



THE Heron



by Karri Rutenbeck,
West District Park
Supervisor

Wildlife Magic

As we eagerly anticipate enjoying the warmer months and the start of another camping season, it's a great time to prepare your camper by stocking up on the essential items you'll be needing this summer. Besides the usual bug spray, sunscreen, and hot dog sticks, consider packing along these items to add a

touch of wildlife magic to your camping experience:

1 | Binoculars — Spring is a prime time to catch glimpses of wildlife, all from the comfort of the campground. Equip yourself with a pair of binoculars to get closer views of migrating waterfowl such as sandhill cranes or mergansers along the scenic Wapsipinicon and Mississippi Rivers. Keep your eyes peeled for majestic eagles, graceful pelicans, and elegant herons- frequent visitors along these waterways.

2 | Hummingbird Feeder — Bring the joy of these tiny aerial acrobats right to your campsite with a small hummingbird feeder. Mix up a simple solution of one-part sugar to four-parts water, hang up your feeder, and often within minutes, you'll be watching these colorful beauties dodge and dip around, providing endless entertainment to you and your fellow campers.

3 | Nectar-Rich Plants — Spice up your campsite with the addition of nectar-rich plants that not only add beauty but also attract native pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Butterfly feeding stations can also be used in place of plants.

4 | Wildlife Calls- Want to bring the birds a little closer? Pack along an owl or turkey call and let nature come to you. Barred owls, in particular, can be easily attracted with a simple mouth call. Be sure you aren't bothering other campers by not using calls during quiet hours (10PM - 6AM).

By incorporating these simple items into your camping routine, you can help to create unforgettable moments, feeling closer to the wildlife around you. Always remember to keep your coolers tightly closed to discourage the unwelcome wildlife visitors to your campsite!



BY PHIL VISSER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Learning to Adapt in Order to Being Successful

Over the past few months, many individuals have had a chance to get out and enjoy the outdoors. One of the most common recreational pursuits is fishing. In Clinton County we have an abundance of fish and fishing opportunities (although it doesn't always feel that way when you are waiting for something to take the bait). When it comes to fishing, as in life, often the difference between success and failure is having a good plan.

When it comes to managing the public lands in Clinton County, it is no different. We try to have both short term and long-term plans for everything we do. Short-term plans can include all our day-to-day operations. This can include what parks we are going to be mowing that day or what will

be taught at a school program. Long-term plans can include things such as the timing of building a new cabin or facility. Several years ago, the Conservation Board was able to create a strategic plan that helped to determine our goals and expectations. This plan is routinely examined and used when we are considering large projects and when we are setting our budgets for the next year.

Of course, we know that the best laid plans do not always come to fruition. Like when fishing, plans may change because of a development in the weather, the presence of other anglers, or even because of a small detail noticed on the waters, our plans for the county's public lands, also may encounter challenges that require us to amend them. Our day-to-day challenges can be from something as simple as the weather, but when it comes to some of our larger plans, changes can be made because of funding constraints, new regulations or policies, or discoveries made while the projects are ongoing. Sometimes these changes are just a result of unknown factors coming into play. These challenges are not always a bad thing, in fact, often they are due to positive influences, including additional funding streams becoming available, or projects being completed more quickly than anticipated.

One other thing that can change our plans that is always for the better, is related to input from members of the public. We do have many



people on our staff who are extremely knowledgeable about our areas, but it is always great to receive input from those who are utilizing our parks, campgrounds, trails, and wildlife areas for their own enjoyment. Individuals with thoughts and ideas on how we can improve our plans are always welcome to call, email, or talk to any of our team members. Everyone is also welcome to attend our Conservation Board meetings to express any thoughts or concerns. The Clinton County Conservation Board meets once a month, usually on the third Tuesday. These meetings are held at the Grand Mound Conservation Office and are open to everyone. There is also an online viewing option via Zoom.

