



# The Heron



Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation  
Volume 40 Number 1 January ~ April 2018

CCCB Newsletter  
1978-2018

## 2018 Addition to Ringneck Marsh Wildlife Area

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

By the time you read this, the CCCB will have completed the acquisition of an 80-acre parcel of land next to the existing Ringneck Marsh Wildlife Area. Ringneck Marsh is a 260-acre public hunting property that is located about 5 miles north-west of the town of Calamus. With this addition, 340 acres will be available to area sportsmen and nature lovers. The wildlife area lies in the Wapsipinicon River floodplain and is primarily comprised of native grassland shallow wetlands and floodplain timber. It's close proximity to the Wapsipinicon River corridor makes it a real outdoors paradise that a wide range of wildlife calls home. It is near Mockridge Wildlife Preserve and Syracuse Wildlife management Area as well as hundreds of acres of privately owned wildlife habitat.

Game species such as whitetail deer, raccoon, beaver, mink, otter and even an occasional pheasant can be found there. A variety of waterfowl including mallards, wood duck, Canada geese and others are also found on the property. Non-game species like the sandhill crane, great blue heron, trumpeter swan and bald eagles call the area home. The rare Blandings turtle, east-central newt and the ornate box turtle also are known to frequent the area.

Long-term plans for the new addition include converting the 35 acres of croplands into shallow wetlands and native grasses. The remaining acres include 32 acres of floodplain timber and a 13 acre meadow. Signs will go up as soon as weather allows and a small parking area will be built.

The Conservation Board has been working on this acquisition for almost two years now. With most of the land in Clinton County being intensively farmed, it can be very difficult to find a sizable piece of land for hunting. As a state, Iowa ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the amount of public lands.

This project has been funded by a wildlife habitat grant from the Iowa DNR and donations from Whitetails Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Mississippi Valley Sportsmen and the Clinton County Community Development Association. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the Clinton County Conservation Foundation were also instrumental in the acquisition of the property.

Two of our Conservation staff also deserve the lion's share of the kudos on this project, Park Officer, Chip Brown got all the groups on board to put up the money needed for the purchase and Resource Technician, Darin Voss worked with Chip to write the grants.

A BIG thank you goes out to all who made this possible!

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### 2018 Addition to Ringneck Marsh Wildlife Area Management Plan



### Funding Sources

<b>DNR Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>
<b>Pheasants Forever Total</b>	<b>\$76,500</b>
♦ Clinton County Chapter	\$20,000
♦ PF State Trust	\$20,000
♦ Cedar County Chapter	\$5,000
♦ Pheasants Forever Grant received from Clinton Co. Development Association	\$31,500
<b>Whitetails Unlimited Total</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>
♦ Clinton Area Chapter	\$5,000
♦ Wapsi Bottoms Chapter	\$4,500
♦ National Fund	\$4,500
♦ Jackson County Chapter	\$4,000
<b>Mississippi Valley Sportsmen</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Clinton County Conservation Board</b>	<b>\$10,500</b>
<b>TOTAL Acquisition Cost</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>

## 2017 “Building Better Birders” Class & Cruise

by Kelly J. McKay and Mark Roberts

During the spring season of 2017, the Clinton County Conservation Board (CCCB) Education Staff developed an idea to train better birders and possibly develop a core group of new citizen scientists, by conducting “beginning birder cruises” in the wooded backwaters of the Mississippi River at Rock Creek Park on the Blue Heron pontoon boat. The hope was that participants in this program would get involved in various “citizen science” projects (e.g. Christmas Bird Count, Statewide Spring Bird Count, etc.). The program was funded in-kind by CCCB (\$1,575) along with a grant from the Iowa Ornithologists’ Union (\$750). The cruises were co-led by Mark Roberts (CCCB) who served as a birthing guide and boat pilot, as well as Kelly McKay (BioEco Research and Monitoring Center) who was involved as the primary birthing guide and instructor.



Originally, six cruises were planned during the summer breeding season of 2017, alternating between Saturday and Wednesday mornings (June 10 & 21, July 8 & 19, 5 and August 5 & 16). Eventually, we added two additional cruises during the fall migration season (September 13 & 27). Cruises began shortly after sunrise (6:30-7:00 AM) and lasted anywhere from 2.5 to 5.0 hours, depending on availability of the boat as well as interest from the participants. Furthermore, participants had the option of birding on foot throughout the park with Kelly for an additional hour or two after the cruise.

