



The Heron

Newsletter of Clinton County Conservation
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The Value of Conservation

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

The thought of summer coming to a close blows my mind. Considering our summer season...aka “busy season” didn’t really start until after the 4th of July, it has been a short summer. Flooding reeked havoc on many of our county campgrounds. Both the Mississippi River and the Wapsipinicon River flooded early on and hung high for all of the early camping season. Limited access to our parks, lead to limited use of our parks, which in turn, took a hard toll on the Conservation Department. Not only did we see the affects financially, but the feedback from the community who enjoy our parks was also concerning. With little money coming in, the question, “what is the *value* of conservation?” arose.

As a Naturalist my job is to answer that question. Everyone has an opinion on the importance of conservation. Even within our staff, every person’s role in conservation is different and their “job” is most important, but we do have an understanding that it is all intertwined and has value. Wikipedia has several definitions for the word *value* depending on its reference.

Value (ethics), may be described as treating actions themselves as abstract objects, putting value to them.

Value (economics), a measure of the benefit that may be gained from goods or service.

When it comes to government entities, the economic value usually outweighs the ethical values, but as an employee who strives to make the connection between people and conservation, the ethical value is what I see first hand.

August was a very busy month for the Conservation Department. We have hosted several large events at Rock Creek (one of our campgrounds that are still feeling the affects from the long-lasting floods). The second weekend in August we hosted our 6th annual *Fishing Has No Boundaries* event. The event was another HUGE success! It brought 41 anglers and roughly 80 volunteers together at Rock Creek for a day of fishing on the Mississippi River. This event provides people with disabilities an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and do what a lot

of us may take for granted, to simply go fishing! To me, that is the *value* of conservation.

A couple of days after that event, we hosted our annual Hunter Safety Camp. This hands-on camp allows kids ages 11-16 to get their hunter certification. We had a full class of 30 participants that included two parents that received their certification along-side their child. In addition to learning basic gun safety they were educated on hunting-dog training, survival skills, turkey & deer hunting 101 and tree-stand safety. Educating possible future hunters on how to be ethical hunters for the sake of our wildlife populations shows the *value* of conservation.

A few days after Hunter Safety Camp, the Lower Wapsi River Clean-up Project invaded Rock Creek for its annual river clean up weekend. The LWRCP’s mission is “to remove trash from the river and dispose of it in an environmentally responsible manner; and to educate the public about our environment and the importance of caring for our natural resources.” They are able to do this “by providing an opportunity for concerned individuals and groups to participate in an organized cleanup event, and by offering environmental education programs during that time, we inform people about the way our environment works and increase public awareness of the impact our actions have on the quality of our waters.”

In partnership with CCCB, this group of roughly 30 volunteers spent three days cleaning up the lower end of the Wapsipinicon River that both spills into the Mississippi River and makes up the channel that runs past the Eco Center. Their hard work and dedication to our water resources goes above and beyond. We are proud to be a part of it. It truly shows the *value* of conservation.



We continue to be proud of the work we do in Clinton County and the lives we touch with the *value* of conservation.





The Cabin at Camp Miss-Elk-Ton is Now Open!

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

Renovations to the cabin at Camp Miss-Elk-Ton are now complete! Camp Miss-Elk-Ton is located near Teeds Grove in northeastern Clinton County. The former girl scout camp lodge has been completely remodeled into a two-bedroom cabin complete with a living room, kitchen and bath. The cabin sits in a beautiful hardwood forest that is bisected by Elk River. This is truly a great spot to take family and friends to relax and escape the grind of your daily life for a while. Perfect for a couples escape, scout weekend or a girls getaway! The Cabin at Camp Miss-Elk-Ton has an open and spacious floor plan, which is great for entertaining. It is a peaceful, quiet and cozy getaway ready for guests to enjoy! The cabin sleeps up to 8 people with a queen bed, 2 sets of bunk beds and a pull-out sofa.