Input from others can also be helpful when someone is going outdoors. One thing that I will almost always do when going to a new lake or river to fish is to stop by a local tackle shop to find out what to expect. I am usually not asking for specific spots or lures to throw, but some info on average sizes or where the fish are in relation to the spawn or cover can be immensely helpful. This can also help you to avoid dangerous situations.

Even though our plans may have to change and adapt, it doesn't mean that we won't be successful. We do need to make sure that we have defined what success is and understand that can change as well. There have been many plans that the Conservation Board has made that have not come to pass, but that does not always mean it was a failure. Sometimes things happen that are out of our control. Just remember that the key to being happy with the result is to do your best and to enjoy the journey.



Happy Retirement Schaeef!

The Man, the Myth, the Legend...Bob Schaefer, more commonly known as Schaeef, served Clinton County Conservation Board in the maintenance department, for 45 years! He dedicated a large portion of his career improving the parks, campgrounds, hunting lands and wildlife management areas throughout Clinton County. He has seen many changes throughout the years, some good, some bad, but all necessary to provide safe and influential outside opportunities for people of all ages for years to come. On behalf of all Conservation Board members, the Staff, and the Conservation Foundation, we thank Bob for his years of service. We wish him many happy years of retirement to come!



by Hannah Edfors,
Interpretive Naturalist

From Hunter to Hunting Education Instructor

In April of 2006, I officially became a certified hunter after passing my hunters safety class. From then to today I have spent countless hours outdoors learning various hunting skills with my family and friends. As a young girl, I knew I always wanted to have a job outdoors, doing what exactly I was not too sure. At first, I wanted to be a conservation officer so I could protect the animals and environments around me that I loved dearly. As I got older, I realized that I also loved to teach, as well as be outside and being a Naturalist has been the perfect combination of both.

Hunting has changed my life in more ways than one. It has always been a family affair and still is today, giving me many fun memories that I will never forget. For example, seeing my cousin shoot his first duck or helping my brother track a nice 9-pointer. I have hunted with uncles, cousins, grandpas, siblings and friends that have become family. As I have gotten older, hunting has become much more about the time spent with friends and family, instead of the amount of game you end up with at the end of the day. Nevertheless, we always enjoy having a nice pile of greenheads or Snow geese for a picture at the end of the day. Spending

time in nature has led me to care much more for it and appreciate the little things and I hope to be able to pass that appreciation on to the next generation. There have been numerous times out in the ladder stand or on a riverbank where I have gotten to witness other amazing things in wildlife. Whether it be a Great horned owl swooping onto a tree branch nearby while deer hunting or seeing hundreds of Sandhill cranes littering fields of open country while scouting for Snow geese, nature never fails to make an impression on me.

Having these experiences has made me that much more passionate about the outdoors and eager to teach others about everything it has to offer, especially from the hunting side of things. Hunting allows you to learn so much more about the outdoors than you ever thought it would have. It teaches you how all things are intertwined and need each other to sustain life, it teaches you patience and how to be respectful of the environment around you. Over time you start to see how impressive nature is and the reasons for wanting to protect it continuously add up. Seeing that led me to want to educate others on the importance of getting outside, hunting or not. Not because everyone should aim to be a trophy hunter, but because you can learn a lot about our natural world and the beings in it by spending time in it.

Since being with Clinton



Left to right: My husband, Guy, myself, and my dad fall waterfowl hunt in Saskatchewan, Canada 2023. Not looking at the camera in the front row is Hank, our families Black Lab and fearless hunter.

County Conservation, I have been able to do all sorts of new things, like help with our Hunters Education camp and YHEC (Youth Hunters Education Challenge) but the latest thing I have done is receive my Hunters Education Instructor Certificate, allowing me to assist my co-workers with teaching Hunters Education in Iowa. This certificate is something I have wanted to obtain for a very long time and I'm excited to help teach the young minds in our area about how much there is to hunting. I was fortunate enough to have many great role models in my life always willing to answer questions and teach me about hunting and the outdoors and I hope to be one of those people for the next generation. As Baba Dioum once said, "In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught."