Overall, 83 people participated on the 8 cruises (slightly over 10 per trip) with a low of 5 participants on Trip 1 (June 10) to a high of 16 participants on Trips 4 and 6 (July 19 and August 16). During these 8 cruises a cumulative total of 105 species were identified, ranging from a low of

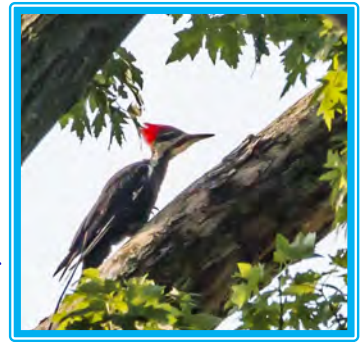


7 species (September 27) to a high of 72 species (September 13). This produced an average of nearly 60 species per cruise. Approximately half of the species (52) were observed on 6 or more of the trips, while 28 species were encountered on all 8 cruises. During these birding cruises, 10 species of waterfowl and other waterbirds were reported along with 6 species each of raptors and shorebirds and all 7 species of woodpeckers (red-headed, pileated, flicker, yellow-bellied sapsucker, red-bellied, hairy and downy) occurring in Iowa. Furthermore, these trips yielded 8 species of flycatchers, 5 species each of vireos, thrushes, and blackbirds, as well as a notable 17 species of warblers. Highlight species encountered in noteworthy abundances included: wood duck, yellow-billed cuckoo, spotted sandpiper, double-crested cormorant, turkey vulture, bald eagle, red-headed woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, eastern wood-pewee, great crested flycatcher, yellow-throated vireo, red-eyed vireo, tree swallow, northern rough-winged swallow, brown creeper, house wren, prothonotary warbler, American redstart and Baltimore oriole.

The whole trip series was fraught with worries. Whenever you schedule a series like this you run the risk of it not attracting a crowd the first couple of outings and now you are stuck following through with the rest of the scheduled events. Luckily we had a small but enthusiastic following from the very start. The people were really interested in birding and becoming better birders. This fueled our whole series and inspired Kelly and myself to continue into the fall and hopefully next year. Of course the biggest fear is over sleeping. It turns out it is far easier to say you will meet at 6 AM at the boat ramp than it is to actually do that when the time comes! Astoundingly, all the trips took off on schedule. Another pesky worry is poor weather hurting your turnout. I must say we had the most spectacular weather for every one of our days. Low wind, sunshine and lots of birds! Lastly, scheduling a birding event with people does not guarantee the birds are going to show up. That was never a problem as you can see from Kelly’s report.

Although we believe this first-time effort at “beginning birder cruises” was a success, illustrated by the fact that several people participated on multiple trips, the definitive proof of success for this program will be demonstrated by the involvement of participants on various “citizen science” programs in the future. We are hopeful that additional years of this program may produce a reliable source of citizen scientists throughout the local area.

*We were fortunate enough to have photographer Steve Hagar along on one of our cruises and we took some great photos including the ones in this article. See them all at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/132925030@N04/sets/72157685314673923/with/36259318930/>*





## Cavity Nesters of Clinton County

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretive Naturalist

We have a great mix of furry and feathered creatures to brighten our seasons. If you haven't put up feeders in your backyard habitat yet there's still time. Many of the same animals we feed will be looking for a place to raise their young next spring. A good number of those are cavity nesters. In a wilderness, they find dead limbs or old snags to excavate their nest cavity in or use an old hole. Trouble is we don't like dead limbs or trees threatening to fall on our heads or property so we cut them down. "Oops!" there goes another cavity condominium.

We can compensate for this by building artificial nest cavities. Some animals need special habitat that you might or might not be able to provide them. You'll want to know what types of animals you can expect to visit and how and where to place their boxes. Clinton County Conservation is pleased to offer all this as well as kits ranging from \$5-\$20 each.