Renovations were made possible by a grant from the Clinton County Development Association and by contributions from the following:

- Air Control
- Andy Barrett
- Beckwith Roofing
- Clausen Supply
- Dan Srp
- EB Construction
- Joe Larson
- Joe Vance Construction
- Keith Wright Construction
- LyondellBasell
- Marvin Christian
- Mike May Electric
- Whitetails Unlimited
- Moore Siding & Construction

For reservation information please visit www.mycountyparks.com



The Cabin at Camp Miss-Elk-Ton



Gas Fireplace



Cozy Living Room

Eden Valley Nature Center: Construction is Underway!

by Walt Wickham, Executive Director

At their May meeting the Clinton Conservation Board had approved the construction of a new addition to the Eden Valley Nature Center. I am happy to report that construction is now well underway! The new addition will include badly needed restrooms & showers, a classroom/ community hall and kitchenette. With this addition we will be better able to serve the community and provide environmental education experiences to area school children and other groups.

Construction of the building shell will be completed in the next few weeks. Our goal is to then complete the interior work over the winter months so that the new space will be ready for use in the spring of 2020.

While several generous donations have made it possible to begin this project, fundraising efforts are not yet over. Funds are still needed to finish the building interior and to purchase items like tables, chairs, kitchen items and audio/visual equipment. If you are interested in helping us to reach our goal of completing this project by the

spring of 2020, please consider making a tax deductible contribution to the Clinton County Conservation Foundation. For more information, please call 563-847-7202 or email us at conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov. The generosity of individuals and area businesses help us as a community to achieve what otherwise would not be possible!





From Paddle to Steam

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretive Naturalist

From my boyhood days I have always been drawn to water. First the creek that flowed through our neighborhood and as I grew bolder, the banks of the Mississippi River. There I would sit for hours watching my fishing pole and the boats passing by. I dreamed about a life on the river. A century or two earlier I might have found myself working aboard one of the rafts, canoes, keelboats, flatboats or steamboats, the first commercial vessels on the river.

Log rafts were built long and often carried cargo but the logs were possibly the most important cargo when they were sold in lumber towns like Clinton. Canoes and pirogues of various sizes were used to deeply penetrate the interior, hauling cargoes of trade goods and were keenly used in the fur trade. Keelboats worked both up and downstream on larger rivers but were more suited for canals and lakes. Flatboats were originally about 15 feet wide and at least 50 feet long. This is not at all what we would call a flatboat today, more like a small barge. A long oar or sweep was used to maneuver them into a landing. These often carried coal or grain and could become floating houses or stores. Some became mobile workshops and others shanty boats. They were all paddled or poled and were a bit on the slow side.

Steamboats were first invented in 1707 but not proven on interior rivers. In 1810 the *New Orleans* steam vessel was built in Pittsburg by Edward Livingston, Robert Fulton and Nicolas Roosevelt. While Fulton oversaw the building, Roosevelt traveled the 2,000 miles of Ohio and Mississippi rivers in a flatboat scouting for obstacles. The vessel was 148 ft long, 32 ft wide with a 12 ft hull depth (4 ft below water line) and cost \$38,000. She was rigged with 2 masts and a bowsprit for sails and steered by a tiller in the stern as the pilot directed the helmsman from the bow. The engine was mounted vertically and produced up to 20 pounds of steam per piston stroke at 20 RPM. The piston rod came through the deck, attached to a heavy fulcrum (walking beam), another rod reached down to the crankshaft and then to the wheels. The boiler was perched on a brick-lined firebox and an iron chimney carried away the smoke. Cabins with cots (berths) were on the main deck, the ladies in the rear of the boat was carpeted, mirrored and windowed with 4 berths. The larger Gentlemen's cabin had 12 bunk beds and a dining table. It adjoined the galley and pantry, farther forward were the officers staterooms. It could carry 75 passengers.