My dad and I during youth deer season in Whiteside County during the fall of 2006. This would be the first of many deer hunts with my dad and the most unforgettable one at that.





CALENDAR OF Events

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Summer Hours:

Sunday-Wednesday, 7 AM-6 PM, Thursdays 7 AM-7 PM, and Friday and Saturday 7 AM-8 PM.

Note on Blue Heron Eco Cruises:

Sign-up for each cruise will begin one week before each trip. Check the forecast, gather your friends and sign-up! 563-259-1876. Note: The Blue Heron does not go out if winds are 20+ MPH, lightning is (or is forecasted) within 10 miles or the river stage is 17+ feet (Camanche River Gauge).

May Events

18th ~ Spring Faire ~ 11 AM-2 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center

Old-fashioned family fun with games and crafts! Grill-out lunch offered! Free entry for all ages.

26th ~ 150th Anniversary Celebration ~ Smithtown Church ~ 12:30 PM

Join us as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church with a potluck and a program starting at 2 PM.

28th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

Join this amazing volunteer group to make a difference at Rock Creek! Email kjeffrey@clintoncounty-ia.gov for more information.

30th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

Thursday evenings there will be naturalist-guided Mississippi River cruises aboard the Blue Heron pontoon. Call 563-259-1876 to reserve a free spot one week in advance.

June Events

1st ~ Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) ~ 8 AM-7 PM ~ Rock Creek

This statewide event is held for children 11-18 years old who compete in eight elements: shotgun, rifle, muzzleloader, archery, wildlife ID, orienteering, safety trail and knowledge base test. This is a full day of fun competing as a team or individual! Practices are going on right now, contact Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 for more information or visit www.mycountyparks.com.

5th ~ Science & Storytime ~ 10:30 AM ~ Rock Creek

During this program, we will read a story and do some science exploration through hands-on experiments! Each Science & Storytime event will take place at a different location and include a different story and experiment. Check our Facebook page to find out the topic for each event! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

5th ~ Creating an Angler ~ 6:30 PM ~ Malone Park

Providing new experiences in nature for children helps build an appreciation for the outdoors at a young age that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on doing fishing yourself. We will teach you how to encourage your angler even if you're not an angler yourself. This is a free event and open to the public. Call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 with any questions.

6th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

7th-9th ~ Free Fishing Weekend for Iowa Residents

8th ~ Yoga in the Park ~ 9 AM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center

Join us for a peaceful morning of outdoor yoga with local yoga instructor, Deb Sandholdt, who is an RYT 200 yoga instructor. This is an all-levels class



focusing on building strength and flexibility. Please bring your own yoga mat, if possible. If you do not have one, please include that when registering and we will provide you one. Space is limited and pre-registration is required by texting/calling 563-349-0956 to sign-up. The fee for this class is \$15/participant and can be paid the day of via cash/Venmo.



June 8th ~ Amphibian Day ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Eden Valley

Today is all about those fantastically fun frogs and salamanders! All day, there will be coloring pages, at 10 AM there will be a story, 10:30 AM a live animal presentation and a craft at 1 PM! Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

8th ~ Clinton Furry Scurry ~ 8-10 AM ~ Eagle Point Park

3rd annual two mile dog walk/run. Find treasures at the silent auction and vendor tables! Dogs need to be up-to-date on all vaccinations and leashed at all times. To register please visit <http://getmeregistered.com/FurryScurry24>

13th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

14th ~ Rock Creek Fun Day ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek

You know those fun things you hear about us doing during fieldtrips, that is what we are going to do once a month this summer! At **10 AM** we will start with a cruise (must sign up by calling 563-259-1876, limited availability). From **11:30 AM-2 PM** attendance is unlimited, it is geared towards elementary aged children, but all ages are welcome. We will start with live animal time in the nature gallery, **Noon-12:30** your own sack lunch, from **12:30-2PM** it will be naturalist choice on what we do based on conditions. It may range from catching critters with nets, Geocaching, paddling, wagon ride, etc.! Children must be accompanied by adults the whole time.

