

The Heron

*Quarterly Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
Volume 34 Number 1 Winter 2012*

First Purple Heart Hunter is a Success!

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

The Clinton County Conservation Board recently started a program to give opportunities for US military heroes and disabled veterans to experience hunting at its best, one-on-one.

Thomas Detweiler, a Vietnam war veteran from Hiawatha, Iowa, recently became the first hunter to experience Clinton County Conservation Board's newest program, *Purple Heart Hunting*. The hunt took place October 3rd through the 9th near Rock Creek Marina & Campground. The program provides free, handicapped-accessible hunting opportunities to American soldiers that have received combat citations, are disabled or are a former prisoner of war. Tom found out about the program at the *Hiawatha American Legion Post #735* meeting from the information I sent out to Veteran's groups across Iowa.

Tom is an honorably discharged, decorated combat veteran and has received the following awards: Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with Bronze Star, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm and Rifle Expert Badge.

Tom spent the first week of October staying with his wife, Nancy, in the Wood Duck Cabin at Rock Creek. He used a camouflage electric golf cart, that was recently purchased with the help of the American Legion, to quietly get to and from the hunting blind. Tom is 80% disabled from military injuries. While serving, he was exposed to Agent Orange and has neuropathy in his hands and feet, asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, post-traumatic stress disorder and is hearing impaired. He got his first deer in many years on the morning of Sunday, October 9th. He took the large doe with a crossbow, which is only allowed for use by people with disabilities. Tom called me to assist in field dressing and transporting the deer to Matthiesen's Deer and Custom Processing in Malone. Tom saw a lot of wildlife while sitting in the blind, from songbirds and squirrels to deer and turkeys.

Another of our military heroes is scheduled to hunt during the second shotgun deer season. He is a 90% disabled Iraqi war veteran and, in his own words, was "blown up". He plans to take his little boy with him. He feels this will be a great way to pass on his hunting heritage to his son. The program is meant to give our wounded warriors the opportunity to hunt on their own, the way they remember. So far so good. I hope we have another success story for our next newsletter!

We still have openings for the late deer and spring turkey season. It is not too early to book next fall's hunt. Tom was very happy with the entire experience and wrote the following letter to me.



Mark -

I am writing to thank you for the opportunity you gave me to hunt "The Purple Heart Hunt". It was a great experience that I will remember a lifetime. I would not have been able to hunt were it not for this opportunity. I had great weather with temperatures in the eighties. My week-long adventure started with the surprise that I could use a golf cart to get back in the woods. What a great help it was. It saved so much walking that I am unable to do on my own.

Once in the woods, I was fortunate enough to be able to use the ground blind provided by the DNR. The first day I hunted, I saw a small doe which winded me. It was pretty quiet during the week until Wednesday morning when I had eleven turkeys surrounding my blind. I wish I would have had a turkey tag! They went on their way and I didn't see anything until Sunday, my last day to hunt. I hunted the morning and about 8:00 I saw three deer come out of the corn. I used my deer call to call them in. It worked and I was able to shoot a nice 165-pound doe. Everything worked out nicely and my patience was rewarded.

Thanks to Clinton County Conservation, Illowa Marine of Clinton, American Legion of Iowa, Steel Tuff of Low Moor, Scott County Pheasants Forever, Scott County Waterfowl USA and Wapsi Bottoms Whitetails Unlimited.

Tom Detweiler, U.S. Army, Retired

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center ~ Working out the Details

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

Details, details, details! The list of details that need to be addressed for the Eco Center seems almost endless. Now that the facility is under construction, it seems that every day, there are more details that need to be ironed out. I guess that is to be expected on a project of this scale. The Eco Center, scheduled for a spring 2012 opening, is 8,400 square foot in size with a price tag of over \$1.7 million dollars. Another \$650,000 will be spent on interpretive displays, an 8,000 gallon aquarium, equipment and furnishings. Our staff and especially our volunteers have worked too hard for too long raising those dollars for us to be wasteful. We want to stretch every dollar as far as possible.

The size and scope of this project means that there are literally thousands of details that need discussed. Many issues were addressed during the planning process and many more are arising now that we are under construction. New issues are brought to my attention almost every day. Some of the problems seem simple enough and can be handled fairly easily. Everything, from what color do we want to paint the walls in the community hall to the style of the deck rails, needs to be decided. Some issues are much bigger than that. Like, how do we get an 8,000 gallon aquarium in a building with 36" doorways? Don't worry, we've got that one figured out!

Some of the bigger issues yet to be completely ironed out deal with the day to day operation of the facility itself. Questions that are not yet fully answered include, what are the operating hours going to be? What will we be charging for the hall rental? How often will we offer public Blue Heron cruises? Is the camp store and cafe menu going to change? What kind and how many public events are we going to schedule? Will there need to be staffing changes and how will they be addressed? What about volunteer help? The list goes on and on. Despite all this, I am confident that

the staff, board members and I will have everything worked out and be up and running by sometime next spring or early summer.

Tremendous progress has been made on the facility since the last article on the subject appeared in the summer 2011 issue of *The Heron*. After years of hard work and planning by staff and volunteers and many generous donations, the walls are now up and the roof is on. With winter setting in, the construction crews are turning their attention to interior work.

Designs have been completed for the interpretive displays and we are now completing fund raising for these. Recently, the Howe Foundation made a \$250,000 donation towards the aquarium. Art Aquatics of Toledo, Ohio, has been contracted to build the large (18' x 10' x 6') aquarium. It is now under construction. We hope to have it completed and ready to install by March of 2012! ADM (Archer Daniels Midland) also recently announced a \$50,000 grant towards the project. ADM's donation will be applied to the interpretive displays such as the backwaters wetland display. This donation puts us much closer to our goal of having a fully outfitted facility come next summer, but we aren't quite there yet. The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is still actively soliciting donations to complete the project. If you are interested in helping out, you can contact me by phoning our office at 563-847-7202.

