



The Heron

*The Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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Clinton County's New Voyageur Canoes

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretative Naturalist

They're finished and will soon be on the way from Vancouver, British Columbia! We're as excited as expectant parents to get our hands on these beautiful, new boats which we plan to christen "*The Marquette & The Joliet*".

The two 14-passenger, Voyageur-style, Kevlar canoes and trailer are a substantial addition to our fleet of paddle craft. They are a direct result of a grant from the Clinton County Development Association. They will enhance our public offerings on the water as well as providing a physical connection to the historic exploration of the Mississippi River. They will be a unique educational tool here in Clinton County and can be trailered to other appropriate venues.

The bark canoe was the invention of pre-historic peoples and replaced the dug-out whenever a lighter craft was desirable. They were mainly constructed of birch or elm bark. They were quicker to build, but needed much more maintenance. In 1603, when Samuel de Champlain first saw the important role the canoe would play; their use expedited the exploration of the Saint Lawrence Seaway and both shores of Lake Superior by the 1660s. The indigenous tribes were contracted to build them for the French.

In 1673, Father Jacques Marquette, and Louis Joliet, a fur trader, undertook an expedition to explore a territory of North America stretching from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. Traveling with a small band of Europeans and two indigenous guides in a pair of bark canoes, they crossed the northwest corner of Lake Michigan, paddled up the Fox River, then portaged to the Wisconsin River and descended it to the Mississippi River directly across from what is today Pike's Peak State Park. They canoed down the Mississippi to arrive at the Arkansas River by June of that same year. Marquette became fluent in many First Nation languages. The expedition's goal was to document this area for French Canadian officials. Their southward journey ended when the explorers were warned that Spanish colonials were just downstream. Marquette and Joliet returned to the Great Lakes region via the Illinois River and Lake Michigan to the head of Green Bay.

The French began to build forts along the rivers placing a barrier between themselves and the English colonies. Information gained by the explorers paved the way for more expeditions including Robert de La Salle, in 1682. In 1686 Henri de Tonti came to the Arkansas River and established the first European settlement west of the Mississippi. The bark canoe was the chief vehicle throughout all of this.



For centuries, transportation in the Great Lakes region was

done by canoe, largely by French Canadians. As the trading moved deeper into the wilderness, transportation of furs and trade goods became a large part of this. Those using canoes in wilderness trading became known as Voyageurs, a French term meaning "traveler". The Voyageurs are regarded as legendary heroes celebrated in folklore and music. For reasons of promised celebrity status and wealth, this profession was highly coveted. Such a man might boast "I could carry, paddle, walk and sing with any man I ever saw. I have been twenty-four years a canoe man, and forty-one years in service; no portage was ever too long for me, fifty songs could I sing. I have saved the lives of ten Voyageurs, have had twelve wives and six running dogs. I spent all of my money in pleasure. Were I young again, I would spend my life the same way over. There is no life so happy as a Voyageur's life!"



But, Voyageurs' life was one of toil and not nearly as glorious as folk tales make it out to be. They had to be able to carry two 90-pound bundles of fur over portage. Some carried up to four or five. Hernias were a common and frequently cause of death. Voyageurs would begin their career in their early twenties and continue, if they survived, into their sixties. They never made enough money to consider an early retirement. Voyageurs were mostly illiterate and, therefore, didn't leave many written documents. The only known record left behind for posterity by a Voyageur was written by John Mongle in 1830, "...to let you know the state of my health, which is very good so far...". He used the services of a clerk to send letters to his wife Marie. He drowned in the Columbia River on October 25th, 1830.

The fur trade extended west, north and south. Forts and trading posts were built. Treaties were negotiated with native groups. Fur trading became very profitable and organized. By the late 1600s, a trade route through and beyond the Great lakes had been opened. *continued on page 2 P.1*

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The Hudson's Bay Company formed in 1670, The North West Company in 1784 and The American Fur Company was founded in 1808. Within a quarter century this company monopolized the North American fur industry. In the late 1700s, demand in Europe grew substantially for marten, otter, lynx, mink and especially beaver furs, expanding the trade. At the height of trade in the 1810s, Voyageurs numbered as many as 3,000.

