partnerships have been with the local wildlife conservation groups. Organizations like Pheasants Forever, Whitetails Unlimited, the Izaak Walton League, Waterfowl USA and the Wild Turkey Federation have made enormous contributions to the Clinton County Conservation Board. Individual members of these groups have come and gone, but their missions keep them going strong. Through ongoing fund-raising efforts, these groups have literally raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and made possible the acquisition of hundreds of acres of public land in Clinton County. Land that now is home to a wide variety of wildlife and provides countless hours of outdoor recreation to area residents. Wildlife areas like Lost Nation Public Hunting Area, Ben Martinsen Wildlife Area, McAndrews Wildlife Area and Ringneck Marsh would either be much smaller in size or just plain not exist without their help. They have also made possible programs like Hunter Safety Camp and Youth Outdoor Skills Day. For this and much, much more, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

For the last several years, the Clinton County Conservation Foundation (another overworked and under appreciated partner) has been raising funds for a variety of conservation projects. By far their biggest project is the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek. Through the foundation's persistence and hard work, we have gained several new conservation board supporters. Because of the Foundation's efforts, over 160 individuals and businesses and corporations have contributed funds, time and talent to the Eco Center, school

field trip busing scholarships and various other projects. I hesitate to try and list them all here for fear of unintentionally leaving someone out! It will have to suffice to say that you know who you are and we couldn't have done it without you! A permanent method of recognition for contributors to the Center will be built in the near future. Until then, thank you one and all!

Contributions from area businesses go far beyond financial. Many have provided volunteers and support for field work projects and educational programs as well. A good example of this is LyondellBasell's contributions to the EnviroKids program. EnviroKids is a series of events for kids in 3rd to 5th grades. Clinton County has partnered with several other agencies for this award-winning program. LyondellBasell has been involved with the EnviroKids program since the very beginning. They take care of all of the printing and t-shirt costs for this program, organize the registrations, as well as hosting a tour of their factory for the kids.

And finally, there are the countless individuals who volunteer their time and talents. These are the individuals who allow us to do more that we could possibly do on our own. The Eden Valley nature center hosts are one group of individuals who immediately come to mind. These individuals open the nature center every Saturday, April - October, so that visitors can view the nature center displays. They answer questions about the park and provide a friendly face for the CCCB. This year's hosts are Laura Ahrens, Lou Berend, Joan Jones, Don & Ann Ott, Bel Tubbs, and Lois Wurster. A BIG THANK YOU goes out to each of you!

As you can imagine, a need for volunteer help is growing. To help fill part of the void, a new *Friends of Rock Creek* is in the planning with an informational meeting scheduled for July 24th. For more information on this, see the article *Volunteer Opportunity* on page 5.

To those who have already volunteered or contributed in some way, THANK YOU!



Family Memories

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

In the early 1970's, Dad and his best friend, discovered a place to fish on the Chippewa River in Wisconsin. Huge catfish were abundant and the first thing Dad thought of was, "I have to bring the kids". We camped on Lake Holcombe at the City Beach. The younger kids swam and played on the lake shore. Dad and the older boys fished below the Cornell, Holcombe and Jim Falls dams and we all water-skied. Mom discovered a beautiful campground while taking us younger kids on a boat ride around the lake, Pine Point County Park. It had everything we wanted. A swimming beach, shade trees, a playground and a beautiful view of the lake. We were hooked!

Our most lasting family memories come from camping on Lake Holcombe. Those trips to Pine Point Campground will always be in our family lore. Dad loved the cool, crisp air, a bonfire in the evening, camping in the tent and fishing in the river. For the past 40 years, there have been Roberts's camping there. Usually 1, 2, or even 3 times a year a number of us meet up for a week of camping, fishing and boating. Everybody was included, from Grandpa Cummings down to the great grandkids. I could spend hours just telling Pine Point stories, my brothers and sisters could do the same. Chippewa County Parks may disagree, but it is OUR campground. Dad brought the family. We kids bring up our kids. We bring our friends. Our friends bring their kids. Our kids bring their friends and on it goes. All because Dad shared his new fishing spot with his family. Experiences at Pine Point changed me forever. I knew that the I wanted to work in nature for the rest of my life. I owe Dad so much for that.

My father passed away early this summer and as I reflected on my memories they almost invariably came back to an outdoor adventure with him. It got me to thinking, I wonder how our campgrounds, parks and fishing holes stack up? Are we providing the backdrop, the scene, for family memories to be made? In this business you need lofty goals. It is easy to get bogged down in everyday challenges. It is too easy to be discouraged by vandals. It is easy to be angry with litter-bugs. It is easy to get disenchanted by what can be termed the "Rule Breakers".

Family memories, that is where our focus needs to be. People don't have family memories about a clean showerhouse, a well manicured lawn or a spotless campground. These things don't make memories, although they can detract from them. Our job is to provide places worthy of family memories. In a sense, we need to get out of the way so people can make family memories.

So what places does the Clinton County Conservation Board manage that are family memory worthy? What is it about these places make them memorable? I believe we have many.

Eden Valley Refuge's beautiful vistas, many hiking trails and babbling Bear Creek provide the scene. Playing in the waters of Bear Creek is one of the really great things you can do with your kids. The cool, clear water, sand and pebble bottom, minnows and other small fishes, frogs and turtles make the creek a hundred times more interesting to be in than a swimming pool. Splashing, running, swimming and just sitting in the running waters is fantastic. Just make sure you are right in there with them. That is where the memories will come from.



Lakes Malone and Killdeer have lots of nice amenities to make visits more comfortable. The family memories could come from many activities but I believe that fishing tops the list. Both lakes have an abundance of fish to catch and make great places to teach grandkids to enjoy fishing. The easy approach to the mowed shorelines makes it easy for people who don't get around as well as they used to, to join in the fun.

Walnut Grove and Sherman Parks are nice, quiet and small campgrounds on the Wapsipinicon River. Catching large catfish from the shore is a great family activity, as is canoeing and hiking. Sitting around the campfire, talking about anything and everything, making S'mores, no TV, computer or cellphones getting in the way, is a great way to make lasting family memories.

Rock Creek has so many opportunities I could write this entire article just on that park. I think it is at its best when people are enjoying the adjacent Mississippi River. The park rents out canoes, kayaks and paddle boats. There may not be a better family outdoor activity than paddling. You get the chance for shared adventure, a chance to let your conversations wander and a chance to slide up close to wildlife. It is also a chance to get into a paddle-splash fight or to dump your canoe to cool off.

Dear to me are the many family fun events my agency puts on. We plan activities with making family memories in mind. Look through our calendar of events in this newsletter and let your imagination tell you which ones have the potential to make a family memory for your family. Then attend and give it a chance to root in your mind and in your children or grandchildren's minds, forever. Take a Blue Heron ride, paddle on free paddling day, take a guided walk, listen to campfire music and sing along. These things will help make up a collective outdoor experience that will become those precious family memories recounted years later.