Much of the final planning for the operation of the facility will be worked out this winter, well before the facility opens some time next spring. There is no doubt in our minds that the *Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center* is going to be a great facility and a popular destination for tourists and locals alike. It is our goal to make the Eco Tourism Center a place you'll want to come back to again and again with your family and friends.



Jan. 6, 2011 ~ Groundbreaking



July 7, 2011 Platform Installed



Aug. 26, 2011 ~ Roof Trusses



Oct. 5, 2011 ~ Walls & Roof Up



Nov. 14, 2011 ~ Roof Finished



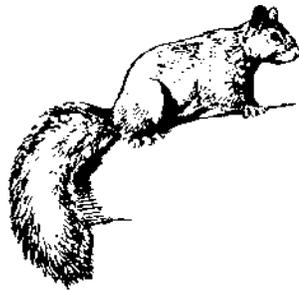
Dec. 12, 2011 ~ Exterior Near Done

A Different Perspective

by Darin Voss, Natural Resource Technician

It's this time of the year that I normally find myself out in the field or out on the water doing as much hunting as possible. This year has been extremely busy and I have not been able to do as much hunting as I would have liked. However, I am fortunate to have the opportunity to make up for it by taking a week of vacation to dedicate towards hunting. I plan to spend the first part of my vacation in Northeast Iowa, deer hunting with family and then off to South Dakota to pheasant hunt with a college buddy. As I have been eagerly waiting for my vacation to get here, I've done some thinking about what hunting is to me, as well as other people's perspective.

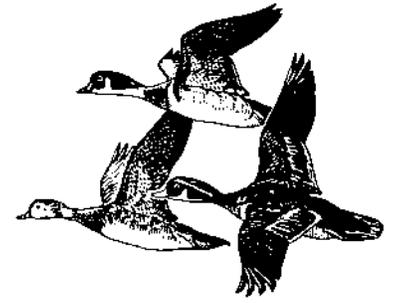
I grew up in northeast Iowa where the landscape consists of an abundance of timber land broken up by ridges and bottoms of cropland. This landscape, at least as long as I've been around, has supported a healthy population of many game species including deer, wild turkey, squirrels, rabbits, pheasants and many more. I am very thankful that I was brought up in a family where my father hunted and cared enough to pass the tradition down. I can still recollect some of my first hunting experiences that started around the age of eight. Squirrel hunting was the first type of hunting that I was exposed to. Dad always used squirrel hunting to teach us kids to be savvy in the woods. He would start out by making sure that we would walk quietly, being careful not to kick or snap any twigs and to step lightly to not make a big ruckus in the leaves. This all had to be done while scanning the ground and tree tops for any movement of squirrels. We would also be taught the lay of the land and how to keep from getting lost. Further more, we were taught hunting ethics and how to clean and care for the wild game after it was harvested to keep it from spoiling.



I have since been introduced to many different types of hunting by family and friends. Many memorable moments have been shared while hunting throughout the years and new traditions have evolved. Today, I still enjoy hunting many different species. Hunting, to me, goes way deeper than just going out and harvesting something for a thrill. It's about getting together and spending time with family and friends and reminiscing about past hunts and making new memories. It's about putting delicious meat in the freezer and carrying on a tradition that was passed down to me. Hunting can also be used as a management tool to help sustain a healthy population of a species. I also attribute hunting and my love for the outdoors to making my career choice in conservation.

Now that I have shared what hunting means to me, I understand that not everybody views it the same. There are those that hunt more for a "thrill to kill" and may be unethical and use methods to take game that are "unfair" and even illegal. As a hunter education instructor, conservationist and being a hunter myself, I do not condone these people or practices. It gives all of the ethical hunters a bad rap and is disrespectful to the animals that are pursued or treated in such a manner. Then there are those who are

anti-hunting. Some of these people feel that the animals are defenseless and should not be killed. Some may have heard stories or seen some practices used by unethical hunters and see them as being cruel, then assume that all hunters act in such a manner. Others just see hunting as going against their beliefs. I respect the decision of those who may not approve hunting for these reasons as long as they respect a hunter's choice and right to hunt.



I have seen opposition in the past regarding hunting. In the past year, I have been able to see a different side, as well as share my side, of hunting. It all started in the summer of 2010 when I started dating a girl who, at the time, was anti-hunting. We both learned quickly where each other stood on this topic. She began to ask me questions and one was if I would expect her to go hunting. My answer was no, I would never expect someone to do something that they weren't comfortable with. I then told her that I would be willing to take her if she ever decided that she would like to see what it was about. I also made it clear that I would not stop hunting for anyone. She said she was fine with that as long as she wouldn't have to see "dead things".

As time went on, she continued to ask questions about hunting and some of the hunting adventures that I went on. The more questions she asked, the more interested she became. She even started trying some of the wild game and she really likes the taste. Before we started dating, she would have never eaten wild game, other than some summer sausage that she was unaware of it having venison in it. However, recently she was a little disappointed in me when I let a fellow hunter keep the pheasant that I harvested that day. Just a couple of weeks ago, she thanked me for showing her a different side of hunting. She told me how differently she views hunting now and that she had a completely different image of hunting in her mind before she met me. I was also made aware that she never saw herself with a hunter, but as it turns out, she agreed to marry me this spring anyway!



It struck me just how important it is to keep an open mind to things and be mindful about how others may perceive things so differently. It also showed me that it is important to be patient with others that have different ideas and how a little education can go a long ways. Most of all, I have learned that it is crucial for myself, as well as other hunters, to also keep an open mind to how others view hunting. Be mindful while hunting, transporting or cleaning game. Try not to be conspicuous to those who may find it offensive. Also keep in mind that if you run into some opposition, many are willing to listen to your side if you are patient and calm. It is important that we, as hunters, do everything we can to give hunting and other hunters a good image.