With all of this history to consider and its effects on the landscape of North America, we can't help but be excited. Once the boats arrive we will want to become acquainted with their handling. I would like to form a team or two for each boat consisting of veteran paddlers (see April 15th on page 6). We will offer supervised public paddling opportunities as well as classroom trips. I hope by next spring to lead an expedition down the Wisconsin River into the Mississippi and along eastern Iowa, retracing a portion of the Marquette and Joilet Expedition of 1673.

Lost Nation Christmas Bird Count: By the Numbers

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

December 15th, 2016

Starting Time (owling): 4:30 AM
Ending Time: 5:30 PM
Dedicated Conservationists: 13
Field Parties: 5
Total Birding Hours: 40
Miles on Foot: 7
Miles by Car: 365
Temperature: -3°F.
Wind Gusts: 17 mph
Inches of snow: 4 Inches
Number of Birds: Nearly 11,000
Number of Species: 67

From www.audubon.org: Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the fledgling Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

From December 14 through January 5 each year tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation action.

The data collected by observers over the past century allow Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

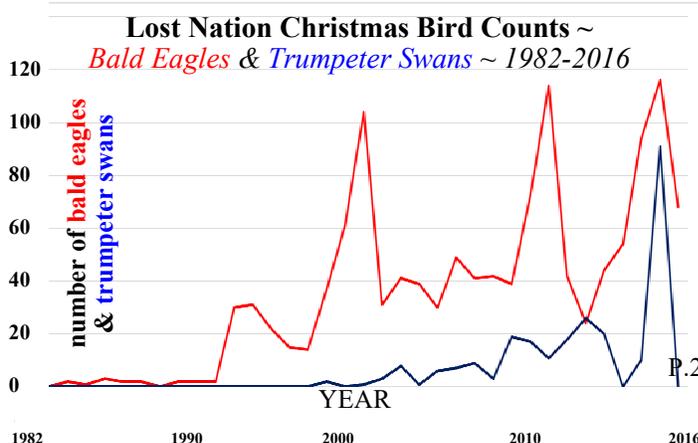
For our part, we have been conducting our own little piece of the survey. Clinton County Conservation started the Lost Nation Christmas Bird Count in 1982 and we have conducted the survey every year since. All CBCs are 15-mile diameter circles (176 square miles). Our circle is centered in Lost Nation and encompasses many local conservation areas such as Eden Valley, Syracuse, Lost Nation Public Hunting Area, McAndrews Wildlife Area, Walnut Grove, Massilon Park, Ringneck Marsh and Mockridge Preserve.

Our team documented an all-time record number of species and individual birds during this year's count held on December 15, 2016. The mild winter, to that point, kept some species in the north longer into the winter than normal. Birds like the fox sparrow, hermit thrush, snipe and yellow-rumped warbler should be long gone, but were still hanging around. Chuck Jacobsen even documented an osprey at Bulger's Hollow during the Clinton/Savanna count this year!

Does all this point to global warming? Is it simply an anomaly, a one-year oddity? Long-term censuses, like the Christmas Bird Count, show us insights over a long period of time. The bald eagle chart shows the explosion in numbers of our national symbol during the 35 years of the Lost Nation Count. Will the trend continue or will bald eagle numbers crash again. Will osprey become a common winter sighting or just a weird, once-a-decade phenomenon? Time and the Christmas Bird Count will tell.

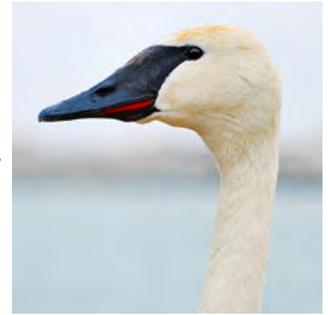
If you want to know more about the CBC and how you can join the fun, go to <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>. You do not have to be a birding aficionado. Just be willing to spend a winter's day looking for birds, want to learn, have a listen and keep your eyes peeled!

Year	# of Species	# of Birds
1982	45	4,008
1992	48	4,957
2002	53	5,032
2012	66	10,119
2016	67!	10,870!