We also manage prairies, like Manikowski and Duke, forests like Mockridge and the Wapsi River Center and wildlife areas like McAndrews, Ringneck Marsh and Ben Martinesen to name a few. Any of these have potential of making lasting memories. For many people hunting, on one of our many public hunting areas is the only place they could gain access to share these experiences.

Some of my best memories of time with my father were spent hunting. For me, I remember squirrel hunting in the autumn woods around West Union. My brother, Jeff, and I would stay with Dad because we were the little ones. Older brothers Tim, Terry and Kevin would split up and hunt on their own. They got more squirrels, probably because Jeff and I were too loud, but I know which team was better off. We had alone time with Dad. When you went hunting with Dad, he always wanted you to take the shot. It meant more to him to give you a chance to be successful, than it was to bag the game.

I sincerely hope that we help provide that perfect family spot in the outdoors. A place that is so ingrained in the family memory that they become a part of the people in that family. We should and do feel privileged to be a part of that.

Hello! From the New Naturalist

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

As the new person on the job, you often get asked about your previous experiences. How did you end up here? Why did you choose to work as a naturalist? What career path directed you to us? To me, the answers are quite simple. I grew up on the backwaters of the Maquoketa River in Manchester, Iowa. Like most nature-loving people, I was the child that spent endless hours down at the creek, catching critters and coming home as muddy as possible. As I grew older, the time by the creek became less and less, but my interest in the outdoors continued because of my Grandfather, Bill Bishop. He was always there to spark my interest about fishing, birds and the beauty of the outdoors.

I attended Iowa State University in hopes to become a veterinarian. I knew I loved animals and I thought that was the best route for me to take, but I quickly learned that there were better things out there. I took a class on interpretation of natural resources and fell in love with the idea of teaching about the outdoors. I declared my major as Animal Ecology with an emphasis in Interpretation of Natural Resources.

I enjoyed the next three years studying ecology. My classes included dendrology (trees), ornithology (birds), herpetology (reptiles & amphibians), fisheries and land management to mention a few. I interned at many places including Story County Conservation where I worked as a summer Naturalist in Ames, Blank Park Zoo where I led summer day camps for children of all ages in Des Moines and the Forest Service where I worked as a Shipboard Interpreter on the Alaskan Marine Highway system in southeast Alaska.



When I graduated in 2002, I applied for a full-time position at Trees For Tomorrow in Eagle River, Wisconsin, which is a non profit organization that has been around since the early 1940's. At that time I had little classroom teaching so they encouraged me to work as a seasonal naturalist to see if I liked it. I worked there for a full

year before heading to Upham Woods in Wisconsin Dells where I worked as a Environmental Educator. I returned to "Trees" for one more. My first full-time job was for McHenry County Conservation District in northern Illinois. I was there five months when I got the call that there was a full-time job opening with Trees For Tomorrow. I applied, got the job and back north I went. I spent the last seven years of my life living in the northwoods of Wisconsin. I was surrounded by trees and fresh water lakes. I enjoyed my time up there so much, the memories I have of cross country skiing in the thick hemlock forest and hiking and canoeing in Sylvania Wilderness area will be with me forever.

I met my husband in Eagle River and we now have a beautiful two-year-old daughter, Sylvie. As time passed, my desire to return to Iowa became stronger and stronger. I wanted Sylvie to grow up close to her cousins and I missed my family quite often. We decided that we were ready for a change and I began the search for a job in Iowa.

It took a year of searching for that perfect job, to find the right

one. I was excited to hear that I had been given the opportunity to move back home and to work for a county conservation board. I believe that educating the public about the natural world has positive outcomes and I was excited to be a part of that. I started at Clinton County Conservation Board on May 29, 2012.

I am thoroughly enjoying country living. Because the move was so far, we decided to live in the Syracuse Wildlife Area house until we established ourselves in a community and decided where the best place was for us to live. I spend my evenings walking the paths at Syracuse with my daughter and dogs, discovering the wildflowers and birds along the way. We like to wade across the creek and skip rocks. It really has been a nice transition.

The first few weeks at work have been busy. I have been spending my time touring the different park areas, as well as spending a lot of time on the Blue Heron boat. I have needed to learn the navigation routes on the river and it's been a lot of fun teaching people about the birds, turtles and snakes we find a long the way. I am really looking forward to a summer filled with tours on the Mississippi River! I spent some time working with the K-2nd summer camp kids; that was a fun week! To see the excitement on kid's faces when they hold a turtle for the first time or hop on a paddle boat is the reason why we do what we do. The rest of the summer is filled with more camps and programs at Eden Valley and Rock Creek. I am enjoying meeting the different people affiliated with our organization and attractions in Clinton County that draw people to the area. The people who work for Clinton County Conservation Board are amazing. They have made me feel welcomed and have been very helpful during my first few weeks here. I am truly blessed to be a part of something so great.

What I am most excited about in this job is the opportunity to learn about a new area. As a naturalist, you are constantly learning about the land around you, Mother Nature is not an easy subject to learn, it is constantly evolving and when you put yourself in a new area, the world around you has completely changed. The wildlife species we encounter in eastern Iowa, the tree and plant species, the ecosystem of the Mississippi River are all things that intrigue me and I am very excited to experience it all. To become a student once more and study the area around me, and then in turn, be able to share that knowledge with the people who have been living here for a long time, is great.

As we move forward, I feel like I have a lot to offer this organization. I have experience working with the public and am confident in my ability to learn the area and the many things Clinton County has to offer. I hope to bring some new ideas to this well established group and provide some fresh input on the programs that are currently being offered. I'm looking forward to utilizing the many parks and natural pieces of land Clinton County has and to provide opportunities for the public to explore these areas as well. I am excited to establish myself in such a great part of Iowa and I'm looking forward to continuing my growth as a Naturalist. I believe we are that connection between the people and the land, it is our job to keep that connection alive!



The Last Free-roaming Nations

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretative Naturalist

My last few articles have followed the story of the first nations to inhabit this land we call Iowa. For tens of thousands of years people have prized this country for its bounty and beauty. For many the land demands a deep and abiding respect while others, driven by greed and ambition, pilfer its every treasure. Are we one of these or some mixture of the two? How do we justify our past; what we have done and to whom we have done it? Or do we excuse ourselves by saying "that's just the way it goes"? Generations of Americans have been raised to believe the first peoples were savage, murderous and cruel. Well I've found there's enough of that to go around and unless we recognize these things in ourselves we will not overcome them.

