

The Nature of Things

THE BENTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15 WINTER 2017-2018

All Who Wander... *By Karen Phelps, Director*

The fresh blanket of pristine white snow may make for hazardous driving conditions, cause frequent visits to the chiropractor, and force some people to enter a hibernation mode of sorts. I, on the other hand, am intrigued by the fresh tracks left behind by what appear to be wanderers - animals simply out and about.

Looking out the window of my office across the backyard and beyond to vast fields of snow, I observe multiple sets of tracks scattered about. They tug at me and beckon me into the outdoors for closer inspection.

Have you ever followed a set of tracks and wondered if the animal who left them had a destination in mind? I personally never gave it much thought until after several aimless wanderings of my own while carrying a GPS unit, I looked back on my path and was amazed at the design I created. Looking at the GPS path, I remember what caused me to turn one direction over another: a tree, something interesting on the ground, a bird call. Do animals do the same, or are they simply out and about on a romp? What causes an abrupt turn in a seemingly straight path?



Snow provides a great surface to observe tracks, such as these left by a bird hopping along on the snow.

I know from walking my dogs that could be just about anything. A fresh blanket of snow helps shed some light on their chaotic behavior. When my arm gets yanked out of its socket from a rush of excitement, all I need do is look down and see the rabbit tracks leading off in the direction that my dogs are now taking me. Of course, there is always that SQUIRREL!

Snow creates answers to mysteries humans often overlook. It provides the evidence that many animals are able to detect through their sense of smell, hearing or eyesight. That small, narrow ridge of snow where a mouse tunneled above the ground under the snow, only to have the ridge end where a pattern of wings and talons attacked it. The barred owl heard that little furry fellow trudging along under the snow. From high in the tree top where it calculated the distance, depth, and precise location of its prey, the owl took flight and grabbed its supper before the mouse could react.

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Contact us at:
319-472-4942 or
info@bentoncountyparks.com
to be added
to our mailing list.

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New Playground at Benton City-Fry *By Jon Geiger, Park Ranger*

We are excited to announce that a new feature has been added at one of our Benton County Parks this fall. Our team of staff members successfully installed a new playground at Benton City-Fry County Park that we know will be beneficial to park users. Funding for this project was made possible through the Benton County Foundation and Local Option Sales tax dollars. On July 25th, 2017 the Benton County Foundation awarded Benton County Conservation with grant money to be used on the purchase of new playground equipment.



Before picture of Benton City-Fry area where playground equipment was installed.

different roles within this department. This type of unity is what reminds us that we are all one department and working together toward our common goals. We are not able to do these type of projects often, but it is important for us to have projects like this to help bring us closer together. Once the assembly was complete, concrete was placed into the holes and all the required surfacing materials placed into the area. The project was completed and opened to the public on September 19th, 2017. We are very excited to see this new feature being used in the summer of 2018!

The addition of this playground equipment is one of many updates and changes we have made at Benton City-Fry over the past few years. In 2014, the Cedar river shoreline was armored to protect the bank line from erosion during high water events. In 2016, the pavilion was leveled up and refinished with a steel roof and ceiling. New electrical upgrades and a new waist high grill was also added to the pavilion to make this a great rental facility. It is available for rentals by contacting our main office or the Park Ranger at (319) 560-9802.

Benton County Conservation then placed an order for a new swing set and a freestanding slide. On August 18th, construction began with site preparation which consisted of equipment placement and flagging out the proper fall zones. Once these zones were established we began removing the top twelve inches of material, which would later be used to hold the proper surfacing materials. Holes were then dug in the exact areas that all support poles would need to be placed and secured. Shortly after Labor Day weekend, our team of staff members assembled the new playground equipment on the site. We were able to complete the assembly in one day, but that was not our greatest accomplishment. Our greatest accomplishment was to be able to work together as a team and all leave with a sense of pride for completing such a task together considering we all have



Playground equipment after installation.

