



The Heron

Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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Camp Miss-Elk-Ton Renovations

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

Camp Miss-Elk-Ton is a 39-acre park located north of Clinton near the town of Teeds Grove. The park is situated on the upper end of the Elk River valley and is predominantly covered by large oak and hickory trees. A variety of woodland songbirds, hawks, owls, deer, gray squirrels and wild turkeys call this paradise of woods and bluffs, home.

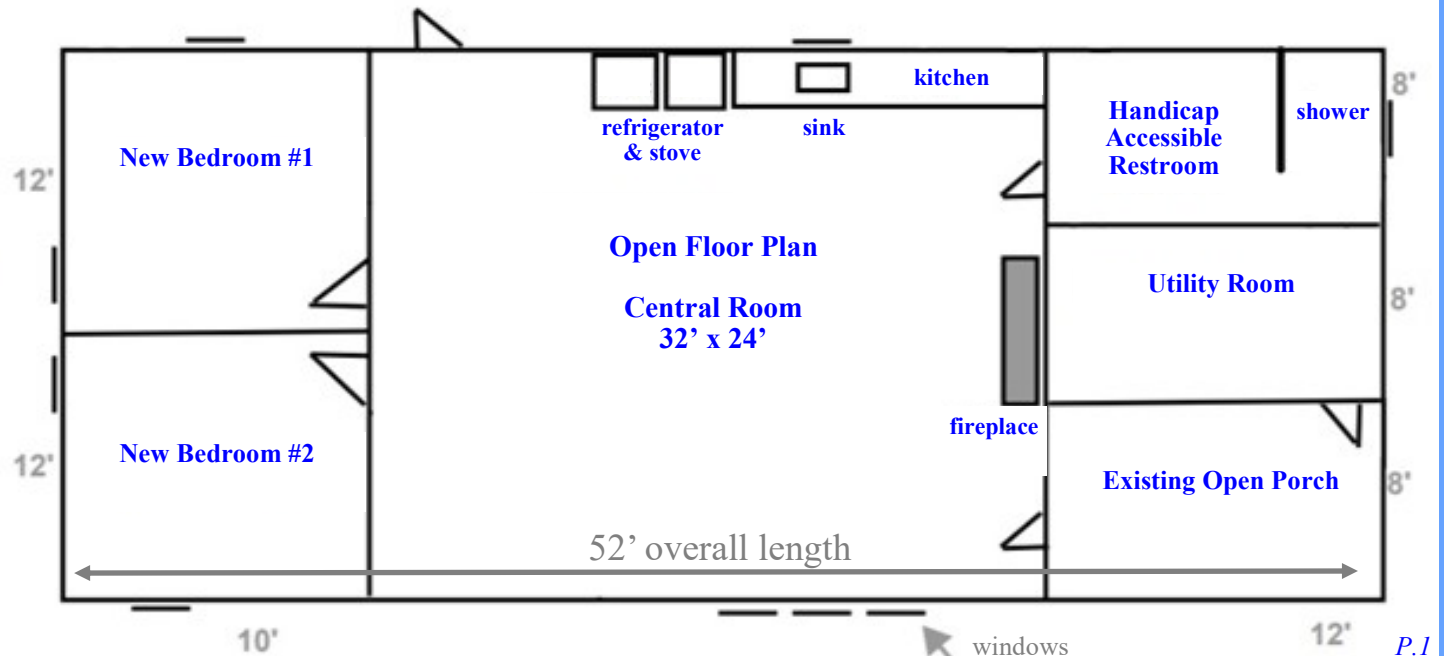
Previous to the Clinton County Conservation Board (CCCB) taking ownership of the property in 1981, Camp Miss-Elk-Ton was owned by the Mississippi Valley Girl Scout Council. Because of declining use, they decided to put the property up for sale. The Council accepted the CCCB's bid on the property despite the fact that the board was not the high bidder. An informal agreement was reached that allowed the Girl Scouts to have use of the property, schedules permitting. This agreement was later extended to all organized youth groups.

The original intent was for the property to be used as an overnight facility for local youth groups, a place to host educational workshops and to preserve a unique habitat. In recent years, use by youth groups has greatly declined. The CCCB was left debating how best to utilize the property. A number of ideas were discussed ranging from tearing down the camp lodge and making the property strictly a wildlife preserve to total renovation of the lodge for overnight stays for the public. In the end, it was decided that turning the building into a rental cabin was the best use of the facility.