Prehistoric and Protohistoric Peoples of Iowa

by Chuck Jacobsen, *Interpretative Naturalist*

The Late Prehistoric peoples who inhabited the area that would become Iowa just prior to the European exploration of the Midwest are referred to as the Plains Village pattern. This culture existed from the year 1000 - 1650 A.D. in western Iowa and other plains territories. The people had improved varieties of seed; creating vegetable surpluses that could be traded. New storage methods, earthen lodges and stronger communities were developing. Bison and elk continued to supply meat, hide, sinew and entrails for food, clothing, robes, and coverings for tipis and lodges, tools and other necessities. Bones were modified into a variety of tools, like scapula hoes, used in gardening and digging.

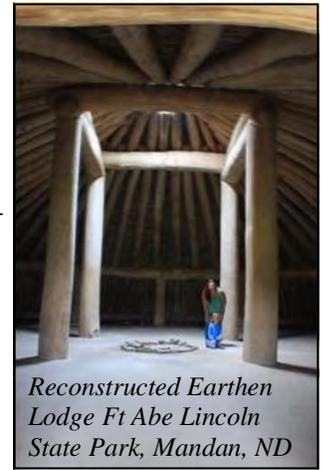
One of the earliest of the Plains Village cultures was Great Oasis. This culture developed from the local Late Woodland culture. Great Oasis sites are found over a wide area in the eastern Great Plains. Villages were situated on low terraces above the flood plains of rivers and streams, and on lake shores. The location of Sherman Park's modern campground is a good example of these terraces. Large permanent villages may have been occupied by the entire population throughout the fall, winter and spring. During the summer, bison hunts or small agricultural campsites took the place of the larger settlements.

The Mill Creek culture was a northwest Iowa group of this period and part of what historians refer to as the Initial Variant of the Middle Missouri tradition. I had the occasion to visit a Mill Creek village while on the Iowa DNR's Project AWARE several years ago and was shown that they appear today as depressions in the earth and raised deposits on terraces above the Big and Little Sioux Rivers and their tributaries. Many of these well-planned villages were fortified with log walls and encircling ditches. Within the villages were individual earth lodges with large internal storage pits. Mill Creek people were semi-sedentary horticulturalists who grew a large amount of corn along with the native crops. It is likely that a communal bison hunt was conducted occasionally during the year. Mill Creek people maintained connections with other groups in the Mississippi valley such as the famous site of Cahokia near St. Louis.

From 1050-1250 the Central Plains tradition consisted of cultures in Kansas, Nebraska, western Missouri and southwestern Iowa. Many Central Plains sites were settled farming communities whose residents built substantial earth lodge houses. The archaeological remains of their communities are grouped into what is called the Nebraska Phase. Relationships between the prehistoric Nebraska Phase and historic tribes are unclear, although the historic Pawnee may have roots in the Central Plains tradition. Over 80 Central Plains earth-lodges have been recorded near Glenwood in Mills County, Iowa. They represent an expansion of Nebraska Phase people into southwestern Iowa. Glenwood settlements were individual farmsteads or small clusters of earth lodges dispersed along ridge summits, low terraces and valley wall slopes in the Loess Hills and adjacent areas.

Extending out until about the year 1700, the Oneota culture dominated much of eastern Iowa, large parts of central and northwestern Iowa and other Midwest sites. Oneota villages were large and permanent or semi permanent with houses that varied in form

from small, square or oval single-family dwellings to longhouses with many families. Their subsistence economy was based on fishing, hunting, plant collecting and agriculture. Distinct Oneota groups occupied widely separated regions of Iowa. Each had central villages that were densely packed on the landscape. These central areas were surrounded by huge territories that were probably used for hunting and gathering.



The Oneota peoples are ancestral to several historic Midwestern tribes such as the Iowa, Oto, Missouri and Winnebago; which formed the Winnebago nation. The visiting, marriage and child-raising customs did not differ from those of related tribes. They appear to have been cultivators of the soil at an early date. According to the traditions of these tribes, they had come from their ancestral home north of the Great Lakes. Because of an abundance of fish in Lake Michigan it is said that the Winnebago settled on its shore while many others moved on. Other accounts claim this separation happened much later in northwest Iowa.

The European experience with North America native populations began in 1539 with the Spanish when Hernando de Soto landed nine ships with over 600 men including some of their families. His expedition was a mobile community, most of his group was made up from Europe and Africa, with a few from Cuba. His encounters with indigenous people were less than friendly as he meant to steal any precious metals or gems they possessed. This led to a battle in 1540 when de Soto's men were attacked as the Mississippian natives won the release of their chieftain, Tuscaloosa, who the Spaniards were holding for ransom. De Soto's men managed to fight their way out, but lost around 200 people, with 170 more badly wounded or dying of complications. Thousands of Native warriors were said to have died. Even though the Spaniards won the battle, they had lost most of their possessions and many horses. On May 8, 1541, Hernando de Soto became the first recorded European to reach the Mississippi River, though I'm sure his scouts were actually first. He gave it the name "Rio de Espiritu Santo", River of the Holy Spirit. They crossed the river into present day Arkansas but soon returned. De Soto died of a fever along its banks in 1542. Because the Spaniards had passed themselves off as immortal, his death was kept secret and his body sunk in the river to hide his death from the natives.

From 1611 until 1700, several Oneota sites in northeastern and northwestern Iowa bridged the prehistoric and historic eras. Early French-traded goods such as glass beads, finger rings and gunflints have been found at sites dominated by native-made material. The term "protohistoric" denotes the period when European goods were arriving and other influences were felt, but before European peoples started to make extensive written records of the area. Native groups residing in, or using portions of, Iowa seasonally in protohistoric times included the Iowa, Oto, Omaha, perhaps the Missouri, and the Middle and Eastern Dakota. These were the first historical nations of the land to become Iowa.

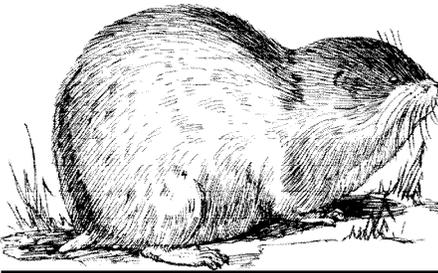
The Tundra Ghost ~ aka the Snowy Owl

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

Every year on the Lost Nation Christmas Bird Count, we look and listen for owls. We usually hope to record Eastern screech, barred, great horned, short-eared and long-eared owls. This year I am hoping for a snowy owl!