In the year 1800 European/Native enterprises included the fur trade and lead mining. Fur trading with Native groups was dominated by Frenchmen at posts mainly on the east side of the Mississippi. The Spanish held the lead interests to the west. Competition between Native peoples for the opportunity to trade with the powerful Europeans for goods such as firearms and horses, certainly increased tensions between neighboring peoples. It was most likely this competition that caused the peaceful and horticultural Ioway, suffering greatly from war parties of their neighbors the Dakota, to move far up the Des Moines River also establishing themselves on the Grand and Platte Rivers farther west.

France was soon to acquire the west (Louisiana) from Spain through the then secret Treaty of San Ildefonso. Then in 1803 the U. S. bought the Louisiana Territory from France nearly doubling the size of our nation. Less than one year later Lewis & Clark traveled up the Missouri River on their mission to explore the new Western United States. Though they never met the Ioway themselves, the expedition learned from the Ioway's brothers, the Oto and Missouri, tribes, with whom the expedition hunted in the Loess Hills, that the Ioway nation consisted of 200 warriors with a total population of 800. By 1804 the Sauk peoples began moving into Iowa putting still more pressure on the Ioway to move farther west. This was probably due to a disputed treaty between the Sauk chieftain Quashquame (jumping fish) and William Henry Harrison that ceded much of Illinois to the U.S. in 1804.

In 1805 Zebulon Pike conducted a reconnaissance of the Upper Mississippi River. With a force of twenty men on a seventy-foot keelboat he ascended the Mississippi while Lewis and Clark were at the headwaters of the Missouri River far to the west. The expedition was ordered to explore the Mississippi, purchase sites from Native Nations for future military posts and bring a few important chiefs back to St. Louis for talks. Pike was only modestly successful in his relations with the Natives, striking one poorly translated land purchase with the Dakota at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers that is disputed to this day.

By 1809 Forts Madison, Armstrong, Crawford and Atkinson were constructed. These forts were built for the purpose of protecting Native Nations from each other and the incursion of illegal white settlements. But history would bear out a different reality when it came down to enforcement and justice. Entire Native Nations were often harshly penalized for the rash behavior of small bands. The military did at times aid the Natives. After the death of Julian Dubuque in 1810, white attempts to settle on

Dubuque's old claim were met with armed hostility which resulted in the expulsion of all whites from the west side of the Mississippi. Then in 1814, in an attempt to give them an undisputed home, the U.S. allotted lands to the Ioway known as "the Platte Purchase" extending from the Platte River of Missouri through the western Iowa Territory to the Dakota country. Land that was the Ioway's to begin with. Unfortunately, this agreement along with many others, would not stand the test of time.

In the years following through 1832 our government encouraged settlement of the east side of the Mississippi and continued the relocation of Natives to the west. Trade continued in furs and lead, but disease and forced population movement decimated Indian cultures and economies. Soon the U.S. government would begin to claim the lands that would become Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri through a series of treaties compelling the Ioway, Sauk and Dakota to cede their lands. On August 19, 1825 the Ioway surrendered their last claims to their lands. By 1829 the Ioway consisted of an estimated 1,000 members showing little change since the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

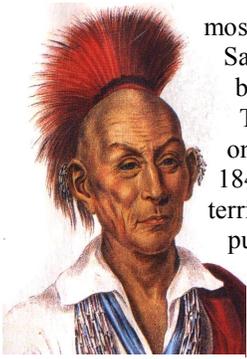
A massacre of the Meskwaki near the Dubuque mines on May 5, 1830 by a band of Dakota, Winnebago and Menomonee caused many survivors to flee to Rock Island, Illinois. White miners quickly took advantage of the situation and again moved across the Mississippi from the east. Troops under the command of Colonel Zachary Taylor (later the 12th US President) arrived in Dubuque on July 4, 1830 and ordered the miners to leave. In July of 1831, a Meskwaki war party retaliated against the earlier attack by ambushing a group of Menomonee in Wisconsin. Fearing pursuit, they abandoned their Catfish Creek village near Dubuque forever. White miners again crossed the Mississippi, only to be ordered out by troops under the command of Lieutenant Jefferson Davis (later, the President of the Confederate States of America). This game of cat and mouse; with troops chasing the miners back across the river lasted for several years until the land west of the Mississippi was opened for white settlement.

In 1832 the Ioway retreated from the northern part of the present State of Iowa. The Dakota then occupied much of the abandoned territory until the Sauk and Meskwaki settled in the neighborhood shortly before, and immediately after, the Black Hawk War. The Black Hawk War was brought about when the Sauk, enraged by the Quashquame and William Henry Harrison Treaty, revolted. The Sauk and Meskwaki were pushed out of the Mississippi valley in 1833 and much of eastern Iowa was opened for non-Indian settlement. After constant harassment by their new Sauk neighbors the Dakota withdrew. In June, the first American settlers officially moved into the Iowa Territory. Most Meskwaki people continued to live in villages in the Iowa River valley, moving farther up river with each land cession.

By 1842 the Meskwaki had parted with their Iowa lands and p.4



Ioway Oval Bark and Mat House



Sauk Chieftain, Black Hawk

most of them removed to Kansas with the Sauk. The following year the Meskwaki had been pushed out of the Iowa River valley.

The United States Indian Office reported only 470 Ioway that same year. Still, in 1845, some Meskwaki remained in the Iowa territory. In the following year they were pushed out of the territory altogether. The Chippewa, Potawatomi and Ottawa, ceded their last lands in 1846. Farms soon covered the Iowa Territory, industries such as coal mining flourished and Iowa became the 29th state on December 28, 1846. At this time the Ioway were camped along the Missouri River opposite Fort Leavenworth, their numbers continuing to fall.

In 1850 The Ho-Chunk were removed from Iowa and small towns were springing up across the state. Most of these early settlements were along rivers that powered the grist mills that ground the harvested grain to flour, especially in eastern Iowa. On May 17, 1854 Ioway reservation lands in Nebraska and Kansas were considerably reduced. The Spirit Lake massacre of 1857 was a five day rampage lead by a Dakota chieftain who had been enraged by the murder and mutilation of his family by a white who escaped prosecution. Fourteen renegade Dakota killed 35 or more settlers and took 4 hostage.