On October 20th, 1811 Roosevelt, his wife (expecting) and daughter boarded the craft along with 2 female servants, a waiter, cook, six deckhands, a pilot and an engineer. Under the *Great Comet of 1811* the vessel made its way down the Ohio River. The Great Comet of 1811, was visible to the naked eye for nearly 9 months! Roosevelt's son was born during a 6-week delay in Louisville and Cincinnati, while they waited for the river to rise. They made it to Henderson Kentucky on Dec. 16th during the New Madrid Earthquake while 200 miles below them the Mississippi flowed backwards!



An unfinished model of the *Virginia*.

After out-running hostile Native Americans and the vessel catching fire (the gentlemen's cabin was gutted, cigar anyone??) they arrived at Natchez, Mississippi on December 30th, 1811 and a wedding took place on the main deck. The groom was the engineer and the bride a boats maid. The boat arrived in New Orleans on January 10th, 1812.

It was 1823 before a steamboat would pass the Des Moines and Rock Island rapids of the Mississippi and steam past what would become Iowa. The *Virginia* was a small stern-wheeler built in 1819, she was 118 feet long, just over 18 feet wide with a hull depth of just over 5 feet.

There was a small cabin in the aft and she was steered by a tiller. Her Master was James Pemberton, her Captain John Crawford and her passengers included an Indian agent, the exiled Italian explorer G. C. Beltrami who chronicled the voyage, the Sauk chief Great Eagle (invited by Missouri governor William Clark), a Kentucky family of four bound for Galena and a female missionary. The *Virginia* launched from St Louis on April 21st and on May 10th she nosed into the Minnesota River and landed beneath the slopes where Ft. Snelling would later be built. Watch for her story in a later addition of the Heron.

As the river was tamed, boats became larger, more powerful and more luxurious. Still 2 of every 3 boats careers ended in wrecks. The heyday of the steamboat ended with westward railroad expansion but there still is a chance to experience it. The Delta Queen is returning! Her grand Victorian charm with teak handrails, Tiffany-style stained glass and crystal chandeliers are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, she is a National Historic Landmark and a member of the National Maritime Hall of Fame. Most recently she was designated a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Ninety-three years after her maiden voyage, she will return to the waterways of America's Heartland and Deep South, giving passengers the opportunity to experience the rivers from America's only authentic 1927 overnight paddle-wheeler. At this time, the historic vessel is undergoing major renovations. In the meantime, visit her on Facebook.





Fall Family Events (all are free unless otherwise noted)

September

5th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Thursday evenings there will be naturalist-guided Mississippi River cruises aboard the Blue Heron pontoon. Call 563-259-1876 to reserve a free spot one week in advance.

6th ~ Sherman Park Music Jam ~ 7 PM ~ Sherman Park ~ We'll get a fire going near the campground shelter and play some music. Pull up a chair & play, sing or just enjoy.



7th ~ Public Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance

9th ~ Building Better Birders Eco Cruise ~ 6:30 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ World class birder, Kelly McKay, will lead this free class for people wanting to improve their bird watching skills. You must call 563-259-1876 to sign up!

11th ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We are opening our Archery Range in the basement of the Eco Center for public use. The event will include both safety and practical instruction. Participants must use our equipment and will be under the watchful eye of a range master. Children (9+) must be accompanied by an adult.



12th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

12th ~ Harvest Moon Cruise ~ 7:30 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Sign-up for a slow cruise out on the moonlit river. We'll look at the Harvest Moon and try to identify some features using binoculars and telescopes. We'll also listen for owls. Call 563-259-1876 to reserve a free spot.

14th ~ Youth Outdoor Skills Day ~ 9 AM-3:30 PM ~ Clinton Izaak Walton League ~ Looking for a way to open your child's eyes to gain experience with outdoor skills? Kids, ages 11-17, will learn about safety and skills at stations staffed by organizations such as Whitetails Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Wild Turkey Federation, Clinton Ikes, Clinton County Sportsmen, Iowa DNR and Clinton County Conservation. All stations will involve hands-on activities keeping safety at the forefront. Parents and younger siblings are encouraged to attend. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Cost is \$10. Participants receive a T-shirt & lunch. Call 563-242-6939 to sign up.

