

# The Nature of Things

THE BENTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 21 Fall 2020

## We Are Lucky: *By Shelby Williams, Interim Director*

Like everyone else in the midwest, we were affected by the Derecho that hit on August 10th, 2020 at approximately 12:15pm. It's no surprise that we want to share our experiences with this storm, as many in the midwest do.

With a staff that works in the field most of the time out in the parks, we were lucky enough to have most of the staff in our County Nature Center the exact time the storm hit. Unfortunately, a handful of us were still dispersed throughout the county and we had campers and park patrons utilizing our areas at this time.

Not only were we unable to communicate because we had no cell service, no land lines, and hardly any radio communications, we couldn't get to everyone as there was minimal access to all of our parks. Roadways were closed with power lines, trees, and debris from homes and outbuildings. This lack of communication created an eruption of fear when we tried to make contact with everyone following the storm.

It wasn't until much later that the panic lessened, around 8:30 pm. We made contact with everyone on staff and got mostly through all of our parks for initial debris removal and checking on campers. However, the devastation worsened with another day and more observations. Our trees are gone. All of our parks sustained tree damage which will take hundreds of years to recover from. Hundreds of years.



*Our trees are gone. Derecho tree damage will take hundreds of years to recover from.*



*Benton County Conservation Staff and Volunteers after some Derecho storm clean up.*

### *Inside this Issue*

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*Due to Covid-19, preregistration is now required and masks are mandatory for all events*

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Electronic versions are available at our website

[www.bentoncountyiowa.org](http://www.bentoncountyiowa.org)

Contact us at:

319-472-4942 or

[info@bentoncountyparks.com](mailto:info@bentoncountyparks.com)

to be added to our mailing list.

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# The Colors Of Fall: *By Signey Hilby, Naturalist*

When trying to identify trees, looking at the leaves is a very good starting point. There are 3 basic leaf types: needles, scales, and broadleaf. Evergreens typically have needles or scales, which stay attached and green all year long. Most broadleaf trees are deciduous, meaning they drop their leaves when dormant in the winter.



*Needles*

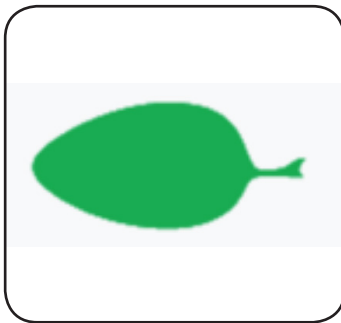


*Scales*



*One type of broadleaf*

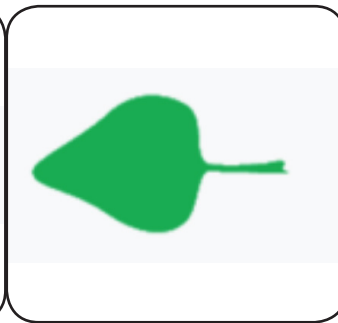
When it comes to identifying broadleaf species the shape of a leaf can give us clues. Common broadleaf leaf shapes include ovate (egg shaped), lanceolate (long and narrow), deltoid (triangular), orbicular (round) and cordate (heart shaped). There is also the palm-shaped leaf (maple) and the lobed leaf (oak), two of the more recognizable leaf shapes.