Then in 1862 a Dakota uprising took place when Natives under the care of the U.S., suffering from starvation due to the governments inability to provide rations allotted the Dakota through treaty, took matters into their own hands and raided nearby farms for food. The thieves were shot. Some angry Dakota, seeing the U.S. military busy with the Civil War, took the opportunity to try to win back their lands. In the aftermath 1600 Dakota women, children and elders were interned in a stockade at Fort Snelling where hundreds died of malnutrition and diseases through the winter. In the spring the survivors were loaded into steamers and sent to the south and up the Missouri to reservations in the west. During the 1850s something unprecedented happened. The Iowa Legislature passed an act allowing the Meskwaki to purchase land in Iowa. Many Meskwaki returned settling on their old homelands near Tama, Iowa and that settlement remains to this day. By 1859 nearly all the Meskwaki and Sauk had come back. As for the Ioway, their numbers have dwindled to very few. U.S. census have shown only 89 in 1905, 1910 returned 244 Ioway; of whom 124 were in Kansas, 79 in Oklahoma, and 38 in Nebraska. The 1923 census showed 338 Ioway living in Kansas and 82 in Oklahoma, for a total of 420. In 1930, census revealed 10 Ioway in Kansas, 83 in Nebraska, 56 in Oklahoma and 5 in other States for a total of 154. The 1937 census showed there were 112 Ioway in Oklahoma. Today they are all but gone. Truly a lost nation.

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Volunteer Opportunity ~ Friends of Rock Creek

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

It is amazing the growth and improvements that Rock Creek Marina and Campground has had over this past year, most noticeably with the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center (MRETC). We celebrated ground breaking in January of 2011 and opened in April of 2012. Anticipating increased demand, we also hired another full-time Interpretive Naturalist. With this new growth, we want to continue the trend with the development of a volunteer group we are calling the *Friends of Rock Creek*.

Many similar agencies have these invaluable friends groups to help out. We are currently looking for members to volunteer their time with many aspects of Rock Creek, primarily at the Eco Tourism Center. The Friends of Rock Creek will be a branch of the Clinton County Conservation (CCC) Foundation which is another group of volunteers that provide fundraising for the CCC Board. The Friends will not be responsible for any fundraising, but, hopefully with their help, there will be a trickle down effect which will boost freewill donations. In my mind, the Friends will be participating in the fun part of the CCC family by interacting with the public, grounds and the facility directly. Depending on the talents, skills and ambitions of the volunteers, the possibilities to help are endless. They may be asked to help staff a Foundation fundraising event, assist the naturalists with a large presentation/event, answer questions, and keep the nature gallery in the MRETC in tip-top shape.

From the influx of visitors at the MRETC, boaters using the new boat ramp and campers at the campground, we have already seen the need of ready volunteers. For instance, our Kindergarten - 2nd grade camp held in June was over our goal capacity and we reached out to a few unofficial volunteers to help with the camp. We are doing the same thing for our two 3rd - 5th Grade Camps. If those volunteers are reading this, thank you again, we could not

have done it without you! Another time when volunteers would be helpful is weekends during the summer. The store staff is usually swamped with checking campers in, renting equipment, fixing meals and answering the phone. Unfortunately they do not have time, to simply mingle and mix with the crowd in the Nature Gallery section of the Eco Center to answer common questions. Also, the store staff relies on self service for finding the correct PFD/life jacket and canoe paddle and honor system for returning equipment. I think it would be nice if someone was trained to fit people to the right equipment and demonstrated the proper way to wear it and then check the equipment back in. Also, when the weather gets cooler the Center may not be staffed as often, but if we decide on regular hours for the center to be open by volunteers, then people can have a chance to view this great place all year long. Some other tasks, depending on volunteer interests, is brochure rack filling, manicuring the landscaping outside the center, some animal care, cleaning displays, litter duty and much more!

To start things off we will have informational meetings every fourth Tuesday of the month with the first meeting on July 24th at 7 PM. Unlike many other groups, there will not be a membership fee. At the first few meetings I am envisioning introductions, a tour of the facility and a questionnaire of interests. As the group progresses we will develop a mission, by-laws and officers. If need be, we can change time and dates of regular meetings.

So if you, or someone you know, would like to volunteer at this new, growing, great place and like work to work with people, please come to the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center in the big, community room at 7 PM on July 24th. Or any other fourth Tuesday of the month at 7 PM. It is never too late to start. If you have any questions, please call me at 563-847-7202.

Make a Family Memory

Weekly Scheduled Events

Sunset Cruises ~ Every Thursday Evening ~ Rock Creek ~
Call 563-259-1876. Starting at:

- 7 PM ~ July & August
- 6 PM September
- 5 PM October

Early Bird Cruises ~ Every Saturday Morning ~ 9 AM ~
Rock Creek ~ Through Labor Day, Call 563-259-1876.

Nature Center Open ~ Every Saturday Afternoon ~ 1-4 PM ~
Eden Valley ~ July-October

July

3rd ~ Full Moon Float ~ 9 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join our natural-ist for this peaceful family oriented trip through the quiet backwaters of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge. Paddling gear is free on a first-come, first-served basis. Persons using their own gear must be equipped with legal running lights; a center 360 degree white light, flash light and whistle. Meet at the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. Participation is limited, call 563-847-7202 and register today.

6th ~ And They're Off! Turtle Races ~ 6 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Bring your own or borrow a turtle. Meet near the playground for an exciting evening of racing! Depending on the number of racers, there will be prelims and a final. The grand prize winner will win a free night of camping!

6th ~ And They're Off! Turtle Races ~ 8 PM ~ Walnut Grove ~ Bring your own or borrow a turtle, for an exciting evening of racing! Depending on the number of racers, there will be prelims and a final. The grand prize winner will win a free night of camping!



7th ~ Stream Stomp / Great Mississippi River Cleanup ~ 8:30 AM-12:30 PM ~ Clinton County ~ Join other environmental activists, both young and old, as they pick, pull, haul and drag everything from litter, to tires, to metal scrap from the shores of our rivers, streams, backwaters and upland areas. Chad Pregracke will be joining us in our efforts this year with his fleet of flatboats on the Mississippi. To register contact Brad at Clinton Area Solid Waste by calling 563-243-4749. To contribute supplies or refreshments contact Melisa, Project Coordinator, at 309-737-9016.

7th ~ And They're Off! Turtle Races ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Bring your own or borrow a turtle. Meet near the east playground for an exciting evening of racing! Depending on the number of racers, there will be prelims and a final. The grand prize winner will win a free night of camping!

7th ~ Fish Boil ~ 4-7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ It's back & better than ever! Enjoy a Door County-style fish boil with all the trimmings.

13th ~ Calls of the Wild ~ 6:30 PM ~ Walnut Grove ~ Come learn about the art of animal communications, the reasons why and when they can be heard! Test your wildlife identification skills by sound alone!

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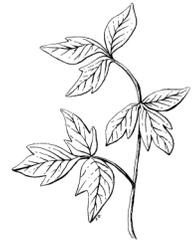


14th ~ Calls of the Wild ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Do you hear what I hear? Come test your knowledge on wildlife communications and match the correct animal with its sound! This is a fun, interactive program, be prepared to move around! We will meet at the picnic tables located under the deck at the center.

14th ~ Hayrack Rides ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Good times aboard this hayrack ride. An adult must accompany children.

14th ~ 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.

