

The Nature of Things

THE BENTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4 SUMMER 2014

Take a Drive and Enjoy the View *by Karen Phelps*

My drive to and from work is not quick; gone are the days when I used to walk to work. When I started my employment with Benton County Conservation over 12 years ago, I had to adjust to a 15 minute drive to get to my office. My office has since moved to the northern part of Benton County, north of Vinton, and my commute is now 50 minutes. Needless to say, I have quality time to myself to explore the world at my own pace.

One of my favorite routes is from Hwy 30 north to Van Horne on county road V66 or 21st Ave. As part of the Iowa Department of Transportation's (IDOT) prairie restoration plan for the state, the ditches on both sides of this road were converted to native prairie. The first three years it didn't look like much, mostly weeds, as some people like to refer to them. However, if you'd have taken the time to stop and explore, you would have been witness to a rebirth of Iowa history. The delicate shoots of Butterfly weed, Hoary Puccoon, Culver's root, Spiderwort, Blazing star and Cone flowers were beginning to emerge in an area that had been void of these native species for over a century.

It was an arduous task, first spraying the non-native vegetation, then broadcast and drill seeding the area with native seed. The area was mowed at an approximate 8-inch level several times a summer for 2 years to help establish the native seed and discourage the non-native vegetation from recurring. All the while, I'm driving by daily with an increasing interest in the project.



A variety of prairie blooms celebrate summer along county road V-66

Inside this Issue **Calendar of Events** Insert

A Grilling Companion
page 2

Inevitable Truth
page 3

New Hannen Ranger
page 3

Outdoor Journey
page 4

Prairie Girl's Notebook
page 6

Plant Profile
page 7

Extreme Outdoors
page 8

This and That
pages 10 & 11

Electronic versions are available at our website or via email through the following website:
www.bentoncountyparks.com
or call us at:
319-472-4942 to be added to our mailing list.



Continued on page 9

A Grilling Companion *By Aaron Askelson, Naturalist*

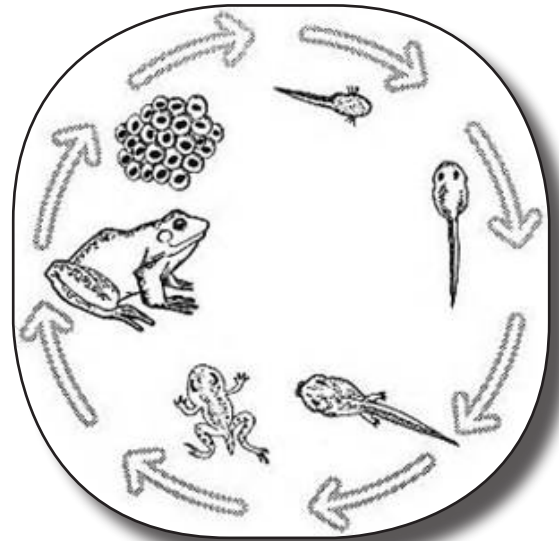


I like to do a lot of grilling this time of year, and this year I have a new grilling companion. I store my charcoal in a gray flip-top wastebasket; the kind where you step on the pedal and the top flips open. It has served me well and always kept my charcoal dry, although with all the wind and rain we have been getting lately, I might need to think about something a little more substantial.

I guess I am getting off track a little, but this wastebasket has served as a new home for a cute little guy that seems to think it is an ideal home for him. He startled me the first time I encountered him. I flipped the lid open and grabbed my charcoal chimney and as I was reaching for my bag of charcoal, the side of the wastebasket seemed to move. Upon closer inspection, I realized that it was a very well camouflaged gray treefrog. He was probably only 1 1/2

inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch wide. Trying not to disturb him, I gingerly took out the bag of charcoal; I failed, but he did not travel far, he simply moved around to the backside of the wastebasket. Now a wastebasket seems like an odd choice for a home unless you are Oscar the Grouch, but this home seems to suit my new companion. I am sure he enjoys the unsuspecting bugs that wander into his lair. His lair shelters him from the drying sun, and when he wants to venture out, he can often be found on the backside of the receptacle.