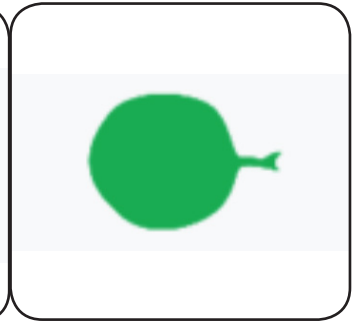
*Ovate*



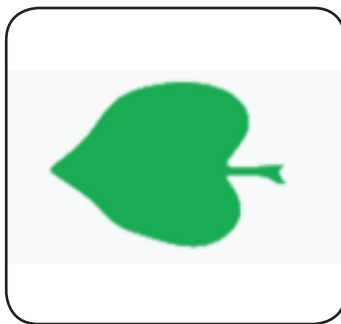
*Lanceolate*



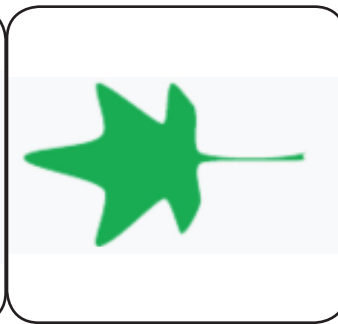
*Deltoid*



*Obicular*



*Cordite*



*Palm-shaped*



*Lobed leaf*

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# The Colors Of Fall: *Continued from page 2*

In the winter, it would take a lot of energy and water for plants to keep their leaves healthy. But winter is cold, dry, and usually there isn't much sun. So, instead of trying to keep their leaves alive, some plants will drop their leaves, seal the the spots on their branches were the leaves had been attached, and will enter dormancy for the winter season.

## The Fall Color:

Leaves are colored by molecules called pigments. The pigment that causes the leaves to be green is called chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is important to plants because it absorbs sunlight and uses that energy to make food through a process called photosynthesis. During the spring and summer when there is plenty of sunlight, plants make lots of chlorophyll. In the fall when the length of daylight changes and the temperature starts to get colder, some plants stop their food making process and break down the chlorophyll into smaller molecules. As the chlorophyll is broken down and goes away, other pigments start to show which may turn the leaf different colors.

Other pigments in leaves are called carotenoids and xanthophyll. Carotenoids are yellow, while xanthophyll are orange. Anthocyanins are other plant pigments that cause red, blue, or purple colors. Some other pigments may display mostly browns. So the different colors in fall leaves are caused by chemical processes within the leaf that causes the mixing of varying amounts and different kinds of leaf pigments.

The following broadleaf pictures are from various Iowa deciduous trees. Use this to help you get started with your own fall tree identification.



*Ash*



*Black Walnut*



*Cottonwood*



*Elm*



*Ginkgo*



*Hickory*



*Maple*



*Oak*



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# All Good Things Come To An End: *By Scott Bahmann, Rodgers Park Ranger*

It was on April 6th, 1998 that I accepted the job as Park Ranger for Benton County Conservation and after 22 years of service, it's time to say goodbye. This has not only been my job but, has been my passion for many years.

Throughout my career, I have thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of this position. From the simplest of tasks like mowing and weed eating, to the more complex ones such as building walls and writing newsletter articles. Let's not forget patrolling the campground and the camaraderie with the campers. I have been fortunate enough to work with many different agencies throughout the years and have gained a wealth of knowledge and valuable friendships.

While with Benton County Conservation, a dear friend once told me, in order to get the most out of County Conservation you need to get involved on the statewide level. I have enjoyed being on the statewide Winterfest committee and the CCPOA (County Conservation Peace Officers Association) committee and will miss working alongside those individuals.



*Scott Bahmann  
Rodgers Park Ranger*

After a great deal of consideration, I have stepped down from being the Rodgers Park Ranger for Benton County Conservation and have accepted a new role as Deputy Sheriff with the Benton County Sheriff's Office. I am excited for this opportunity and I am eager to see all that this position has to offer to me and my family.

It will be very difficult to leave all of my friends, coworkers, special campers, etc., but rest assured I will miss each and every one of you and hope that we can stay in touch.

Too-da-loo,  
Scooter (Scott Bahmann)

## Amazon Smile

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers enjoy the same selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that, when customers shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers, at no extra cost!

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# Meet The New River Parks Ranger: *By Layla Hagen, River Parks Ranger*



*Layla Hagen*  
*New River Parks Ranger*

Hello! My name is Layla Hagen and I am the new River Parks Ranger for Benton County Conservation. I started with Benton County Conservation in May of 2020 as a seasonal Conservation Aide and Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) Technician Intern. Within a few weeks of working with the team here at Benton County Conservation, I knew I wanted to continue working at the county park level.

