



The Heron

*Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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Sap to Syrup

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretative Naturalist

I emptied a gallon jug of milk the other day and so began my 2022 maple syrup campaign, well it always starts that way for me. The jugs I use to collect sap as part of a simple and fairly closed system. All my other equipment I get from the local hardware store including a 3/8 inch drill bit, 3/8 inch inside diameter hose as well as “T” and splice fittings. A couple of pots plus my camp stove and gas grill complete my necessities list.

Last fall our deciduous (broad leafed) forest began to shut down for the year. The leaves which spent the bright days of summer storing sugars in the trees tissues, were cut off from the trees circulatory system, their greens faded into the colors of autumn and they fell to the ground. Now those sugars wait for the end of the long winter when the warming sun allows the sap to move back to the buds to plumpin and encourage them to burst into the new leaves of spring.

Many animals have taken advantage of this phenomena and collected sap as food for themselves. I’ve seen squirrels and deer licking at small wounds they may or may not have inflicted on the trees themselves. Lets not forget the aptly named yellow bellied sap sucker who’s diet includes the sap and insects that may have also been attracted by the sticky sweet stuff. Then of course there are humans. Many of us can trace our sweet-teeth back to the same roots. Ha!

I myself love the stuff and will never go back to the corn syrup my parents always fed us kids. Oh I understand why it was that way in a house of nine. Maple syrup carries a high price tag when you buy it off the shelf. If you ever wonder why, just do like I do and make some for yourself. You have to find the trees, tap and transport the sap (about 8 lbs./gallon), remove the water and store it. All of that takes time and energy and those are both in high demand.

Maybe your picturing a metal bucket hung on a hooked metal tap. What I’m suggesting is a bit less labor intensive. I use a CLOSED system. The sap leaves the tree through a neat hole entering a nylon hose and into a gallon jug through a hole in its cap. This way there is little chance of insects and other undesirable foreign objects being collected with the sap. The lines run downhill allowing gravity to deliver the sap. Large operations have interconnected lines linked to many trees leading to tanks on wagons they can simply pull up to, leaving a new tanked wagon and haul away the filled one. That’s a bit more than I can use.

I keep my operation small using a half dozen trees and jugs I can quickly exchange for those that have filled with sap. I have tapped the trees at home and those of others who have



given their consent. Identifying trees is easier than you think. Maple trees are preferred due to their high sugar content. With sweeter sap, less is required to make each cup of syrup. That means fewer trips to the trees or more syrup in the end. A maple twig is evenly divided by opposite twigs, so you’ll find a twin twig directly across the main twig from its mate. There is one trickster out there, the ash. Ash trees are similar except that they have a compound leaf and so have fewer twigs left on the tree in the winter, so look for many opposite twigs on the small branches. Another give-a-way is the presence of sapsucker holes. These are small holes in horizontal lines in the bark of the trees trunk. Yes, the birds have marked the best trees for you.

When daytime temperatures reach into the 40’s while the nights are still below freezing, its time to set your taps. You should limit the number of taps placed in a tree by measuring and using only one tap for every 8 inches of trunk width. A sixteen inch wide trunk can handle two taps and so on. This will insure that you don’t harvest too much sap. These tap holes will heal quickly and do no harm to the tree. Choose a different spot in following years. You’ll want to drill a shallow hole at an upward angle just through the bark and penetrating into but not through the trees living wood or cambium. You’ve done well if your sawdust comes out damp and the bit is followed by a slow drip of sap. Next tap a nylon fitting into the hole. You’ll want to use a “T” fitting if the tree is only getting one hole. This gives you something to hang your jug from. If there are going to be multiple holes you can use a splice fitting and run it into other lines using “T” fittings then into a jug hanging from the lowest tap. Don’t let a jug go more than a day without checking it or you may loose sap to spillage.