Trumpeter Swan 2C0 - An Extraordinary Life

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator



Most of you are aware of the story. Clinton County Conservation partnered with the Iowa DNR to restore the Trumpeter Swan, as a breeding bird, to Clinton County. And it worked. Literally hundreds of swans have passed through the program since its inception back in 1994. Countless life-and-death dramas have been played out on wetlands and farms ponds across the county and indeed across the Midwest. I want to share a small glimpse into the life of just one of these birds.

Red 2C0 (due its DNR ID collar) started out in a place far from here back in 2003. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park is located not too far from Mount Ranier in the state of Washington. From there the little female was raised by Del Hubner of Clinton, for the Iowa DNR. The following spring the young bird was released at Pete Clausen's wetland northwest of Clinton. To make its own way. After learning to fly, 2C0 decided to see a bit of the world and was reported in Bath, Illinois, 125 miles to the south. She returned to Clinton County in 2005 and settled with a male from Bob and Mary Boock's pond north of Wheatland.

In the spring of 2006, 2C0 made its first nesting attempt. Swans are often not successful in hatching young in their first try and 2C0 was no exception. Bob and Mary took the abandoned eggs to Glen Drowns, a science teacher from Calamus/Wheatland High. He could hear life inside the eggs! The eggs were rushed to Dr. Jack Buesing of Coal Valley, Illinois. He performed surgery on the eggs and two little cygnets, the size of a tennis balls, were brought living into the world!

Spring of 2007 marked the first year 2C0 (named "Mother" by the Boocks) hatched cygnets on her own and produced seven. She nested every year until 2012 when her mate disappeared (presumed dead). It is unknown if "Mother" ever accepted another mate. Trumpeter swans generally mate for life. Reports of her were either that she was alone or with a larger over-wintering flock. She was often seen at the Steines pond, Calamus, on many occasions.

Our Administrative Assistant, Karen Brix, observed the flock of swans that 2C0 was part of nearly every day this winter, on her way to our office, just a mile away. She said

there were 8-12 swans consistently, but as many as 25 on occasion. Often the swans were seen feeding in a cornfield only 30 yards off the road. They would stay overnight in the lagoons and fly out to feed each day.

On November 25th, 2016, 2C0 and another trumpeter swan, were found in the road ditch on the south side of Grand Mound's sewage lagoons. A young man by the name of Anton Green (son of former CCCB Board Member Alan Green) spotted the birds and called the DNR. The official cause of death was listed as: Powerline strike-dead. "Mother's" extraordinary life was over.

In all, "Mother" bought 18 cygnets into the world. Those swans are continuing her work to repopulate our county, our state, our country and our world with the largest flying bird on the planet. In biology we are taught that the population of a species is what is important to focus on, not the individual. 2C0 has made an impression on me as an individual. A bird who had a singularly interesting life.

Dave Hoffman of the Iowa DNR is keeping an exact accounting of where swans are dying due to powerline collisions. He is collecting powerline strike information in hopes of working with power companies to get more problem areas marked. Rural Electric Cooperative has promised to place warning markers on the powerlines near the Boock pond in order to help the birds see the line before crashing into them. Boock's pond is a place of high swan activity and swan powerline mortality, just like Grand Mound.

Despite powerline collisions, poaching and swans ingesting lead from fishing sinkers and shotgun shells, trumpeters, as a species, are doing well. I see them flying about as I travel the countryside. I sometimes see a hundred or more in the fields near Folletts on my way to Rock Creek. I see nesting birds in the spring. There was a time, not long ago, I could not say that. Thanks to many birds like "Mother" and dozens of local citizens over the years, I can confidently say that now. Trumpeters are doing well.



Red 2C0 Reports:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April, 2004 • January, 2005 • February, 2005 • March, 2005 • August, 2005 • July, 2006 • July, 2007 • July, 2008 • July, 2009 • June, 2010 • June, 2011 • November, 2011 • March, 2013 • November, 2014 • November, 2016 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clausen's Wetland, Bryant One-acre Pond, Bath, Illinois Boock's Pond, Wheatland Banker's Pond, Clinton Boock's Pond, Wheatland Wet cornfield, Clinton County Hurstville Marsh, Hurtsville Boock's Pond, Wheatland Road ditch, Grand Mound |
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Events Calendar - Beat Cabin Fever!