A snowy owl. How cool would that be? Now this does not come about without good reason. I subscribe to the free website, Iowa's Ornithologists' Union - Iowa Birds and Birding listserv. This website lists notifications of birds that people are seeing and there have been several sightings of snowy owls. They have been found near Sioux City, Waterloo, Mason City, Boone, Ames, Spencer, Iowa City, Stanhope, Prairie City and Marshalltown. On the listserv, there are many hard-core birders and they are excited that they have checked this bird off of their "life lists". This is significant because this bird does not come to Iowa often.

The snowy owl is native to the arctic tundra of North America, Europe and Asia. It is the only bird of prey hardy enough to live there year round. The tundra is a treeless place that has permafrost. In the summer, the soil only thaws down 1 to 3 feet with a growing season of between 6 weeks and 4 months. The temperature ranges from 37 degrees to 54 degrees F. In the winter, the owls will migrate south farther into Canada and the northern United States but is considered nomadic with sightings as far south as Mississippi! Females tend to stay north whereas young males travel the farthest. This is thought to be due to weather and fluctuations of their main food, lemmings. Even though snowy owls seem to prefer lemmings, they will eat other small mammals



The snowy owl's preferred food, the lemming.

and birds. Some mammal prey include mice, hares, muskrats, marmots, squirrels, rabbits, prairie dogs, rats, moles and entrapped furbearers. Birds include ptarmigan, ducks, geese, shorebirds, ring-necked pheasants, grouse, American coots, grebes, gulls, songbirds and short-eared owls. Snowy owls will also take fish and carrion. When prey items are plentiful, snowy owls will eat their fill, storing enough fat to be able to survive 40 days without food. Most owls take prey from the ground, trees or shrubbery, then quickly eat it whole. However, the snowy owl can take prey from the water or air and eat in the open.

Their nesting success relies on lemming populations. When the lemming population plummets, the owls may not breed. But when food is plentiful, they can raise large broods with 100% nesting success. Clutch sizes normally range from 5 to 8 white eggs, but may be as many as 14 eggs, laid on a scrape the female makes upon a small rise on the tundra. The female incubates the eggs while the male brings her food and guards the nest. Eggs hatch in 32-34 days. Nestling owls require about 2 lemmings/day and a family of snowy owls may eat as many as 1,500 lemmings before the young disperse. Young begin to move out of the nest before they can even fly, around 25 days after hatching, but still

depend on parents for food and protection (possibly up to .6 of a mile). Then fledglings can fend for themselves 50 to 60 days after hatching, living up to 9 years in the wild.



A juvenile, female snowy owl perched up on an electrical line.

You may be interested to know some other names for the snowy owl are snow owl, arctic owl, great white owl, ghost owl, ermine owl, tundra ghost, ookpik, Scandinavian night bird, white terror of the north and highland tundra owl. It is the official bird of Quebec. A group of these owls may be called a blizzard. Its official Latin name is *Bubo scandiacus* with its first name meaning it is related to horned owls, like the great horned owl. Though it may not look like it has "horns", it does, but prefers to keep them hidden.

So, these days I am looking for the elusive snowy owls. They are active during the daytime, from dawn to dusk. Look for a relatively large white bird (heaviest owl in North America at 4 pounds) with a round head. They make short direct flights with strong down strokes and quick upstrokes, close to the ground, from perch to perch. Perches are on the ground or a low fencepost. The one that was located in Mason City was near a soccer goal and they joked that they might have mistaken it for a soccer ball! If you get close enough, you will see its yellow eyes and black bill. The feet are heavily feathered. Their plumage is variably barred or speckled with thin, black/brown horizontal bars or spots. Females and juveniles have more markings as males tend to lose their markings as they get older. Males will have up to three tail bands whereas adult females have four to six tail bands. They are not like local owls that hoot (great horned and barred owl) and whinny (screech owl) all times of the year. The snowy owl is virtually silent unless it is during breeding season. The typical call of the male is a loud, harsh, grating bark, while the female has a similar higher-pitched call. During the breeding season, males have a loud, booming "hoo, hoo" given as a territorial advertisement or mating call. Females rarely hoot. Its attack call is a guttural "krufff-guh-guh-guk". When excited, it may emit a loud "hooo-uh, hooo-uh, hooo-uh, wuh-wuh-wuh".



Sketch of a snowy owl's "horns" that are usually tucked away.

So keep your eyes open for this rarity. Who knows the next time the owls of the Arctic will come down to visit. If you spot one, let me know, I would love to see one and the birding community is mapping their locations.

Winter Conservation Family Fun

January

Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather conditions allow, check the local media for cross-country skiing and snowshoe outings throughout the winter. Or, for those with e-mail addresses, write clintonccb@yahoo.com and place yourself on our handy adventurers' list. Adventurers will receive a short message whenever last-minute snow events are planned.

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 welcomed.



6th - 8th ~ Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days ~ QCCA Expo Center, Rock Island ~ Celebrate the return of the Bald Eagle. Enjoy more than 100 display and information booths. The event is 4 PM - 8 PM Friday, 10 AM - 8 PM on Saturday and 10 AM - 5 PM on Sunday. Stop by and visit the Wapsi Center display.

7th ~ Christmas Tree Recycling Drive / Fundraiser for DeWitt Boy Scout Troop 29/Venture Crew 77 ~ Support the scouts! Support the environment! Collection area is the Central Community School District. Place the tree at the curb by 9 AM on Saturday, January 8th. Pick up is free (donations are always appreciated). Call 563-212-5683 to schedule pick-up.



