

# Naturally Speaking

Volume 27, number 2

Spring 2011

## Conservation Update by Dennis Lewiston

**Park Openings.** Jefferson County Park will open for the season on Friday, April 29th. Picnic shelters will be available as well as the gazebo, cabins and the 24 unit campground. Phase II of the campground renovation project will be completed by the opening date. Seventeen of the 24 camping pads now have water hookups and 50 amp service. Phase III of the renovation project will be completed this fall.

**Mushroom Season.** Spring is getting closer and that means the beginning of mushroom season. The JCCB has many areas that are available to the mushroom hunter. The JCCB area directory has aerial photos of each county area and a location map. These directories may be picked up at the courthouse, the Fairfield Public Library, the Chamber of Commerce and at the sporting goods department at Wal Mart.



**Rate Change.** Camping rates in Jefferson County Park will increase this year to \$15.00 with electrical and water hook-ups and \$12.00 without hook-ups. Rates will remain the same at Round Prairie Park and Mac Coon Access - \$10.00 with electricity and \$7.00 without. Shelter reservation fees at Jefferson County Park will remain the same at \$20 for a "rental period" (either 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) in shelter #3 and \$15.00 for shelters #1 & #2. The gazebo is \$10 for each rental period. Cabin rates will also remain the same at \$45.00 for a one night stay or \$40.00 per night if rented for two nights or more. There is a minimum stay of two nights for the weekends. Weekly rates for the cabins is \$240.00. Since last year, the JCCB has required a \$50.00 deposit when reserving the cabins.

**Mac Coon Access.** Mac Coon Access has seen substantial amount of flooding during the last two years. Many of the electrical boxes will have to be replaced and the pump in the well needs to be repaired. The pads will be re-graveled and the area reseeded this spring. The JCCB likes to open Mac Coon up mid April but it may be the first of May before everything is mended. The boat ramp is available year-round.

**Swinging Bridge.** The swinging bridge is closed due to a broken support cable. The staff is looking into whether to refurbish or completely rebuild the bridge. There are concerns regarding costs and liability but we are hoping to replace the bridge since it is popular with the visiting public, especially school groups, and has been a fixture in the park for over 25 years.





## Around the County & Through the Parks by Ron Meyers

### Round Prairie Park

This is the spring newsletter so that should mean that winter is over and the only mention that needs to be made here is that winter was a lot worse in several other areas of the country and around the world. Let's think positive, it's spring! And you know what's coming.

And then before long the campers will be back and enjoying the parks. If you can't wait until May 1<sup>st</sup> you may want to give Round Prairie Park a try, it's available for camping in April. The spring renewal is in progress, so make the effort to visit your parks and take walks on your favorite trails to watch its arrival.



**Remember the 3 R's.** I recently saw this sign in a state park and it got me to thinking that we have come a long way with the recycling part but we could also be doing better. When I came to Fairfield over 50 years ago (at least as I remember it now) there was a city dump just south of where the new Hy Vee Store is now and there wasn't very much recycled in those days it just went to the dump. After that the city contracted for trash to be picked up and hauled out of the city to be disposed. The trash was hauled out to land that is now part of Jefferson County Park and was dumped in ditches and covered over with dirt.

Next the city went to an Incinerator system to get rid of the trash. It was located at the northwest corner of Fairfield. All that seems pretty primitive when compared to the sophisticated and regulated landfill and recycling center of today. Not to mention the relatively simple and convenient choices that we have available to us to use these facilities.



Once in awhile a camper will ask us why we don't have recycling in the campground. Well we have thought about it but because we have a very limited staff and a lot to do we thought that since a large portion of our campers are local and have recycling available to them it would be simpler (for us) and responsible (of them) if they would do their own recycling. And some do, but not enough. Every week when we picked up the trash in the campground it is obvious that much of it could have and should have been recycled.