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

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Winter Hours:
Monday ~ Wednesday, 10 AM - 2 PM, Nature Gallery only
Thursday ~ Sunday, 8 AM - 4 PM, Gallery & Camp Store.

February

1st ~ Bird Watching Walk ~ 9 AM ~ FREE ~ Eden Valley ~ Meet at the Nature Center and walk around with a naturalist at Eden Valley during this low-key activity. The area is great for over-wintering birds in the valley's high bluffs. Binoculars, guides and hot chocolate provided.

1st ~ Benevolent Box Turtle ~ 11:15 AM ~ FREE ~ Camanche Library ~ A live ornate box turtle will be there to see, touch and learn! There will be a book, craft & snack.

2nd ~ An Animal Encounter ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Preschoolers and their parents can enjoy an animal encounter through games, crafts and live animal presentations. Siblings are welcome!

2nd ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ FREE ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will play and sing a wide variety of music. Participants with musical talents are invited to bring their instruments along for this coffee house style jam. Refreshments are available & the entire family is welcome. Donations to support the center are always welcomed.

4th ~ Winter Survival ~ 10 AM - 12:30 PM ~ FREE ~ Eco Center, Rock Creek ~ Take a minute to learn about the many challenges winter has and have fun doing it! This family presentation will teach you how to build fires, sterilize water and build shelters all while having fun outside! Adults must accompany children, registration is required, www.mycountyparks.com or call 563-349-8680 by Jan. 30.

4th ~ Birds of Prey, Our Red-tailed Hawk Debut! ~ 1 PM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Our naturalist will unravel the amazing world of Iowa birds of prey! Also our red-tailed hawk will make her public debut at the Eco Center, see this amazing bird up close as she comes full-circle.



7th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ *The Town Mouse and The Country Mouse* will be read in an interactive and fun way!

8th ~ Mammoth Discovery ~ O.W.L.s ~ CANCELLED

9th ~ Full Moon, Eye Shine & GPS Hike ~ 6 PM ~ FREE ~ Sherman Park ~ We'll hike the parks trails stopping to enjoy the sights and sounds of the winter night under the illumination of Luna. Learn to identify certain mammals by their eye shine while navigating with a GPS unit or your phone app. Snowshoes/skis will be available if necessary. Meet in the north parking lot.

11th ~ Cross Country Ski Day ~ 9 AM - 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of skis, get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our skis. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for snow conditions.

14th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ We read "Owl Moon", create a model of the Moon and watch the Moon move through its phases on the big screen.

17th ~ Painting Class with "Fresh Paint" ~ 6-8 PM ~ \$30 ~ Rock Creek ~ This is a first for us. A "Paint and Sip" class (BYOB). It's a 2 hour event...step by step painting instructions on a 11x14 canvas with *Fresh Paint* by Christine Boeve. All materials supplied! Space is limited, register at www.mycountyparks.com asap.



18th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ This coffee-house style music event offers local talents and center guests an opportunity to gather together for a variety of music in a casual setting. Donations to support the center are always welcomed.

18th ~ Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help provide public hunting, wildlife habitat and the future of the hunting tradition. Children in attendance receives special prizes. Tickets are \$45 each, \$20 for spouses and children. Deadline is February 10th. Call Jeff Beckwith at 563-249-7358 for tickets.



20th ~ Eco Center Closed/Presidents Day ~ Rock Creek

21st ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek

22nd ~ Birds of Prey ~ 9 AM ~ FREE ~ Wild Winter Wednesdays @ the Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton, IL ~ Meet our red-tailed hawk and other local raptors.

23rd ~ An Animal Encounter ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Preschoolers, parents and siblings!

24th ~ All About Amphibians ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ We will share our love for animals by bringing a few live amphibians for your child to see, touch and hold (if they want)!

24th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Trivia Night ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come for a fun night of trivia to raise funds for the Friends of Rock Creek. They support Rock Creek by promoting the site through volunteering and events at the Eco Center. Register your table of 8 for \$80 or individually for \$15 at www.mycountyparks.com. Bring your own snacks and beverages.