The Eastern gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*). This amphibian starts his life cycle with up to four thousand other eggs often in a temporarily wet area, river backwater, pond, or wetland. The eggs are divided into masses that have around 100 eggs per mass. Normally the eggs are laid in an area that is free of predatory fish. Gray treefrogs will begin breeding as early as late April and go into July. The eggs will be in a film close to the surface loosely attached to aquatic vegetation. The males usually spend most of their lives close to water while the females tend to only go there when they are ready to lay eggs. Like all amphibians, these frogs will go through a metamorphosis before becoming an adult frog. The eggs can take up to four or five days to hatch into tadpoles. The tadpoles can be identified by a red or orange tip on their tail. The froglets will be a beautiful bright green. They will mature into frogs over a period of two months.



These frogs are active in Iowa from late April to October and are usually found in, or near, humid wooded habitats. They tend to stay hidden during the day and do most of their hunting at night. Insects and other invertebrates are what is on the menu for these guys as they enjoy crickets, worms, and many flying insects. Many treefrogs can be found around lights late at night, taking advantage of the flying insects being drawn to the light.

Tree frogs are truly the most skilled climbers of the amphibian world, their foot pads enable them to seemingly defy gravity. These foot pads work like suction cups that they use to scale walls, trees, and even glass. The gray treefrog also has the ability to change the color of its skin in a matter of minutes, making it hard for predators to spot and keeping it concealed while it is out on the hunt.

Continued on page 3

The Inevitable Truth *By Megan Jorgensen, Seasonal Intern*

Ever since the day I was born, I have been exposed to hunting, fishing, and camping, and continue to be, even now as a 21 year old college student. Growing up, because of my father's job as a conservation officer and his love of the outdoors, I have been taught the importance of natural resource conservation and management. Likewise, values of environmental stewardship and ethics have been instilled in me. However, despite my love and adoration for nature and the recreational activities I partake in, I have always told myself and others that a career in natural resource conservation or in any area remotely related to the environment, was out of the question; I did not want to follow the same path as my father. Instead, I wanted to discover happiness in my own career path. In fact, I entered college as a History Education major, confident that teaching was what I wanted to do with my life. However, I quickly realized that I had chosen the wrong major. Thus, while keeping my history major, I embarked on a journey to discover my true calling.

After exploring possible second majors, I uncovered what I like to call the "inevitable truth." Peace & Justice Studies, the second major I finally chose, lead me down a path concentrated on Environmental Studies. After taking one environmental class, it became inevitable that denying myself a career environmentally related, or forcing myself to pursue other endeavors, was completely barbaric. After accepting the "inevitable truth," or what was inevitable all along, I continued to take classes centered on the environment.

Continued on page 5

Conservation Welcomes New Hannen Park Ranger



Logan Hahn, Hannen Park Ranger

My name is Logan Hahn, the new park ranger at Hannen Park. I grew up in Blairstown, about 3 miles from Hannen, from the age of 3. I have always been enthusiastic about the outdoors. This enthusiasm lead me to pursue a degree in Wildlife Ecology at University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Between semesters, I spent a summer as a seasonal park technician at Hannen Park in 2010. After graduating in 2012, I worked for the Wisconsin DNR for 2 years. Last month, I accepted the position as park ranger.

Hannen Park has always been one of my favorite places to both camp and fish in my youth. The scenery, quality of fishing, and friendliness of

the people at Hannen Park make this place hard to beat when it comes to outdoor recreation. As the new park ranger, I will strive to maintain the high-quality outdoor experience that Hannen Park provides while continuing to find new ways to promote recreation at the park. I hope to see you here! *Logan*

A Grilling Companion *Continued from page 2*

I have come across a gray treefrog on a white shutter that was virtually invisible till it moved. And if they did not already have enough amazing superpowers, they also have converted glucose flowing through their organs so they won't freeze solid in the winter time. How is that for some cool "superpowers"?

So keep your eyes peeled for this elusive and extraordinary critter. Oh, and if you happen to catch him hopping away, you might get to see his bright orange and red warning colors on the insides of his legs.