15th ~ Fishing Has No Boundaries Youth Event ~ 9:30 AM-12 PM ~ Lake Malone

Fishing Has No Boundaries, Eastern Iowa Chapter and Clinton County Conservation are partnering up once again for our youth with disabilities fishing event! If you know of a child living with a disability, please consider signing them up for a morning of fun and fishing at Lake Malone. The cost for this event is \$15/child and registration is required. We need volunteers



and fishing buddy volunteers! If you would like to be a part of this amazing event, please contact Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202.

16th ~ Good Morning Cruise ~ 9 AM & 10:30 AM ~ Rock Creek

Join a naturalist on a peaceful morning cruise on the Mississippi River. Call 563-259-1876 to reserve a free spot one week in advance.

19th ~ Creating an Angler ~ 6:30 PM ~ Malone Park

Providing new experiences in nature for children helps build an appreciation for the outdoors at a young age that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on doing fishing yourself. We will teach you how to encourage your angler even if you're not an angler yourself. This is a free event and open to the public. Call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 with any questions.

20th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

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

Join this amazing volunteer group to make a difference at Rock Creek! Email kjeffrey@clintoncounty-ia.gov for more information.

27th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

30th ~ Good Morning Cruise ~ 9 AM & 10:30 AM ~ Rock Creek

Join a naturalist on a peaceful morning cruise on the Mississippi River. Call 563-259-1876 to reserve a free spot one week in advance.



July Events

2nd ~ Berry Dyeing ~ 6 PM ~ Sherman Park

Be prepared to pick berries (mosquitoes and thorns) then we will prepare to dye silk squares. The fee is \$10 and preregistration is required on www.mycountyparks.com.

4th ~ Happy 4th of July ~ No cruises will be running

10th ~ Science & Storytime ~ 10:30 AM ~ Lake Malone

During this program, we will read a story and do some science exploration through hands-on experiments! Each Science & Storytime event will take place at a different location and include a different story and experiment. Check our Facebook page to find out the topic for each event! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

10th ~ Creating an Angler ~ 6:30 PM ~ Malone Park

Providing new experiences in nature for children helps build an appreciation for the outdoors at a young age that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on fishing yourself. We will teach you how to encourage your angler even if you're not an angler yourself. This is a free event and open to the public. Call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 with any questions.

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

12th & 13th ~ Christmas in July ~ Eden Valley, Walnut Grove and Sherman Park

Decorating campsites in the Christmas-fashion. Weather permitting, a movie played at Eden Valley Campground at dusk.

12th ~ Rock Creek Fun Day ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek

You know those fun things you hear about us doing during fieldtrips, that is what we are going to do once a month! At **10 AM** we will start with a cruise (must sign up by calling 563-259-1876, limited availability). From **11:30-2 PM** attendance is unlimited, it is geared towards elementary aged children, but all ages are welcome. We will start with live animal time in the nature gallery, **Noon-12:30** your own sack lunch, from **12:30-2 PM** it will be naturalist choice on what we do based on conditions. It may range from catching critters with nets, Geocaching, paddling, wagon ride, etc.! Children must be accompanied by adults the whole time.

13th ~ Turtle Day ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Eden Valley ~

Today is all about those totally tubular turtles! All day, there will be coloring pages, at 10 AM there will be a story, 10:30 a live animal presentation and a craft at 1 PM! Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.



16th ~ Wagon Ride ~ 6 PM ~ McAndrews Wildlife Area

Enjoy a wagon ride through one of the counties beautiful public areas as the prairie flowers are blooming and the pollinators are buzzing. Space is limited so please text/call 563-349-0956 to sign-up for this free event.

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

20th ~ Yoga in the Park ~ 9 AM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center

Join us for a peaceful morning of outdoor yoga with local yoga instructor, Deb Sandholdt, who is an RYT 200 yoga instructor. This is an all-levels class focusing on building strength and flexibility. Please bring your own yoga mat, if possible, if you do not have one, please include that when registering and we will provide you one. Space is limited and pre-registration is required by texting/calling 563-349-0956 to sign-up. The fee for this class is \$15/participant and can be paid the day of via cash/Venmo.