25th ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM - 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of snowshoes, get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our snowshoes. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for snow conditions.

25th ~ Clinton Ducks Unlimited Dinner ~ 5 PM ~ Gil's Ballroom, Clinton ~ You are invited to the annual Clinton DU Dinner, a live auction will follow raffles and dinner. Call Kevin Goodsmann, 563-212-3393, for tickets.

25th ~ Mississippi Flyway, Waterfowl USA Banquet ~ 5:30 PM ~ Majestic Pines, Thomson, IL ~ You are invited to the annual dinner, raising funds for local wetlands. Contact Ron Kaufman @ 563-357-7988 for tickets.

26th ~ Youth Hunter Education Challenge - Open Try-outs ~ 1 PM ~ FREE ~ Wapsi Valley Izaak Walton League, DeWitt ~ Y.H.E.C.

is a weekend-long event that takes place June 2-4 at Camp Wesley Woods, Indianapolis. Youth compete in 8 events, learn about the outdoors and have fun with other young people that have similar interests. This "tryout" day for that kids and parents to come and experience a Y.H.E.C. practice.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



28th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek

28th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Check out this great volunteer group!

March

1st ~ Bird Watching Walk ~ 9 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Brave the elements and walk around with a naturalist at Rock Creek during this low-key activity. The area is great for birds as water and woods come together. Binoculars, scopes, field guides and hot cocoa provided.



2nd ~ An Animal Encounter ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Preschoolers, parents and siblings!

2nd ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ FREE ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will play and sing a wide variety of music. Donations to support the center are welcomed.

4th ~ Horticulture in the Heartland ~ 7:30 AM - 2 PM ~ \$30-\$35 ~ Clinton Community College ~ The college and Bickelhaupt Arboretum are offering their annual *Horticulture in the Heartland* seminar. The event is co-sponsored by Clinton Trees Forever and Clinton Co. Master Gardeners. Lunch provided. Call Margo Hansen at 563-242-4771.

4th ~ Cross Country Ski Day ~ 9 AM - 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of skis, get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our skis. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for snow conditions.

4th ~ Hunting Heritage Banquet, Eastern Iowa Wild Turkey Federation ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ For more tickets call Mike House at 563-357-9251 or email mike.house@adm.com

8th ~ Eco Center Closed/Staff Training ~ Rock Creek



11th ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM - 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rent one set of snowshoes, get the 2nd rental free. Stop in the camp store and check out a pair of our snowshoes. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for snow conditions.

11th ~ Camanche Ducks Unlimited ~ 5 PM ~ Imperial Lanes, Camanche ~ Contact Ruth Marsh, 563-212-8133.

14th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek

15th ~ "Toad"ally Cool ~ 11:15 AM ~ Camanche Public Library ~ There will be a live toad to see, touch and teach what makes toads totally cool!

16th ~ An Animal Encounter ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Preschoolers, parents and siblings!

17th ~ Cabin Fever Day Camp ~ 9:30 AM - 2 PM ~ \$10 ~ Rock Creek ~ Spring is right around the corner and it's time to get outside! This day camp is designed for children grades 4th-6th and will include outdoor activities such as using a compass, fire building and archery! Registration is required.



Visit www.mycountyparks.com to register your child, space is limited!

18th & 25th ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 8 AM - 4 PM ~ Hurstville Interpretive Center, Maquoketa ~ Visit <http://register-ed.com/programs/iowa> for required sign-up.

18th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ This coffee-house style music event offers local talents and center guests an opportunity to gather together for a variety of music in a casual setting. Donations to support the center are always welcomed.

21st ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek

24th ~ Mighty Minnows ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ We will share our love for animals by bringing minnows to sort and race!

25th ~ Twenty-first Annual Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ \$15 ~ Wheatland Community Center ~ Clinton County Pheasants Forever is planning a night of fun and fund-raising. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465.



28th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek

28th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Check out this great volunteer group!

30th ~ An Animal Encounter ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Preschoolers, parents and siblings!