Outdoor Journey for Girls: An Unforgettable Experience

by Megan Jorgensen, Seasonal Intern

To begin, I must define Outdoor Journey for Girls. Nicknamed OJ, Outdoor Journey for Girls is a three day, two night camp for girls between the ages 12 and 15. There are three sessions each summer. One in June and August at the Springbrook Education Center in Guthrie Center, Iowa, and one in July at Hickory Hills Park in Dysart, Iowa. The purpose of the camp is to expose young girls to hunting and fishing, all while encouraging



them to become more fully active in the outdoors as environmental stewards. Camp mentors, women with active careers in the field of natural resources, act as camp counselors; they stay with them overnight in the cabins. The mentors act as role models for the young girls, sharing with them their experiences and the positive impact nature has had on their lives. Finally, at the end of the three days, the girls receive their hunter's education certificates and get a chance to hear more about the opportunities for women in the field of natural resources.

Growing up, I had always heard about OJ because of my father's job as a conservation officer; he and several officers serve each year at the camp along with

many other volunteers from the area. Likewise, when my sister was 12 years old, she attended the camp and came home having had a positive and joyous experience. Now, as a 21 year old naturalist intern, I thought it would be an excellent idea to volunteer at the Hickory Hills session July 8th, 9th, and 10th. I attended Wednesday and Thursday, the hunter's safety and fishing days. The time I spent at the camp proved to be a rewarding experience. On Wednesday I helped out with a program aimed at illustrating how to properly identify wild game animals specific to Iowa. In the afternoon, I assisted in teaching the girls how to properly handle and shoot a 22 caliber rifle and a 20 gauge shotgun as well as basic gun safety. Thursday, I aided in teaching the young girls how to properly cast a fishing pole, as well as educate them on the different types of rods and various gear one might need while fishing.

Both Wednesday and Thursday were quite wonderful and the experience is one I will never forget. When I was their age, I was fortunate enough to have already been taught the basics of hunting and fishing and the importance of environmental stewardship. However, most of these girls had little or no experience with both. It was such a wonderful feeling seeing the joy in the girls' faces when they successfully hit their target or the clay pigeon for the first time. It was also wonderful seeing the excitement and happiness the girls eluded when they successfully casted their fishing line from their pole into the hula hoop target in front of them. It made me feel wholesome knowing that at least a small amount of my teaching and prior knowledge proved to be valuable and useful to the girls. I also felt joy knowing that the girls demonstrated they had learned a lot about hunting, fishing, and environmental stewardship.

Continued on page 5

**For more information about Outdoor Journey for Girls,
check out the Iowa DNR website at
<https://www.iowadnr.gov/training/index.php/DirectoryDetail/20>**

The Inevitable Truth *Continued from page 3,*

Each class, whether it was Environmental Politics, or Environmental Biology, encouraged the deepening of my love for the environment and its empowering beauty. More importantly, the classes have created a passion in me to protect our natural resources from individuals who refuse to understand or cannot fathom the importance of environmental stewardship for human survival. As a result, I have chosen to pursue a career in Environmental and Criminal law, my true calling.

As I approach my senior year of college, I am forever grateful that my father taught me how to hunt and fish, and that both he and my mother took our family camping every summer, exposing my brother and sister and I to the beauty of nature. Had they not, I would never have developed a passion for the environment, nor would there be an “inevitable truth” in existence. Similarly, I never realized that the countless hours my dad has spent successfully and unsuccessfully taking me hunting and fishing and all the memories those outings created, would have such a tremendous influence on my perceptions surrounding the environment or the world we so incredibly take for granted on a daily basis. These experiences, paired up with the education I have been given, have lead me to understand that unless our resources are protected through conservation, human and ecological survival will not be possible. Acceptance of the “inevitable truth,” characterized as the reality that a career in natural resource management or one environmentally related cannot be avoided by myself, has allowed me to discover true happiness.