15th ~ The Mighty Monarch ~ 10:30 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Small but mighty, the monarch migrates thousands of miles every fall to its wintering grounds in Mexico. With all the struggles they face along the way, monarch numbers are down and researchers strive to save them with the help of the public tagging and documenting their movements. Join in the fun by learning about the butterflies and tagging some monarchs (if we can catch some) for release!



17th ~ Building Better Birders Eco Cruise ~ 6:30 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876 to sign up!

17th ~ Creating an Angler ~ 5:30 PM ~ Malone Park ~ Providing new experiences in nature for children help build appreciation for the outdoors that they may carry on throughout their life. We have worms, poles and tackle...let's just catch the fish! Bring your child to the shoreline and teach them how to fish, even when you may not like to. Experience and licenses are not required unless you plan on doing the fishing yourself, we will teach you how to encourage your young angler.



18th ~ Open Range ~ Air Rifles ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ We are opening our Air Rifle Range in the basement of the Eco Center for public use. The event will include both safety and practical instruction. Participants must use our equipment and will be under the watchful eye of a range master. Children (9+) must be accompanied by an adult.

19th ~ Music Cruise ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Musicians will offer a variety of music for a cool, dark sky, evening on the Mighty Mississippi. Call 563-259-1876 to register.

21st ~ Enabled Hunting Starts ~ Ringneck Marsh ~ Call Mark at 563-847-7202 for information on this opportunity for people with disabilities. 12 hunting seasons available.

24th ~ Friends of Rock Creek ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Volunteer to make a difference at Rock Creek!

24th & 28th ~ Hunter Education Course ~ 6:30-9 PM (Tues.) & 8 AM-4 PM (Sat.) ~ Wapsi Valley Ikes, DeWitt ~ www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Hunter-Education

26th ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

28th ~ Hawk Watch ~ 8 AM - 4 PM ~ Eagle Point Park, Clinton ~ Join our Hawk Watchers as we attempt to count every migrating bird of prey passing by the North-end Mississippi Overlook at Eagle Point. Special Guest, Biologist Kelly McKay is spearheading the watch. We will have scopes set up and binoculars to lend.



October

1st ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

3rd ~ Fall Color Eco Cruise ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek

4th-6th ~ Halloween Weekend ~ Rock Creek ~ Adults must accompany children during activities. All activities originate at the Eco Tourism Center.



Halloween Friday the 4th

~ Decorate Your Campsite ~ Get into the holiday spirit by decorating your campsite for Halloween. We will be awarding prizes for the most creative Halloween campsites.
~ Evening Paddle ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Start your weekend off with an evening paddle on the backwaters of the Mississippi River. Meet by the Eco Center and spend some time on Lost Lake Water Trail Loop watching the water come to life before the sun goes down.





~ Frightening Family Movie Night ~ 7-9 PM ~ Come in your pj's and bring your favorite blanket for a Halloween family-friendly movie in the community room. Concessions will be available for some favorite movie treats. *Cash only please*, plan accordingly.

Halloween Saturday the 5th

Enjoy a seasonal lunch special and some Halloween treats!

~ Creatures of the Night ~ 10:30 AM ~ Furry or slimy, many animals make their appearance at night! Get a chance to meet some of these mysterious animals and learn what makes them so amazing!

~ Spooktacular Crafts ~ 1 PM ~ Creepy crawly crafts will be provided for people of all ages under the deck.

~ Pumpkin Carving ~ 2 PM ~ Come carve your pumpkin at the Eco Center! We will supply the carving tools, stencils and a place to make a mess! Bring your own pumpkin!