A great way to start to remove the water is to pour your sap into a pan in an unheated protected spot. Ice will form in the pan and you can remove a lot of water in this way. Ya, the sugar stays in the pan! You may want to finish it over fire, but don’t do this indoors. The steam will carry away some sugar and condensation on the walls leave a sticky flammable mess you don’t want to deal with. The longer you cook it the thicker your syrup will get. Be sure to keep an eye on it as again, it is flammable. Happy tapping!



Freebird

by Mark Roberts, Naturalist



In the past eight issues of *The Heron*, I have written articles looking back into my own history with Clinton County Conservation. This led me to make a series of my top eleven greatest hits. I have finally reached number one!

#1 Clinton County and Iowa Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction.

Since 2003, I have worked on bringing back the trumpeter swan as a breeding bird to our county and our state. As I drove to work this morning I counted 29 trumpeters just north of our Grand Mound Headquarters. It occurred to me that not only would I remember them if they left tomorrow, which they surely will soon. I also realized that they are as free as a bird now.

Lynyrd Skynyrd's classic rock anthem *Freebird* came to mind as an inspiration and fitting title for the final article of this series. Not only are the swans free to migrate, explore and return, they are also irrefutably, unforgettable.

*If I leave here tomorrow,
would you still remember me?
For I must be traveling on now,
'cause there's too many places I've got to see.
But if I stay here with you,
things just couldn't be the same.
'Cause I'm as free as a bird now,
and this bird you cannot change!*

It all started with a presentation at an Iowa Association of Naturalists Meeting in November 2003. Ron Andrews of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, gave a presentation on potential restoration efforts by the Iowa DNR to bring trumpeter swans back to north-central Iowa while "Trumpeting the Cause for Wetlands". It was fascinating to think about a species as charismatic as the trumpeters back in Iowa's skies and marshlands. I had never even seen a swan in flight but the thought of such a huge bird (7-foot wingspan) on the wing caught my imagination.

Towards the end of the presentation my hand shot up. Why only north-central Iowa? Ron explained, "That area of Iowa is part of North America's *Prairie Pothole Region* known for its wetlands and waterfowl production". He thought that with limited funds, this was the best place for the DNR to concentrate their efforts.

I then asked the obvious question that would lead to this article all these years later "What if Clinton County raised their own money to restore swans?" Mr. Andrews gave me a puzzled look and said, "That could work."

Before I even got back to Clinton County I started making calls and sending emails. How much do cap-

itive breeding trumpeters cost? Whose farm can they be placed at? Where can I find the money? The answers came pretty quickly and surprisingly easily. It turns out everybody loves swans and lots of people wanted to help.

Without getting too much into the details, we found everything we needed and the swans started breeding, nesting and raising young. That led to wild releases and eventually wild nesting. We are now several generations into the effort and all the birds are mixed up with other populations but the number of swans that have gone into the wild with Clinton County roots number well over 1,000!

Today I see swans everywhere I go in the area. Whether I'm near Lost Nation, Goose Lake, Wheatland, Clinton, Grand Mound or Camanche, the evidence of the return of the trumpeter is plain to see. People get used to seeing the birds on ponds or in fields and forget it was not always so. Someone had to ask the question "Why not here?"

I knew, in real time, when we were turning swans loose during public releases, that one, this is going to work and two, this will be the greatest accomplishment of my career in Conservation. In essence, I started this article long ago.



You can enjoy the previous articles in this series at "The Heron" newsletters via www.clintoncounty-ia.gov.