22nd ~ Mussel Cruise ~ 3 PM & 5 PM ~ Rock Creek

Learn about the common mussels found on the beaches around us! The Blue Heron will take participants out on the Mighty Mississippi to discover mussels for themselves! Please dress accordingly to be wet and sandy. Please call 563-259-1876 to reserve your free spots.

23rd ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

Join this amazing volunteer group to make a difference at Rock Creek! Email kjeffrey@clintoncounty-ia.gov for more information.



24th ~ Science & Storytime ~ 10:30 AM ~ Eden Valley

During this program, we will read a story and do some science exploration through hands-on experiments! Each Science & Storytime event will take place at a different location and include a different story and experiment. Check our Facebook page to find out the topic for each event! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

24th ~ Creating an Angler ~ 6:30 PM ~ Malone Park
Providing new experiences in nature for children helps build an appreciation for the outdoors at a young age that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on fishing yourself. We will teach you how to encourage your angler even if you're not an angler yourself. This is a free event and open to the public. Call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 with any questions.

25th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

August Events

1st ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

3rd ~ EnviroKids ~ Rock Creek

A fun filled day at the Eco Center for children grades 3-5th. Contact Judie Petersen at 563-357-6932 for registration information.

7th ~ Creating an Angler ~ 6:30 PM ~ Malone Park

Providing new experiences in nature for children helps build an appreciation for the outdoors at a young age that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on fishing yourself. We will teach you how to encourage your angler even if you're not an angler yourself. This is a free event and open to the public. Call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 with any questions.



8th ~ Bird House Building ~ 2:30 PM ~ Rock Creek

Join a Naturalist and create a Wren house for your backyard! We will provide all the materials and tools needed and will lead you through the assembling process. Spaces are limited and registration is required for this \$15 program by August 1 at www.mycountyparks.com.

8th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

10th ~ Fishing Has No Boundaries ~ 8 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek

Clinton County Conservation will be hosting the 10th annual Fishing Has No Boundaries event. This event will provide fishing opportunities for people

with disabilities on and along the Mississippi River. We need boat captain volunteers and fishing buddy volunteers! If you would like to be a part of this amazing event, please contact Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202.

13th ~ Mussel Cruise ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek
Learn about the common mussels found on the beaches around us! The Blue Heron will take participants out on the Mighty Mississippi to discover mussels for themselves! Please dress accordingly to be wet and sandy. Please call 563-259-1876 to reserve your free spots.

14th ~ Science & Storytime ~ 10:30 AM ~ Sherman Park

During this program, we will read a story and do some science exploration through hands-on experiments! Each Science & Storytime event will take place at a different location and include a different story and experiment. Check our Facebook page to find out the topic for each event! Children must be accompanied by an adult.



15th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

16th ~ Rock Creek Fun Day ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek

You know those fun things you hear about us doing during fieldtrips, that is what we are going to do once a month! At **10 AM** we will start with a cruise (must sign up by calling 563-259-1876, limited availability). From **11:30-2 PM** attendance is unlimited, it is geared towards elementary aged children, but all ages are welcome. We will start with live animal time in the nature gallery, **Noon-12:30 PM** your own sack lunch, from **12:30-2 PM** it will be naturalist choice on what we do based on conditions. It may range from catching critters with nets, Geocaching, paddling, wagon ride, etc.! Children must be accompanied by adults the whole time.

16th ~ Clinton National Night Out ~ 5-7 PM ~ Clinton Waterfront Bandshell

Enjoy a fun night at the Clinton Waterfront and stop by the Clinton County Conservation booth to visit with the Naturalists and see the different animal artifacts they brought and even meet some of the fun critters!

17th ~ Snake Day ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Eden Valley

Today is all about slithering, secretive snakes! All day, there will be coloring pages, at 10 AM there will be a story, 10:30 AM a live animal presentation and a craft at 1 PM! Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.