~ Trick or Treat! ~ 5-6 PM ~ We invite all our camper ghouls and goblins to trick or treat the campground. We ask our campers to please pass out candy.

~ Lighted Hayrack Ride ~ 6 PM ~ Join us aboard our hayrack as we drive through the campground looking at the decorated campsites. Adults must accompany children.

10th ~ Fall Color Eco Cruise ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek

10th ~ Hunters Moon Cruise ~ 6:30 PM ~ Rock Creek

12th ~ Thirty-Eighth Annual Bluegrass & Old-time Music Gathering ~ 12:30-7 PM ~ Eden Valley ~ The stage shows begin at 12:30 PM followed by a free chili supper and potluck at 4:30 PM. We'll be in the nature center in the case of rain. Once you attend, you will never want to miss it again! Call Mary McAndrew 563-343-7002 info. FREE!

12th ~ Public Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance

16th ~ Open Range ~ Air Rifles ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

17th ~ Fall Color Cruise ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek

19th ~ Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever Banquet ~ 5 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Clinton County's PF chapter will be hosting their annual fundraising banquet to raise money to provide local wildlife habitat as well as youth outdoor skills opportunities. Call Brad Taylor at 563-357-0465 for tickets.

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

24th ~ Fall Color Cruise ~ 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Finale!

26th ~ Building Better Birders Field Eco Cruise ~ 7 AM ~ Rock Creek ~ Call 563-259-1876 to sign up!

26th ~ Fall Fest ~ 4 PM ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ 3923 N. 3rd St., Clinton Iowa ~ Bring the family out for hot dogs, chips and s'mores at the fire, pumpkin carving and face painting in the Nature Barn, a freaky-fun night hike and hayrack ride around the north end of Eagle Point Park. The Riverside Jammers will be playing after 6 PM. A free-will donations appreciated at this otherwise free event.



November

2nd ~ Bald Eagle Eco Cruise

~ 1 PM ~ Rock Creek ~

This will be the public's last opportunity this year to take a Mississippi Eco Cruise on the Blue Heron Pontoon Boat. The American bald eagles will start to congregate along the Mississippi for the winter and we hope to see several of the birds during the cruise. Call 563-259-1876 to register.



2nd ~ Fifth Annual Conservation Foundation Banquet ~

Doors open at 5 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Come enjoy a night at the beautiful Eco Center to raise money to benefit education! There will be plenty of action including silent bids, raffles and live auction, plus a fantastic smoked prime rib dinner. Purchase tickets at the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center or by calling 563-847-7202 or 563-259-1876.

10th ~ Crafts at the Creek ~ 9 AM-3 PM ~ Rock Creek ~ Free admission, door prizes, lunch specials. Homemade crafts and local vendors. If you would like a display table, call Tara at 563-847-7202.

13th ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

20th ~ Open Range ~ Air Rifles ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

22nd ~ Turkey Talk ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ Did you know that turkeys can run up to 25 mph and fly as fast as 55 mph! Bring your kids to learn this and more with a hands-on animal artifacts and mount!

23rd ~ Public Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance

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

December

4th ~ Open Range ~ Archery ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

5th ~ Night Hike ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance ~ With a waxing gibbous moon over head we may not need a flashlight. There will be a campfire and s'mores to follow.



6th ~ Animals in Winter ~ 10 AM ~ Discovery Center, Clinton ~ We will follow along with a young fawn's journey to prepare for winter with the book "First Snow of the Woods" by Carl Sams with finger puppets, a live painted turtle and animal artifacts to bring the story to life!

18th ~ Open Range ~ Air Rifles ~ 6 PM ~ Rock Creek

28th ~ Public Open House, Jens-Wendt Observatory ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance

January (Sneak-A-Peek)

4th ~ 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.

9th ~ Night Hike ~ 4 PM ~ Sherman Park, North Entrance ~ Moonlit wanderings through prairie, woods and along the ridges of the Wapsi. Free snowshoes and cross country skis will be available if conditions are right.