- #1 Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction
- #2. Blue Heron Eco Cruises
- #3. Staff & Program Growth Through the Years
- #4. Nature Gallery & Archery Range
- #5. Voyageur Canoes
- #5a. Building Better Birders REAP-CEP Grant
- #6. Disc Golf Courses
- #7. Prairies for Schools & Pheasants Forever
- #8. Hunter Safety Camp
- #9. Eden Valley Nature Center Reinvention
- #10. Nature Center Partnerships
- #11. River Clean-ups



Clinton County Swan Team

- Bob & Mary Boock
- Dick & Lina Block
- Gary & Rojean Behrens
- William Luse Photography
- Quad City Audubon Society
- Clinton County Pheasants Forever
- Clinton County Conservation
- Iowa DNR





A New Hunter's Perspective

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

This hunting season will mark my third year as a hunter. I didn't grow up in a hunting family, although my dad did "hunt" a few squirrels back in his day. I don't have memories of sitting in the blind with him or walking the timber in search of the "big one." Our family never even owned a gun, not that I'm aware of anyway, and I was always the animal lover taking in stray cats and even a field mouse at one point. I was first introduced to hunting in college. My boyfriend at the time was a lifetime hunter. He had many hunting stories to share with me and encouraged me to give it a try. Being young and *in love*, I thought this would give me one more thing to experience with him, so I decided to take the leap and become a hunter.

The first time I held a shotgun was during my hunter's safety education course. I was very intimidated by the weapon, it was heavy and a little scary to be honest. I wasn't really sure I'd be brave enough to pull the trigger if I had to, but I was eager to learn about it, and all of the other guns I was introduced to throughout the course. As the only adult in the class, as well as the only female, I quickly realized I was in the minority as a hunter and I had a lot to learn.

My first hunting experience was with duck hunting. My boyfriend loved it and I was ready to give it a try. I remember being nervous and feeling slightly like a child as he explained everything to me...I knew very little about this sport. What I did know were my ducks. I was in an ornithology course at the time and we were learning how to identify ducks both on the water and in flight. After my first trip was over this is what I came home with:

- 1.) You have to get up REALLY early to get into position to be ready for the ducks to come in.
- 2.) Moving targets is NOT my strong suit.
- 3.) I think ducks are pretty and I was sad when I shot my first one.
- 4.) I have never been duck hunting since.

That sad feeling stuck with me for awhile. I felt cruel killing a blue-winged teal when it had spent its whole life just trying to survive. *What gave me the right to just take it from the wild?* I didn't need it...I just wanted it. After that experience I decided to put hunting on the back burner. My boyfriend and I split up and it wasn't something that stuck with me in my young adult life. What did stick with me was learning more about wildlife. I received my bachelor's degree from Iowa State in Animal Ecology and my career path took me exactly where I wanted to go...I became a Naturalist.

My career landed me here in 2013. Throughout the years I have become a hunter safety instructor in Wisconsin and in Iowa. I also have become involved in many outdoor recreation organizations such as Pheasants Forever and YHEC (Youth Hunter Education Challenge). I was surrounded by people who enjoyed hunting and once again I decided that as a teaching tool, I would like to gain more experiences hunting.

My first deer season was the winter of 2018. A fellow outdoor enthusiast and friend of mine agreed to be my mentor through my first season. I will never forget the first time I saw deer outside my blind. Just sitting and observing them, I found my heart beating so fast from the adrenaline racing through my body...it was at that moment I knew I was hooked. I never harvested a deer that first season but I learned so much and was ready to do it all over again.

Being much older this time around, I found myself just enjoying being outside in the timber. Still having to be ready way before the sunrise, I enjoy watching the earth wake up. First the birds, then the squirrels and eventually with a little luck the deer! I harvested my first deer near Bellevue in the winter of 2019. I was part of a hunting group that year and

was introduced to the technique of deer driving, something that is still growing on me. Hiking around in mountain goat country I was lucky enough to pull the trigger and take down a nice doe (not to mention myself from the "kick" from my 12 gauge). I was given a lesson on gutting my own deer, taking the traditional bite from the heart of my first kill and processing the meat of the animal to put it in my freezer.