17th ~ Yoga in the Park ~ 9 AM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center

Join us for a peaceful morning of outdoor yoga with local yoga instructor, Deb Sandholdt, who is an RYT 200 yoga instructor. This is an all-levels class focusing on building strength and flexibility. Please bring your own yoga mat, if possible, if you do not have one, please include that when registering and we will provide you one. Space is limited and pre-registration is required by texting/calling 563-349-0956 to sign-up. The fee for this class is \$15/participant and can be paid the day of via cash/Venmo.

19th ~ Voyageur Paddle ~ 5 PM ~ Swan Slough to Rock Creek

Enjoy a peaceful evening on the Mississippi River in our 29-foot Voyageur canoes. This event is for ages 10 and up and is for all experience types. We will meet at Rock Creek at 5 PM and carpool to the Swan Slough boat ramp in Camanche, IA where we will begin our journey down river back to the Rock Creek Eco Center. Room is limited so sign-up is required. Please call or text 563-349-0956 to reserve your free spot.



21st ~ Goldenrod Dyeing ~ 6 PM ~ Sherman Park

Be prepared to cut goldenrod (mosquitoes and tall grass) and then prepare to dye flower sack towels. The fee is \$10, and preregistration is required on www.mycountyparks.com.

21st ~ Creating an Angler ~ 6:30 PM ~ Malone Park

Providing new experiences in nature for children helps build an appreciation for the outdoors at a young age that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on fishing yourself. We will teach you how to encourage your angler even if you're not an angler yourself. This is a free event and open to the public. Call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202 with any questions.

22nd ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek



25th ~ Annual Rock Creek Catfish Classic ~ 7 AM -12 PM ~ Rock Creek

The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is hosting this tournament to raise funds for our nature centers. Costs are \$50/boat and \$10 for the Biggest Fish Jackpot. Registration can be done on www.cccf.org or the day of the event.

27th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

Join this amazing volunteer group to make a difference at Rock Creek! Email kjeffrey@clintoncounty-ia.gov for more information.

28th ~ Science & Storytime ~ 10:30 AM ~ Walnut Grove

During this program, we will read a story and do some science exploration through hands-on experiments! Each Science & Storytime event will take place at a different location and include a different story and experiment. Check our Facebook page to find out the topic for each event! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

29th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 7 PM ~ Rock Creek

BY GABRIELLA TORRES, ABSTRACT ARTIST AND CREATIVE PLACEMAKER

“A drop of ink may make a million think”

~ LORD BYRON

It's hard to believe that the WILDNESS project has almost come to an end. In just a month or two, the panels will go back to where it all started, to the trails and other areas of Eden Valley, Rock Creek, Sherman Park and Camp Miss-Elk-Ton to become outdoor art displays for the public to enjoy. It has been an incredible experience for Jess and me and I'm so proud of not only the work we created but what we've learned about creating natural pigments, inks, and dyes, and using those mediums to create art. What's even better, that knowledge, through future programming, will now be passed on to you through workshops and other presentations to continue this ancient tradition of creating. We were and continue to be excited to bring art enthusiasts to conservation areas and conservationists to the art scene.

I would like to personally extend an enormous thank you to Interpretive Naturalist, Jessica Steines, without whom this project would not have been successful. Her knowledge, perseverance, and sense of adventure ensured that we would have all the necessary materials to create our pigments. She has become, in my eyes, an incredible ink and dye maker! I'd also like to thank the Iowa Department of Natural Resources who funded this project and Clinton County Conservation for their partnership, for the use of Miss-Elk-Ton as a residency space, and for hosting the WILDNESS art show, which, with over 130 people at the opening reception, was an incredible success.

Finally, a thank you to all of you who have followed us on this journey, who have supported us, who came to the reception or to see the show, and who I hope are inspired to enjoy and engage with the natural beauty around you.