**Box 1 /\$5/Wrens/White-footed or Prairie Mice** ~ If you build it they will come. *House wrens* begin nesting in May. Attach their box to a building, tree, pole or leave it free hanging. Place them 5-10' above the ground, 100' apart. *Prairie and white-footed mice* can be interesting to observe in your yard. Boxes should be placed 3-4' above the ground. The entry hole should face east or southeast.

**Box 2 /\$5/White-breasted Nuthatches/Prothonotary Warblers** *White-breasted nuthatches* are found in woodlands, near open areas and water. They begin nesting in May. Put 1" of wood shavings in the box and placed it with its back to the prevailing wind 5-20' from the ground and 1000' apart. *Prothonotary warblers* breed in floodplain forests and swamps and nesting begins in April. Place boxes in shade within 16' of or over standing or slow-moving water. Over water they should face land 10-20' from the shore, 4-12' above the high water level and 235' apart.

**Box 3 /\$5/Black-capped Chickadees** These birds prefer woodlots, shelter belts and nearby yards. Nesting begins in April. Place an inch of sawdust in the box then place its back to the prevailing wind in 40-60 % sunlight. Mount them 5-15' from the ground and 650' apart.

**Box 4 /\$5/Tree Swallows/Eastern Bluebirds** *Tree swallows* nest in marshes, meadows and wooded swamps beginning in May. Place boxes on poles 5-6' high and space them 35' apart. Face the hole towards an open field from the northeast to southwest. They favor long uncut grass and line their nest with feathers. *Bluebirds* begin nesting in April. Their boxes should be placed facing east in meadows or open woods, 4-6' off the ground and 300' apart.



**Box 5 /\$5/Great Crested Flycatcher** *Flycatchers* nest in open woodlands, towns and along rivers beginning in May. Give the box an unobstructed flight path along a woodland edge in partial sun. You may use a post or tree and mount it about 3-20' high. To keep out starlings and sparrows you can hang it from a 3-4' wire.



### **Box 6 /\$5/Robins/Barn Swallows/Eastern Phoebes**

**Robins** begin nesting in May. Their platforms are mounted on posts 5-25' high and on buildings just below the eaves in plain site. *Barn swallows* begin nesting in May using mud nests attached to vertical surfaces and prefer meadows near water. Place under the eaves 7-12' high. Multiple platforms can be placed as near as 5' apart. Swallows must have mud and you can make a puddle for them. *Eastern phoebes* begin nesting in April and prefer sites in an open woodland with water nearby. Place the platform on a building close to the eave from 3-6' high and 165' apart.

### **Box 7 /\$20/American Kestrels/Eastern Screech Owls**

*Kestrels* prefer to nest in grasslands and open woodlands beginning in March. Attach their nest boxes to buildings, posts or lone trees under a limb 10-30' high facing northeast to southwest and no closer than 1/2 mile apart. Add 3" of wood shavings to the box. *Eastern screech owls* nest in open woodlands, forests and towns beginning in March. Their boxes can be attached under a limb of a live tree at the woodlands edge or from poles 10-30' high and 100' apart. Add 2-3" of wood shavings to the box. Wait a week if not two after finding a nest to check the contents.

**Box 8 /\$20/Flying Squirrels** Place the box in woodlands from 10-26' high so it faces opposite the prevailing wind. You can attract *southern flying squirrels* by placing nuts on a dimly lit feeding platform (the squirrels won't mind) and watch for them after dark.

**Box 9 /\$20/Bats** Our *bats* prefer to hunt insects over water so their boxes are best placed near it. Bat houses should be mounted 12-15' high. Choose a sunny location on the south or east side of a building or on a pole. Bat houses work best with at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight. Black paint or a tar paper rap may be needed for additional heat absorption and boxes should be in place by April.

**Box 10 /\$20/Wood duck/Hooded Merganser** *Wood ducks* & *hooded mergansers* both nest in forests and marshes near water. On land, choose a site within 100' of and face their boxes toward the water or place them over the water and attach them to poles or posts from 6-30' high and no closer than 600' apart near, or over water. Place 4" of wood shavings in the box.