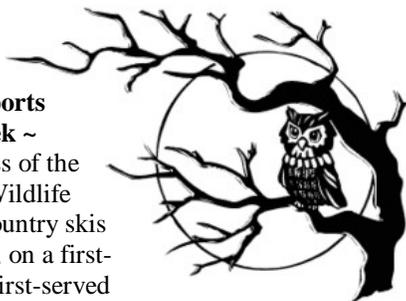
7th ~ Christmas Tree-cycling ~ Killdeer Recreation Area ~ Looking for an environmentally-sound fate for your Christmas tree? Drop it off at Killdeer Recreation Area, Hwy. 30 east of DeWitt, by the 7th and the DeWitt Area Scouts will use it for fish habitat! Please, no wire, bases or flocked trees.



7th ~ The 28th Annual Bald Eagle Watch ~ 9 AM-2 PM ~ Clinton Community College ~ Speakers, exhibits and parking will be at the college. Courtesy transportation will be provided by MTA from the college to the viewing site at Lock & Dam #13. Participants should dress for the weather and bring binoculars.

- Outdoor viewing: Lock & Dam 13, 8:30 AM-3:30 PM
- Free bus service from college to outdoor viewing area.
- Live Bird and Nature Programs: Clinton Community College, 9:30 AM-2:00 PM
- Exhibits: Clinton Comm. College, 9 AM-2:30 PM
- For more information call the Thomson Ranger office: 815-259-3628.

9th ~ Full Moon Winter Sports Night ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come explore the wilderness of the Upper Mississippi Fish & Wildlife Refuge on a pair of cross-country skis or snowshoes provided free, on a first-



come, first-served basis, by your Clinton County Conservation Department. A naturalist will lead a trail ski or individuals may enjoy the park's trail system on their own. The camp store will be heated and we may even build a warming fire outdoors if the weather allows.

21st ~ Volunteer Work Day ~ 9 AM-Noon ~ 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.

21st ~ Saturday at the Arb ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum, Clinton ~ The Arb will present a program called "Midwest Mighty Mammals". Come and enjoy fun facts about common and not so common animals that live in the Midwest. The program will cover many of the animals we have on display. All ages will be entertained and enlightened. For more information call 563-242-4771.



21st ~ Winter Sports Clinic ~ 12:30-4:30 PM ~ Emma Young Park, Clinton ~ Join naturalists for this introduction to the outdoor winter sports of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. A new feature this year is the updated equipment provided free, including New Nordic Norm (NNN) boots and bindings, no-wax skis and poles. This new equipment will provide a better experience for those who have tried skiing and snowshoeing before and will get beginners off on the right foot.

28th ~ Ninth Annual Ice Fishing Tournament ~ 7 AM ~ Pool 14, Lost Grove Lake & Rock Creek Area ~ Entry fee is \$20 per person with 2-person teams. Pre-registration & entry fee must be made to Princeton Outdoor Adventures by Jan. 27th, at www.princetonoutdooradventures.com or call 563-289-5445.

29th ~ Snowmobile Radar Run ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Eastern Iowa Sno-riders snowmobile club will once again hold this annual event on the backwater ice at Rock Creek Marina, ice permitting. Anyone is welcome to race their snowmobile against a radar gun. Donations accepted per run, with all proceeds going to the Spina Bifida Foundation of Iowa. The club also holds a wheelie contest. Hot food, drinks and snacks will be available for purchase on-site. Spectators are welcome. Bad ice date is February 5th. Call Ron Benhart at 563-529-5703 for more information.



February

2nd ~ 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 welcomed.



7th ~ Full Moon Winter Sports Night ~

6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come explore the wilderness of the Upper Mississippi Fish & Wildlife Refuge on a pair of cross-country skis or snowshoes provided free, on a first-come, first-served basis, by your Clinton County Conservation Department. A naturalist will lead a trail ski or individuals may enjoy the park's trail system on their own. The camp store will be heated and we may even build a warming fire outdoors if the weather allows.



12th ~ Saturday at the Arb ~ 10 AM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum, Clinton ~ The Arb will present "Note Cards from Nature". This will be a make and take class creating your own personalized note cards. Pre-registration required. For more information call 563-242-4771.

17th ~ Funny Feathers ~ 10 AM ~ Children's Discovery Center, Clinton ~ This nature program is for children ages three to five with a hands-on presentation about feathers. With activities we will discover the ins and outs of feathers using real feathers, craft, game and story. This event is free of charge.

18th ~ Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 4:45 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help provide public hunting, wildlife habitat and support the future of the hunting tradition. Also see the largest trophy deer display in the county. Children are encouraged to attend and each will receive a special prize. Call Mark for tickets at 563-349-0956.



25th ~ Winter Sports Day ~ 1-4 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Next year, the new *Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center* will be open year-round and folks will be able to check out our snowshoes, cross country skis and ice skates from the Camp Store anytime it is open. To get a jump start on that tradition, we will have all our equipment available for use in the park free of charge. We will have ski trails groomed and have a Geocache course set up so you can explore via our snowshoes and GPS units. We also will

have a small skating area cleared in front of the center with skates to loan. We will even have free hot cocoa, a warming fire and marshmallows. This will be the first official event held in the new Center!



25th ~ Mississippi Flyway Chapter of Waterfowl USA Banquet ~ 5:30 PM ~ Buck's Barn, Thomson, IL ~ Local Bucks for Local Ducks! The chapter recently donated to help Clinton County Conservation purchase Ringneck Marsh. Also the chapter has a shallow water wetland fund that helps landowners with the cost of developing wetlands and is active in artificial nesting with many wood duck houses and goose floats in area backwaters. Call Dave Larsen at 563-357-0184.



March

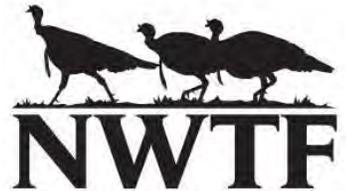
1st ~ Music in the Loft ~ 7 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will provide entertaining instrumental and vocal offerings of a wide variety of music. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along and all are encouraged to sing, tap their toe, slap their knee or just listen. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event, although donations to support the center are always welcome.