19th ~ Peculiar Plants ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ This is a hands on nature class designed for children 3 - 5 years of age while accompanied by an adult. For the hour we will read a story then take a short walk, look at plants and what makes some of them extra special and which ones to avoid.



21st ~ Free Paddling ~ 8 AM-Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ Rock Creek's canoes and kayaks will be available to use free of charge in the Mississippi River backwaters around the park.

21st ~ Tubin' the Bear ~ 1 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Here's some fun for a hot, summer day. Slip on a PFD and grab one of our recycled inner tubes for a fun splash down Bear Creek. A ¼ mile stretch of the creek will be designated and the end clearly marked. When you've finished simply return your PFD and tube or jump in again if there isn't anyone waiting for a tube.

21st ~ Fish Boil ~ 4-7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Enjoy a Door County-style fish boil dinner with all the trimmings.

21st ~ Hayrack Rides ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Good times aboard this hayrack ride. An adult must accompany children.

24th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Organizational Meeting ~ 7 PM ~ This meeting is for anyone interested in assisting the Clinton County Conservation Department as a volunteer to help with environmental programming, promotion, etc. This meeting will be held monthly at the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center every fourth Tuesday of the month.

25th ~ Kids' Fishing Tournament ~ 5:30-8:30 PM ~ 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.



Awards will be given out 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 a 5:30 PM, with fishing from 6 to 8 PM; weigh-in and casting contest will follow.

26th ~ Music in the Moonlight ~ 9 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come enjoy an evening of home spun music beneath the waxing "Thunder Moon" aboard the Blue Heron Eco-cruiser. Make your free reservation early by calling 563-259-1876.

27th ~ Vapor, Liquid, Ice Cream! ~ 7 PM ~ Walnut Grove ~ Come to do some fun water experiments and make an individual serving of your own home-made ice cream! Donations appreciated.

27th ~ Christmas in July Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~

- Campsite Christmas Light Competition, sign up in Camp Store by 8 PM
- Christmas light viewing hayride 8:30 PM
- Campsite Christmas lighting contest judging 9 PM

28th ~ Christmas in July Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~

- **Vapor, Liquid, Christmas Ice Cream!** Eco Tourism Center 1 PM, Come to do some fun water experiments and make an individual serving of homemade peppermint ice cream!
- **Kids Coloring Contest**, all day, Camp Store
- **Christmas Movies**, Eco Tourism Center 7 PM

28th ~ Make an Herb Wreath ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ Make and take your own fresh herb wreath. Pre-registration required. Call 563-242-4771.

31st ~ Mussels, Moonshine and Music: Mississippi Valley Migrant Life in the Early Twentieth Century" ~ 6 PM ~ Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton, IL ~ Presented by Dennis A. Stroughmatt, Illinois Humanities Council

August

1st ~ Mussel Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Blue Heron will take participants to learn about and wade for freshwater mussels. Freshwater mussels are the most endangered group of animals on earth; find out why. Call 563-259-1876 for reservations.

3rd ~ Bat Stream ~ 8 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Walk (or drive) north of the campground to experience "The Bat Stream". A torrent of bats whiz past on their way to the river for a night of foraging for mosquitoes. Meet at the Eco Tourism Center.

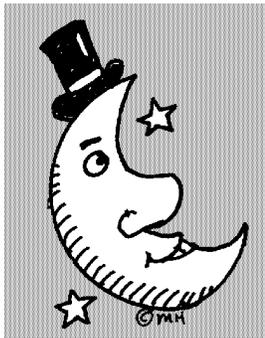


4th ~ Crossroads Triathlon ~ 7:30 AM ~ Killdeer Recreation Area ~ Clinton County's only triathlon will be a great event! Participants will start with a 500-yard swim in Lake Killdeer, then bike 15 miles and then run 3.1 miles. Contact race organizers <http://crossroadstriathlon.com/>

4th ~ Free Paddling ~ 8 AM-Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ Rock Creek's canoes and kayaks will be available to use free of charge in the Mississippi River backwaters around the park.

4th ~ Free Canoe Shuttle ~ 2 PM ~ Walnut Grove ~ We will loan out our canoes free of charge and provide shuttle service up to Massillon Park, 4 miles upriver to float on your own back to Walnut Grove. Call to sign up, 563-847-7202. Limit of 2 canoes per group. All participants must be off the river by 6 PM.

4th ~ Fish Boil ~ 4-7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Enjoy a Door County-style fish boil dinner with all the trimmings.



4th ~ 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.

10th ~ Twinkle, Twinkle ~ 9 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Take a closer look at the night sky. Telescopes will be set up at the park's Observation Tower. In case of an overcast sky we will tour via the Stellarium program projected at the playground or in the Nature Center in the case of rain.

11th ~ Lost Lakes Paddling ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come explore the wilderness of the Upper Mississippi Fish & Wildlife Refuge. Paddle craft equipment will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis by your Clinton County Conservation Department. A naturalist will lead through the twists and turns of this wildlife filled backwater area. Meet the group at the newly built Eco-tourism Center. Participation is limited so call 563-847-7202 and register today.



11th ~ Paddling Pool 13 ~ 3 PM ~ Thomson Causeway ~ Thomson, IL ~ Take a quick-start course on paddling and join the naturalist for a short trip into the tranquil backwaters of the Mississippi River's Pool 13.

11th ~ Bags tournament ~ 3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Win prizes from Rock Creek. Start at Camp Store. Please bring bag toss sets.

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



17th ~ Turtle Talk ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ In the heat of the summer, we often see a variety of turtles basking in the sunlight.

Come learn about the different species of turtles found in our neck of the woods and the important role they play in a healthy ecosystem. Meet some of our live turtle residents!

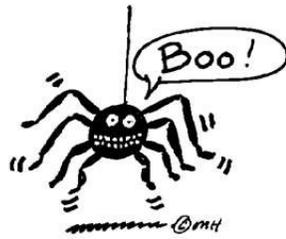
18th ~ Nature Scavenger Hunt ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come discover the many amazing things the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center has to offer by exploring in and around the building in an adventurous scavenger hunt! You will need your walking shoes as you venture out on your own searching for your clues and answers hidden in the center and throughout the campground!

18th ~ Fourth Annual Rock Creek Catfish Classic ~ 6 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is hosting this tournament to raise funds to help finish the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center displays at Rock Creek. Costs are \$50/boat and \$10 for the Big Fish Pot. Prize money is to be determined by the number of entries with a minimum 70 percent payout guaranteed to the top 3 boats. There are door prizes for all contestants. Check-in will begin at 6 AM and weigh-in at 2 PM sharp. Up to a limit of 10 channel cats, at a 12" minimum length, will be weighed per entry. Sign-up and rules available at www.mycountyparks.com/County/Clinton/Park/Rock-Creek-Marina-Campground/Events



22nd ~ Itsy Bitsy Spiders ~ 10 AM

~ Rock Creek ~ This is a hands on nature class designed for children 3 - 5 years of age while accompanied by an adult. For the hour we will read a story then take a short walk around the park to look for spiders and spider webs while learning how they are helpful and what makes them unique.