Pileated Woodpecker *by Aaron Askelson, Naturalist*

As the snow starts to fly and the days grow shorter, one common sight at our bird feeders at the nature center is the Black-capped Chickadee. It was a brisk Thursday afternoon with the wind howling out of the Northwest when I decided that our little outdoor friends might need their feeders filled. I could hear the familiar call of the Chickadee “chicka dee dee” as I filled the feeders with some bird seed, some of which was graciously donated by our local Theisens. I filled the feeders with haste, since I had neglected to put on my stocking cap. Mourning doves flew overhead as I finished my task.

As I began to walk back into the Nature Center, I heard a very distinct call, much different than the normal chatter we usually hear at the bird feeders. The loud, almost monkey-like whinnying call of a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*). It swooped behind the Nature Center and landed in one of the large maple trees. It immediately began to peck at the bark in search of food. I grabbed my phone and tried to stay as still as possible. I don't think it had seen me yet. As I brought my phone up to try to get a picture of this beautiful bird, it ceased to peck and took flight to a silver maple further away. I was eager to share this sighting with my co-workers. I was trying to text Caitlin when I saw that she had come down to the basement. I motioned for her to come outside.



Illustration by Aaron Askelson

We both watched as the bird had begun pecking on the silver maple tree, again looking for what we assumed were insects or larvae just under the bark of the tree. I used the word “peck” because that is what woodpeckers do, but the Pileated Woodpecker seems to do more than just “peck”, they destroy. The first time I encountered evidence of a Pileated Woodpecker I was hiking at Palisades State Park many years ago. I was hiking on one of the bluff trails overlooking the Cedar River. I could hear some knocking on a tree that sounded really loud and close. I stopped to catch my breath and see if I could locate the direction of the sound. I stood quietly for a moment attempting to discern the culprit of the noise. I waited and waited but heard no more of the loud pecking. Stumped by this, I decided to travel on. After a bit more hiking I decided that I should turn around and head back to the car. On my way back, I heard the very distinctive pecking again. Now I had a general area to look for it in. I slowed my pace in hopes of not disturbing the bird. I was unsuccessful in seeing the bird but I did find plenty of evidence of its handy work. It was probably only 40 feet off the trail. If you have ever come upon a spot where a Pileated has been working for a while you will be highly impressed by the sheer magnitude of wood chips they leave behind. The pile of wood chips I encountered that day was almost a foot tall and three feet in diameter at the base of a dying tree.

Eagle Scout Project at Rodgers Park *By Evan Sampson*

My name is Evan Sampson. I'm a member of Boy Scout Troop 47 in Vinton, and currently the rank of Life Scout. In February, I will finally attain Eagle Scout, the highest rank in Scouting, which has been my journey since February 2011.



In order to earn Eagle, Scouts must organize, lead, and complete a service project that benefits a nonprofit organization in their community. I chose Benton County Conservation to be my project benefactor, and the project I settled on was tree-planting.

A section of trees in Rodgers Park was obliterated following the devastating windstorm in 2011. Until my project, it was completely bare and not particularly prepossessing from below. Granted, it's still not spectacular, but that's because the trees were just planted!

So, once I settled on this project, the conservation board introduced me to 140 young trees of various species (chestnut, white pine, red oak, coffee, fruit, etc.) that we planned on planting throughout late October and mid-November.

Our first day of work was October 25th, 2017 when Mr. Bahmann and I (along with a little help) placed white marker flags in every spot we wanted to plant, each flag about 20 feet apart. Our next day was on November 5th, but between these two dates, qualified conservation members used an auger to dig every hole next to the marker flags.

The 5th was our main work day: I enlisted the help of multiple Boy Scouts and conservationists to come out at nine o'clock in the morning and assist in the planting of 140 eight to nine-foot tall trees. We worked for four hours that morning, planted everything, spread a circle of mulch around every single tree, and watered them as well with about five gallons. It certainly went by much faster than I had anticipated, which is a good thing! Of course, it may have gone by even more quickly if the full 100-gallon water tank hadn't slipped from the bed of the truck.

Then, our final work day was the 16th of November. On this day, I only needed four other people (friends and adults) to give all 140 trees another drink of water. It also went by quite fast, at about two hours from ten to noon. This was our last day of work.