3rd ~ Horticulture in the Heartland Symposium ~ Clinton Community College ~ The keynote speaker will be ISU Extension Climatologist, Dr. Elwynn Taylor, speaking on "Our Changing Climate". Four other sessions will follow with experts speaking on Perennials, Mushrooms of Iowa, American Bald Eagle and other birds of prey, Growing Healthy Trees, Growing Brambles and Berries, Roof Gardens and more. Pre-registration required. Cost \$30. For more information call 563-242-4771.

9th ~ Nocturnal Night ~ 10 AM ~ Children's Discovery Center, Clinton ~ This nature program is for children ages three to five with a hands-on presentation. We will discover nighttime animal life indoors with an "animal hunt", craft and story. This event is free of charge.



10th ~ Wild Turkey Federation Banquet ~ 6 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help raise funds for turkey habitat and public hunting. Call Craig at 563-249-3261 for tickets.



17th ~ Pancake Breakfast ~ 8-11 AM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ Join fellow conservationists in support of Clinton's nature center, locally known as *The Nature Barn*. A free-will donation at the door will treat you to hot cakes, sausage links, scrambled eggs, milk, juice and a hot drink (coffee, cocoa or apple cider). The center is located south of Eagle Point City Park and serves a large area bringing in classrooms from Clinton, DeWitt, Long Grove, Princeton and others. Public outreach programs are also staged often at the center so your donation will serve a wide range of people.



17th ~ Maple-Syruping Demonstration ~ 10 AM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ Join Chuck Jacobsen as he discusses the history and procedure of tapping trees for syrup. Then try some on a pancake in the Nature Barn. Handouts and where to find tapping equipment will be provided to participants.

20th ~ The Vernal Equinox ~ 5:30 PM ~ Bickelhaupt Arboretum ~ The Arb presents a short program on the Vernal Equinox to help usher in Spring. For more information call 563-242-4771.

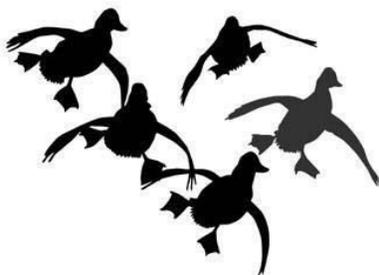


20th ~ Recycled Rugs ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This is a great way to use up those old t-shirts that accumulate in your closet. By using a 33-inch hula hoop, about 12 of your old t-shirts and a pair of fabric scissors, we will weave a simple rug for you to use at home. I will also introduce you on how to make chair pads and baskets using the same techniques! The fee is free unless you need the supplies mentioned above, please call 563-847-7202 to register by March 19th.

24th ~ Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ Wheatland Community Center ~ The Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever is planning a family night of fun at the Wheatland Community Center. They will have games, door prizes, an auction and a pork dinner. Cost is \$10, people need not be members to attend. Call Brad Taylor 563-357-0465 for tickets.



29th ~ Waterfowl Watch ~ 7 PM ~ Ringneck Marsh Wildlife Area ~ The marsh is a resting and feeding point along the spring migration route for many species of ducks and geese. We should have a pair of trumpeter swans to release into the wild at the marsh as well. With luck, we will also hope to see and hear rarer species like sandhill cranes and wild trumpeter swans. Ringneck Marsh can be found by traveling north from Calamus on Y44 and following the signs west starting at 215th Street to 150th Ave. We will have binoculars and spotting scopes set up.



April

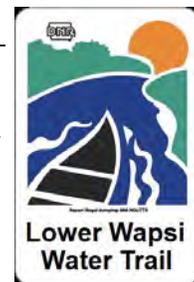
5th ~ Music in the Loft ~ 7 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will provide entertaining instrumental and vocal offerings of a wide variety of music. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along and all are encouraged to sing, tap their toe, slap their knee or just listen. Refreshments are available and the entire family is welcome. This is a free event, although donations to support the center are always welcome.



12th ~ 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.



28th ~ Rock Creek Water Trail Float ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ More and more paddlers are discovering the beauty of the Mississippi and Wapsipicon Rivers through the newly developed water trails that provide direction and access to these gems. Add to that the interpretive skills of a professional naturalist and you have what it takes for a fun and educational afternoon of recreation on the water. Clinton County Conservation's fleet of canoes, and kayaks will be available, first-come, first-served for those who need them. Call 563-847-7202 to reserve your spot.



Rooms for Rent

Through www.mycountyparks.com

Rock Creek

- **Wood Duck Cabin** ~ Log cabin, sleeps 6, \$50/night. Electricity, futon, table/chairs, small fridge, microwave, sink, water, heat/AC, sleeping loft, 1/2 bath (toilet/sink). Picnic table and fire ring outside.
- **Camping Cabins** ~ 6 small cabins, sleeps 4 each, \$35/night. Electricity, heat/AC, small refrigerator and microwave. Fire pit and picnic table outside each cabin.
- **Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center** (563-847-7202)
Community Room ~ 2,652 sq. ft., Seating for 120+. Kitchenette for family gatherings. Rent set early 2012.
Meeting Room ~ 484 sq. ft., Seating for 20+. Kitchenette for family gatherings. Rent set early 2012.
Campsites ~ There are 10 campsites currently reservable.

Eden Valley

- **Bunkhouse** ~ Rustic pack-in cabin, sleeps 12, \$50/night. Electricity, small refrigerator, hotplate, wood burning stove and firewood is available.
- **Camping Cabins** ~ 2 small cabins, sleeps 4 each, \$35/night. Electricity, heat/AC, small refrigerator and microwave. Fire pit and picnic table outside each cabin.
- **Campsites** ~ 2 pack-in campsites currently reservable.

Picnic Shelters

\$15 to reserve, or first-come, first-served for free, at Eden Valley Refuge, Rock Creek, Sherman, Walnut Grove, Malone and Follett Parks. Call 563-847-7202.

Camp Miss-Elk-Ton Lodge

770 sq. ft. lodge with stove, refrigerator and fireplace on 39 secluded acres on the Elk River. \$3/person, organized youth groups only. Call 563-847-7202.

