

Naturally Speaking

Volume 30, Number 3

Autumn 2014

A NEWSLETTER OF THE JEFFERSON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Conservation Update by Dennis Lewiston

Annual Fall Trail Drive Through. The Jefferson County Conservation Board will host another “trail drive through” on Wednesday, October 29th. In past years the event has been held on a Sunday but this year it was decided to try a weekday. The trail will be open to vehicles at 10:30 a.m. and continue until 1:30 p.m. There will be two routes to choose from: Cedar View Trailhead to 223rd and then from Cedar View Trailhead onto the Loop Trail that takes you through Whitham Woods. Participants can take both routes if desired.



Drive Through on Cedar View Trail

Fishing. If you have visited Whitham Wood’s lately you may have noticed that the newly renovated pond is just about full. Money from the Fish Habitat Fund was used to reconstruct the dam and dredge silt from the old pond. The pond has been stocked and in two years will be an excellent fishing pond. Just a reminder to all anglers, the big pond in Jefferson County Park had a complete winter kill last winter. Although the pond has been restocked it will be a few years before good fishing is restored. The JCCB is looking into the possibility of installing a winter aerator system.

Camping and Hunting Areas. Fall is an excellent time of year to get out and enjoy the great outdoors! The JCCB campgrounds in Jefferson County Park, Round Prairie Park and Mac Coon Access will be open through October. We still have open dates (including some weekends) for the cabins at Jefferson County Park. If you are a hunter, the JCCB has many excellent public hunting areas which include Turkey Run Wildlife Area, Gantz-Hewett Timber, Cedar Creek Timber and Wetland, Livingston Timber and Mac Coon Access. Fall is also a good time to hike and bike the many miles of trails in Jefferson County. Call 472-4421 for a free area directory of JCCB areas or for a detailed map of all the trails in Jefferson County Park and the city of Fairfield.



Fall Camping at Jefferson County Park



New Home Needed for Peach Blossom School. During the past few years the Jefferson County Conservation Board has been trying to find a new home for the Peach Blossom School house that is located in Round Prairie Park. The old school house, which was originally located near the Wooster Corner off of Glasgow road, was moved to Round Prairie Park back in the mid 70’s. Six different people expressed interest in the building but then, each in their turn, decided against it. If someone does not step forward very soon, the building will be dismantled. So if someone is interested in moving the building or know someone who is, please contact the JCCB at 472-4421. Last chance to own an old school house!

Park & Trail Update by Bob Leazer



Summer storms have brought trees down onto the trails.

The JCCB manages approximately 835 acres of woodlands, 319 acres of prairie, 120 acres of wetlands with the remaining 152 acres being streams, trails, park space and other open spaces.

Hello Everyone and Everything!! Welcome to the onset of an early fall, I believe. My earthly instincts, with the help of the Farmers Almanac, tell me that Mother Nature has a bountiful amount of surprises in store for us this upcoming fall and winter.

How has everyone been doing this summer? I can't believe summer is mostly over, and the kids are back in school. Seems like spring was just a few days ago. Does that mean I'm getting old!

Well just a little update on things that have been going on in and around the park this summer. Our main theme this summer has been "Hi-ho, Hi-ho, it's off to mow I go! Mercy me can you believe the rainfall this summer? On high note all the rainfall has done a wonderful job filling up the pond at Whitham Woods park, from our pond restoration project, but it's kept the grass lush. Usually the grass mowing slows down in July and August but not this year! Butch Martin one of our summer staff that has helped us for many years has been a Godsend. Without him we would never keep up with the mowing. We had a couple of other part-time summer workers that helped with our chores but they are finished for the summer so it's back to myself, Shawn, and Butch to keep operations going in the park maintenance field. That task is never ending and with so much rainfall it has been an especially busy summer. We are constantly working on the trails, repairing ruts and removing fallen trees from the constant deluges and storms. We fix them up and Mother Nature messes them up again! Yipee! But that's why I'm here. To take care of the park the best we can as time allows. My job is always interesting as I never quite sure what the day may bring.