**Clinton County Conservation** is offering a *Cavity Box Workshop* at 10 AM on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March in the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek Park. We will provide tools and materials to build your kits or you may pick them up at that time. *Place your order by 3/9/18.*

**To order** mail a check to Clinton CCB Headquarters, P.O. Box 68, Grand Mound, Iowa 52751. For questions call 563-847-7202.

Be sure to make the check out to **Rock Creek** for the total of your order. Include the quantity of each box number you want in the memo space of the check.

## Events Calendar ~ Fight Cabin Fever!

Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather conditions allow, we will try to schedule some quickie events. Write [cjacobsen@clintoncounty-ia.gov](mailto: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

### January

1<sup>st</sup> ~ Eco Tourism Center Closed ~ Rock Creek

4<sup>th</sup> ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Local musicians will play, sing and lead you through a night of music, dance and fun. Musicians interested in playing should contact Chuck at 563-357-0759.

6<sup>th</sup> ~ Annual Bald Eagle Watch ~ 9 AM-2 PM - Clinton Community College, 1000 Lincoln Blvd. ~ Eagle Watching is at Lock & Dam 13. The dam is located 3 miles north of Fulton, IL. Programs will feature live birds of prey. The hall will have exhibits, door prizes, food and drinks.

9<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

9<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We are looking for volunteers for the Eco Tourism Center, come to find out how you can help out!

12<sup>th</sup> ~ Amazing Amphibians ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Tiger salamanders can live up to 15 years in the wild and over 20 in captivity! Bring your kids to meet a live tiger salamander along with other hands-on opportunities, story, craft and snack.



13<sup>th</sup> ~ Ski Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Stop in the camp store and rent (\$5) one set of cross-country skis and get the 2<sup>nd</sup> rental free. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for snow conditions.

15<sup>th</sup> ~ Eco Center Closed for Martin Luther King Day ~ Rock Creek

16<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

17<sup>th</sup> ~ Build an Ice Fishing Rod ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Local rod builder, Garry Land will be on hand to help you build your very own, unique ice fishing rod for only \$30. Space is limited, register at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com)

20<sup>th</sup> ~ Winter Sports Clinic ~ 10 AM ~ Ericksen Center ~ Emma Young Park, Clinton ~ This is winter fun for all! Beginning with an in-depth look at the sports of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. After, we will crack open the gear trailer and check out equipment, free of charge, from 11 AM-1 PM. A group demonstration will be followed by private lessons.

20<sup>th</sup> ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2-4 PM ~ 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. Step-up and lead or just play/sing along. Sit and listen or get up and dance.

*All events are free unless otherwise noted.*



20<sup>th</sup> ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 5 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ Intro to Spectroscopy and Double Stars. View skies through a 20-inch diameter telescope if the skies are clear. Check out [www.facebook.com/QuadCitiesAstro/](http://www.facebook.com/QuadCitiesAstro/)

23<sup>rd</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

27<sup>th</sup> ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Stop in the camp store and rent (\$2.50) one set of snowshoes and get the 2<sup>nd</sup> rental free. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for snow conditions.

27<sup>th</sup> ~ Wings Cupped, Feet Down, Delta Waterfowl Banquet ~ 4 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Come have fun and make a difference! Contact Shane Lieferman @ 563-503-0930 to purchase tickets.

30<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

31<sup>st</sup> ~ Furry Friends ~ 11:15 AM & 2:15 PM ~ Camanche Library ~ We all wear our winter coats during the cold season including the many magnificent mammals that live in nature. Get a chance to see and feel some of these wild winter coats as we discover what makes a mammal a mammal through a story, craft and animal furs.

### February

1<sup>st</sup> ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ Musicians interested in playing should contact Chuck at 563-357-0759 before the event.

1<sup>st</sup> ~ Moon Hike/Snowshoe ~ 8 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ We'll hike the Nature Barn's trails to Eagle Point Park, stopping to enjoy the sights and sounds of the winter night under the illumination of Luna. Snowshoes will be available if necessary. Donations for the center are welcome.

2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Mighty Minnows ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Have you ever raced a minnow? Bring your kids to race, sort and experience. This event also includes, story, craft and snack.

3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Winter Wonders Festival ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The magic of the cold months comes alive during this family fun winter festival! The Friends of Rock Creek will be offering a day of winter crafts, snacks and games!