I grew up on an acreage near a small town in Iowa County where I spent a lot of my time participating in 4-H, horseback riding, and going on camping trips in Iowa and out West. Spending the majority of my time outdoors developed my love for county and state parks, and sparked an interest in conservation.

I attended the University of Northern Iowa as an art student in 2013 and eventually transitioned to environmental studies. I graduated in the spring of 2017 with a bachelor's degree in Geography, with an emphasis in Environmental Sustainability. Following graduation, I worked for the

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Des Moines as a Partnership Assistant and GIS Technician Assistant. After gaining experience and skills in writing and monitoring federal conservation grants and agreements, I knew I wanted to apply myself to the outdoor field of conservation work.

I am looking forward to getting to know those of you that enjoy visiting and camping at Wildcat Bluff Recreation Area, Benton City-Fry Recreation Area, and Hoefle Dulin Recreation Area. I plan to enhance the River Parks visitor experience by adding areas of native plantings, recreational trails, a shower house, and a dump station. As the new River Parks Ranger, I hope I influence the public to appreciate and do their part to take care of these natural areas while visiting. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any ideas for enhancing our lovely parks. I am looking forward to protecting the county parks and serving Benton County!

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.” - John Muir



## Noting Nature

### Winneshiek County Conservation

Track seasonal changes and natural wonders across Winneshiek County with spectacular photography and information provided by Naturalist Larry Reis through a series of short, frequently updated videos available on YouTube.

On YouTube or Google search “Noting Nature in Winneshiek County”

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# Dutch Oven Days: *By Aaron Askelson, Naturalist*

Fall always makes me think of Dutch oven cooking the crisp cool mornings with just a touch of frost on the leaves so they crackle ever so slightly under foot. I love the sunny days that start out in the forties and by early afternoon are warm and in the low seventies. I have cooked with a Dutch oven in the summer time but it is not nearly as pleasant. Hovering over the coals, moving them around as the sweat drips off your nose and makes a sizzle as the perspiration drops onto the Dutch oven lid, turning instantly into steam is not pleasant. The cool temps of the fall make it ideal for Dutch oven cooking.

If you are looking for a substantial meal, Chili is always popular and another great one to try in a Dutch oven. There is just something so unique about cooking chili near or on a fire. The smokey flavor that it adds really pairs well with the meat and beans. My favorite Dutch oven dessert is definitely an apple crisp. With an abundance of ripe fruit around and the mild temps, I find this one to be ideal. It is simple and takes very little effort. I think I am making myself hungry just thinking about it right now.

## **Dutch Oven Chili with Beans**

- Prep time 25 minutes
- Cook time 50 minutes

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 Large yellow onion rough chopped
- 3-5 Cloves of garlic fine chopped
- 1 to 2 lbs. ground beef
- 2 cans black beans drained
- 2 cans chili beans drained
- 4 cans diced tomatoes with green chilies undrained
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 1 tbsp cumin
- 3-4 tbsp ground chili powder, add more at the end for more punch
- 1 whole chopped, jalapeno, remove seeds and ribs (unless you like the burn)
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 cup of water



*Dutch oven cooking on charcoal*

Begin by browning the meat in a 12-inch Dutch oven by using 8-10 charcoal briquettes under the oven. Add chopped onions and garlic during the browning process.

After the meat has been browned, if there is excess grease, pour it off. I like to put the meat in a separate container and place tinfoil in the bottom of my Dutch Oven to protect it from the acid in the tomatoes and more importantly to help with easy clean up.

Add the remaining ingredients.

At this point, it might be best to replace all the briquettes under the Dutch oven and place about 14-16 new ones on the top of the Dutch oven.

*Continued on next page*

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## Dutch Oven Days: *Continued from page 6*

Cooking time should be about 35 to 45 minutes depending on how hot your coals are.