With another deer season upon us I am excited to do it all over again. The time in the blind, watching and observing the wild animals, learning their behaviors to better help me in my hunt. I have grown tremendously in the last few years. This year is my second year bow hunting, I have been successful at squirrel hunting, and this past fall I tried turkey hunting for the first time. Every single time, a lesson is to be learned about the animal and the value of them on our planet. I do not hunt for the thrill of it, although there is definitely a thrill, but for the fact of harvesting my own food that comes not from humans, but from the earth. Most days I wish humans wouldn't have the desire to control everything, but as we've evolved, our place in hunting is to help manage wildlife populations. With rules set into place, we aid in the balance of our healthy environment and from a new hunter's perspective, that is my goal for each of my future hunting stories.





Winter's Activities

Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ *As weather conditions allow we will schedule some events, including beginners clinics, at various locations throughout the county. 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.*

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Regular Winter Hours ~ 8 AM to 4 PM Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Winter Rates ~ Effective thru March 31st ~ **Eden Valley Camping** ~ \$10, any site ~ **Rock Creek Camping** ~ \$10 primitive or \$15 electric site ~ **Community Hall, Rock Creek** ~ \$250 per day ~ **Pintail Cabin, Rock Creek** ~ \$100 per night ~ **Cabin at Camp Miss-Elk-Ton** ~ \$100 per night



January

1st ~ New Years Day ~ Eco Tourism Center Closed

1st ~ April 30th ~ Project Feeder Watch ~ Visit feederwatch.org for information. There is a small fee to participate.

8th ~ Bird of Prey Day ~ 9 AM-2 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ Today is all about those soaring, swooping, sensational raptors that call Iowa home permanently or temporarily. There will be live bird of prey presentations, hands-on animal stations, nature hikes (snowshoes if necessary), crafts and spotting scopes and binoculars for bird viewing.

11th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ On most Tuesdays we will have the Eco Center Nature Gallery with animal encounters, birdfeeder watch and fish feeding at Noon! All FREE of course! The Camp Store will be open these hours as well. This is in addition to regular winter hours.

11th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ **Soaring Eagle Nature Center, Clinton** ~ This round house jam promotes acoustic expression from local talents. Come and join in or just listen.

12th ~ Backyard & Feeder Birds ~ 6 PM ~ **Soaring Eagle Nature Center** ~ Come learn about the birds most commonly seen in our own backyards, and the different foods that attract them.

18th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

18th ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 4, 5 & 6 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ Our range in the basement of the eco center will be open by appointment. Our Range Master will provide safe and practical instruction while using our equipment. Children (9+ recommended) must be accompanied by an adult.



Sign-up required with just 10 people allowed for each of the 1-hour sessions. Call 563-847-7202.

21st ~ Mighty Minnows ~ 10:30 AM ~ **Discovery Center** ~ This is always a crowd favorite as your young ones will squeal with joy as they catch minnows and feel their slimy scales! There will also be a book read and craft to make and take home!

22nd ~ Creekside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ **Eden Valley Refuge** ~ This round house jam promotes acoustic expression from local talents. Come and join in or just listen.

24th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ A once a month meeting with volunteers that help out around the park. We would love you to join!

25th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Closed ~ Due to staff training.

February

Thru the second week of April ~ Hidden in Plain Sight ~ This is an interactive hiking/hide and seek game played using shed deer antlers. Rules and clues will be posted on our Facebook page and a prize will be awarded weekly.

1st ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ Local Rod Builder, Garry Land, will be on hand to help you build your very own, unique one-piece, spinning fishing rod for only \$75. This Batson rod works well for catching walleye, pan fish and light bass. Note: the rod will have to cure overnight and need to be picked up at a later time. Space is limited, so register now at www.mycountyparks.com.

2nd ~ Ground Hog's Day at Sherman Park ~ 2 PM ~ **Sherman Park, 2740 160th Ave. Calamus** ~ Discover the wonders of the winter woods. Hike, snowshoe, ski or skate to your hearts desire. Our winter sports equipment will be available and a naturalist lead a night hike. A warming fire will be lit. Call 563-357-0759 to register.