We have hauled many a dump truck loads of rock for the trails this summer. On the Loop Trail out by the Libertyville road bridge there has been a constant battle with ruts due to torrential down pours. One 500 yard section contained five substantial ruts, the longest one ran diagonally across the trail for 30 feet, was about 5 inches deep and two feet to 30 inches wide. In order to fill, re-grade and smooth out the ruts, we placed 16 tons of rock in that section alone. The seven miles of trails within Jefferson County Park also require attention. Along with this comes constant growing of the understory which needs to be

pruned back to keep the trails passable for all park and trail users to enjoy.

Other things that are going on. The thirty-four year old park residence is getting a nice face lift with new windows, vinyl siding, aluminum soffit and fascia. Thus making it virtually maintenance free. The nature center also will be finished with



The renovated pond at Whitham Woods is two feet from full.

vinyl siding, soffit and fascia cover, to give it a welcome new appearance.

In Round Prairie Park we are adding some new water hydrants for easier water access for the campers. And installing lighting for the new restroom facility. Down yonder at Mac Coon Access a new water hydrant will be installed. (The top of the old one blew off creating a wonderful water fountain for a short time!) We also had a nice stand of sunflowers in our food plots at Gantz-Hewett Timber and Turkey Run Wildlife Area, so the dove hunters are welcome to come and try their luck!

Well my fingers are tired so I will sign off now. Hope everyone had a great summer. Look forward to seeing everyone in the park and on the trails this fall and winter!
Bob



Black Oil Sunflowers can be grown with almost any wildlife food plot and provide a high quality oil content seed needed for the healthy growth of all wildlife species.

Park Management News by Shawn Morrissey

The JCCB will again be allowing archery hunters with special permits to hunt antlerless deer (does) in Jefferson County Park. Harvesting does has helped reduce the deer population in many areas including the park.

The season dates for this year's hunt are from October 1, 2014 to January 10, 2015. After completing the qualification requirements participants can purchase tags at the Jefferson County Recorder's office. These tags are valid for the Jefferson County Park hunt only. Those interested should contact the Jefferson County Conservation Board Office at 641-472-4421.

This will be the eighth hunting season since the Park Hunt was started in the fall of 2007. The previous winter a helicopter survey had counted 86 deer within the park boundaries. In an area less than 2 square miles, which included the park, a total of 185 deer were counted. At levels above 30 deer per square mile the deer can pose a threat to the ecosystem.

During the past seven seasons over 70 deer have been taken by park hunters. The current estimated deer population of the park is thought to be well below half of the 86 counted in 2007. There are still high numbers of deer on some of the areas north and east of the park. These areas fall within city limits and are not open to hunting.

Hunters must follow specific rules so that they don't interfere with other activities in Jefferson County Park. Hunting is not allowed in the campground, picnic areas, or along the trails.

There are many days when there are no hunters in the park. Park users can make themselves aware of this by checking the map located on the small shed behind the nature center. A thumb tack posted on the map indicates that a hunter is in that area. No thumbtacks, no hunters.



Upcoming Programs



Monday, October 6th.

What Can Artifacts Tell Us About Life Long Ago

7:00 p.m.

It's Iowa Archaeology Month and we're having a roadshow! Elizabeth Reetz and Cherie Haury-Artz of the Office of the State Archaeologist will be at the Jefferson County Park nature center for an evening of great history! They'll have a variety of artifacts on hand and will talk about how they were made, who made them and what they were used for. The public is invited to bring along an artifact that Elizabeth and Cherie could interpret (note: they will not assign any monetary value to artifacts.). Pre-registration is not required but is appreciated. Call 472-4421 or e-mail therese@jeffersoncountyconservation.com



Sunday, October 26th.