This fall, the CCCB had the good fortune of being awarded a \$26,000 grant from the Clinton County Development Association to renovate the lodge into a two-bedroom rental cabin. A complete renovation of the cabin is scheduled to begin in January, 2019 with completion by fall. Labor will be provided by conservation staff working in concert with skilled local volunteers. Current features like the large fireplace will be given a facelift. Special attention will be made to be sure the cabin is ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant so that everyone can come and enjoy the cabin including our local youth groups..

This cabin will give a unique opportunity for visitors to experience a secluded cabin retreat while just 20 minutes from Clinton. The cabin will be a great place to escape the pressures of day-to-day life and reconnect with nature. Where else can you stay in a cabin in the middle of 39-acres of woods and have it all to yourself?





Saying Goodbye to a Dedicated Supporter of Conservation

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

As we wrap up 2018, we reflect on the meaningful moments within Clinton County Conservation. We have gained many new friends throughout the year, but more importantly, we have lost some as well. Kim Rixen-Bratthauer, a current board member, passed away on Sunday, November 25th. We were all saddened by this unexpected loss of not only a great asset to the Board but a great friend of conservation. The short time I have been with the Conservation Board, I was given many opportunities to work along side her and she became not only a colleague, but a good friend. Her feisty “get-it-done” attitude was one of the many things that drew me to her and if I had to choose what connected me to her the most, it would be a long list. I admired her love of the outdoors, her desire to improve conservation in Clinton County, her willingness to step in whenever called upon and, my favorite, her loud, boisterous personality.

That, her boisterous personality, I can honestly say, we all will remember most about her. She wasn't quiet, she wasn't subtle, she was a “get-to-the-point” and “make-it-happen” kind of woman and I respected her for that. Her passion for conservation shined brightly as she volunteered her time with the Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Project in Clinton County and was one of the people who released a young swan at a the very first wild release, at Goose Lake in 1998. She officially joined the Conservation Board in 2011 after years of attending meetings with her uncle Ross Spooner. She actually filled his spot after he left the board. She has served many roles throughout her time here. In 2014 she served as Vice President, President in 2015 and Secretary/Treasurer in 2016. Since then she has kept herself very much involved by helping with many events at the Mississippi River Eco Center while volunteering with the Friends

- ◆ *Kim the Board Member*
- ◆ *Piper the granddaughter*
- ◆ *Will the son*
- ◆ *Shampoo the dog*



of Rock Creek. There is rarely a time that I can remember not seeing her help during our public events. We could always count on her creative ideas, enthusiasm and work ethic.

Losing such a dedicated friend of conservation is heartbreaking and there is definitely a void where her presence once was; but I truly believe those we love never go away even when they can't be physically present. They walk beside us. Still loved and still missed.

We will greatly miss Kim. We will miss her at Youth Outdoors Skills Day, where she cracked jokes throughout a very long day of teaching kids shooting skills and gun safety. We will miss her support and efforts with the Clinton County Conservation Foundation fundraising banquet. Her large circle of friends, always willing to help her with donations and contributions to support her passion for environmental education, not to mention her own generosity. We all will miss her eternal desire to keep learning about the her world and most importantly, we will miss her laugh.

Although we were all surprised and saddened by her loss, we can take peace in knowing that her legacy in conservation is not ending, it is just changing hands. Kim's granddaughter, Piper, expresses the same dedication and love that Kim had and I know Kim is proud of that, we all are proud of that and are excited to see what Piper will contribute to conservation.

Goodbyes are not forever, they are not the end; it simply means we'll miss you until we meet again.



Jim Haring, A Lifelong Conservationist

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

This past summer, Clinton County Conservation lost a true friend and tireless supporter. Jim Haring was a lifelong friend of conservation on the local, state and national level.

Jim served on the Izaak Walton League both locally and at the state and national levels. He designed and supervised the construction of the Clinton Ike's clubhouse and was also a Pheasants Forever member and a Charter Member of the Clinton Whitetails Unlimited. He was a hunter safety instructor and helped facilitate the annual Youth Outdoor Skills Day at Ike's Haven. Jim also served on the Clinton Trees Forever Committee. Because of his lifetime of conservation volunteering, Jim received the 2010 Iowa Outstanding Environmental Education Volunteer Award.