In efforts to achieve the goals the “inevitable truth” has led me to set for myself, I have taken a position as the Naturalist Intern for Benton County Conservation. Because of my father’s position as a Conservation Officer for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), I have gained a significant understanding of the work and role agencies such as the DNR have in influencing environmental policy and laws surrounding the conservation of natural resources and land management. However, I do not have as much experience, a part from the classes I have taken, with local entities, the issues they face, and the impact they have on policy and laws concerning the environment and our natural resources. I have enjoyed my time here thus far, and have no doubt that my experiences will continue to be enlightening and will bring me a small step closer to achieving my goals. In the end, I am thankful for my willingness to accept the “inevitable truth” with open arms and open doors, enabling myself to discover my true calling, a career that will bring me the most joy and happiness and will inevitably allow me to make a difference in the greater world around me.



Outdoor Journey for Girls

Continued from page 4

Sharing my knowledge and experience with the girls proved to be a rewarding and unforgettable experience that I hope will forever have a positive impact on their lives, as they become more involved in environmental stewardship, hunting, and fishing, just as they continue to have a positive impression on me and my life. In the end, the experience as a volunteer is one I would recommend to any individual willing to share their experiences with

young girls who may not get the opportunity for exposure to hunting and fishing, without Outdoor Journey for Girls. It is also a camp that I would recommend to any young girl interested in learning more about hunting and fishing, and what it means to be an environmental steward. After all, an experience such as this could forever have a tremendous impact and possibly play a role in shaping the lives of the young girls who attend the camp each year.

May 6, 2014
Bodeker Driveway
Benton County, Iowa

The Curiousness of Curiosity

Today's morning stroll up my drive started out peaceful, but soon gave way to instant drama. I was intently watching three American Tree Sparrows bouncing about in front of me on the gravel when confronted with a strange sight. Ahead in the newly green grass stirred a Blue Jay



with a massive worm in its mouth. Dropping the worm, the jay proceeded to use its beak like a hammer, repeatedly drilling the creature with a striking and somewhat horrifying force. Up and down, up and down the beak worked. The jay would occasionally look up {to check for bystanders that needed dealing with} and then go back to its gruesome business. Once the Blue Jay had obviously killed its victim {or toy?}, it lost interest in the

disturbing pursuit and flew off to a nearby cedar. I hustled over to the scene to investigate. The “worm” the Blue Jay had been harassing was actually a large garter snake with a badly bruised, bloody abdomen and clearly dead. As I continued on my way, I wondered whether the snake's movements in the long, spring grasses had sparked the Blue Jay's curiosity, but not its appetite, or was this particular Blue Jay simply a snake-torturer...

~by Coralee Denise Bodeker



BENTON COUNTY INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SAND PRAIRIES:

Historically, 80% of the land area in Iowa was dominated by prairie. Unfortunately only a little over 0.1% of this original area remains today. Remnant sand prairies make up only a fraction of this small percentage making them one of the most endangered plant communities in our state.

Sand prairies are characterized by sandy, well-drained soils and dry soil moisture conditions. Thus, many unique plants are found in sand prairies. These range from the massive Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) to the tiny Prairie Violet (*Viola pedatifida*). However, within the range of plant species that can survive in this environment there are a few that can only be found amid these dry and barren conditions. Sand Milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*) is one of those species.

Although much of Iowa's sand prairie has disappeared from the landscape, there are still small pockets that have survived. Habitat conversion from urban and agricultural development pose one of the most serious threats to these communities. However, this is not the only threat to sand prairies. Sand prairie is an early to mid-successional habitat type which requires regular management. In the absence of fire and other types of disturbance these communities naturally disappear from the landscape. This occurs as trees and other plant species that were historically suppressed by fire are allowed to grow and convert these areas to a new ecological regime. The Benton County IRVM program and Benton County Conservation Department regularly manage sand prairies on county property to ensure that they persist.



Native Plant Profile

BY: BEN BONAR

6 / 19 / 2014

Sand Milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*)

Sand Milkweed is unique in that it requires dry soil moisture conditions and sandy well-drained soil to survive. This milkweed species can be differentiated from similar species such as Common or Purple Milkweed by several characteristics. *Asclepias amplexicaulis* usually has a single cluster or umbel of flowers at the top of its stem. However, there can be two in rare cases. The leaves are wavy near the margins and the plant produces smooth seed pods later in the season.