We are deeply fortunate to live in an area with so much beauty, full of beautiful landscapes, vegetation, and creatures. I hope that this project has helped to highlight that beauty, to celebrate it, and to raise awareness of these spaces so that we continue to be good stewards of this WILDNESS for years and years to come.

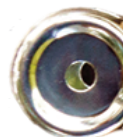


Call of the Wild

Looking back, you could say Gabi and I were called to do the WILDNESS Project. When I first met her, I knew that I wanted to collaborate with her. When we were able to connect, the project was born! If you know me, I love anything about getting back to nature and Gabi wanted to learn new skills by using more natural ways to create her art without having to depend on the liquid plastic paints we call acrylics.

When we started this project, we knew we had to be mindful of the amount of harvesting we did in an area, to not take resources away from wildlife and let the plants rebound from our disturbance, so others can enjoy the plant and we could harvest from the same location in the future.

For instance, the first plant I showed Gabi was bloodroot, one of the first spring wildflowers in woodlands that have been a staple for art for centuries. In fact, North Carolina State University is teaching people how to propagate bloodroot so as not to decimate the native population for their pigment making due to loss of habitat and usage for traditional arts. Because of that, we did not use any bloodroot, it just didn't feel right, Iowa being one of the most altered landscapes in the world.



BY JESSICA STEINES, INTERPRETIVE NATURALIST

In the early 1800's, Iowa was 88% tall grass prairie, now reduced to 0.1%. Forests have suffered less, but now only covering 8% of the original 19% of the land because of the inaccessibility of farming due to floodplains and topography, and really, how much of that 8% is quality woodland with native wildflowers?

So luckily, we discovered many invasive and weedy plants like garlic mustard, honeysuckle, catnip, and curly dock, make fantastic pigments! These plants are prolific so we can't possibly overconsume, in fact, we want to harvest as many berries, seeds and whole plants to reduce the populations in our natural areas, so they don't choke out the desirable native plants like bloodroot. Another pleasant

surprise is that these plants are harvestable well into the colder fall and winter season!

If you want to try your hand at making a green pigment AND removing an incredibly invasive spring plant called garlic mustard, below is an easy recipe. We want to eliminate this plant because it is phenomenal at spreading as it produces MANY tiny mustard seeds in a small skinny pod. This plant grows in shady areas and competes with morel mushrooms (and makes them harder to find) and those unique spring wildflowers for space, water, nutrients and sunlight. For this small project, harvest the whole plant, cut off the roots, place them in a bag, tie them tightly and throw in the garbage.

Garlic Mustard Pigment Recipe

1 cup garlic mustard plant, cut to pieces 2 Tbsp white vinegar
1 cup water 1 Tbsp salt

Optional Ingredients:

alum ½ tsp gum arabic whole or clove oil

Simmer water, plant material, vinegar and salt in a stainless-steel pot for 15 minutes, stirring and mashing occasionally. Check color by dipping a small strip of absorbent paper into the liquid, if you would like a stronger color continue simmering, checking every 15 minutes or so. If you would like to alter the color, make the color brighter and/or reduce fading, stir in some alum until it starts changing color.

Strain plant material into a glass bowl/jar by using a flour sack towel in a colander/sieve. Use tongs to squeeze out excess water and pigment.

If you have enough water in your pigment, submerge a small, square 100% silk scarf. Wash the silk first, with it wet and a similar temperature of your pigment, submerge it with a weight. Occasionally, stir and look at the color. Keep it in the dye bath until you are satisfied with the color or has absorbed as much color as it can. Hang to dry. Then wash with clear dish soap.

If you would like to thicken your pigment for inks/watercolors, whisk in gum arabic. If you would like to improve the smell and/or decrease the chance of mold use clove and from there, let your creative mind flow using this beautiful, all natural pigment.



Clinton County Conservation

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MAILING LIST

Clinton County residents may 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 third Tuesday the month, at 6 PM, in the Conservation Office, located 1 mile south of Grand Mound at 2308 255th St. Please note, date and location may be changed.

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.