Remember to check your coals every 10 minutes. If they get small or burnt out, be sure to replace them. Remember to also turn your oven a quarter turn on the briquettes every 10 minutes. Turning the lid in the opposite direction every 10 minutes will prevent burning if there are any hot spots.

If you do not line your Dutch oven, I would recommend stirring it at least twice during the cooking process. It will take longer to cook but it will also prevent the chili from burning to your Dutch oven.

For a more smokey flavor, remove the lid and extend cooking time 10 minutes.

Now that you had your savory meal, it is time for a sweet dessert. And what could be better on a cool fall day than a generous helping of warm apple crisp.

### Dutch Oven Apple Crisp

- Prep time 30 minutes
- Cook time 30 minutes

#### Ingredients:

##### Apple mixture:

- 10 cups unpeeled, sliced Granny Smith apples
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 tbsp lemon zest
- ¾ cup sugar

##### Topping:

- 1-1/2 cups brown sugar
- 1-1/2 cups oats
- 1-1/4 cups flour
- ¾ cup butter or margarine
- 2 tbsp lemon zest
- 1-1/2 tbsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 1 tsp cardamon



*Dutch oven apple crisp*

Stir together the apple mixture ingredients. Spread the apple mixture in the bottom of a tinfoil lined 12-inch Dutch oven and set aside. Use a fork to stir together the topping dry ingredients. Then cut in butter or margarine until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Spread topping on the apple mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Use 8 coals under the oven and 16 on the lid. Replace coals if needed. Remember to turn the oven a ¼ turn every 10 mins. Also remember to turn the lid a ¼ turn in the opposite direction at the same time. Continue cooking until apples are cooked and the topping is brown. Serve warm with ice cream or whipped topping if you like. Serves 8-10. Enjoy!



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## Derecho At Hannen: *By Collin Strickland, Hannen Park Ranger*

August 10th, 2020 is a day that most of us will not forget as the Derecho storm tore through Iowa.

Hannen Lake Park sustained extensive damage and it was heartbreaking to witness. Every part of the park was impacted in some way.

My first task was to check on the campers and make sure everyone was okay. This quickly became difficult as I had to figure out how to get into the park. There were power lines down across the east entrance and there was a bur oak tree laying across the road on the west entrance.

I began working on cutting through the trees that were across the road on the west entrance. It took a few hours just to get the west entrance opened up.

Then I focused on clearing all of the trees that were blocking the roads throughout the park.

Once I was able to get the road opened back up throughout the park, I immediately began to take pictures of all the damages.

Many trees were snapped in half, uprooted, or had major limbs that were broken. Some trees even fell on the power lines! Thankfully a crew from REC was able to shut all power off to the park so we could safely work around the down power lines.

We removed many of the trees from the down power lines, which made REC's job a bit easier and go a little quicker when they came to shut the power off and fix the power lines. There were even two utility poles that had to be replaced because they fell during the storm.



*A fallen tree tangled in power lines*



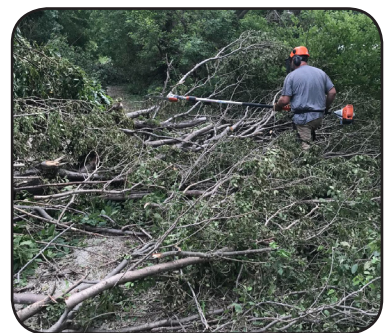
*An overturned camper*



*A tree that was snapped in half by the winds*



*A tree that fell onto a wooden fishing jetty*



*BCC staff clearing the trails*



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## Derecho At Hannen: *Continued from page 8*

The registration kiosks were heavily damaged, the Hickory Hill shelter did sustain some roof damage, and a covered picnic table structure was completely broken.



*Damaged  
registration kiosk*

The east side of the park reopened on August, 21st while the west side didn't reopen until August 27th due to more excessive damage.