Although Sand Milkweed is not a dominant plant in modern landscapes it still provides an ecological function in the habitats where it exists. Bees, butterflies and birds all utilize the plant for a variety of purposes. Native birds have been found nesting in the lower leaves of native milkweed species including *Asclepias amplexicaulis*. Sand Milkweed also provides vital habitat for Monarch Butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) which have seen drastic declines in their population in recent years. Monarchs will only lay their eggs on native milkweed species thus making the plants necessary for their survival.



Sand Milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*). This plant was found growing in right-of-way near Van Horn, IA.

Species Characteristics:

Soil Moisture: Dry

Bloom Time: May, June

Bloom Color: Pink

Height: 3 Feet



Extreme Outdoors: Dare to Participate!

We invite you and your family to get off the couch, put away the electronic games and get out and experience these adrenaline filled opportunities to experience the Iowa outdoors in ways you may not have tried or even knew existed as options. There are exciting opportunities for all ages and skill levels.

Extreme Outdoors is a series of adventuresome, fun, challenging, exhilarating and safe outdoor recreational activities sponsored by naturalists with Buchanan, Bremer, Benton, and Chickasaw Counties. Limited transportation may be available from these local County Conservation offices - please call Aaron or Karen at 319-472-4942 to inquire for more information. Each activity will be led by experienced professionals.

Please Pre-register by calling 319-636-2617 or email fontanapark@iowatelecom.net

Bowfishing; Mahaska County - ONLY 5 SPACES REMAIN

August 9 - 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Russell Wildlife Area, 2254 – 200th Street, New Sharon, IA 50207

Fee - \$15 per person - minimum age 10

Participants will learn about which fish to shoot, equipment, safety, laws and ethics and much more. Of course, everyone will be able to shoot, first at targets on and under the water, then we will go riverside to see what's available.

Primitive Tools (atlatl & flint knapping); Vinton

September 13 – 10 am - noon;

Benton County Nature Center; Rodgers Park, Vinton

Fee \$8/person

Join State Archeologist Mark Anderson and Benton County Naturalist Aaron Askelson as we take a trip back into the Ice Age. Participants will learn about flint knapping (making stone tools) and then get to try their hand at throwing the Atlatl (ancient spear thrower). There will also be other tools used by the people of the Ice Age to view and learn about. Cost of the event will be \$8 per person, children under 5 get in for free when accompanied by an adult.

Hot Air Ballooning and Fall Colors

August 23, September 27 and October 4 (see below for time details)

\$225 per person - 2 per balloon (2-3 balloons available)

A hot air balloon ride lasts approximately one hour. Flights are in the morning about sunrise (or if morning conditions are not ideal, late afternoon about two hours before sunset, weather permitting. Your ballooning experience usually takes about two hours, including launch, flight, recovery and returning to the launch field. We wait to inflate the balloon until you arrive. It only takes about ten minutes and you are gently lifting off, beginning a magical experience. Your flight path will be determined by the direction of the wind. You could find yourself floating over a tree line, over the city of Cedar Rapids or out in the countryside. It's your own private guided aerial tour of the area. If weather conditions are not suited for flight, you will be given a certificate to be used for a future flight that you can schedule with the pilot.

Enjoy the View *Continued from page 1, by Karen Phelps, Naturalist*



*Pale Purple coneflower stands amongst Butterfly weed,
Yellow coneflower and more along Hwy V-66.*

Ten years after the initial planting, when spring arrives and matures into summer, the explosion of color is better than 4th of July fireworks. From April to November, the ditches are ablaze with a never ending changing palette of color. One must look closely to see the Shooting star and toadflax which tend to keep a lower profile in the ditches than the towering Compass plant, Cup plant and Big bluestem. Many of the plant pictures we post on Facebook® or Bentoncountyparks.com were taken along this stretch of road. I often kidded with the now-retired IDOT specialist, telling him the issues I had with the project. He would comment that he'd never really heard a complaint about the project, rather many positive comments. I told him that 50 minutes is more than enough time to spend on the road traveling to and from work. With this masterful prairie reconstruction, it often takes me an additional 30-60 minutes to get home as I stop to explore, sketch and photograph the intrinsic variety of prairie plants. Mind you, this is not the ideal spot to stop as the road has very narrow shoulders, however, I have yet to have an angry landowner come out and tell me to get out of his or her farm drive while I'm poking around in the ditches with camera and ID guide in hand.