April

3rd ~ Make Your Own Barn Quilt ~ 6-8 PM ~ \$25 ~ Rock Creek ~ Barn quilts are fun to see when you are driving down the road, now you can make one for you or as a gift. Provided for you is a 2'x 2' primed plywood, paint brushes and basic paint colors. You will need to bring a picture of a basic quilt pattern (Pinterest), hair dryer or fan and particular colors of paint if you want. Space is limited so register today at www.mycountyparks.com by Wednesday, March 29th.

4th ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek

6th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ FREE ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local talents will play and sing a wide variety of music. Donations to support the center are welcomed.

7th-8th ~ Winter Camping ~ This will be the last week-end for winter camping rates (\$5 discount) at Rock Creek and Eden Valley. Take advantage of these low rates.

8th ~ Sandhill Crane Count & Birding Walk ~ 7 AM ~ FREE ~ Goose Lake Wildlife Area ~ Meet in the west parking lot. We will count sandhill cranes, by call and sight, as part of the *Annual Midwest Crane Count*.

13th ~ Spring Migration on the Mississippi Flyway ~ 5:30 PM ~ FREE ~ Bulger's Hollow ~ Waterfowl are migrating back north and the Mississippi River's Lake Clinton and Bulger's Hollow is a perfect place to view the spectacle! Naturalists will have spotting scopes set up in search of returning waterfowl including ducks, cormorants, pelicans, swans, herons, cranes and eagles.

15th ~ Voyageur Canoe Christening ~ 10 AM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Our new Voyageur canoes "*The Marquette and The Joliet*" will be launched after a presentation on the history of the craft they represent and their usefulness in our county's education program. Hour-long excursions will be offered throughout the day as long as interest holds and light allows. Paddlers are welcome to bring their own craft or rent one and form a flotilla around the larger craft. An award will be presented to the person wearing the most period correct (1600-1800) outfit.



15th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Take a break from the paddling and enjoy this coffee house style jam. We will include some of the tunes that kept the Voyageurs paddling in unison and passed the time away.

16th ~ Eco Center Closed for Easter ~ Rock Creek

17th ~ Eco Center open 7 days/week ~ Rock Creek ~ The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will now be open 7 days/week. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for hours.

18th ~ Woodcock Watch ~ 7:30 PM ~ FREE ~ Sherman Park ~ Some of the most memorable and anxiously awaited sights and sounds of spring are those demonstrated by these seldom heard and seen birds. You can sit by a warm fire after a short presentation and watch their sky dance while listening for their calls or get up on your feet and attempt a close encounter of the wild kind. The terrain can be rough, the reward is entertaining.

18th & 22nd ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7 - 9 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ FREE ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~ Visit <http://register-ed.com/programs/iowa> for required sign-up.

19th ~ Trip to International Crane Foundation and Devil's Lake State Park, Baraboo, Wisconsin ~ 7 AM - 9 PM ~ \$35 ~ We will transport participants on an all-day adventure! We will meet at CCCB Headquarters, Grand

Mound for the 7 AM departure.

We will get a special tour of the International Crane Foundation followed by lunch (bring a sack lunch) in the picnic shelter. Then on to Devil's Lake State Park for hiking and exploring the trails of this geologic wonder with a park naturalist. There will be a choice of hikes offered, easy and difficult, so don't let that scare you off. On the way back home we will stop for pizza (included). A long, but great, day! Sponsored by the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. Space is limited, registration and information at www.mycountyparks.com.



21st & 22nd ~ Cabin Fever! Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ It's been a long winter and we are ready to get outside. We will be offering discounted heated cabin rentals this weekend. Two-night minimum. Call the camp store at 563-259-1876 to make your reservation and the discount.

22nd ~ Spring Fling ~ 10 AM - 2 PM ~ FREE ~ Rock Creek ~ Spend the day celebrating Spring!

- ♦ **10 AM:** There will be an egg hunt for ages 1-12 by the back playground (weather permitting).
- ♦ **11 AM:** Expand your knowledge of one of Iowa's most common birds of prey, the red-tailed hawk. Meet our live hawk and learn about this amazing bird!
- ♦ **12:30 PM:** On the mark, get set, GO! Gather a team of four and join us for a scavenger hunt around the park! Prizes will be awarded to the first three teams that make it to the finish line and have the correct answers! There will be other fun things going on throughout the day including live animals, crafts and more!