In Honor and Remembrance of Kim Rixen-Bratthauer

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

This past November, we were all saddened by the unexpected passing of Kim Rixen-Bratthauer, a longtime member of the Clinton County Conservation Board. Not only was Kim a great asset to the board, she was also a dedicated volunteer and advocate of conservation. In honor of this commitment, an award was created to remember Kim and her time spent with her family enjoying the outdoors.



Kim's granddaughter, Piper, had recently become involved in Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC). Kim would spend her Sundays with Piper at practice, helping her learn new outdoor

skills of hunter safety, shotgun, muzzle loader, rifle, archery, wildlife ID and orienteering. She was a very instrumental part of the 26th annual state competition that occurred for the first time at Rock Creek the summer of 2018.

After Kim's passing, memorial funds were donated by her family to the Friends of Rock Creek (FORC), another organization Kim was involved in. This volunteer group is made up of selfless individuals that have one main thing in common, they want Rock Creek to thrive as part of the community, sharing their love for the outdoors. It was soon

decided that some of these funds would be used to give tribute to Kim and Piper's involvement in YHEC as a Top Female Award.

In a mostly male dominated sport, this award was created to recognize the female competitors of YHEC. This last June, at the state YHEC Competition held at Rock Creek, the award was handed out for the first time. It is the goal of both Kim's family and the FORC to continue this distinguished award for many years to come, highlighting female involvement in this outdoor skills competition.

The first award was handed out in June, 2019 to Rachel Lochner (pictured on the left), a competitor from Linn County. Rachel was recognized as the 2019's Top Female Competitor's using her overall score in all 8 categories. On behalf of the FORC and Kim's husband Scott, son Will (pictured right) and granddaughter Piper (pictured center), congratulations Rachel!



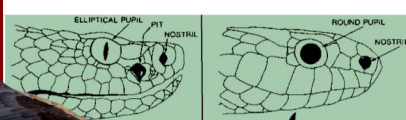
The More You Know ~ The More You Grow

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

I hear comments like, "a good snake is a dead snake," ALL. OF. THE. TIME! It truly irritates me, but I have changed peoples perception my whole career and it is very rewarding. When you learn about the unknown in a safe way, it isn't as scary.

Something I hear after the "I hate snakes" is whether it is poisonous or not. You mean...venomous or not. Most biologists define poison as a toxin that has to be absorbed or swallowed, whereas venom has to be inserted into the bloodstream. Either way, know that these types of snakes are very rare in Iowa due to habitat loss and persecution, much like the nonvenomous varieties. Many people kill snakes emotionally, believing that they could be dangerous. Know this, of the 29 species of snakes in Iowa, only 4 are venomous. The copperhead has only been reported in the three counties in the very southeast point of the state. The prairie rattlesnake is only found at a heavily managed property in a far western county. The timber and massasauga rattlesnakes are more dispersed in the eastern third of the state but still very rare and in isolated areas with specialized habitat.

I have actively looked for massasauga, the only thing I seem to find are the bold and nonvenomous northern water snake, NOT water moccasin/cottonmouth (Iowa is too far north)! Not that you want to get this close, but all venomous snakes in Iowa have vertical eye slits (similar to cats)



while the nonvenomous have round pupils like us. Many snakes mimic

rattlesnakes by vibrating their tails when disturbed but since they do not have rattles, their tails must be flat and in contact with the ground, whereas rattlesnakes hold up their tail in the air to prove what they are!

Something that not a lot of people are aware of, snakes are protected by law, making it illegal to kill or collect with the exception of garter snakes and timber rattlesnakes, only if found within 50 yards of an actively, occupied residence. Something that we must remember is that everything is connected and essential for the survival of other wildlife that you enjoy observing and hunting. Snakes are part of the food chain as animals eat them. In return they eat a variety of animals like worms, birds and their eggs, insects and mice, keeping their numbers in check.