Critters of the Night Fall Hike

6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Bring along the kids for a night time hike and along the way you'll meet some unusual characters....perhaps a batty scientist, or a critter lady, maybe the critter itself! Small groups led by a tour guide will leave from Shelter #3 every 12 to 15 minutes. After your hike your tour guide will bring you back to your starting point so you can warm up by the fire and enjoy a hot chocolate. You don't have to have kids to participate but all kids must be accompanied by an adult.



Wednesday, October 29th.

Fall Trail Drive Through

We will have our annual Fall Trail Drive Through on Wednesday, October 29th from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. We are mixing things up a bit this year by having the event during a weekday. Two options will be available and those interested can finish up one route and then return to do the other. Traffic is one-way only. Route 1: Enter Cedar View Trail off 32nd street and exit at 223rd street one and a half miles later. It will take you over Cedar Creek on one of the largest trail bridges in the county. Route 2: Enter Cedar View Trail off 32nd street and then drive down onto the Loop Trail heading north to Whitham Woods and then exiting on old Hwy 34. We hope people come out over their lunch hour to enjoy this once-a-year opportunity to drive a section of our trail system.



Saturday, November 1st.

Family Fun Day: Geode Hunting

10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

We're heading to Van Buren County to visit Bear Creek in search of Iowa's State Rock. Pre-registration is **REQUIRED**. **Space is limited**. You don't have to have children to participate but all children must be accompanied by an adult. Dress for the weather, wear rubber boots, and bring along a lunch and a bucket or canvas bag for your geodes! Must be able to walk a mile on flat ground and maneuver in a creek with uneven bottom. Fee: \$5.00/person or \$20/family. (Family is defined as mom and/or dad and school-aged children.)

Volume 30, Number 3

On the Road Adventures by Ron Meyers

Hello to everyone. Therese asked if I would share a little of our RV travel adventures with you newsletter readers and I never say no to Therese, so here goes.

After living and working in Jefferson County Park for the past 12 years my wife Jeri and I left Iowa and Jefferson County Park towing our 36 foot 5th wheel RV last December 2nd. We headed to a much warmer central Florida and the Salt Springs Campground near Orlando where our daughter and her family live.

We enjoyed three months there and then headed west but for the first time not back to Iowa and Jefferson County Park. With some regret but also with a lot excitement and anticipation to tour the western half of the United states. We returned to Jefferson County Park almost nine months later (now as visiting campers) on August 26th after traveling through 24 states plus side trips into Mexico and Canada. We logged a little over 19,000 miles and camped in 40 different campgrounds plus 14 over nights in Walmart and other business' parking lots when in a pinch to find a campground.

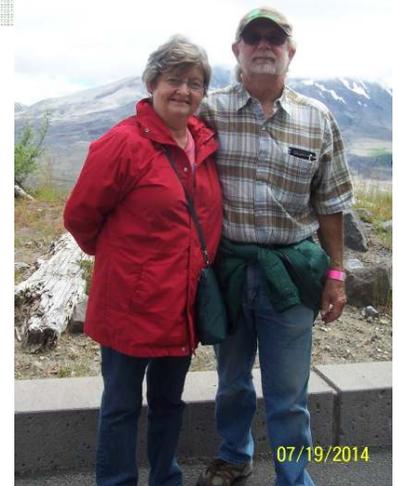
We visited family and friends along the way but most of the trip was into new territory for us. National parks, national monuments, national forests, major mountain ranges, major rivers, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, deserts, wetlands, forest, open range lands, glaciers, volcanoes, and the Great Salt Lake. We traveled the Lewis and Clark Trail (but not in a boat) and the Oregon Trail (but in a more modern covered wagon.)

One of the neat things about this trip was the mountains. It's more than just going up one side and down the other. Each mountain range was different. From barren and rocky desert mountains to snow capped mountains with dense evergreen forest and just about everything in between. From winding rivers and gorges, to tunnels, awesome bridges and hairpin curves to snowpacked glaciers and rainforest. We also enjoyed the numerous visitor and interpretation centers across the country. Especially those at the national facilities. They are a great way to learn about local areas and historical events. Stop at as many as you can. You'll be glad that you did!