22nd ~ Smithtown Church Open House ~ 10:30 AM - Noon ~ FREE ~ Smithtown Church ~ The Clinton County Historical Society, along with the CCCB, have completed many restorations inside the 143-year-old building located 3 miles south of Eden Valley. Stop by and take a look.

22nd ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Season Opener ~ 1-4 PM ~ FREE ~ Eden Valley ~ We will have cookies and lemonade for guests on this special day. A naturalist-guided flower walk will start at 1:30 PM to see what is in early bloom and to appreciate the beauty of the spring woods. The Nature Center will be open from 1-4 PM on Saturdays, now through October. Volunteer hosts are needed, especially in spring and fall.

25th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Check out this great volunteer group!

29th ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM

On The Horizon... Summer Summer Camps!

Cost is \$45 for all three days. For details go to www.mycountyparks.com.

June 13th-15th ~ Pollywog Camp for K-1st graders

June 20th-22nd ~ Creature Camp for 2nd-3rd graders

June 27th-29th ~ Child vs. Wild Camp for 4th-5th grades

July 18th-20th ~ Outback Kids Camp for 6th grade & up

July 25th-27th ~ Wilderness Trip for High Schoolers



Winter Survival Is For The Birds

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

Winter is a tough time...for everyone. The days are short, cold and often gray while the nights are long, even colder and dark. While we are all snug inside there is a whole group of animals that are really on the brink of survival. It is really extraordinary how birds cope (for the most part, many probably do perish). Keep in mind not all of these superhero adaptations are found in all birds, just a special recipe for each one.

Food = Energy ~ More you eat the fatter you get, right? But the fatter you get, the more weight to carry, in turn makes you slower, easier and more delicious as a snack for a predator. With thousands of years of evolutionary adaptations to make them lighter for flight, it is a constant battle. In one study, it showed that black-capped chickadees ate 60 percent of their weight daily to gain 10 percent of their weight to only lose it all by morning. In comparison, that would be like a 165 pound man eating 99 pounds of food, then losing 15 pounds in one night!

Dirty birds ~ You know the ones at your feeders making a mess, using their beaks to throw seeds side to side while eating one occasionally. It seems like they are doing it for pleasure, but in reality these birds are choosing the seed that has more bang for its buck. Studies have shown that these dirty birds are “weighing” the seeds and if they are big enough, they will spend the time and energy to crack it open.

Cache it ~ Not only do squirrels store food but many birds, like chickadees and blue jays do as well. When they find a good source of food they will store some of that food in a convenient place (close to home under some bark or moss) for when the going gets tough.

Conserve Energy ~ So now that the bird is fat and happy, they have to find ways to make it last.

Regulated hypothermia ~ Black-capped chickadees are able to drop their core body temperature from 108 degrees during the day, down 12 to 15 lower degrees at night! The lower the temperature at night, the more energy conserved.

Staying Warm and Dry

Shiver ~ When birds shiver at night, they burn off the fat reserves stored during the day. If they run out of fat to burn, in essence, they starve to death. Also, if their regulated hypothermia, also a form of short term hibernation called **torpor**, becomes too deep and the bird lose their ability to shiver, they will also perish.

Feathers ~ Down is the fluffy, insulating feathers that a bird has to keep it warm. Some birds actually grow more down to prepare for winter’s harshness. As humans, we know the advantages of a down coat and double-paned windows. Air is an excellent insulator if it can be trapped and that is what happens when a bird fluffs up its feathers. The beak and feet are the areas that heat can escape easily since it is not covered in feathers. If a bird is tucking its head or squatting to cover both feet, it is uncomfortably cold even though they look so cute and chubby.

Scaly feet ~ A bird’s feet is covered by nonliving tissue called scales (yes birds have scales and feathers just like some dinosaurs). Under those scales, there is not much living tissue to freeze and few nerves to damage, mostly just bone and tendons. If their feet get too cold, they will just tuck one foot up and under their down. Then alternate them as they need to.

Counter Current Exchange ~ Some birds, especially waterfowl, have a great system for keeping their feet warm while swimming in icy water. The warm blood flowing from their heart down the artery to their legs are close to the veins returning cold blood from the feet. So the warm blood is cooled going down to the extremities keeping the tissue alive whereas the cold blood is warmed a bit going into the body to not cool the body down too much.