The trash and recycling facilities in other campgrounds vary a lot. From none, with a "carry in- carry out" policy, to trash containers that are for everything, recyclable or not (like ours), still others have trash containers plus

recycling containers. This can vary anywhere from a single container for aluminum cans to multiple containers for aluminum, glass and plastic and even one each for those that have a deposit and those that don't.

Ryan Smelcer, a local boy scout with Troop 108 contacted the JCCB looking for something he could do for his Eagle Scout project and a recycling project was suggested. Ryan agreed to work with the conservation board and staff to come up with a recycling program for the campground. We expect to start out simple and see how it goes. We hope that you will help to make a difference too.



**Trail Rides for Seniors.** For the sixth season we are pleased to announce that our electric trail buggy will be available for trail rides in Jefferson County Park and the Cedar View Trail to senior citizens and others who are not physically able to walk the trails and see the sights. Our electric "trail buggy" can usually accommodate six passengers plus the driver (weight is an issue) and the rides last from 45 minutes to an hour.

*(continued on page 5)*



## Park Management News by Shawn Morrissey

At least 3 different times in the late winter I spotted trumpeter swans flying in the area and I wondered if they were hanging out here or just passing through. I never did see them on the ground. I recently read about the Iowa D.N.R.'s plans to phase out its successful trumpeter swan restoration program. The program started in 1993 with the first successful wild nest occurring in 1998. In 2010 there were 42 reported wild nests.

These swans are the largest waterfowl in North America and can weigh up to 32 pounds with a wingspan of 8 feet! The adult birds are completely white with black legs and large black bills and face. A salmon-red "lipstick line" divides the upper and lower mandibles of the bill.

These birds feed while swimming, sometimes up-ending or dabbling to reach submerged food. The diet is almost entirely aquatic plants. In winter, they may also eat grasses and grains in fields. The young are fed on insects and small crustaceans at first, changing to a vegetation-based diet over the first few months.

The Jefferson County Conservation Board currently has a trumpeter swan at a taxidermist. In about a year's time we should have a trumpeter swan "in flight" in our nature center.

Trumpeter swans were once common in Iowa but by the early 1930's just 69 trumpeter swans remained in the continental United States.

Adult with juvenile.





## Summer Programs for Youth

### Canoe Basics for Beginners:

Thursday, June 9th; 9:30 a.m. - Noon or 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.

**6th grade & up.** For students new to canoeing or for those wanting to review, this class will introduce you to canoe basics, followed by time in the pond to practice various paddling techniques plus a few fun games to help you develop your skills. Meets at Shelter #3 in Jefferson County Park. Fee: \$2.00. Interested parents are welcome to register and participate with their son/daughter at no cost. Limited to 16 participants each class.

### Canoe Basics for Beginners: Paddling Pleasant Lake

Friday, June 10th; 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

This is an opportunity for those new canoers to try their new skills in a larger setting. We'll meet at the parking lot at Pleasant Lake (Waterworks Pond #2) off Pleasant Plain Road. Wear sunscreen and a hat with a brim and bring along water and your lunch, we'll eat on the water. And wear shoes you don't mind getting wet. Fee: \$3.00. Interested parents are welcome to register and participate with their son/daughter at no cost. Limited to 16 participants.

### Bear Creek Geodes

Wednesday, July 6th; 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**3rd & above.** Once again we're heading to Van Buren County to visit Bear Creek in search of Iowa's State Rock and whatever other rocks or fossil catches our eye. Geared for 3rd grade and above but those younger are allowed if accompanied by an adult! Bring along a bucket and your lunch and wear clothes and shoes you don't mind getting wet. Fee: \$15.00/child. \$5.00 for accompanying parent.

### Nature Tots I: Turtles & Frogs

Thursday, July 7th, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Or 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

**Three to 5 year olds.** We'll meet in the nature center to get "hands-on" with the resident turtles and then its out to our mini-wetland to search for frogs. Parent/Adult must accompany their child and be willing to get their hands dirty! No fee is involved but pre-registration is required.