The purpose of this project was not to just replace what had been lost for aesthetic or sentimental reasons, but instead had quite a lot to do with soil retention and timber stand improvement. Not to mention that it will provide nutrition and homes for local wildlife! I'm pleased to have worked with Mr. Bahmann on this project, and I'm sure it will grow to become something that has a very positive long-term effect on the animals and visitors of Rodgers Park.



Snowy Owl Encounter *By Scott Bahmann, Rodgers Park Ranger*

On a cold and windy November day, while driving back from winterizing Hannen Lake, one of our parks, I noticed a strange looking owl sitting on top of an electrical pole. I drove past, not thinking much of it, but curiosity got the best of me. I backed up to take a second look. The owl I had seen was what I had thought it was, a Snowy Owl. Snowy owls are very rare to see in the state but from time to time will pass through. I had to capture the moment, so I took a few pictures. After showing and telling others of this find we went back later that day to see if he or she was still around, with no such luck: the owl was gone.

The snowy owl is an occasional winter visitor to Iowa. Their populations fluctuate depending on the populations of their main food source, lemmings. When there is a high population of lemmings in the summer, the owls are able to lay more eggs and raise more babies to adulthood. When this happens, there are more birds searching for hunting areas in the winter, so more owls migrate farther south. The owls that migrate to Iowa in the winter are not starving as some would believe, but typically well-fed and healthy. This is known as an “irruption” year, when there is an increase in an animal’s population outside of its normal range.

These owls are large ground nesting birds that are native to the Arctic regions. These birds focus on small rodents, but are opportunistic eaters, so they are known to take other things. Unlike most other owls, these raptors are diurnal, which means they hunt during the day time. Another unique characteristic about these owls is their aggressive ability to defend their nest. Both males and females will dive bomb and distract whomever disturbs them. Like other birds of prey the females will be much larger than the males.

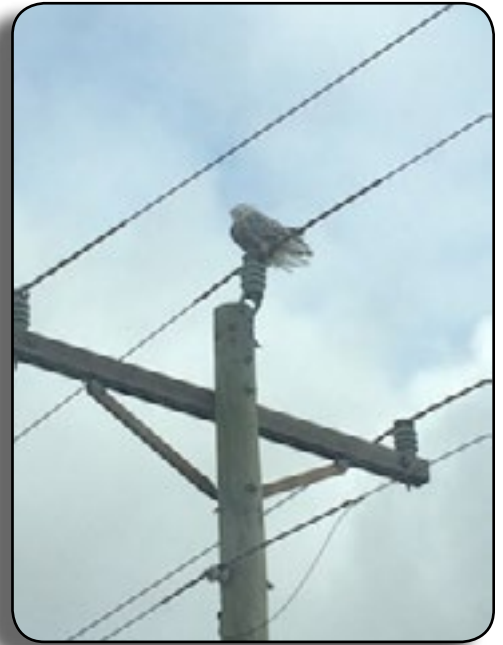


Photo by Scott Bahmann.



Photo by Karen Phelps.

Snowy Owls at a Glance

- *North American range is in the Arctic and subarctic regions, although they will migrate south during the winter.
- *Prefer treeless areas and wide open spaces.
- *Eat small mammals, mostly lemmings, but will also eat ptarmigans and waterfowl.
- *Can lay 3-11 eggs in a single clutch -- they lay more eggs when there are good feeding years.
- *Adult males can be nearly pure white, while juveniles and females have some dark barring.
- *Have bright golden eyes.

1958-2011 by Coralee Bodeker

Several years ago, two Boxelder (*Acer negundo*) trees stood sentry above my chicken coop. In 2008, when my family took up permanent residence on this rural parcel, these two trees were full of woodpeckers and nuthatches swooping through the branches, climbing along the trunk. Robins often built nests in the crooks and squirrels chattered away from the swaying tops. While alive I didn't pay much attention to these two trees. It is only now, six years after the sentries fell from their posts in the July sky, that I ponder their existence.