24th ~ Evening Float ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Join us for a leisurely paddle on the quiet backwaters of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. We will cover about 5.5 miles of wilderness viewing its flora and fauna as we go. Paddle craft equipment will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis by your Clinton County Conservation Department. Participation is limited so call 563-847-7202 and register today.

25th ~ Butterfly Fest ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ Learn about the Monarch Butterfly. Programs and displays join in tagging and releasing monarch butterflies.

25th ~ Tubin' the Bear ~ 1 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Here's some fun for a hot, summer day. Slip on a PFD and grab one of our recycled inner tubes for a fun splash down Bear Creek. A ¼ mile stretch of the creek will be designated and the end clearly marked. When you've finished simply return your PFD and tube or jump in again if there isn't anyone waiting for a tube.

25th ~ Hayrack Rides ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Good times aboard this hayrack ride. An adult must accompany children.

25th ~ 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.

28th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 7 PM ~ This meeting is for anyone interested in assisting the Clinton County Conservation Department as a volunteer to help with environmental programming, promotion and assistance. This meeting will be held monthly at the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center every fourth Tuesday of the month.



29th ~ Fabyan Windmill: Mill on the Fox River ~ 6 PM ~ Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton, IL

30th ~ Music in the Moonlight ~ 9 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come enjoy an evening of home spun music beneath the waxing "Green Corn Moon" aboard the Blue Heron. The cruise is free of charge so make your reservation early by calling 563-259-1876.

31st ~ Creek Stomp'n! ~ 4 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ Wear an old pair of shoes and let's explore Bear Creek! Nets, buckets and I.D. books will be provided as we catch some critters, look for fossils, and check out the banks of this amazing creek. Be prepared to get wet!

31st ~ The Trusty Compass ~ 7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ With technology always improving, we sometimes forget about the basics! This is a beginner compass activity, you will learn the parts of the compass, and how to properly use the compass with an interactive orienteering course.



September

1st ~ Bon Voyage Party for "Exploring TREES Inside and Out" Exhibit ~ 11 AM to 5 PM ~ Sawmill Museum ~ It's a going away party for the exhibit that will be next seen in Saudi Arabia. \$2 discount on admission with a donation of a canned item for the Food Pantry.

1st ~ Fish Boil ~ 4-7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Enjoy a Door County-style fish boil dinner with all the trimmings.

1st ~ Leaf Printing ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Calling all creative minds! Bring a plain t-shirt, pillowcase, bandana or other small piece of cloth and create a leaf printed original! Choose from the many different kinds of leaves found in the area and have fun painting your item! Participation is limited so call 563-847-7202 and register today. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

8th ~ Youth Outdoor Skills Day ~ 8 AM-5 PM ~ Clinton Izaak Walton League ~ Looking for a way to open your child's eyes to a life of adventure in the great outdoors? Looking for a chance for your child to gain experience with a variety of outdoor skills? We have just the thing! Clinton County kids ages, 11-18, will learn about safety and skills at various stations staffed by various Conservation Organizations such as *Pheasants Forever*, *Harvester Bass Club*, *Whitetails Unlimited*, *Wild Turkey Federation* and *Clinton County Conservation*. All stations will involve hands-on activities designed to give kids practical experience while keeping safety at the forefront. Parents and younger siblings are encouraged to attend with students. They will be invited to eat lunch, free of charge, along with participants. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Each participant will be charged a non-refundable \$5 registration fee and receive a commemorative T-shirt. Call 563-847-7202 for sign-up.



15th ~ EnviroKids ~ 9 AM-Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ Hop aboard the Blue Heron boat at Rock Creek for a cruise and more!

15th ~ Leaf Cast Bird Bath ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ Master Gardener Deb Monroe will instruct the class in making a unique leaf cast bird bath. Pre-registration required. Call 563-242-4771.

15th ~ Fish Boil ~ 4-7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Enjoy a Door County-style fish boil dinner with all the trimmings.

19th ~ Monarchs and Milkweed ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ This is a hands on nature class designed for children 3-5 years of age while accompanied by an adult. For the hour we will read a story, look around to find eggs, caterpillars, chrysalis and net butterflies. Hopefully we will then tag and release monarchs to continue their journey south to Mexico.

21st - 23rd ~ Annual Lower Wapsi Cleanup ~ 8 AM ~ Walnut Grove ~ Toronto, IA ~ This year, river levels permitting, we hope to clean the original stretch of the lower Wapsipinicon that was targeted so many years ago. Our volunteers have covered the river from Anamosa to the Mississippi and portions of the "Big River's" backwaters. Now it's time to see what's drifted in since that first trip. Join us Friday night for early check-in and a community friendship fire or



arrive early Saturday morning to check in. We'll move downstream from the park with landings at Muhl Bridge, Syracuse Wildlife Area and Sherman Park. Sunday's efforts will be focused on the river between Sherman and Allen's Grove landing with a halfway stop at Buena Vista. For information contact Melisa Jacobsen, coordinator@lowerwapsicleanup.org

25th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 7 PM ~ This meeting is for anyone interested in assisting the Clinton County Conservation Department as a volunteer to help with environmental programming, promotion and assistance. This meeting will be held monthly at the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center every fourth Tuesday of the month.

26th ~ Color Change ~ 2 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ Join Clinton County Conservation Naturalist after school as you explore the colors of fall! This hour long program will include a story, craft and interactive game explaining photosynthesis and the reason why leaves change color.



27th ~ Illinois Rivers & Flooding ~ 6 PM ~ Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton, IL



27th ~ Music in the Moonlight ~ 9 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come enjoy an evening of home spun music beneath the waxing "Hunter's Moon" aboard the Blue Heron Eco-cruise Boat. The cruise is free of charge. For reservation call 563-259-1876.

29th ~ Something NEW at the Sawmill Museum! ~ Time TBA ~ Something to explore if you're small. Something to look at in the fall! Tales of history! Pictures of mystery! Exhibits for one and for all!

29th ~ Fish Boil ~ 4-7 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Enjoy a Door County style fish boil dinner with all the trimmings. Season finale!

October

3rd ~ 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 call 563-357-0759, then bring their instruments along. 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 welcomed.



6th ~ Building a Leopold Bench ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ Call 563-242-4771.

6th ~ Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom ~ Pheasants Forever's Clinton County Chapter is holding its annual fund-raiser at the Millennium Ballroom in Goose Lake. The group provides funds to local landowners and agencies for the establishment of wildlife habitat. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 for tickets.