Anything that eats a mouse is a friend of mine! Even though I hate mice like others may hate snakes, I know their importance in the food chain. Do you realize that no snakes pass on disease? Whereas mice harbor many diseases that kill or incapacitate humans like hantavirus and lyme disease, respectively and commonly. I know several people, including my daughter, that have lyme disease and I would never want anyone, even people that harm snakes, to get that painful and unpredictable disease.

Now you know how I feel and more importantly the facts. It may not change how you feel but now you know, and now you can grow, if you choose.



Ready to change perceptions with a blue racer snake.





Do-Do-Do, Lookin' Out My Backdoor

by Mark Roberts, Interpretive Naturalist

As I begin this article, Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Lookin' Out My Backdoor" is playing, inspiring the title for this retrospective article. I was just looking back thinking about things that really made me proud to be involved with conservation here in Clinton County. There are really quite a few, but I will limit it to two for now.

River Clean-ups

Lower Wapsi River Clean-up Project.

We just finished up the 13th year of the clean up in late August. The annual event tackles a different section of the Wapsi from Anamosa to it's confluence with the Mississippi near Rock Creek Marina & Campground. Over 50 of those miles are within Clinton County. Volunteers have combed every bank and sandbar twice over that time. This year they even decided to do the Mississippi River some good by cleaning the island banks nearby to Rock Creek. Using the Blue Heron, we picked up literally tons of big



trash on the river. Clinton County always provides support in the way of transportation, canoes, free primitive camping, and even personnel when within our county. This clean-up alone has cleared more the 65 tons of trash from the Wapsi. Not bad for about 25 people per year in canoes!

Other Clean-ups.

I have, through the Conservation Department, been able to assists with equipment and time for many other clean-ups over the years including the *Iowa River Clean-up*, *Volga River Clean-up*, *Project AWARE* (statewide), *Living Lands and Waters* (Chad Pregracke) and our now defunct local small creek effort called *Stream Stomp*.

My view has always been that, if we have people willing to spend their time cleaning up our rivers and streams, we should help them out if we can. In most cases, in addition to spending their weekend or week cleaning up other peoples trash, they bring much of their own equipment and even pay to be a part of these events!

As always, I stand in awe of the spirit that drive these folks. I see many of the same faces event-after-event and year-after-year. I am proud to be a part of the solution and proud of Clinton County's association with these tenacious and conscientious people.



Unless someone like you

It's not! - The Lorax

cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better.

Nature Center Partnerships Soaring Eagle Nature Center.

In the early 2000's, the Soaring Eagle Nature Society was on life support. Working diligently since the mid 1970s, the society was out of staff, out of money and out of time. I was able to convince the Conservation Department that getting involved was in everybody's best interest.

We entered into an agreement with the Society to conduct the field trips and educational events at the Center, allowing them to focus their money on keeping up the many buildings and grounds, not having to pay naturalists.

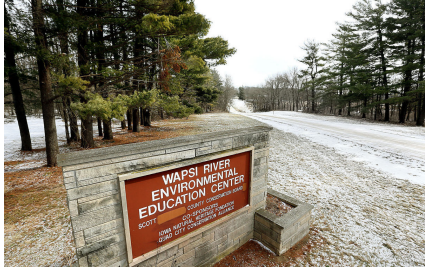
The Nature Center is located on leased property from the City of Clinton adjacent to Eagle Point Park. The site includes the Nature Barn, a 1938 historic structure renovated into a nature center, Flannery One-room Schoolhouse, a 1935 historic building, a small zoo, converted into an out-standing dog park and 40-acres of woodlands with trails.

The partnership has benefited both programs immensely as well as benefitting the citizens of Clinton County.

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center.

At the beginning of my tenure with Clinton County Conservation (1992), we were just entering into the fledgling partnership with Scott County Conservation to co-operate the Wapsi River Center.