While serving on the Clinton County Conservation Board and the Clinton County Conservation Foundation, Jim was instrumental in raising funds for the development and construction of the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek Marina & Campground. The Eco Center was the culmination of a lifetime of achievement for Jim. As a recognition of his hard work in making this dream a reality,

the Community Hall was named “Haring Hall” in his honor.

Jim believed so much in the importance of conservation education that he left the

balance of his estate to the Conservation Foundation with the understanding that the funds would help further environmental education opportunities for Clinton County youth. Getting kids outdoors was always a top priority of his. The Conservation Foundation is now working to determine how apply the funds to leave an enduring legacy and meet Jim's goals.

Jim chose to lead by example and wasn't afraid to dig into any project that would serve to better conservation. I can't help but believe that if we all had just a small bit of Jim's conservation vision, endurance and enthusiasm, the world would be a much better place.



Jim Haring at his beloved Ike's Haven.





Creature Feature: Nuthatches

by Chuck Jacobsen, *Interpretive Naturalist*

Late fall always finds me hanging things up in the yard, making that last pass with the mower and getting its' deck off and the snow blade on. Not some of my favorite chores, but if I can get them done on a sunny, short sleeve, sort-of-day it's all good. That's how I spent the day before our big Thanksgiving weekend snowstorm here in Clinton County.

With the mower transformed and the outdoor holiday lights up, I turned to hanging the extra bird feeders I manage through winter. I was excited to be welcomed by a pair of red-breasted nuthatches that nearly landed on the feeder before I could even hang it!

Their cousin, the white-breasted nuthatch, is a common visitor to any feeder, but the red-breasted, a smaller and more colorful bird, is usually only seen in years when the cone crop in the northern arboreal forests is poor. With a limited number of seeds to forage for, the birds move south, hundreds of miles from their home range, making them a irruptive migrant.

Having a small stand of conifers just west of my house may attract them, making my feeders a handy resource.



Red-breasted Nuthatch.
Note the orange belly and heavier black eye stripe.

There are many places in Clinton County where Christmas tree stands have been allowed to mature creating habitat for these birds that may hold them the year-round. Mockridge Preserve is a great example of this. They need mature trees that can be easily excavated to create a cavity nest. The entrance of this cavity is coated with pitch to keep creatures out, mainly insects, that might attack the young chicks. Because of this the birds fly in and out without landing at the entrance. The parents feed the chicks insects and spiders which, along with seeds, are what they eat themselves during the warmer months.

Nuthatches show little fear of humans and will approach very close to us, sometimes even landing on an outstretched arm or hand. I've had them perch on the top of my ski pole handle while resting during cross country skiing. They also respond to calling which can be done by playing a recording of an eastern screech owl or by "pish-ing". The spell checker doesn't like that word, but it is literally a way to call in birds. Purse up your lips and repeatedly pronounce an exaggerated "P" followed by a drawn out hissing "ish...". Be patient and hold still as it may take a few minutes to bring them in, but you may be rewarded by this tiny bird looking you right in the eye from a very close perch, perhaps even your shoulder!



White-breasted Nuthatch



AmeriCorps Grant Results in a New Face

by Erin Toohey, *AmeriCorps Naturalist*

My name is Erin Toohey and I will be serving as an AmeriCorps Member for Clinton County Conservation in the AmeriCorps 4-H Environmental Education Program. You may recognize me if you visited Rock Creek this past summer. I enjoyed my time as the seasonal naturalist there and I'm excited for this new opportunity to serve conservation.

What is AmeriCorps, you may be wondering? It's a network of national service programs whose goals are improving lives and fostering civic engagement. The 4-H Environmental Education Program is a partnership between AmeriCorps, 4-H and Iowa State University Extension Outreach.

As a member of this program, I hope to help the people of our county recognize Iowa's resources and conservation practices. I want to get them outside to see things firsthand, to help foster an appreciation for the environment and to cultivate a desire to conserve it.