10:30 AM-12:30 PM ~ Winter Survival ~ Take a minute to learn about the many challenges winter has and have fun doing it! This family fun program will teach you how to boil water, build fires and shelters all while having fun outside! Children must be accompanied by adults, registration is required for Winter Survival at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com) or call 563-847-7202 by Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>.



3<sup>rd</sup> ~ 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 @ 309-887-4390 to purchase tickets.

6<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek



10<sup>th</sup> ~ Ski Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek

13<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

14<sup>th</sup> ~ Happy Hibernators ~ 11:15 AM & 2:15 PM ~ Camanche Library ~ Many of Iowa's wildlife avoid the cold temperatures by sleeping the winter away. We will take a closer look at some of these animals through a story, craft and up-close encounter.



16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> ~ Winter Weekend Getaway ~ Rock Creek ~ Call the camp store at 563-259-1876 to make your cabin reservation and to get a \$10 per night discount. A two-night minimum stay is required for the discount.

16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> ~ The Great Backyard Bird Count ~ This was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds. More than 160,000 people of all ages, worldwide join the four-day count each February. For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere, for as long as you wish! Your help is needed to make the GBBC successful! Go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

17<sup>th</sup> ~ Voyageur Canoe Meeting ~ 9 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Our 29' voyageur canoes have had a good first season and are now in winter storage. It is our hope to expand into more general public use of the boats and the most exciting way to do this is to conduct voyages along miles of shoreline. We are inviting naturalist guides and the public to learn about the history, culture and techniques necessary to successfully conduct these voyages. We will present information, collect ideas and plan events, while building a team of dedicated and skilled voyageurs. Contact Chuck at [cja-cobsen@clintoncounty-ia.gov](mailto:cja-cobsen@clintoncounty-ia.gov) or call 563-357-0759.



17<sup>th</sup> ~ Winter Sports ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Have you ever experienced the exhilaration of treading or gliding over the winter snow through trackless wilderness? The CCCB will have it's snowshoes, cross-country skis and skates available free of charge. Private lessons will be given then a guided tour of the refuge will round out the day.

17<sup>th</sup> ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2-4 PM ~ Rock Creek

17<sup>th</sup> ~ Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help provide public hunting, wildlife habitat and hunting tradition. Deadline to purchase tickets is February 9<sup>th</sup>. Call Jeff Beckwith at 563-249-7358.

17<sup>th</sup> ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 5:30 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ Star Photography.

20<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

24<sup>th</sup> ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek

24<sup>th</sup> ~ 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 Goodsman, 563-212-3393, to purchase tickets.

25<sup>th</sup> ~ Youth Hunter Education Challenge - Open Tryouts ~ 1 PM ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~ Y.H.E.C. is a weekend-long event for kids 11-18 that takes place June 9<sup>th</sup> for the first time in Clinton County! Youth compete in 8 events, learn about the outdoors and have fun with other young people. This "tryout" day for that kids and parents to come and experience a Y.H.E.C. practice. Call Loren @ 563-357-4866.



27<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

27<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

28<sup>th</sup> ~ Bears, Wild Winter Wednesdays ~ 9 AM ~ Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton, IL ~ Black, brown or white, North America is home to some beautiful bears. Join while we explore the fascinating facts of these large mammals.

### March

Camanche Ducks Unlimited ~ Imperial Lanes, Camanche ~ Contact Ruth Marsh, 563-212-8133 for information and to purchase tickets.

1<sup>st</sup> ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle

1<sup>st</sup> ~ Eagle Point Park Full Moon Hike ~ 8 PM ~ Soaring Eagle ~ We'll hike the parks roads and visit its overlooks watching for night-time visitors and listening for their sounds under the 1<sup>st</sup> full moon of March. Refreshments will be available and the family is welcome. Donations to support the center are always welcomed.



3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Snowshoe Day ~ 9 AM-1 PM ~ Rock Creek

3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Mississippi Valley Sportsmen Banquet ~ 5:30 PM ~ Starlight Ballroom, Davenport ~ Contact Rob Cain, 563-340-4918 for information and to purchase tickets.