It was nice to have the park completely opened up for the three day - Labor Day weekend. Even though Hannen sustained all sorts of damage, it was nice to see so many campers still utilizing and enjoying the campground throughout the Fall season.



*Shelter roof damage*

### 3 Month Update:

The trails have recently been cleared and are now opened back up. Please continue to be careful and alert when walking on the trails or utilizing various places in the park, as there are still broken limbs that we have been unable to reach or get rid of. There is still quite a lot of work that needs to be done at Hannen Lake Park.

As the camping season comes to an end, remember to keep an eye on our Benton County Conservation Facebook page as we will post when our parks will be winterized for the season. I hope you've enjoyed camping in all of Benton County Conservation's parks this year! Thanks for all of your support and patience throughout this crazy year!



*Broken covered  
picnic table*



*A tree that was blown over by  
the wind*



*BCC staff work to clear  
debris from the campground*

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## **We Are Lucky:** *Continued from page 1*

One campground, Hannen Lake Park, had to remain closed for two weeks due to downed power lines and trees. It took a lot of time and help to get it opened and there will be plenty of work to do in the next year to completely clean up. It currently feels like a never ending process.

Another park, Atkins Roundhouse Area, remains closed due to unsafe conditions and the need to clear a substantial amount of debris and trees yet. What is left of the canopy at the Atkins Roundhouse Area is minimal. It is very sad to see as that park is such an asset and used by so many. We've been fortunate to have ample help from the city council and volunteers on clearing what we can to make it emergency ready - but not trail user ready.

Regardless of everything, we are lucky. We are lucky no one was injured and everyone was accounted for. We are lucky to have minimal structural damage when so many are still without homes and October is already here. We are lucky to live in an area where people help one another. We have had volunteers, other county conservation employees, and an overwhelming amount of community members help us to get back up and running. We will strive to get our parks to what they can be and have been, if not better after this storm. We are thinking of all of you that are still struggling to make home feel like home again. We are lucky we are Iowa Strong!



*Before and after Derecho storm clean up  
at the Atkins Roundhouse Area*



### **A Heartfelt Thank You to the Following People**

Jerry Krug and Jo Ellen Krug

The Smith Family:

Mark & Lori Smith, Ken & Cheri Morrow, Steve & Cyndee Sinnott  
In memory of their parents Barbara J. and Lee E. Smith, Jr.