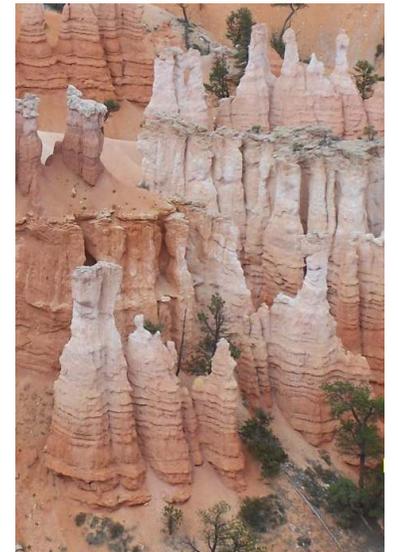
When we could we tried to camp near some kind of water because a sunrise or sunset is especially beautiful over a river, lake or the ocean. Of course a beautiful sunrise or sunset anywhere is a great way to start or finish the day.

I can't help but compare the campgrounds that we stayed in to Jefferson County Park and Iowa parks in general. I'd say that on average we spent around \$30 a night in other state and county parks. (Twice what we pay here in JCP.) Most of the other states that we visited also had a day use fee just to get into the park so I'd say that we have it pretty good here in Iowa!

Now in a month or two we'll head back to Florida for the winter and come next year we'll explore the northeastern states. We're looking forward to more great adventures.



Ron & Jeri at Mt. St. Helens



Bryce Canyon National Park



Sunset over the Great Salt Lake

Insect Musicians



Common True Katydid.
Most of the insect songs that we hear in nature are the calling songs of males, produced primarily to attract mates.



Field Cricket.
Field crickets chirp both day and night from their hideouts but are typically quiet at dawn.



Marsh Meadow Grasshopper.
Grasshoppers sing during the day.

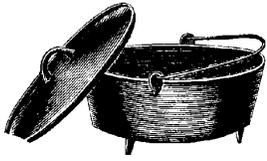
Grasshoppers, katydids and crickets. Oh my! The call of these three groups of insects fill the autumn air. Like birds, individual species can be recognized by their song. The first broad distinction is between sounds that have a musical pitch (try to hum a matching note) and songs that are purely mechanical and have no pitch to hum along with. The former often sound like whistles or trills, the latter sound like pieces of sandpaper being rubbed together. Sounds with pitch are made by the crickets. Sounds that are pitch-less and mechanical are made by the grasshoppers.

Crickets and katydids (also known as long-horned grasshoppers), which call at night more than by day, make sounds by rubbing the bases of their wings together; a sharp edge, or "scraper," at the base of one front wing is rubbed across a bumpy ridge, or "file," located at the base of the opposite wing.

The grasshoppers (also called locusts or short-horned grasshoppers) are recognized by their short antennae (less than half the body length). Of the over 650 species of grasshoppers in North America, most do not produce sounds but those that do, like members of the slant-faced grasshoppers, do so by rubbing their hind legs against the edges of the forewings. The hind legs have short peg-like bumps which function like a file. Another group, the band-winged grasshoppers, make an entirely different kind of sound. Males can make loud snapping or crackling sounds with their wings as they fly.

Although the "music" of grasshoppers, crickets and katydids are associated with autumn some of them begin to play earlier, whereas others don't begin "tuning up" until later in the season. For example, the clear, musical chirp or trill of Spring Field Crickets can be heard in early May, but the Common True Katydid doesn't start its harsh "Katy-did" call until mid-August.

Because singing insects are cold-blooded the pulse rates of their songs vary with temperature. Songs tend to speed up as the temperature rises and slow down as the temperature falls. Because of this effect, the songs of certain species can actually be used to approximate the temperature. A well-known example is the Snowy Tree Cricket. Research has shown that counting the number of chirps given in fifteen seconds and then adding 40 will give you the ambient temperature in Fahrenheit.