One of the best ways, to get anyone to care about the natural world, is to get them out to experience it. There are so many great parks right in our own backyard and each one offers different experiences. If you're looking for a beautiful hike, Eden Valley Refuge has five miles of hiking trails. If you're looking to try snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, Rock Creek has equipment you can rent in the winter-time. Sherman Park has public hunting and an astronomical observatory and Killdeer Recreation Area has a nine acre lake for fishing.

This past summer I got to be a part of these experiences

with people at Rock Creek. Whether it was during "A Nature Story", an "Animal Encounter" or "Critter Catching", it was good seeing people explore nature. "Critter Catching" was my favorite summer activity because it was literally going out and seeing what lived right outside the door. Plus, the kids loved getting muddy and seeing all the cool critters. It was nice seeing families come back multiple times too. Tanner and Blake Haskell came with their parents on multiple Sundays. Their goal was to catch as many different critters as they could. They were determined to try and catch a bullfrog and after many Sundays persevering, they were able to finally catch one!

Kaden Ottens is also learning through experiences. Through a class at Clinton High, Kaden has been coming twice a week throughout the fall semester to care for the animals at Rock Creek and help maintain the nature gallery. He has been learning about the animals and what it takes to care for them. It has been wonderful seeing how passionate he is and how the experience is shaping his appreciation for the environment.

I am very excited to continue my growth as an educator with Clinton County Conservation while also being able to inspire people to care about our natural world. I look forward to seeing you around, whether at a school, an event or just while visiting one of our county parks.



Events Calendar

Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather conditions allow, we will try to schedule some quickie events. Write cjacobsen@clintoncounty-ia.gov and place yourself on our "Adventurers" list. You will receive a short message whenever last-minute snow events are planned.

Christmas Tree-cycling ~ **Killdeer Recreation Area** ~ Put your old tree to good use. Drop them off and we will sink them for fish habitat! No wire or flocked trees please.

January

1st ~ Eco Tourism Center Closed ~ Rock Creek

3rd ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Bring your youngsters to the Eco Center to learn about the great outdoors with a story, activities & animal encounters! Every week will be different!



3rd ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ 3923 N 3rd St, Clinton ~ Local musicians will play, sing and lead you through a night of music, dance and fun. Musicians interested in playing should contact Chuck at 357-0759 before the event.

5th ~ 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.

10th ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

11th ~ Happening Herps ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Scientist clump reptiles and amphibians into a group that are often called herps because of the Greek word herpeton, which means "creeping thing." Bring your young ones to see these live "creeping things" (aka toad, salamander, snake and turtle) along with story, craft and snack.



16th ~ Animals in Winter ~ 11:15 AM & 1 PM ~ Camanche Library ~ Animals have much to overcome during the cold months of winter. We will explore their options of hibernation, migration and adaption!

16th ~ Build an Ice Fishing Rod ~ 5 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. The rod will have to cure overnight & picked up at a later date. Space is limited, register at www.mycountyparks.com



17th ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

18th & 19th ~ Winter Weekend Getaway ~ Rock Creek ~ Call the camp store at 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.



All events are free unless otherwise noted.

19th ~ Winter Sports Clinic ~ 10 AM ~ Ericksen Community Center ~ Emma Young Park, Clinton ~

This is winter fun for all that begins with an in-depth look at the sports of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. After, we will crack open the gear trailer and checkout equipment for free. Group demonstration and lessons.



19th ~ Sherman Park Jam & Hike ~ 4 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance, 2740 160th Ave. Calamus ~ This "coffee house-style" event offers local talents and guests an opportunity to step up and lead or just play/sing along, sit and listen or get up and dance. We'll also hike some of the many trails of the park and if there is snow our snowshoes and skis will be available. Bring your sleds too!

21st ~ Eco Center Closed for Martin Luther King Day

22nd ~ 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!

24th ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

26th ~ Clinton Area Delta Waterfowl Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call Nic Hampton at 319-750-4564.

26th ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 6 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ www.qcastro.org. Quad Cities Astronomical Society's monthly gathering at our open to all. We have two large telescopes which will allow you to see things at a level of detail not possible from within the Quad Cities' light pollution.



30th ~ Conservation Club, Nature's Resources ~ 3:30 PM ~ DeWitt Library ~ We use nature's resources every day, from brushing our teeth to writing in a notebook! We will study what resources nature can renew and what it can't through hands-on activities and play.