Oil ~ Most birds have an oil gland located at the base of their tail. When birds preen, they collect oil and spread it around with their beak to give their feathers a water-proof coat.

Behavior ~ Nighttime roosts are essential for survival. Birds like chickadees, titmice and bluebirds will roost communally in tree cavities and birdhouses. In the morning, look at tail feathers, they may be slightly bent from being crammed in a tight space overnight. Not all tree cavities are created equal. The bigger and alive trees retain daytime warmth more than smaller, dead trees. Whether they are roosting together or separate, in a cavity or tucked under an evergreen bough, finding a good place is essential for protecting them from whatever mother nature throws at them and conserving hard earned fat reserves.

Birds that have similar niches tend to group together in **mixed flocks**. For instance, treetop flocks of chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers will roam their home area. More eyes equal more opportunities to spot food and potential predators. You might think there is more competition for food. The opposite actually occurs because these animals have their own niche. Woodpeckers, nuthatches and creepers tend to look for insects on the trunks and large branches of trees. Nuthatches one-ups the others by their ability to scale down trees giving them a different angle to look for food. Whereas titmice and chickadees hang upside down from smaller branches. Kinglets however hangout on the twigs. Mixed flocks can also be observed in the seed-eating and ground dwelling birds consisting of juncos and a variety of sparrows.

When you start to think winter is for the birds, just remember spring is around the corner. We will survive!



Life-sized drawing, golden-crowned kinglet weighing a mere 0.4 oz!

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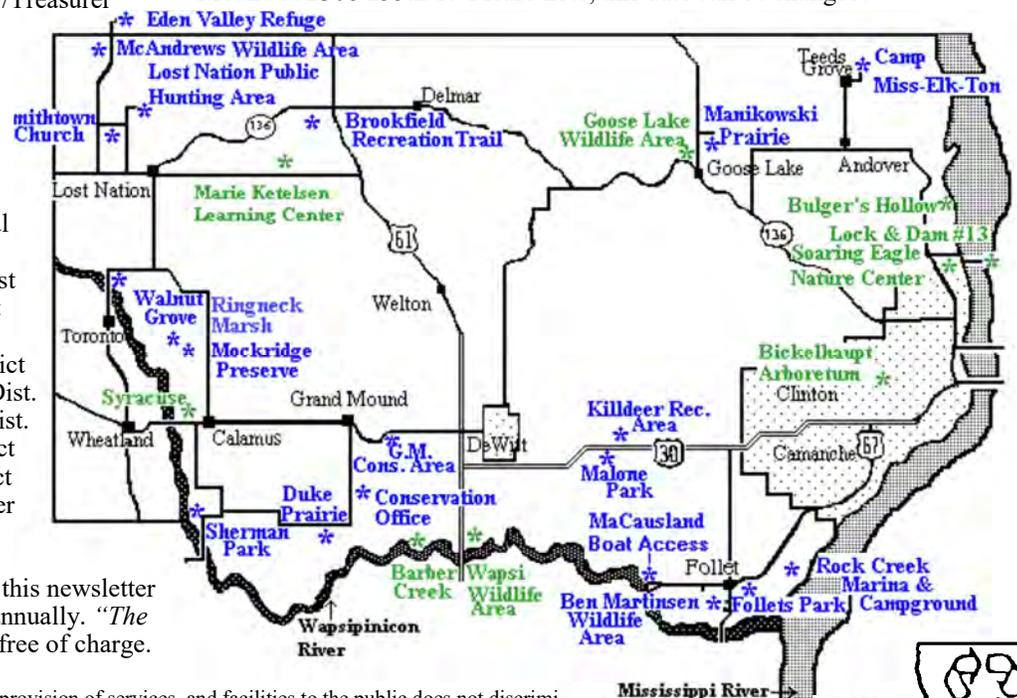
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Clinton County addresses can receive this newsletter at home, free. Others are charged \$5 annually. "The Heron" is on our website or emailed, free of charge.

BOARD MEETINGS

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



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.