Deer Numbers are Down-Down-Down!!!

by Chip Brown, Park Officer, West District

In 2009, my daughter Kallie and I walked into our 10-acre patch of timber and scared out several deer in the progress. I expected to scare out deer, but I had no idea how many. With bushes in the way, I decided not to take the shots because I wanted my 6 year old to be able to see. We arrived at our blind and settled in. We ended up shooting a deer in a matter of minutes. I didn't think that the deer population would drastically change from that shotgun season to the 2010 season.

In 2010, we walked into the timber, not scaring out a thing. My gut knew this wasn't good. With nothing but hope, we settled into our blind and waited. We waited for nearly 4 hours before finally seeing four deer on the far east edge of our small 10 acres of ground. All does and way too far away to shoot. That was the end of our 2010 first shotgun season with my land owners permit. Talk about depression. Kallie was so mad at me for not getting anything and making her sit there so long. I calmed her down and did my best to talk to her about hunting, keeping in mind that she was only seven years old.

This season was close to becoming a disaster. Once again, there was nothing in the timber when we arrived. But, I expected it this time. However, this year was unlike the previous years, the shooting gloves were on different hands. They were on the hands of Kallie, my now eight-year-old daughter. I set the blind up on that east edge, assuming that they would use the same side as the previous year. We settled in to the blind shortly after 7 AM and started the waiting game. At about 10 AM we heard some crashing noise behind the blind and before we had time to blink, a buck ran past the blind almost tripping on the tie-down cords. Kallie looked at me for assistance but it was too late, the buck was already gone. She said, "That's alright Dad, it was a small one." I don't know what she was looking at, but if that was a little 9 pointer, then I wonder what her idea of big is? That was the only deer we saw on Saturday because we had to leave at 11:00 to meet the fur buyer and sell furs.

On Sunday, we got to the blind and waited from 7 AM until 9:30 AM before a doe and a buck come walking down the hill. The doe stopped broadside for a few seconds and Kallie was telling me she was ready. I told her to wait for the buck, but that was a huge mistake. It slowed down but never stopped like the doe. Kallie took a shot at it while it was walking, but missed. Guess what came next? If you guessed a very mad 8 year-old, then you are right! I guess this is one of those lessons in life that every young hunter must go through. It may be the first time she missed, but it won't be the last. At noon, we went back to the house for lunch and Kallie reported to her mom what all took place. At 1PM we returned to the timber for an uneventful afternoon. We stayed in the timber until 4 PM and decided that was enough. Plus, I don't know how many more card games I could handle and I found out that I will never be an expert of Mario Kart. Even though she did not get anything, she still wants to return to the timber for her try at 2nd season.

If the deer population continues this downward trend, then next year we will need 3 days to see 3 deer. All of the hunting shows recommend you to take a child hunting. I understand that they

want you to get them out to enjoy the outdoors and spend time with family and friends. But how much more of a decline in wildlife will need to take place before people can't go hunting and expect to get something? It's hard to take a child out and keep them interested if they never get anything. It has been 2 years since Kallie and I got that deer together. I am beginning to think she is just going to spend time with me and not to enjoy the outdoors. From my childhood to my daughter's, we have seen a drastic changes in the population of rabbits, deer and pheasants. What will take place from now until the time she wants to take her kids hunting?



East District Update.

Even though camping season is over, Rock Creek is still busy as ever with the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center construction project. A lot has changed on the building over the last few months. The roof is completed along with much of the siding. Concrete sidewalks and handicapped parking is complete. On the inside, all of the drywall is hung and the heat pumps for the geothermal heat will be ready to turn on in December. There is still some dirt work to do around the building and some of the parking lot to gravel yet. Demolition of the original store will take place in December. With all the work being done there has been a lot of equipment and dump trucks. I would encourage people to continue to use caution when visiting the park and stay away from the construction site.

Another much needed project that was completed in November was a new boat ramp. A marine fuel tax grant was used to pay for it. It is now a two-lane ramp, which should help with some of the congestion during the busy weekends.

We are starting to look at plans for the rest of the central area of the park. With three buildings less than we had last summer, there will also be room for more, much needed parking. The old camp store, the temporary store and the old garage are or will soon be gone. The plan is to create planned parking spaces for both cars and trucks with trailers. This will allow more spots than the current "fit where ever you can get in" system.

The five campsites north of the Center will be turned into a natural playscape area for families, a group campfire/amphitheater and a few other surprises. Even some of the roads in the park will be re-routed and widened, where necessary, to make things safer for all. We are also redesigning our canoe launch and storage so it is closer to the Eco Tourism Center and out of the way of boat launching.

It is going to be a busy winter at the park to get everything up and going for spring with the new building. We hope to see you all back next summer to visit the new Mississippi River Eco-Tourism Center!

Real Naturalists

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator (adapted from Winter 2002 CCCB Newsletter)

Stolen, in part, from a National Association of Interpretation's newsletter, whom admitted stealing it from someplace else, who had a photocopy they got from somebody someplace, but they can't remember where.

Real Naturalists:

- eat quiche and anything else if it's free
- always have 5:30 AM birding trip following 3:30 AM parties
- never appear to be working
- don't need vacations because they love their work
- can jump in, narrate and manually operate a six projector sound/slide show when the equipment breaks down
- can talk louder and walk faster than any kid
- always have an invitation to dinner
- never get cold, even during February pond studies
- go on hikes and canoe trips on all their days off
- automatically hate all cities
- don't take a lunch break unless the garden club had leftovers
- sleep in their uniforms because they love them so much
- have coffee and maybe a bun for breakfast if the secretary brought them in
- on any given day can easily do all of the following: Four presentations, PLUS clean the nature center, PLUS complete field trip plans, PLUS build a new exhibit, PLUS answer 25 questions and phone calls from the public, order all necessary supplies, assemble a slide show and volunteer for three new projects during a staff meeting
- can spot a female yellow-rumped warbler at 1,000 yards without binoculars
- can talk for 2 hours on a subject they have never heard of before with 1/2 hour notice
- can lead a surprise field trip to Tibet and identify by common AND scientific name all plant and animal life
- never get lost.....anywhere
- can recognize by name any of 18,000 people they have talked to over the last 3 years & remember the topic of conversation
- don't drink, smoke or eat except in private
- are never in private
- know where the bathrooms are
- can identify any baby snake, positively, over the telephone
- become instantly hungry when there is free food
- are happiest when hot and muddy
- tell people where poison ivy is so they can walk in it
- are the coolest, smartest guys a kid ever met, for one day at least
- never mind working on weekends because they had nothing planned anyway
- don't need a sitter because their kids love to go to work with them
- can always squeeze in one more field trip into May
- can control the weather and make the fish bite
- are a perfect addition to any committee even remotely outdoors related
- think about the natural world just like you do
- are all vegetarians and eat grapes
- are all carnivores