The 225-acre nature area was a former Boy Scout camp and the site was full of terrific trails and river frontage. It was also full of unheated buildings, some, that had not been used in



more than a decade. Bob Bryant had just been hired as the Director/Naturalist of the Center and I had just been hired as the Naturalist for Clinton County. We were the start of a small, but determined, team.

The dining hall became the Eagle View Eco Center. The old dining hall became Red-tail Lodge. The infirmary became Kestrel Cabin and the old office had to be torn down.

Over the next several years renovations were done and new structures were added such as St. Ambrose Menke Astronomical Observatory and the Owl's Nest Dormitory.

We were intimately involved with the Wapsi Center for 22 years. I watched it grow both in infrastructure and in stature in the conservation community. When we opened the very busy *Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center* at Rock Creek we knew it was time to cut ties with the Wapsi Center.

The center continues to do outstanding work in environmental education. I am very proud to have been a part of the evolution of the site and the establishment of the program that teaches the *value* of conservation.





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 Phone: 563-847-7202
 Email: conservation@clintoncounty-ia.gov
 Web: www.mycountyparks.com

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The Cabin at Camp Miss-Elk-Ton.
 Ready to rent at mycountyparks.com

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 Elizabeth Carstensen, Concession Lead
 Darin Voss, Natural Resource Tech
 Allen Ketelsen, Maintenance, Central
 Mark Roberts, Autumn Newsletter Editor

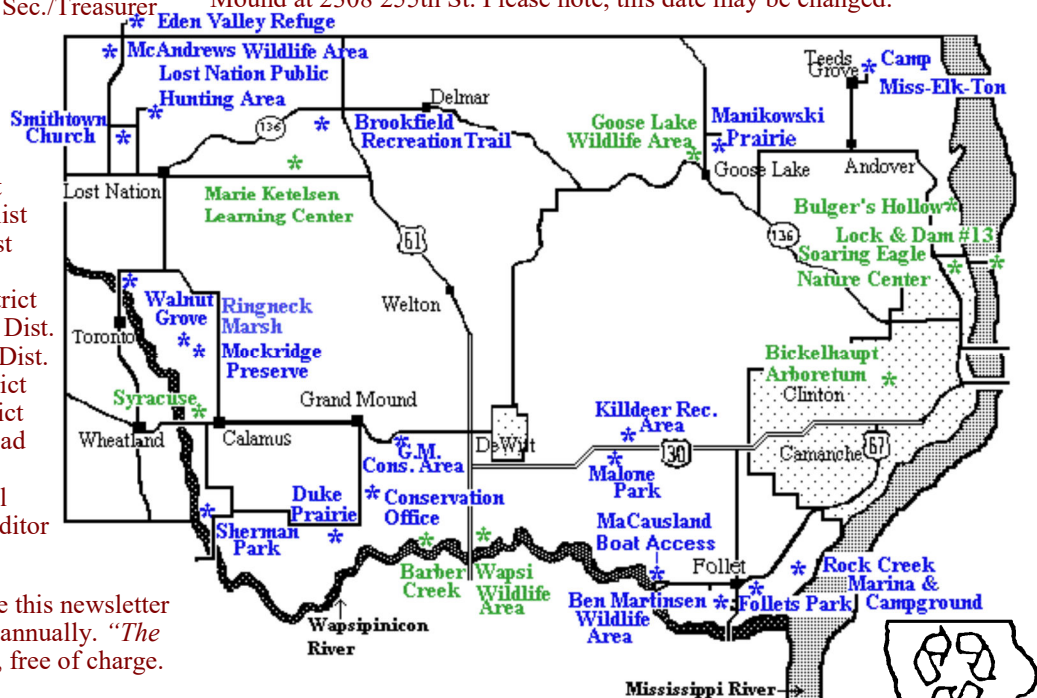
MAILING LIST

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 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 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 may be changed.



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