4th ~ Awesome Owls ~ 10:30 AM ~ **Discovery Center** ~ Sometimes owls don't hoot, sometimes they make sounds like monkeys, like the live barred owl that will be at the center along with Naturalist Jessica and her many hands-on animal artifacts to touch and feel.

4th ~ Clinton County Ducks Unlimited ~ 5 PM ~ **Buzzy's ~ Welton, Ia** ~ Contact Brian Huling at 563-357-8830.

5th ~ Winter Open House ~ 10 AM-1 PM ~ **Eden Valley Nature Center** ~ Celebrate Winter's special brand of fun at Eden Valley! The Center will be open from 10 AM to 1 PM with our live animals on-hand to Animal Encounters plus see the new nature center addition, have a cookie and get some hot cocoa, use our snowshoes or cross country skis then at 1 PM go for a Bird Watching hike along the Bear Creek Nature Trail with a Naturalist, Mark Roberts.

8th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ **Rock Creek** ~ The Nature Center P.4





& Camp Store are open.

13th ~ Animal Signs Hike ~ 1 PM ~ Eden Valley Refuge
~ We will investigate the timber looking for animal signs such as tracks, homes and scat! We will meet at the Nature Center and make our way through the trails, be sure to wear comfortable and warm shoes! This is a free program, all children need to be accompanied by an adult.

15th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

15th ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 4, 5 & 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-847-7202 to register.

17th ~ Painting Class with "Fresh Paint" with Christine Boeve ~ 6-8 PM ~ \$35 ~ Rock Creek ~ Paint your own version of this Chickadee on a Crabapple Tree winter scene. All materials supplied! Register at www.mycountyparks.com

8th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center, 3923 N 3rd St, Clinton
~ This round house jam promotes acoustic expression from local talents. Come and join in or just listen.

18th - 21st ~ The 25th Annual Great Back-yard Bird Count ~ It's free and easy. Visit birdcount.org for info.

22nd ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

22nd ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

23rd ~ Backyard & Feeder Birds ~ 6 PM ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek ~ Come learn about the birds most commonly seen in our own backyards, and the different foods that attract them.

26th ~ Family Winter Festival ~ 9 AM-12 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We will be loaning our equipment and expertise for you and your family to ice fish, cross country ski, snowshoe and possibly ice skate! There will also be warming fires and inside activities like crafts and live animals to continue the family fun going no matter the weather!

26th ~ Freezin' for a Reason ~ Polar Plunge ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Being outside and experiencing nature is a vital component for a healthy life! The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is a non-profit that supports environmental education to the people in our area! They provide bus scholarships to schools for field trips, help fund the Blue Heron Eco Cruise, enhances our nature centers and much more! Help us support this organization and keep nature in the lives of our children and neighbors by raising money and taking the plunge!



Pledge to raise \$100 to be donated to the Foundation. Registration opens January 29th call or text Jill @ 563-349-8680 to sign up! Check us out on Facebook for more details!

26th ~ Creekside Jam ~ 2 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ This round house jam promotes acoustic expression from local talents. Come and join in or just listen.

March

Thru the second week of April ~ Hidden in Plain Sight
~ This interactive hiking/hide and seek game is played using shed deer antlers. Rules and clues will be posted on our Facebook page and a weekly prize awarded.

1st ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

1st ~ Open Range ~ Air Rifles ~ 4, 5 & 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We are opening our Air Rifle Range in the basement of the Eco Center. Children (9+) must be accompanied by an adult. Sign-up is required. Call 563-847-7202.

2nd ~ Maple Syrup Demo ~ 1 PM ~ Westbrook Park, DeWitt ~ We will tap trees, taste their sap and processed syrup in two phases. Look for us in the back parking lot.

3rd ~ Maple Syrup Demo ~ 3:30 PM ~ Eden Valley Refuge ~ We will tap trees, taste their sap and processed syrup in two phases. Look for us in the trail head parking lot.

3rd ~ The Solar System ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We will be projecting on our huge 12-foot screen a very realistic view of the solar system. We will visit all 8 planets!