31st ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

February

1st ~ Ground Hog's Day ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Whistle Pig! Woodchuck! Ground hogs! are all the same animal! Hands-on activities, story, craft & snack.

4th ~ Painting Class with "Fresh Paint" ~ 6-8 PM ~ \$35 ~ Rock Creek ~ Moonlit Snowman with step-by-step painting instructions on a 11x14 canvas. All materials supplied! Register at www.mycountyparks.com. The café's open & offering a homemade soup/sandwich special. Dine with us!



7th ~ NO Nature Story this Week

7th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center

9th ~ **Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 6 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ www.qcastro.org.**

14th ~ **A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek**

15th & 16th ~ **Winter Weekend Getaway ~ Rock Creek ~** Call the camp store at 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.

15th-18th ~ **The Great Backyard Bird Count ~** 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 for as long as you wish! Go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

16th ~ **Winter Family Festival ~ 9 AM ~ Rock Creek ~** Come celebrate winter with fun carnival style games, lots of family activities and crafts!



- ♦ **9 AM -Starlab ~** We'll present the wonders of Starlab inflatable dome, exploring the night skies.
- ♦ **9 AM -Noon-Winter Sports ~** We'll have our snowshoes & skis ready. Lessons offered after 10 AM.
- ♦ **10 AM -Nature Story ~** Bring your kids to learn about the great outdoors with a storybook!
- ♦ **1 PM -Live Animal Encounter ~** Live animal presentation about how animals cope for winter.
- ♦ **2 PM -Riverside Jam ~** This "coffee house-style" music event offers local talents for a variety of music.

16th ~ **Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Vista Grande, Clinton ~** Call Jeff Beckwith at 249-7358.

20th ~ **Sassy Skunks ~ 11:15 AM & 1 PM ~ Camanche Library ~** Smelly but cute, sassy skunks are more interesting than you think! We will take a closer look at these native mammals and find out everything isn't just black and white when it comes to skunks.

21st ~ **A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek**

23rd ~ **Winter Survival ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~** Take a minute to learn about the many challenges winter has and have fun doing it! This family event will teach you how to build fires, boil water and build shelters all while having fun outside! All children must be accompanied by an adult and registration is required for this free event. Sign up at www.mycountyparks.com or call 847-7202 by Feb. 20th.



23rd ~ **Iowa's Mighty Raptors ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~** Let's be bird-nerds for the day! Enjoy a presentation on Iowa's raptors and learn their many adaptations that make them the mighty predators in the sky and get a chance to see one up close and personal!

26th ~ **Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek**

27th ~ **Snakes of Iowa ~ 9 AM ~ Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton, IL ~** The fear of snakes is well known to many but the need for these slithery creatures is often overlooked. Learn about their roles in keeping our ecosystem balanced.

27th ~ **Conservation Club, 3 R's - Reduce, Reuse & Recycle ~ 3:30 PM ~ DeWitt Library ~** Let's take a closer look at how we can be responsible protectors of this earth! Take a look at things we buy & use in our every day life & make smart choices for Mother Nature!



28th ~ **A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek**

March

2nd ~ **Backyard Birds ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~** Come learn about the birds most commonly seen in our own backyards, and the different foods that attract them.



2nd ~ **Camanche Ducks Unlimited ~ 5 PM ~ Rastrelli's, Clinton ~** Contact Ruth Marsh at 212-8133.

2nd ~ **Mississippi Valley Sportsmen Banquet ~ 5:30 PM ~ Starlight Ballroom, Davenport ~** Rob Cain at 340-4918.

3rd ~ **Youth Hunter Education Challenge Tryouts ~ 1 PM ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~** Y.H.E.C. is a week-end-long event for kids 11-18 that takes place June 8th at Rock Creek! Youth compete in 8 events, learn about the outdoors and have fun with other young people. This "tryout" day is for kids and parents to come and experience a Y.H.E.C. practice. Call Loren @ 357-4866.

7th ~ **NO Nature Story this Week**

7th ~ **Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle N.C.**

9th ~ **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*. The Friends support Rock Creek by promoting the site through volunteering and events at the Eco Center while FHNB hosts their annual fishing event for disabled individuals at Rock Creek. Register your table of 8 for \$80 (individuals \$15) at www.mycountyparks.com, text 212-0955 or call 847-7202.