A naturalist is a scientist that studies nature, like a botanist is a scientist that studies plants or a physicist studies physics. The Clinton County Conservation Board employs *interpretive* naturalists. Chuck, Jess and I not only study nature, but we also endeavor to *interpret* nature to other people. We try to put the language of nature into terms that people can easily understand. Often, this means illustrating ecological principals through fun activities that involve and engage participants.



We do disseminate knowledge about the plants and animals in our world, but we spend much of our energy attempting to inspire our love of the outdoors in the children and their parents who attend our activities. We also realize that people will love only what they know intimately. That is why we teach outdoor skills like cross country skiing and canoeing, so people can better enjoy nature on its own terms. The theory is, if you canoe or fish, healthy rivers mean more to you than someone who never uses rivers.

Words of Enos Mills about interpretation.

Interpretation (therefore interpreters):

- lights the path of education
- master of the art of suggestion
- thought compelling
- interest arousing
- more inspirational than informational
- gives a magic spell to existence
- appreciates the eloquence of silence
- aims to illuminate and reveal
- appeals to the imagination

Enos Mills is best known for being the "Father of Rocky Mountain National Park", after his seven-year struggle to educate the public and Congress of the importance of setting aside large land areas for preservation of scenery and the wildlife inhabitants.

While the two descriptions of what an interpretive naturalist is, found on this page, are both accurate, they take a look at the topic from far different angles. The list on the left, being a "tongue in cheek" version of what people sometimes think we are and the list above of what we think we ought to be. People sometimes try to put us on a pedestal. They assume that we do everything environmentally soundly, know all the answers and are always "on". We are just people. We strive to be the best we can be at our jobs. Chuck, Jess and I are still works in progress.

If we are lucky and if all our ducks are in a row, we can identify a baby snake positively over the phone, be inspirational, get a free lunch and add some magic to your life; all in the same day. Sometimes we get to be the coolest, smartest, person a kid ever met, for one day at least. I must admit, I do like that.

Conservation Department Update in Pictures



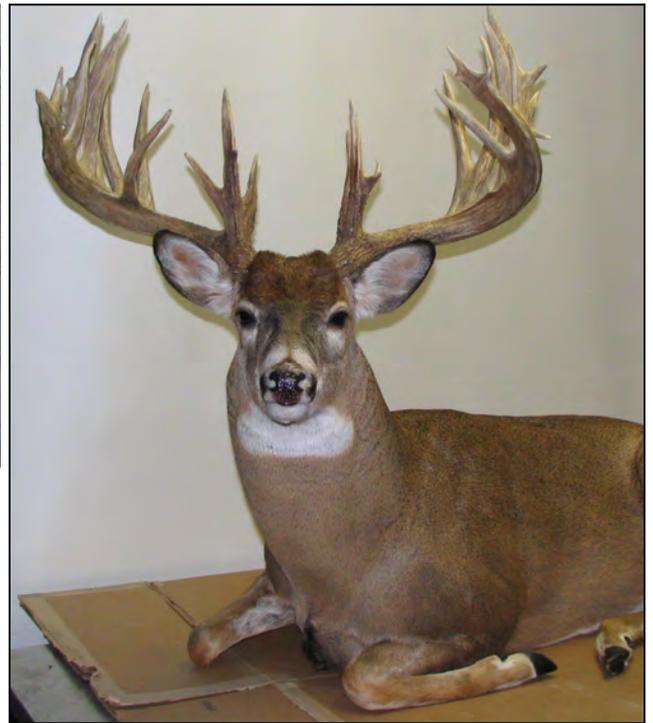
Left: Natural Resource Tech, Darin Voss poses by the rented Fecon Bull Hog forestry mulcher. The mulcher chewed up woody invasive species such as autumn olive, honeysuckle and multiflora rose at Sherman Park as well as McAndrews Wildlife Area this fall. It also helped clear a possible future camping area at Sherman Park.

Below: The highest scoring deer rack ever recorded in Iowa. The Kyle Simmons Buck, was harvested with a bow just 23 miles away from Rock Creek near Spragueville, Iowa in 2008. It scored at a whopping 275 5/8 and outscores the second biggest buck by 22 points! The full-sized replica awaits display at the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek, set to open in 2012. See it first at the Whitetails Unlimited Banquet on February 18th!



Above: The Swinging Bridge at Eden Valley took damage this fall and has been closed for safety. The bridge will undergo repairs and be open in April if things go according to plan.

Below: A new, double-wide boat ramp was constructed at Rock Creek Marina & Campground in November. The two-lane launcher should help relieve congestion at the busy ramp. The project was made possible by a \$55,000 grant from the Iowa Marine Fuels Tax Grant funds.



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
www.mycountyparks.com

Address Service Requested

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



Northern Shoveler Hen
MRETC Display Mount

CLINTON COUNTY CONSERVATION

BOARD

Gloria Friederichsen, Grand Mound, President
 Jim Haring, Clinton, Vice President
 Jeff Beckwith, Clinton, Secretary/Treasurer
 Judie Petersen, Goose Lake
 Kim Rixen, Clinton

STAFF

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

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 or 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 and location can be changed.

PRINTED WITH SOY INK

GREEN SEAL CERTIFIED

Printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper

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.