HISTORY QUIZ



Test your knowledge with the following tidbits of history.
Answers on back page.

1. What mammal, once found in Iowa, was important to the Plains Indian?
2. Hoe cake, Johnny cake, journey cake, ash cake, griddle bread, and mush were all made with what same ingredient?
3. What could be made by mixing tallow with lye and stirring it over a fire?
4. From what did the pioneers make the lye?
5. The Native Americans gave the first corn seed to white settlers. What fruit seed was the gift of the white man to the Indian?
6. What did the pioneers use to make candles?
7. Today we make ketchup out of tomatoes but what was ketchup made out of during the 17th and 18th centuries. A. Shellfish. B. Anchovies. C. Mushrooms. D. Walnuts.
8. An 18th century farmer wrote, "By help of my trees and of my bees, we yearly procure the sweetening we want." What sweeteners is he referring to?
9. What river passes through Jefferson County along its eastern border? The Indians called the river "Checaque" which means, "foul smelling".
10. What was the nationality of the first white men to view the Iowa region?
11. What covered 85% of Iowa prior to European settlement?
12. Which of the following home remedies were actually used by early Americans: A. Onions boiled in molasses for a cold. B. Cabbage leaf tied around the throat for a sore throat. C. Live spider, rolled up in butter and taken as a pill for jaundice. D. Ear wax for chapped lips.
13. What rock did the Native Americans use for arrow and spearheads and the pioneers use to start fires?
14. What did Ben Franklin prefer for our national seal instead of the eagle?
15. Among some Native American tribes which three crops were known as The Three Sisters?

And Speaking of History...

There's many ways to learn about history. You can read a biography, or visit a museum or you can join Michael Zahs and Loren Horton for a walk through a cemetery! On **Sunday, October 26th** join us for **Messages in Stone** at the Fairfield Cemetery (the west end of Evergreen) for a unique way to look back in time. Mike and Loren will introduce you to the history behind our final resting places, the symbolism of Victorian grave markers, and the origins of treestump tombstones and white bronze markers. Begins at **1:00 p.m.**





MISSION STATEMENT: Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in Jefferson County by acquiring, developing and managing public areas so that its citizens will have opportunities for quality outdoor recreation experiences, and to cultivate good land stewardship through natural history and environmental education activities.

Our office is located at
Jefferson County Park,
2003 Libertyville Road,
Fairfield, Iowa 52556
641-472-4421



JCCB Staff

Dennis Lewiston, Director
Shawn Morrissey, Operations
Manager
Bob Leazer, Park & Trail Technician
Bryon & Jen Stever, Park Hosts
Therese Cummiskey, Naturalist &
Newsletter Editor