10th ~ **Eastern Iowa Wild Turkey Federation Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Goose Lake ~** Call Mike House at 357-9251.

14th ~ **A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek**

15th & 16th ~ **Winter Weekend Getaway ~ Rock Creek ~** Call the camp store at 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.

15th ~ **Mighty Minnows ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~** Have you ever raced a minnow? Well, even if you have, bring your young ones to race, sort and experience. This event also includes, story, craft and snack.



16th ~ Outdoor Gear Swap Meet ~ 9 AM- Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ It'll soon be spring cleaning time and I've got a lot of stuff I don't use anymore. Don't we all? So why not bring it down to the Eco Center where it can be set up on the floor or laid out on a table and marked so cheap that it will not go home with us. For \$5 we will reserve an 8-foot table on an 10 X 20 foot area of floor for anything you can get through the door. For the same fee, park it outside in a designated locale close to the building.

www.mycountyparks.com to reserve a spot by March 9th.



16th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek

20th ~ Terrific Tails! ~ 11:15 AM & 1 PM ~ Camanche Library ~ Animal tails come in all different shapes, sizes & colors! We will take a closer look at the many terrific tails of wildlife including our guest, Turnip the rabbit!



21st ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

23rd ~ Twenty-third Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ Wheatland Comm. Center ~ Brad Taylor, 357-0465.

26th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

27th ~ Conservation Club, Green & Growing ~ 3:30 PM ~ DeWitt Library ~ Have you ever thought about where your food comes from? Many kids would be surprised to find out how many foods that come from the ground! Taste our knowledge of green & growing foods.

28th ~ A Nature Story ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

30th ~ Tri-state Rod Builders Workshop ~ 9 AM-4 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Rod building is an art in itself and these regional artists are coming to the Eco Center to share their craft. Beginners to professionals will leave with new thoughts and ideas on how to build their next rod! The famous Holly's Dogs will be what's for lunch! The event is free but a goodwill donation is appreciated to offset the costs. RSVP & information call Garry Land, 249-1213.



30th ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 7 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ www.qcastro.org.

April

1st ~ Woodcock "Sky Dance" ~ 7:30 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ No foolin'! We will look and listen for the courtship display and try to get up close!



4th ~ A Nature Story Finale ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek

4th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30PM ~ Soaring Eagle N.C.

10th ~ Build a Fishing Rod ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Local guild certified custom rod builder, Garry Land will be on hand to help you build your very own, unique fishing rod for \$45. The rod will have to be picked up at a future date to allow the epoxy to cure. Call Jess at 847-7202 with any questions. You must register at www.mycountyparks.com.

12th & 13th ~ 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.

13th ~ Egg-travaganza! ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Many different creatures lay eggs. Bring your kids to learn about eggs, meet an animal who lays eggs and go on an egg hunt!



19th & 21st ~ Eco Center Closed, Good Friday & Easter

20th ~ Spring Refuge Float ~ 11 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Paddle the quiet backwaters of the big river as they wind there way through the Wildlife Refuge. We plan to be out on the water for 2 hours so bring water and a snack.

20th ~ Riverside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek

23rd & 27th ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 7-9 PM (Tue.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~ Visit <http://register-ed.com/programs/iowa>, required sign-up.



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

26th & 27th ~ Spring Fever Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ Call the camp store at 259-1876 to make your cabin reservation & to get a \$5/night discount. A two-night minimum.

27th ~ Spring Fling ~ 10 AM ~ Rock Creek

- ♦ **10 AM ~ Free Egg Hunt** ~ Kids ages 1-12.
- ♦ **11 AM ~Triumphant Trumpeter Swan** ~ Recovered!
- ♦ **Noon ~Tremendous Turtles** ~ Get a chance to learn about the kinds of turtles that live in and around the Mississippi and meet some of our resident turtles.
- ♦ **1 PM ~ Voyageur Canoeing** ~ Enjoy some time on the river in our 29-foot voyageur canoes (weather permitting). Get a chance to experience what it is like to paddle these magnificent boats in the backwaters.
- ♦ **Throughout the Day** ~ There will be more fun things including live animals, crafts and balloon art!