4th ~ Turtle Talk ~ 10:30 AM ~ Discovery Center ~ Some turtles have hard shells and some have soft shells! Naturalist Jess is going to bring both kinds to touch along with other turtle artifacts and a take home craft.

8th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

8th ~ Maple Syrup Demo ~ 3PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center, Clinton ~ We will tap trees, taste their sap and processed syrup in two phases. Look for us in the parking lot.

8th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center, Clinton ~ This round house jam promotes acoustic expression from local talents. Come and join in or just listen.

9th ~ Backyard & Feeder Birds ~ 6 PM ~ Eden Valley Nature Center ~ Come learn about the birds most commonly seen in our own backyards, and the different foods that attract them.

12th ~ Clinton Chapter Banquet Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Vista Grande, Clinton ~ This Grass-roots Program provides grants to projects and activities. Nationally spending \$94 million to date thanks to





members & supporters! For tickets call Jeff Beckwith at 563-249-7358.

15th ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

15th ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 4, 5 & 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Sign-up is required. Call 563-847-7202.

19th ~ 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 organizations. FORC are the eyes and ears of the visitors while promoting the park through volunteering and hosting events. FHNB now hosts two fishing events at the county parks for disabled youth and adults that might not otherwise have the opportunity to fish. Register your table of 8 for \$80 or \$15 for individuals, just call or text 563-212-0955 to reserve your spot.

22nd ~ Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center Open ~ 10 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ The Nature Center & Camp Store are open.

23rd ~ Birds of Prey ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Learn about Iowa's various Raptors during this PowerPoint presentation. There also will be an appearance by our live education birds of prey, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Barred Owl.

22nd ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ A once a month meeting with volunteers that help out around the park. We would love you to join!

22nd ~ Stories in the Stars ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ We have STARLAB on loan from the Mississippi Bend AEA and are presenting the wonders of the constellations as tools and story tellers. Two 45 minute sessions will be offered. Call 563-357-0759 and reserve your seat today.

26th ~ Annual Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5 PM ~ Wheatland Comm. Center ~ Brad Taylor, 357-0465

29th ~ Stories in the Stars ~ 6:30 PM ~ Eden Valley Nature Center ~ We have STARLAB on loan from the Mississippi Bend AEA and are presenting the wonders of the constellations as tools and story tellers. Two 45 minute sessions will be offered. Call 563-357-0759 and reserve your seat today.

April

Thru the second week of April ~ Hidden in Plain Sight ~ This is an interactive hiking/Hide and Seek game played using shed deer antlers. Rules and clues will be posted on our Facebook page and a prize will be awarded weekly.

2nd ~ Sandhill Crane Birding Walk ~ 6 PM ~ Goose Lake Wildlife Area ~ Meet in the NW Parking lot, off 350th Avenue. We will take an easy walk across

the marsh looking at Songbirds, waterfowl and sandhill cranes. Cranes are at their most vocal this time of year.

2nd ~ Outdoor Gear Swap-n-Shop ~ 9 AM- Noon ~ Rock Creek ~ Got stuff you don't use? Bring it to the Eco Center and let someone else take it home. \$5 gets you an 8-ft table on a 10 X 20 ft area or a close spot to park it outside. Reserve by March 19th by calling 563-357-0759.

5th ~ Woodcock "Sky Dance" ~ 7:30 PM ~ Sherman Park, north entrance ~ We will look and listen for the courtship display and try to get up close! Wear long pants in case we have to go through brambles.

9th ~ Annual Midwest Crane Count ~ 5:30 AM ~ Each year in mid-April, over 1,600 volunteers travel to their local wetlands and favorite birding locations to participate in the Crane Count. This annual survey of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes spans over 120 counties in six states of the upper Midwest, including Iowa. Call Mark at 563-847-7202 for information on participating or attend the April 2nd Sandhill Crane Birding Walk at Goose Lake.