### Tadpole Camp

Tuesday, July 12 - Thursday, July 14

9:00 - 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

**For youth going into 1st & 2nd grade.** Tadpole camp celebrates everything that's fun about the outdoors: walking on logs, searching for frogs and toads, exploring a stream,



Pre-registration is required for all summer programs.  
Call 472-4421 or  
e-mail  
therese@jeffersoncounty  
conservation.com



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climbing grape vines! You can sign up for the morning session or the afternoon, whichever works best with your schedule. Each of the three days will involve exploration and hands-on activities. Meets at Jefferson County Park nature center. Dress to get a bit wet and/or dirty each day. Fee: \$10/session (\$5.00 if parent accompanies their child).

### Outdoor Adventures for Kids

Tuesday, July 19th—Thursday, July 21st  
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

**3rd grade & up.** Pack your lunch, wear old clothes you don't mind getting dirty and old shoes or boots! From gully walking and hiking the creek to fire starting and outdoor cooking, we have three days of outdoor adventure. Fee: \$10.00/day.

### Girls Night Out

Thursday, July 21st. 7:30 p.m. to Friday, July 22nd, 8:00 a.m.

Sorry guys! This overnight at the nature center is for girls only. But it's not your average sleep over. This sleep over is for 3rd—5th grade girls who LOVE nature. (Younger girls can attend if Mom accompanies them). We'll go on a night hike, watch the stars, catch fireflies and sack out on the floor of the nature center. All you'll need is your jammies, a sleeping bag and your toothbrush! Space is limited. Fee: \$20.00.

### Skunk River Canoe Paddle

Tuesday, July 26th, 9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

**6th grade & up.** Open to any youth 6th grade and up with paddling experience. We're planning a leisurely paddle and will stop along the way for lunch. We'll put in at Mac Coon Access and take out at the Hwy 34 bridge. Fee: \$10.00. Interested parents are welcome to register with their son or daughter at no cost. Limit to 16 participants.

### Nature Tots II: Creek Exploration

Thursday, July 28th, 10:00-11:30 a.m. Or 1:00-2:30 p.m.

**Three to 5 year olds.** We'll start at the nature center than head down to the small creek that runs past the campground. We'll utilize a short section of the creek to play and explore. Parent/Adult must accompany their child and be willing to get their feet and hands wet! Rubber boots or shoes you don't mind getting wet are a necessity. No fee is involved but pre-registration is required.



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### **Trail Rides for Seniors (continued from page 3)**

Prior to our getting the electric trail buggy we used one of our maintenance tractors to pull a wagon and rides were usually limited to a one or two times a year. Now however since the trail buggy is not used for other work within the park system we can make it available more often.

Weather permitting rides are available from May to November as staff time allows. Because of the extra work load on staff we prefer not to schedule rides on weekends and holidays. Registration is required and there is a small fee per person for rides. Please contact Park Host Ron Meyers for more information or if you are interested in scheduling a ride.



Thank You to Gwen Wells, Vada Byrum and Ruth Brown for their recent donations.

And to Diane Whitney and Gloria Countryman for their help with school groups.





Ron Groenendyk from Team Clueless

## Don't Miss Saturday, June 18th

# Spring Into Summer Dutch Oven Cook Off

Come to compete...or just to eat!



**Competing:** Whether you're a novice or have been Dutch oven cooking for most of your life, we hope you'll join us for our 4th Annual Dutch Oven Cook-Off on Saturday, June 18th at Jefferson County Park! The goal of this event is to have fun, demonstrate Dutch oven cooking skills, and to amaze the public with the great food that comes out of cast iron.

Enter one to four categories of your choice: dessert, vegetable, bread and this year's specialty category...bacon! Your bacon related dish can be anything from an appetizer to a main dish. Entry fee is \$10 for each category (or \$35.00 for all four). Novices may want to participate in just one category while more seasoned cooks, and those with more pots to cook in, may want to do all four. A panel of judges will determine 1st through 4th place winners in each of the four categories.