Board Members

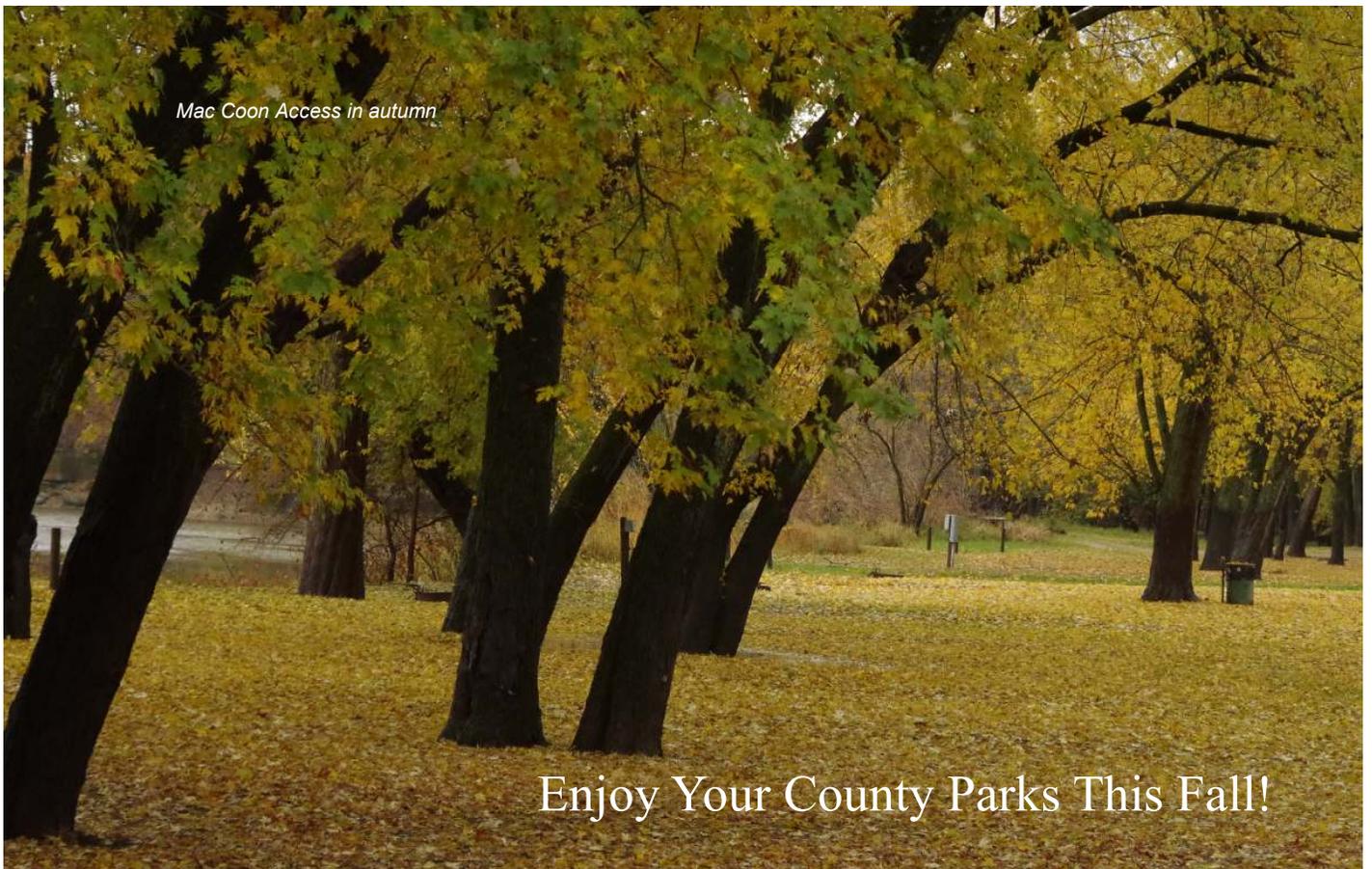
Wayne Atwood
Terri Diers
Cory Klehm
Gene Parker
Kathy Tollenaere

Answers to History Quiz

1. The Bison (Buffalo) supplied virtually everything that the Plain Indians needed to stay alive; food, clothing, tools, and housing.
2. Corn
3. Soap
4. Wood ashes
5. Apple
6. Tallow, fat rendered from cattle and sheep, was the most popular form of wax used to make candles.
7. All of them
8. Maple syrup/sugar & honey
9. The Skunk River. The term "foul smelling" apparently re-



- ferred to wild onion that grew along its banks.
10. French (Marquette and Joliet)
11. Prairie
12. All of them!
13. Chert (Flint)
14. Wild Turkey
15. The Three Sisters are corn, beans and squash. They interplanted pole beans and squash with corn, using the strength of the sturdy corn stalks to support the twining beans and the shade of the spreading squash vines to trap moisture for the growing crop.



Mac Coon Access in autumn

Enjoy Your County Parks This Fall!