6th & 7th ~ Overnight on Pool 14 ~ 8 AM ~ Lock & Dam 13 ~ Paddle campers will meet at Lock & Dam #13, load boats and depart downstream by 9 AM. The group will cover approximately 15 miles of the Mississippi Rivers gentle, mainly backwater, currents and travel through its largest island. We will camp in the vicinity of the mouth of the Wapsipicon River and continue on early Sunday morning to L&D 14. We have a limited number of paddle craft and equipment, 2 person tents, dry bags, cook sets and mess kits free for your use. Call 563-847-7202 to register/reserve county equipment.

6th & 7th ~ Fall Festival ~ 10 AM to 4 PM ~ Heritage Canyon, Fulton, IL ~ Experience pioneer living with the Early American Crafters as they prepare for the fall harvest. Demonstrations include broom stick making, wood stove cooking, weaving, knitting, candle making, wood carving, music and more. For information, contact Fulton Chamber of Commerce at 815-589-4545.

River Cities Educational Attractions

You may have noticed that there are more events being printed in our newsletter than just the Clinton CCB's. A loose coalition of local educational attractions has come together to cooperate and cross-promote each other for the benefit of all. We will include the events that fit our "Outdoor Family Fun" philosophy so people can be more informed about what opportunities are coming up. Our first effort is the River Cities Summer Passport.

Passport Procedures:

- Program is offered May 26th through September 3rd. Pick up your passport at a participating site.
- After your visit to a participating site, get your passport stamped by the "Ticket Agent". When you have collected 6 stamps, you are eligible to enter for a prize drawing. Drawings will be after Labor Day.
- Each site will hold a drawing for its own prize. Request an entry form at your favorite site.

We are tentatively planning a Fall/Winter Passport to encourage return visits, especially for special events.

Our list of Passport Partners hopefully will continue to grow. The current list:

- Clinton Area Showboat Theatre www.clintonshowboat.org
- Felix Adler Children's Discovery Center, adlerdiscoverycenter.org
- George M. Curtis Mansion 563-249-5861
- Fulton (Martin House) Museum & Windmill Cultural Center, www.cityoffulton.us
- Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek Marina & Campground www.clintoncounty-ia.gov
- River Arts Center www.clintonartsassociation.com
- The Sawmill Museum www.thesawmillmuseum.org
- St. Boniface Catholic Heritage Center



Weekend Towns

by Chip Brown, West District Park Officer

During the afternoon on Wednesdays and Thursdays, campgrounds begin to fill. Living at the entrance to one of Clinton County's busiest parks, I witness first hand the sites and sounds of a filling campground.

I see the hustle and bustle of cars, trucks and campers coming into our parks. The familiar sounds of dogs barking, people talking, kids playing and trucks pulling campers begin to get more and more frequent. By early Friday evening, a small town has moved in. I call it a town due to the population that comes with it. The average campsite consists of 4 people. Here at Eden Valley we have 37 sites, that's 148 campers. We also have day users, camper visitors and cabin rentals.

That's over 200 people in one place for at least 2 days. In my book that constitutes being called a town. With that town comes the normal urban needs like water, electric and garbage services. Our small town here at Eden Valley produces enough garbage to fill a 4-yard dumpster in 2 days. They also frequent our restrooms enough times to use 32 complete rolls of toilet paper.

As Friday evening draws closer to dark, the town located between two large valley walls begins to fill with smoke and the light from those fires begin to glow. Like a town, problems arise when neighbors don't get along. For me a perfect night starts when I begin my rounds at Eden Valley, with my meet and greet walk through the campground. I like talking to all the people and hearing their comments whether it be good or bad. New people to the park have all kinds of questions from what kind of activities do you provide to where can we buy firewood? When is the nature center open is another often-asked question. Frequent users, or what I like to call regulars, have more personal or conversation type questions. What have you been up to these past weeks? How are your kids doing? Are you going on any hunting trips this fall? Both kinds of park users are great and really help



the night go by fast. Sometimes I get so caught up in the stories and questions, that I forget about the time and that I have two other parks with campgrounds I need to go to also.

Walnut Grove Park's campground, being equal in size to Eden Valley, has the same small town atmosphere but with one more recreational twist. Walnut Grove Park has the Wapsipinicon River with a new boat ramp for easy river access. On holiday weekends you can easily say, including river traffic, that there are close to 300 park users. Sherman Park consists of 20 campsites plus Wapsi River frontage sites and a boat ramp. Population for this park can easily reach 150 on a good weekend.

Clinton County's West District's three small towns can reach populations of 650 plus. Once the new Sherman Park showers are complete I am predicting that between the 3 modern restrooms (containing 4 showers, 4 toilets, and 4 sinks each) we will use around 85 rolls of toilet paper each weekend. The West District's small towns consists of 62 electric sites with gravel pads and 30 primitive sites. We also have 3 cabins, 3 shelters, over 100 picnic tables, 100 fire rings, 4 septic fields, 3 deep water wells, 3 dump stations, about 10 miles of trails and a few thousand of feet of gravel roads. Once you fill all those sites with miniature mobile houses and lots of people, I would have to say you have three small towns flourishing with activities. If you're getting tired of the big city life, come enjoy the life of relaxation, many activities and good neighbors in the weekend towns of the Clinton County Conservation Board's West District.

East District Update

by Brad Taylor, Park Officer, East District

With summer now in full swing the campgrounds could not be busier. At Rock Creek we are having record numbers of park visitors. Much of that credit will go to the great weather that we have had all spring and early summer and the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. We are starting to get some reservations on the 200-person capacity banquet room and on the 30-person meeting room. This turned out to be a beautiful building that we are very proud of. If you have not seen it yet, I would encourage you to take a trip to Rock Creek to view the record fish displays in the store and the 8,000 gallon aquarium.

The new building and the huge amount of park visitors have taken up the majority of our time. We are slowly trying to get the building where we need it to be to function at its fullest. The fish aquarium looks a little empty right now but that has a lot to do with the biology of the tank. We cannot add a lot of fish at once until the good bacteria is built up in the filter system. As these bacteria build up we can slowly start to add fish. Within a few

weeks it will be able to handle more fish and hopefully some bigger ones as well. We have also started working on the landscaping Around the building. This is a slow process we are trying to do in between the rest of our projects.

Another addition at Rock Creek is a new river rescue boat. We received a grant early this spring to purchase a 18-foot, custom built Jon boat from Illowa Marine, right here in Clinton. This boat is designed to go into shallow water where other boats cannot go. With 55 miles of Wapsipinicon River in this county and 35 miles of Mississippi River, this boat will be a great asset to the county. Before, it was hard to get other boats in the Wapsi in emergency situations with all the logs and shallow water. This boat can handle those things with very little trouble.

Make sure you check out the events, we have added many new activities, including our first annual Christmas in July Weekend.