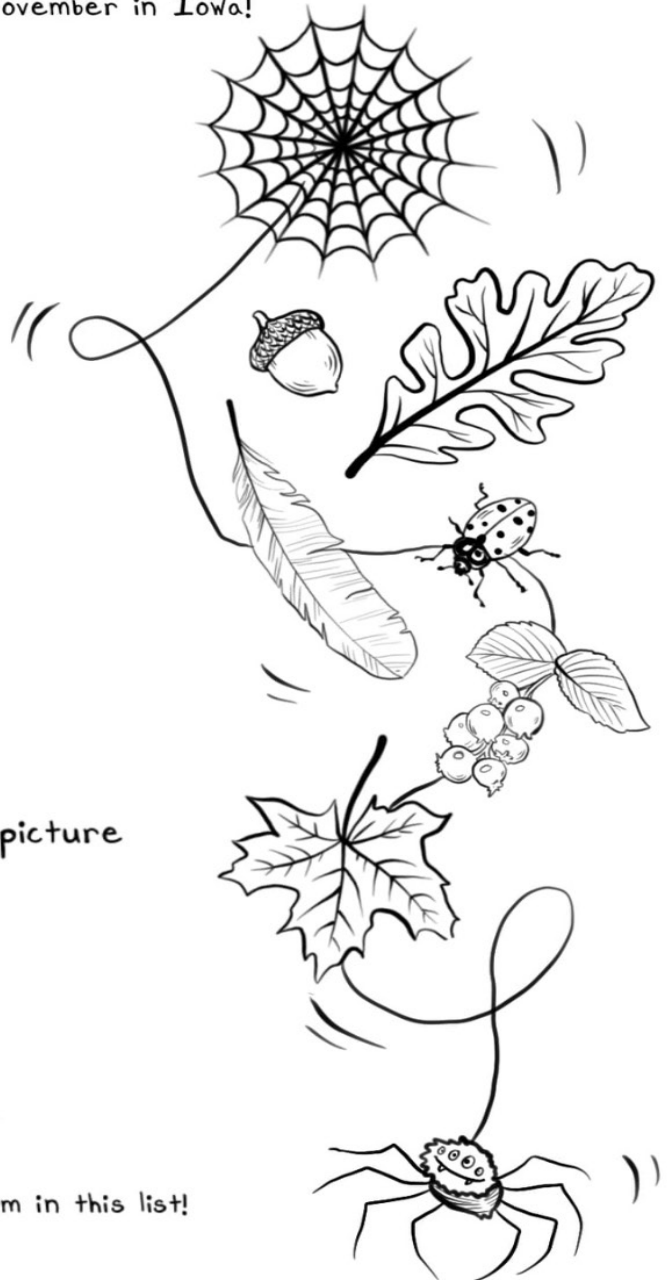


# Fall Scavenger Hunt

Scavenger hunts allow you to get out and explore on your own or in small groups. They also challenge your eyes to see new things or things you have not noticed before. This is a fall scavenger hunt and focuses on things you might only find September-November in Iowa!

- ☐ Caterpillar- draw a picture
- ☐ Red leaf
- ☐ Ladybug
- ☐ Yellow leaf
- ☐ Grasshopper
- ☐ 5 acorns
- ☐ Orange leaf
- ☐ Furry spider- draw a picture
- ☐ 3 walnuts
- ☐ Red berries
- ☐ Spider web in a tree- draw a picture
- ☐ A leaf bigger than your FACE!
- ☐ Feather
- ☐ White mushroom
- ☐ A leaf smaller than your TOE!

✓ Check off the boxes as you find each item in this list!



Use a small bag to collect the things you find and the back of this paper to draw any pictures needed.



## NATURE AROUND US

BY SCOTT PATTON

THE WILD TURKEY HAS EXPERIENCED DRAMATIC CHANGE SINCE THE TIME OF THE PILGRIMS, WHEN IT WAS UNWARY AND AN EASY TARGET FOR HUNTERS. THIS, COMBINED WITH FOREST CLEARING BROUGHT THE BIRD NEAR EXTINCTION BY 1900. HOWEVER, RELOCATION PROJECTS HAVE BROUGHT THE TURKEY BACK UP TO ITS FORMER NUMBERS. IN FACT, FROM AN ORIGINAL 39-STATE RANGE, IT NOW OCCUPIES ALL STATES BUT ALASKA. NOW AN EXTREMELY ALERT BIRD, IT IS A SUPREME CHALLENGE FOR HUNTERS. ITS HEARING AND EYESIGHT ARE VERY SHARP, AND IT CAN SWIM, OUTFRAN A DOG, AND FLY AT SPEEDS UP TO 55 M.P.H.!



PATTON

### *Conservation Board Members*

Daniel Gibbins: Urbana, Member  
Dan Hill: Vinton, Member  
Denni Randall: Belle Plaine, Member  
Randy Scheel: Garrison, Chair  
Becky Van Wey: Vinton, Member

The Benton County Conservation Board meets the second Monday of every month at 5:00 at the Nature Center. Meetings are open to the public.

### *Conservation Staff*

|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Shelby Williams   | Interim Director         |
| Aaron Askelson    | Interpretive Naturalist  |
| Signey Hilby      | Interpretive Naturalist  |
| Vacant            | Rodgers Park Ranger      |
| Layla Hagen       | River Parks Ranger       |
| Collin Strickland | Hannen Park Ranger       |
| Zach Parmater     | Conservation Tech/Ranger |
| Shelby Williams   | Conservation Tech/Ranger |

Email anyone on staff by using their first initial combined with their last name  
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