27th ~ Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ 6 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ www.qcastro.org.

Save the Dates

July 29th-31st ~ Yellow River Backpacking Trip ~ This trip is for boys and girls ages 11-15. Cost: \$50

August 5th-8th ~ Black River Backpacking Trip ~ For youth of 14 to 18 years. Cost: of \$75.

Financial assistance may be available upon request. Call 563-652-3783 or email trip@jacksonccb.com.

Building Better Birders & Citizen Scientists

by Kelly J. McKay, BioEco Research & Monitoring Center

Beginning Birder Cruises

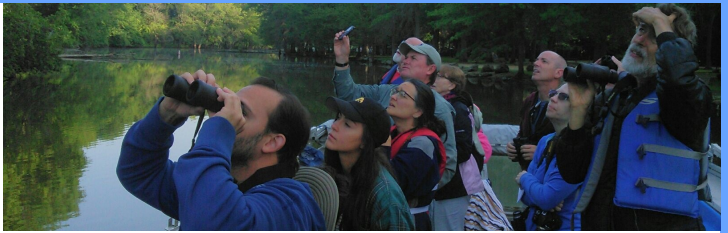
The “Beginning Birder Cruises” were initiated by Clinton County Conservation in 2017 to develop better birding skills among the public and build a core group of skilled “citizen scientists.” The effort was a success with several individuals going on to participate in local Christmas Bird Counts, the Illinois Spring Bird Count, as well as the Bio-Blitz Project at Nahant Marsh during summer 2018. Consequently, we decided to build on this success by continuing the “Beginning Birder Cruises” for a second year.

Once again we offered these birding cruises, which were free to the public, during the summer breeding and fall migration seasons. Participants were taken on a guided cruise through the labyrinth of wooded backwater sloughs of the Mississippi River at Rock Creek Park on the Blue Heron pontoon boat. This program was again made possible by the CCCB along with a grant from the Iowa Ornithologists’ Union. The cruises were co-led by CCCB naturalists who served as birding guides and boat pilots, as well as Kelly McKay (BioEco Research and Monitoring Center) who was involved as the primary birding guide and instructor.

In 2018, a total of 8 cruises occurred, alternating between Saturday and Wednesday mornings. Four took place during the summer breeding season, while the other four occurred during the fall migration season. Cruises began shortly after sunrise at 6:30 AM and lasted 3-6 hours. Furthermore, everyone had the option of birding on foot throughout the park with Kelly for an additional hour or two after each cruise.

Overall, 64 people participated on the 8 cruises. The 2018 cruises produced an impressive total of 110 identified species, ranging from a low of 53 species on June 13th to a high of 71 species on August 25th, for an average of 60 species per cruise. In 2018, 11 species of waterfowl were observed, along with 5 species each of raptors and shorebirds and all 7 species of woodpeckers occurring in Iowa. Furthermore, we recorded 10 species of flycatchers, 6 blackbirds, 5 vireos, 4 thrushes and an exceptional 20 species of warblers. Highlight species included: green heron, yellow-billed cuckoo, pileated woodpecker, peregrine falcon, olive-sided flycatcher, great crested flycatcher, white-eyed vireo, wood thrush, golden-winged warbler, prothonotary warbler, American redstart, northern parula, Wilson’s warbler, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, rusty blackbird and Baltimore oriole.

The overall success of this project is evident by the fact that several of this year’s participants have signed up to take part in this year’s Christmas Bird Count season! We are hopeful that a continuation of this program in the future will produce a reliable source of “citizen scientists” throughout the local area.



Fall Hawk Watch at Eagle Point Park

After discussing the idea of starting a Fall Raptor Migration Watch event for a couple of years, Clinton County Conservation put the plan into action and initiated the first, of what is hoped will become an annual event, Fall Hawk Watch at Clinton’s Eagle Point Park. This site is very good for observing a variety of migrating raptors, since it is located on top of the high bluffs overlooking the Upper Mississippi River at the southern extent of the Iowa’s “Driftless Area”. Many raptors use the river as a migration corridor, where thermals generated on top of the bluffs and updrafts of wind along the bluffs allow these magnificent winged predators to migrate while conserving energy.