6<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek



10<sup>th</sup> ~ Cabin Fever Day Camp ~ 1 PM-4 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Spring is right around the corner and it's time to get outside! This day camp is designed for children grades 4-6 and will include outdoor activities such as using a compass, fire building and archery! Registration is required. Cost is \$5. Register at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com)

10<sup>th</sup> ~ Eastern Iowa Wild Turkey Federation Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ To purchase tickets call Mike House @ 563-357-9251.

**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Trivia Night ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~ Come for a fun night of trivia to raise funds for the *Friends of Rock Creek* and *Fishing Has No Boundaries* (FHNB) Inc. The Friends support Rock Creek by promoting the site through volunteering at the Eco Center while FHNB hosts their annual fishing event for handicap individuals at Rock Creek. Register your table of 8 for \$80 or individually for \$15 at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com), text 563-212-0955 or call 563-847-7202. Bring your own snacks and beverages.



**13<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek**

**16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> ~ Winter Weekend Getaway ~ Rock Creek** ~ Call the camp store at 563-259-1876 to make your cabin reservation and to get a \$10 per night discount. A two-night minimum stay is required for the discount.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Cavity Nest Box Workshop ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek** ~ You can build nest boxes for \$5-\$20. *See article page 3.* Send a check to Clinton CCB Headquarters, P.O. Box 68, Grand Mound, Iowa 52751 with the type and number of boxes you want listed in the memo. 563-847-7202.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2-4 PM ~ Rock Creek**

**20<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek**

**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Real Reptiles ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton** ~ Bring your youngsters to meet some of the oldest types of animals on earth, for example, turtles have been around for 200 million years! Along with a turtle, there will be a snake to get to know, story, craft and snack!

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Twenty-second Annual Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ Wheatland Community Center ~ Clinton Co.** Pheasants Forever is hosting a night of fun & fund-raising. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 to purchase tickets.

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 7 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance** ~ Orion & other nebulae.

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek**

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Painting Class with "Fresh Paint" ~ 6-8 PM ~ \$35 ~ Rock Creek** ~ The first signs of spring is the theme with step-by-step painting instructions on a 11x14 canvas. All materials supplied! Register at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com).



**30<sup>th</sup> ~ Eco Center Closed for Good Friday ~ Rock Creek**

## April

**1<sup>st</sup> ~ Eco Center Closed for Easter ~ Rock Creek**

**3<sup>rd</sup> ~ A Nature Story ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek**

**3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Woodcock "Sky Dance" ~ 7:30 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance** ~ Some of the most memorable and anxiously awaited sights and sounds of spring are those demonstrated by these seldom heard and seen birds.

**5<sup>th</sup> ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle**

**7<sup>th</sup> ~ Wild for Animals ~ 9 AM-12 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~ Be a part of the Junior Stewards of the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center for their group outing to the Mississippi

River Eco Tourism Center. Experience the live animals that live there up-close and personal. This opportunity is for children ages 9-14 with an adult. Pre-registration on [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com) is appreciated but not required.

**7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> ~ Winter Camping** ~ This will be the last weekend for winter camping rates (\$5 discount) at Rock Creek and Eden Valley. Take advantage of these low rates.

**12<sup>th</sup> ~ Eco Center Open 7 days/week ~ Rock Creek** ~ The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will now be open daily. Call the Eco Center at 563-259-1876 for hours.

**14<sup>th</sup> ~ Spring Fling ~ 10 AM-2 PM ~ Rock Creek** ~

- ◆ 10 AM there will be an Easter egg hunt for ages 1-12 in and around the Eco Center.
- ◆ 11 AM Join Naturalist Jill Schmidt for a "Turtle Talk". Get a chance to learn about and meet the different kinds of turtles that live in and around the Mississippi.
- ◆ 1 PM enjoy some time on the river in one of our 14 passenger voyageur canoes (weather permitting). Get a chance to experience what it was like to paddle one of these magnificent boats in the backwaters.