A Sea of Purple

by Darin Voss, Natural Resource Technician

As you're driving down country roads this time of year and looking out over the countryside, you may notice pastures, wildlife areas or waste areas that are inundated with the color purple. There is a vast array of plants that produce a purple flower and many are aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Of these plants some are native while others are alien. Some of these plants are beneficial while others are invasive and can be a nuisance. The group of purple flowering plants that really catches my eye that I would like to discuss further is in the family Asteraceae, more specifically genus *Cirsium* and *Carduus*. Many of you may know this group of prickly plants as thistles.

There are many different thistles that are commonly found in Iowa. Of these several species including tall thistle (*Cirsium Altissimum*) and field thistle (*Cirsium discolor*) are native to Iowa. These plants are beneficial to many wildlife species. The flowers produce a lot of nectar that attract bees, butterflies, moths and even hummingbirds. Other animals will eat the stems, roots, buds and even the leaves. The American goldfinch (below), which is the Iowa state bird, as well as other birds, feed on thistle seed. With proper management of the land these two thistles tend to not be as invasive as the non-native species.



This leads me into a more in depth discussion of three thistle species that are exotic (non-native) to Iowa, that are very invasive.

Canada (*Cirsium arvense*), bull (*Cirsium vulgare*) and musk or nodding (*Carduus nutans*). Keep in mind there are many more non-native invasive thistle species but these are the three I find myself dealing with on our wildlife areas most often.

Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) and bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) have similar life cycles and habitat. Both species are native to Europe and Asia but were introduced to the U.S. in the 1800's. They may have been introduced as ornamentals or as seed contaminants. These thistles are commonly a problem in over grazed pastures and other disturbed areas. When left untreated they will out compete and crowd out native vegetation and valuable pasture land. Musk and bull thistle are biennials which take two growing seasons to complete their life cycle. In the first year of growth seedlings emerge in early spring but may also emerge in the fall. They then grow into the rosette stage where they will overwinter. The following year, musk thistle will bolt



(send up a tall flowering stalk) in early spring and typically flower in late May and June. Bull thistle typically bolts a little later than musk thistle and flower between late June and into the fall.

These two thistles reproduce solely by seed; this makes it critical to keep the plants from going to seed for control. There are several means of control which will keep them from going to seed. The first method is manual control. If the infestation is not very large, they can be dug out with a shovel before the plant has gone to seed. It is critical to remove a few inches of the root and to destroy the flowers so that any seed that has developed will not become viable. If the patches are larger, mechanical means such as mowing can be an option to reduce the population. Mowing should be done while in the bud to flowering stage but before it has gone to seed. It may be necessary to mow a second time if the plants re-bolt and produce more seed heads. After mowing it is important to clean off your equipment before moving to a different site so that you don't spread any seed that may already be developed. A third type of control is chemical. It is best to treat in the fall during the rosette stage or in the early spring before they bolt.



Canada thistle is different from musk and bull thistle in that it is a perennial. Canada thistle is native to Europe and is thought to have been introduced to the U.S as far back as the 1600's as an accidental in farm seed. It is also a problem in overgrazed pastures and disturbed areas as well as crop fields. Canada thistle produces far less seed, 1,500 – 2,000 seeds per plant rather than 20,000 per plant like the other two species of thistle. Canada thistle reproduces prolifically from underground buds that form into shoots off of an extensive root system. This method of reproduction forms very dense stands and gives this thistle a nickname of creeping thistle. In very little time this thistle can crowd out pasture lands, crop fields and native vegetation.



It is very important to control Canada thistle early on. It becomes very difficult once it is established. Unlike musk and bull thistle, manual and mechanical means of control are not very effective alone due to a complex root system. However, mowing can be effective to stimulate new shoots to flush which can then be chemically treated. The best time of year to treat is in the spring up to early bud stage and again in the fall. Another thing to keep in mind is that Canada thistle does not do well if shaded. Well managed desirable vegetation can shade and out compete Canada thistle which can keep it from being a problem.

Some may find the showy purple flowers of thistles aesthetically pleasing and see them as being beneficial to wildlife. I feel that native thistle have their place in the landscape. However, according to the law we still need to control them. The exotic species are extremely invasive and it is important to control them before they get out of control and cause economic loss or take over a natural ecosystem. Just remember, there is no silver bullet in controlling these species, but persistence will pay off.

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

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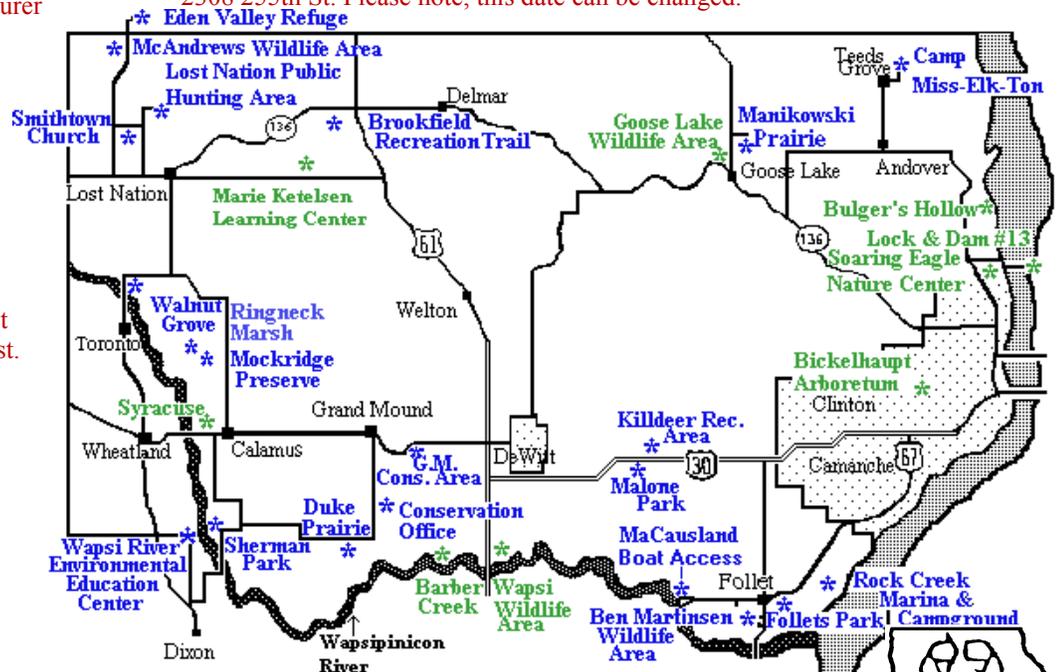
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Clinton County addresses are free.
 Others are charged \$5 annually.
 "The Heron" is on our website or emailed, free of charge.

BOARD MEETINGS

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



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