**Eating:** The public is invited to come watch and visit with the cooks. Individuals can pay a small fee that will allow them to sample the food after the initial judging is done. Visitors to the event last year had the chance to taste test over 40 dishes including peach stuffed pork loin, jambalaya with cornbread dumplings, and pineapple upside-down cake (photo at left). Proceeds from the taste testing will go to benefit the Cedar Creek Chapter of Ducks Unlimited.

For more information:

e-mail: [therese@jeffersoncountyconservation.com](mailto:therese@jeffersoncountyconservation.com)

Phone: 641-472-4421 or go to

<http://www.jeffersoncountyconservation.com/whatnew.html>



Jennifer Hammel from the Packer Backers



Chance and Mark of Team Double Trouble

## Park & Trail Update by Bob Leazer

Hi All,

Can you believe it, spring has sprung! But as I sit here shivering I know that old man winter hasn't given up on us yet. That 60 and 70 degree weather we had was a mere teaser to get us thinking about all of our spring projects. Pretty sure the thermometer said 29 degrees this morning with a wind chill of 15 to 20, so Mother Nature is still in control of our outdoor pleasures. But the sun is shining and the robins are singing so I have faith that warm temperatures are on the way! The grass is getting green as I type so it won't be long and I can complain about the heat.



Mrs. Buckley, and students, with the deer skull they found at the wetland.

Therese has had her first round of wetland excursions with the area 4th grade classes. She let Shawn and I tag along because she knew we needed the exercise after a long winter of over indulging in the winter holiday delights. I'm pretty sure that all the teachers now know that two of the exciting things for students to experience in the wetland are mud and water! Although they were there to see the wildlife and what lives in the wetland, they will carry the experience with them for a life time! It's quite rewarding to see their eyes light up with wonderment as they hike through the maze of grasses, weeds and cattails. There was little reptile activity but they did encounter a sleepy leopard frog and a mothering crayfish. Next month there will be more snakes, turtles and tadpoles, not to mention mosquitoes and deerflies. We did get to see a variety ducks, geese, a great blue heron as well as a bald eagle and a choir of red-winged black birds. Several other species were there also. Therese got to see one of her favorites - the Kingfisher was quite a fabulous bird. So if you're ever bored put on your tall boots and take a stroll into the wetlands just off the Cedar View Trail. You'll be amazed at what you can see and hear in Mother Nature's amazing surroundings.



One of the many students to get stuck in the mud.

In park news, at Jefferson County Park phase two of our campground improvement was completed as we upgraded eight more campsites with 50 amp service and water hookups. We will be adding new gravel and leveling the pads as well, along with reseeding of the ground that was disturbed during construction. Along with the upgrades come increased camping fees (see Conservation Update on page 1). We feel that the increase is still fairly reasonable for a form of awesome activity and relaxation. We also have many other chores to do at Round Prairie Park as well as Mac Coon Access to get ready for the upcoming camp season, not to mention our other non-camping areas. So I need to close my ramblings and get to work! Hope to see you soon! Happy camping, hiking, biking or whatever you choose to do in "THE GREAT OUTDOORS".

See ya later.  
Bob



Shawn Morrissey and a young bird watcher.



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.

J E F F E R S O N

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**To Contact Us:**

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641-472-4421

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# Upcoming Program

## O.W.L.S. Geode Hunting

Tuesday, June 21st

Here's an opportunity for "older, wiser, livelier seniors" to search for Geodes. Bring along a bucket and your lunch and wear clothes and shoes you don't mind getting wet. Trip will leave from the Jefferson County Park parking lot at 9:00 a.m. and will return at 1:00 p.m.



Fee: \$5.00. Trip involves about a mile walk.

Pre-registration required.

Call 472-4421 or e-mail  
therese@jeffersoncountyconservation.com

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# Enjoy Your County Parks This Spring!