*There will be many more things going on throughout the day including live animals, crafts and balloon art!*



**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Great River Road Trip, NE Iowa & SW Wisconsin ~ 7 AM-8 PM ~ \$10** ~ We will transport participants on an all-day adventure! We will meet at CCCB Headquarters, Grand Mound for the 7 AM departure. We will be seeing sights such as Effigy Mounds National Monument, Pikes Peak State Park, St. Feriole Island and the Driftless Area Wetlands Centre. Bring your own sack lunch to enjoy in one of the parks. There will be some optional hiking. On the way back home we will stop at Potosi Brewery & Whispering Bluffs Winery for dinner (about \$15 each) and tours. A long, but great, day! Space is limited, registration and information at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com).



**20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Cabin Fever Weekend ~ Rock Creek** ~ Call the camp store at 563-259-1876 to make your cabin reservation and to get a \$5 per night discount. A two-night minimum stay is required for the discount.

**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Smithtown Church Open House ~ 10:30 AM - Noon ~ Smithtown Church** ~ The Clinton County Historical Society, along with the CCCB, have completed many restoration projects inside the 144-year-old building. Located 3 miles south of Eden Valley. Stop by and take a look.

**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Spring Refuge Float ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek** ~ Paddle the quiet backwaters as they wind their way through the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge. We'll gather at the Eco Center and get underway together. We plan to be out on the water for 2 hours. Bring water and a snack.





**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Season Opener ~ 1-4 PM** ~ We will have cookies for guests on this special day. A short, 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 Labor Day. Volunteer hosts are needed during the spring.

**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2-4 PM ~ Rock Creek**

**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 8 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance** ~ Electronic Assisted Astronomy (telescopes will be hooked up to big screens).

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**

**28<sup>th</sup> ~ Eden Valley Nature Center Open ~ 1-4 PM**

**May**

**1<sup>st</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7-9 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt**  
~ Visit <http://register-ed.com/programs/iowa> for required sign-up.



**Check it & Protect it!**

Help keep an eye on Iowa wildlife when you donate to the Fish/Wildlife Trust Fund on your state tax form.



Learn more at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

*Please donate to the Chickadee Check-off this tax season. Supporting Iowa wildlife conservation.*

**Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center  
Rock Creek Marina & Campground**

Open Every Day, All Winter!  
Camp Store + Nature Gallery, Thurs. - Sun. ~ 8 AM - 4 PM  
Nature Center Only, Monday - Wednesday ~ 10 AM - 2 PM

We Rent Cross Country Skis, Snowshoes & Ice Skates!  
*Rent our 200 seat Community Room!*

- ◆ Watch Big Fish in the Huge River Aquarium
- ◆ Climb Through a Giant Hollow Tree
- ◆ Feel Mussels in Our Touch Tank
- ◆ Investigate Underwater Turtle Island
- ◆ Explore a Mississippi Riverbank
- ◆ Discover "It's A Small World"

3942 291<sup>st</sup> St., Camanche, 563-259-1876



**Enjoy Retirement Karen. We'll miss you!**

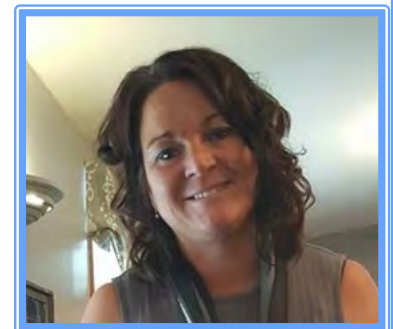
I really don't think Karen Brix knew what she was getting into when she applied for the position of Administrative Assistant with the County Conservation Board back in 1985. I'm sure she thought it would be a good job to put her secretarial skills to good use. I guess she didn't read the fine print in that job description! Over the years, Karen has learned to care for snakes and birds of prey and answer a wide range of wildlife related questions. She had often said that she should have been taking notes on the crazier phone calls that the CCCB receives so that she could have written a book. For example, one day, a person called and said there was a peacock on their back porch and wanted to know what to do. Peacocks are considered a domestic bird, not wildlife so they are out of our realm. She really doesn't want to say the response that crossed her mind on that one. Or the call about a bald eagle stuck on the ice of the Wapsipicon River that turned out to be a domestic duck which, by the way, was far from stuck. How about having a box with



10,000 honey bees placed on your desk? Try preparing bills with a rat snake on your wrist (see photo!). Working at the CCCB can be an adventure. This is something Karen quickly learned to love, but all good things come to an end. Today, Karen is spending her days with her family and friends and finally being able to spend some time in her sewing room at home catching up on quilt making. Enjoy your retirement Karen, you have earned it!