12th ~ Music in the Barn ~ 6:30 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center, Clinton ~ This round house jam promotes acoustic expression from local talents. Come and join in or just listen.

15th & 17th ~ Eco Center Closed, Good Friday & Easter

19th ~ Friends of Rock Creek Meeting ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ A once a month meeting with volunteers that help out around the park. We would love you to join!

22nd ~ Earth Day Walk ~ 6 PM ~ Eden

Valley Refuge ~ We will meet at the Nature Center for refreshments then check out the wildflowers and other early spring forest activity in the refuge on an easy stroll through the woods along Bear Creek.

23rd ~ Spring Fling ~ 10 AM ~ Eco Center, Rock Creek ~ Spend the day celebrating spring! At **10 AM** there will be a FREE egg hunt for ages 1-12 in and around the Eco Center. Join Naturalist Jill Schmidt for "The Cool, Jumpy & Scaly Herptiles" a wildlife program at **10:30 AM**. You will get a chance to investigate all of the unique features our

reptiles and amphibians have to survive! Join in on some family fun in a scavenger hunt throughout the park. Meet on the back deck at **12:30 PM** to collect your clues and enjoy your exploration as you strive to complete the hunt! The day will include other fun activities such as balloon art, live animals and crafts!

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

30th ~ Spring Refuge Float ~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Paddle the quiet backwaters of the big river in the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge. Bring water and a snack. Call 563-357-0759 to register.





No Rest for the.....

by Phil Visser, Executive Director

During the winter months, we often hear people say that it must be nice to take a rest and relax. Even though many of the county's facilities remain open all year, we do see a large decrease in the number of visitors. Certainly, a drive through an almost empty campground can give the impression that things must be at a standstill, but this is actually far from true.

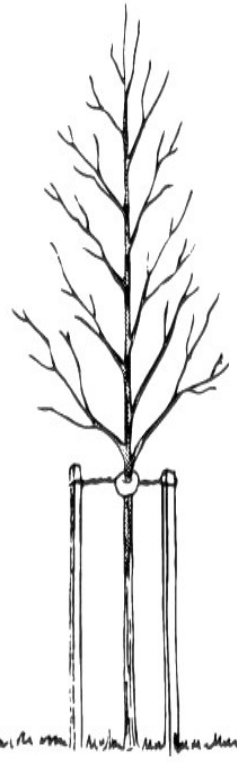
This is the time that we are able to focus on what we refer to as our "winter projects." These can include a variety of different things, from renovating cabins to removing dead trees. This "offseason" we are removing many trees from the Rock Creek Campground and Marina. These are trees that have died out over the past few years and now present a hazard to the park and to the visitors. Rock Creek visitors during the winter months should expect certain areas of the park to be blocked off while our park staff is working on these trees. Although we are saddened by the loss of these trees, we understand that this is a natural part of a tree's life cycle, and we have been and are planning to continue

replacing the dead trees with new young trees. These trees range from about three to eight feet in height and include a variety of species specifically selected for the park including swamp white oak, burr oak, river birch, and sycamore. We were able to plant 60 of these trees in the fall and are will be adding more next spring.

This is also the time for a great deal of planning and preparation. We take this time to look forward and begin to set our goals for what we want to see in 2022. As we are planning, we are also checking on all of our equipment and making sure that everything is in good working order.

We do not rest in the offseason and you may want to look for ways to stay busy as well.

Winter can be a great time to get outdoors. Our naturalists are constantly providing winter programs where you can learn to cross-country ski, snowshoe, ice fish and skate or learn about how our plants and animals adapt during the cold months. Ice skating, snowshoe and ski equipment is available for rent at the Eco-tourism Center. There are still several cabins available at Rock Creek and Camp-Miss-Elk-Ton that can provide an amazing experience during the winter months. It may be tempting to stay at home during the winter, but there is a whole fresh, crisp and bright world out there. We hope that you get a chance to enjoy it with us.