We decided to conduct this inaugural event on September 22nd, during what is usually the peak period of broad-winged hawk migration through the Upper Midwest. When conditions are right and broad-wings are on the move, several thousand a day can be observed in migratory flocks called “kettles.” The day started out with perfect conditions, clear skies and a brisk wind creating good updrafts along the bluff-face. Raptors often don’t begin migrating in big numbers until mid-morning, waiting for the sun-generated thermals to develop. Early in the day we observed several species of migrating raptors, including a couple of fairly small broad-winged kettles. It looked like we were in for a good day of migration, however, that was not to be. By mid-morning the wind had died and it was nearly calm. These conditions are great for birding in general, but not so much for migrating raptors.

This first-time effort was very successful in terms of public interest and participation, with 87 people stopping by to observe not only the migration of raptors but many other species of birds as well! Overall, we had a decent diversity (10 species of raptors), but rather meager numbers (172 birds). For the day we recorded 103 broad-winged hawks, 22 bald eagles, 21 turkey vultures, 10 osprey, 7 sharp-shinned hawks, 3 Cooper’s hawks, 2 red-tailed hawks, 2 peregrine falcons, 1 northern harrier and 1 merlin (falcon).

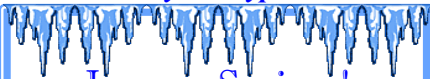
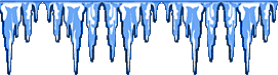
Although raptor migration for the day was fairly slow, we recorded an impressive number of other bird species from our observation site with total 90 species! Among these, some of the more noteworthy observations included: a large number of double-crested cormorants, white pelicans and ring-billed gulls, several Caspian, common and Forster’s terns, as well as northern flickers, least flycatchers, eastern phoebes, red-breasted nuthatches, golden and ruby-crowned kinglets, bluebirds, Swainson’s thrushes, cedar waxwings, rose-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings and purple finches. Additionally, we identified 14 species of warblers and 2 male summer tanagers (“bird of the day!”). We’re hoping this can become an annual event as we will see more raptors and people out there next year!



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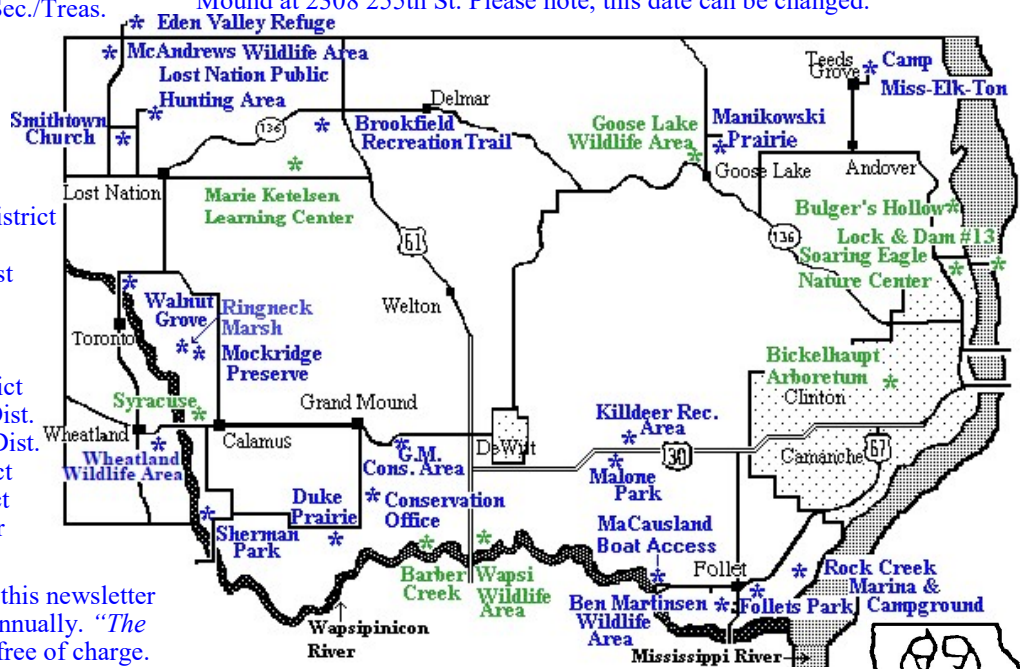
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BOARD MEETINGS

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.