**Welcome Tara!**

Tara Sbertoli is now filling the office management void left when Karen Brix retired. Some of you may already know Tara as she was previously employed as administrative assistant in the Clinton County Sheriff's office. Her skills and previous knowledge of things like county budgeting and policies has made it possible for her to step into the job and take off running. Tara is already implementing some new practices in the CCCB to streamline the offices procedures. She's still not quite sure about feeding the snakes, but we are confident that given time, she'll learn to appreciate them as much as Karen did. Welcome aboard, Tara



**Clinton County Conservation**  
**P.O. Box 68**  
**2308 255<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Grand Mound, Iowa 52751**  
**Phone: 563-847-7202**  
**Email: [conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov](mailto:conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov)**  
**Web: [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com)**

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*Photo by Ann Johnson  
 Iowa Ornithologists' Union*



*Keep an eye out! Snowy owls are being spotted all over this winter including in Clinton County! Its called an irruption.*

**CLINTON COUNTY CONSERVATION**

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 John Schnack, DeWitt, Vice President  
 Judie Petersen, Goose Lake, Secretary/Treasurer  
 Gloria Friederichsen, Grand Mound  
 Kim Rixen, Clinton

**STAFF**

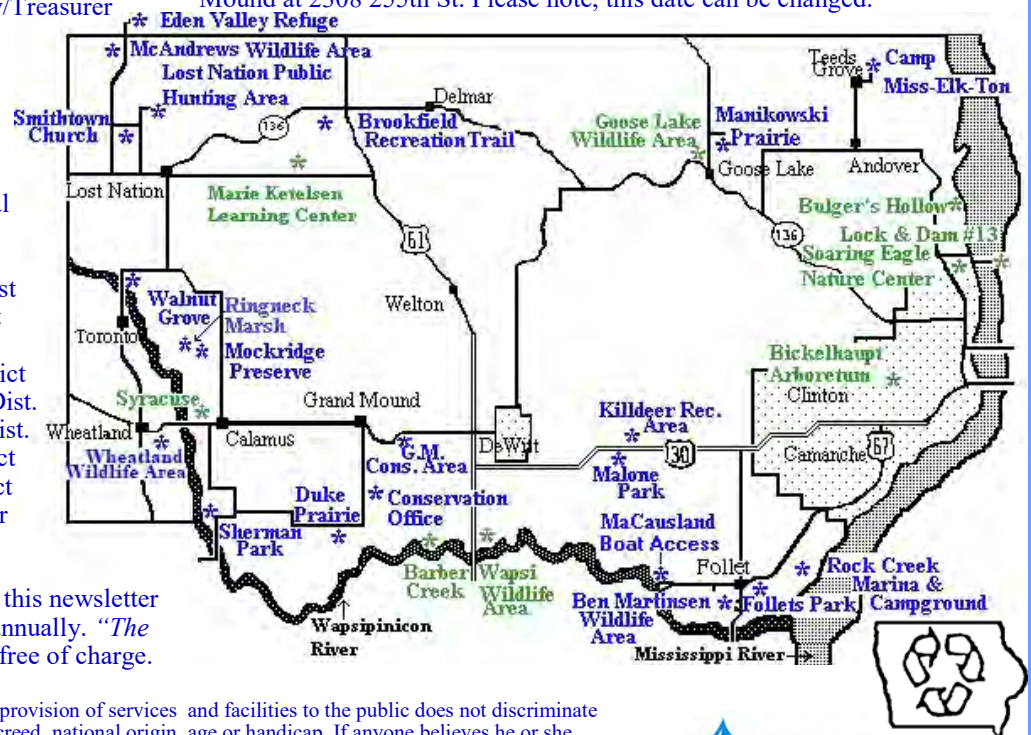
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 Allen Ketelsen, Maintenance, West Dist.  
 Brad Taylor, Park Officer, East District  
 Ryan Waltz, Park Ranger, East District  
 Michelle Stearns, Eco Center Manager

**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 second Tuesday of 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 County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