Supporting Environmental Education

by David Stedwell, President
Clinton County Conservation Foundation

Imagine you are eight years old and you have never caught tadpoles at the water's edge, or been in a kayak or canoe. Today you are bursting with excitement because your school field trip is to the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center. Your first activity is an adventure in a fourteen-passenger, super-sized canoe that you and your classmates will paddle into the backwaters of the Mississippi River.

That is just one of many educational opportunities offered to area students and organizations. The Clinton County Conservation naturalists provide year-round nature experiences at the county's parks and in-school classrooms.

There are also opportunities for adults and families to enjoy the outdoors and learn. It could be a spring woodland flower walk, bird watching aboard the Blue Heron pontoon

boat, an evening owl program or a lesson on snowshoeing and ice fishing.

The nature displays at all the parks are free to the public. At the Eco Tourism Center you can see native fish swimming in an 8,000-gallon aquarium, crawl through a clear tube under swimming turtles at Turtle Island, and see snakes and other reptiles up close and personal.

With your generous tax-deductible support, environmental education programs and hands-on nature experiences like these will be able to continue and thrive.

The Eco Tourism Center, Rock Creek, Eden Valley, Malone Park and all the other Clinton County Parks are **your** precious resources and places where this generation and the next will learn and grow in their respect for nature.

Thank you for your generous gift.
Clinton County Conservation Foundation





Clinton County Conservation
P.O. Box 68
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Grand Mound, Iowa 52751
Phone: 563-847-7202
Email: conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov
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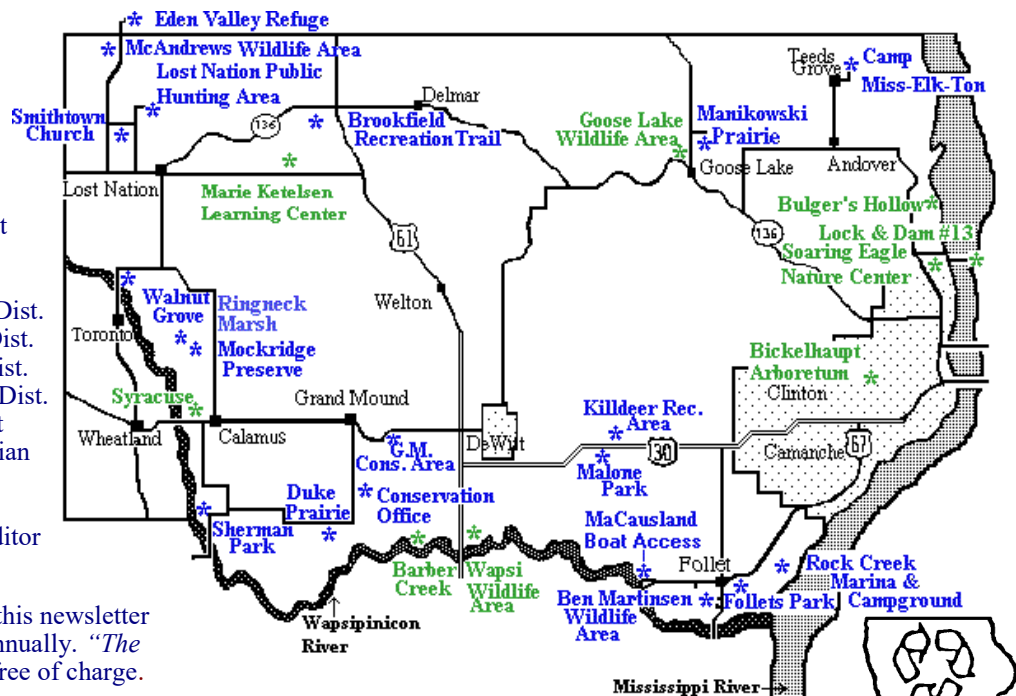
MAILING LIST

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.

The Clinton County Conservation Board in the provision of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subject to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Clinton C.C.B. or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

BOARD MEETINGS

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



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