* * *



My chicken coop boxelder trees, along with many other trees in the yard, were victims of the July 2011 Midwest Derecho [a widespread, long-lived, straight-lined wind storm] that pummeled through the Vinton area in the wee hours of July 11, 2011. One of these two boxelders landed on the roof of my chicken coop and caused, miraculously, little damage, while the other crashed onto the driveway. Following the storm's exit, their limbs and twigs were quickly picked up or sawed apart, likely fuel for our winter woodstove. Their trunks were then sawed flush to the ground and left, semi-forgotten, to decompose. Today, as I pause over the space where these trees once stood, one of the shaved stumps has rotted, a large hole formed in its center and filled with woodchips. The second stump, apparently, has plans to stick around longer than its counterpart, showing only minimal signs of decay on the very edge of its bark. This tree stump is perfectly smooth and its rings easily counted. A tree's rings are much like an autobiography—clues left of a life long after death. Earlier today I counted this second boxelder's rings and found the tree to be 53-years-old at its passing. Most boxelders don't make it to 100 years as it is a fairly short-lived, fast-growing species. I surmise the tree was nearing the end of its natural lifespan anyway when it was abruptly flattened in 2011.

Counting a tree's rings is easy compared to reading the rings; "reading" a tree's rings requires a bit more research and often a lot of imagination. My tree's newest rings (next to the bark) are thin (relative to its base). Working my way from the outside-in, it thus isn't long before I leave the rings my tree produced during my family's years of occupancy in its shade. During this relatively short period, a Baltimore Oriole's nest swung from the highest branches and the tree watched multiple groups of chicks fledge.

The rings spanning 2008 to 1998 mark the time when the original owners of our home resided here. The tree stood near the build site and probably listened as the first layers of cement were poured. It is likely that many trees were cleared when our house went up, but not this survivor, it continued to grow and lay thin, wavy rings.



Moving farther back into the 1990s and '80s, my tree's rings grow thicker and more uniform. In these days the tree stood on the edge of a worn-out Iowa farm. Abandoned, quite possibly, due to the poor quality of the soil and tendency of the land to flood. The boxelder witnessed an older neighbor of ours set fire to the original, dilapidated barn that stood where our house stands now. In the woods behind where the barn stood, exhaust caps from disused tractors slowly rust to this day.

From the '70s back through the '60s, the history of our land becomes unclear, as do the rings on my tree. They are thick and even (indicating decent growth conditions), but it is hard to tell where one ring begins and another ends, a sign of wear on my tree. I did my best to imagine what the farm looked like during this period. It is no doubt my tree grew well in its days on the working farm, laying down new rings and sprouting new green branches every year. I know from countless layers of bedrock found underneath our current garden that when the farm was active the area to the south of our house was a large cattle lot. When the tree was younger, it probably swayed over the cows as they milled to and fro, fattening up on corn grown in nearby fields.

In the late '50s, my tree was a sapling, perhaps watched with care by the landowners or disdained by its sudden, unwanted appearance. Then, as my finger crosses over the centermost ring I read the birth of my boxelder tree—1958, the year when my tree first emerged from the soil and sprouted tiny leaves.

* * *

A tree can stand for years playing sentry while countless people hurry by on the path of life, paying no mind to why and what a tree is until, perhaps, it isn't anymore. The derecho that silenced my tree's growth also left behind hundreds of damaged branches in the remaining boxelders along the driveway. These decaying limbs in turn have attracted many more woodpeckers to our land than resided here prior to the storm. On the stump that once was a shade tree for my chicken coop now flourishes moss and also the fairly frequent Downy Woodpecker, zooming in quite unnoticed to feed on ants.

It's Easy Being Green *By Caitlin Savage, Naturalist*

My role as a naturalist for county conservation involves teaching children about the variety of natural resources that we have available in Iowa, and about outdoor recreation opportunities that enable them to further enjoy these resources. Naturalists strive to ignite children's excitement for the outdoors, which will hopefully lead to their desire to protect natural resources not only for themselves, but for future generations.

Because of this, it is important for me to consider the bigger picture of sustainability as well. County conservation strives to manage the land we have in a way that is beneficial for wildlife and the people who utilize it for hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing, and other forms of outdoor recreation. However, it is important for people to work on improving our use of natural resources in general.