The golden blooms of the Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) seem to greet me every morning from July through August as the blossoms face the rising morning sun. Again on the way home, they bid me goodnight as the blooms now face the setting sun. This giant of a plant with yellow blossoms is a member of the Daisy family. The basal leaves of this plant tend to orient themselves in a general north-south direction, hence the name Compass plant. It has been said that early pioneers crossing the state could orient themselves by utilizing the plant's directional leaves. When in bloom, the Compass plant forms a gummy material along the upper third of the main stem. Native American Indians and pioneer children would delight in using this substance as chewing gum.

As the weather cools and the evenings grow shorter, the deep purples of Aster start to thrive. Even after a hearty frost, they seem to mock the cold weather and continue to bloom. One would think that as the cold weather settles in and the snow begins to fly, these prairie plants would have served their purpose of pollination, beauty, ground cover, water filtration and impede soil erosion. However, I choose this path as my winter route on account of the excellent natural snow fence the dormant plants provide.

This same project was done along Highway 218 a few years later, but unfortunately, repeated mowing from adjoining landowners has kept this area from Hwy 30 north to Vinton from reaching its full potential. Perhaps the steeper ditches along the V66 route, curtail the landowners from safely mowing that area, or perhaps it's a greater knowledge of the importance of not mowing everything we think we should. I see more pheasants, fox, and other wildlife along the V66 stretch on account of the restored prairie. The seed has been planted, and if allowed to grow, over time, the Hwy 218 stretch will provide a much lengthier drive for me as well.



*A busy day at Hannen Lake beach as swimmers enjoy cooling off in the hot summer sun.
Hannen Lake is located in Southern Benton County on the Iowa/Benton County Line.*

FUN IN BENTON COUNTY PARKS

M G G N I M M I W S C G S U O U N H O T
 A U N X R E E T N U L O V N H K Q K F G
 A E S I B V H D U Q C L C D M I R D N Z
 K X B H E V H Z D O W I D W A Q K I D G
 U P I S R O U K Q P R A A V G A D I C Q
 W L K N C O H G N I K A Y A K R F I N W
 N O I I C Q O S S M O R E S I N L G V G
 A R N B X O I M W L A P G B Z P N R E T
 I I G A C I K H I O G N I H C A C O E G
 R N R C R V U G Y N N K O S S C U G E G
 T G Q Z G N N M G G G S T A O W F Q D N
 S U V M T I O R N G V M I U Q A F S U I
 E H E I E N I I N P B B S R H H F V C H
 U F N O O L P I P J E P K P C J Q K A S
 Q G N R L M T P L A Y G R O U N D S T I
 E A T I A A G N I I K S E Y Y Q F T I F
 C S N C O T O V F W G Y N F L S H Y O L
 A G R B Z N E D Q L X W F W Q W Q Q N K
 P P P F J F D N Y G W B M J Q S Q Q X U
 X N F I L W U Y R F W S S K R J O K D W

ASTRONOMY
 BIKING
 BIRDING
 BOATING
 CABINS
 CAMPING
 CANOEING
 EDUCATION
 EQUESTRIAN
 EXPLORING
 FISHING
 GEOCACHING
 GRILLING
 HIKING
 HUNTING
 KAYAKING
 MUSHROOMING
 PLAYGROUNDS
 SKIING
 SMORES
 SNOWSHOEING
 SWIMMING
 VOLUNTEER

Five Cheap Family Fun Events *by Matthew Purdy, Director*

We all know it can be very difficult to get your family motivated when you are just plain tired from the work week. However keeping a good source of recreational family entertainment is vital for a healthy mind and body. So why not get out and enjoy the outdoors and appreciate some natural beauty with your family.

Enjoy the “Old Creamery Nature Trail” or “Cedar Valley Nature Trail”: The OCNT extends from Vinton, through Garrison and on to Dysart. The CVNT extends from Cedar Rapids to Cedar Falls. You can hike, bike, geo-cache (an electronic scavenger hunt with a GPS), go birding, forage, or in the winter months, cross-country ski. Both trails are currently going through major growth, and will have improved surfacing by October of 2015. There will be over \$180,000 distributed towards development of the OCNT through a Federal Recreational Trails Grant. This is being done to make more places for families to recreate with children of all ages.

Play the 18 hole Wildcat Bluff disc golf course: This course is consistently ranked number one in the state by disc golfers. This sport continues to grow and can be played with the entire family. There are currently over 4,500 courses in the United States and over 200 courses in Iowa. The Wildcat disc golfers offer a weekly club night to assist beginners with the sport. Offering an easy to follow layout, there are course maps located by the number one hole. Any Frisbee will do, but specialized discs can be purchased at local sporting retailers.

Enjoy an Iowa Lakeside beach: We may not be in Florida, and our beaches are not filled with shells, but they can be very relaxing. Take your family on a nice beach excursion. Bring the volleyball, fishing poles (not to be used in the beach area), picnic basket, add some cold drinks and sunscreen, and enjoy a day with the family. Try out: Hannen Lake Park (great fishing), Rodgers Park (new volleyball court is under construction), or state parks Pleasant Creek, George Wyth, and Palisades-Keppler. Trails, showers, and shelters are available at all of these locations.

Go camping: I realize that camping is not for everyone. However that does not exclude you from camping in Iowa. Iowa has parks with a plethora of cabins throughout the state that are rented at very reasonable rates. Some locations, like Honey Creek State Park, even have hotel rooms that afford campers to have all the luxuries of a modern campground with the air conditioning included. In Benton County alone we have hundreds of individual campsites and cabin options are growing as we are currently building cabins at multiple locations.

Go boating or tubing: In Iowa you can rent tubes, canoes and boats with rivers stretching across the state. We don't have to worry about alligators, sharks, or other nasty things. You just have to remember your sunscreen and lots of water. Make a float plan and ask someone who has been on the river recently to help with time frames. Local guides or retail shops are your best bet. However the best thing about Iowans is that they are sometimes willing to let you use their underutilized canoes and kayaks more often than not. Ask a friend, and see if they have a boat for you to take the family out on an excursion to remember. Always wear life jackets! And always have fun.

Carpe diem! Enjoy everything that Iowa has to offer and you will appreciate Iowa more.

Cleaning out the garage, basement, closet, kitchen: One way to part with those treasures is to donate certain items to the Nature Center for environmental education. We are always looking for wildlife ID books, a good working blender (for paper recycling), binoculars, insect nets, children's nature books, clay pots, and various other nature related items.

Conservation Board Members

Stephanie Black - Urbana
Jean Ohlen - Blainstown, Member
Mark Pingnot - Vinton, Chair
Denni Randall - Belle Plaine, Member
Randy Scheel - Garrison, Member

The Benton County Conservation Board meets the second Monday of every month at 5:30 at the Nature Center. Meetings are open to the public.

Conservation Staff

Matthew Purdy	Executive Director
Scott Bahmann	Deputy Director/Ranger
Karen Phelps	Interpretive Naturalist I
Aaron Askelson	Interpretive Naturalist II
Jon Geiger	Park Ranger
Logan Hahn	Park Ranger
Zach Parmater	Conservation Aide

Email anyone on staff by using their first initial combined with their last name
@bentoncountyparks.com
eg: mpurdy@bentoncountyparks.com

***Please follow us on Facebook at Benton County Conservation
or visit us on the web at www.bentoncountyparks.com***

***Benton County Conservation
5718 20th Ave., Dr., Vinton, IA 52349
319-472-4942***



Benton County Conservation Board
Interpretive Nature Center
5718 20th Avenue Drive
Vinton, Iowa 52349