There are many simple ways to use fewer natural resources in our daily lives. Here are some small steps that you can take to be more sustainable. If everyone chose a few of these steps to take, we could make a big difference in our natural resource use.

Use fewer disposable items.

1. *Use reusable bags.* Keep a few in your car. Make sure to put them somewhere easily visible so you don't forget them outside when you go to shop.
2. *Use a reusable coffee cup/tumbler.* This is easily done at home, and most coffee shops will fill a reusable mug. Some will even give you a discount.
3. *Fill your own water bottle.* You will also save money by not purchasing bottled water.

By the Numbers

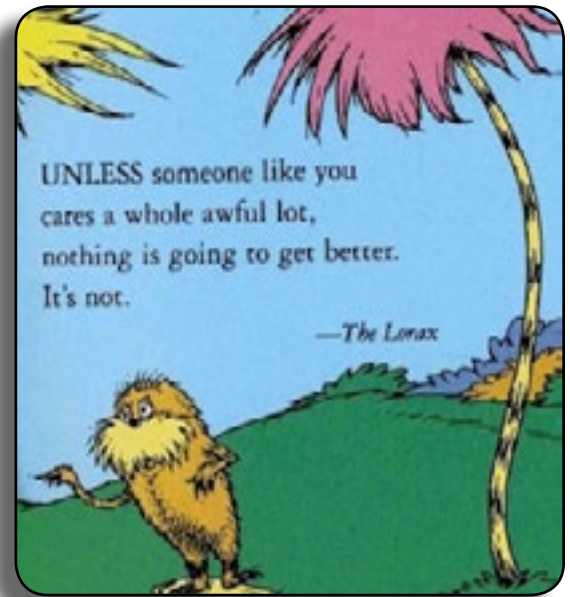
100 billion: Number of plastic bags used in the U.S. every year. It takes **12 million** barrels of oil to make them.

500: Number of years it takes a plastic bag to break down in a landfill. Only **1%** of plastic bags are recycled.

25 billion: Number of disposable cups thrown away in the U.S. each year. It takes **9.4 million** trees to make them.

60 million: Number of plastic water bottles thrown away each day.

Sources: www.biologicaldiversity.org, <https://blog.epa.gov>, www.container-recycling.org



Save on energy.

1. *Use cold water when washing clothes.* When you wash your clothes in hot water, 90% of the energy goes into just heating the water.
2. *Turn off electronic devices when not using.* Most electronic devices use some energy even when they are turned off. Save energy (and money!) by unplugging them when not in use.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This concept of the “3 R’s” has been around since the 1970s, but it applies just as much today.

Reduce the amount of trash and food waste you produce.

Reuse as many items as you can.

Recycle everything you are able to.



Pileated Woodpecker *Continued from page 3*

The Pileated Woodpecker is commonly found in established woodlands. They are often heard but are rarely seen due to their reclusive nature. Their flight pattern and large size make them easily identifiable during flight. They are almost as big as a crow but have a black body with white stripes that run down its neck and a large red crest atop their head. Males have an additional red stripe on their cheeks. In flight the bird reveals white underwings. Their flight pattern undulates like waves in the ocean. What I had heard that day at the Palisades was probably not the woodpecker foraging for food but a behavior called drumming that they use as a type of communication to other Pileated Woodpeckers in the area. The holes they create are also very distinctive and are almost rectangular in shape. These allow them access to the insects within. The holes also provide excellent habitat after the bird is done using them. Frequently bats, owls, and other birds will use these nesting cavities for their future homes.

So, when you are out and about and hear some loud thumping out in the woods, it is probably not a Bigfoot. It is more than likely a Pileated Woodpecker talking to its neighbors and staking its territorial claim to an area of the woods. Our river parks seem to get the most sightings of these big beautiful birds, so check out Hoefle-Dulin, Minne Estema, Benton City-Fry, Winegars Lake, and Wildcat Bluff for some birding excitement.

Alliant Energy Operation ReLeaf

Thursday, April 26th, 4:30-6:00pm
Operation ReLeaf tree distribution at Benton County Nature Center
Order forms available beginning the week of March 1st

Alliant Energy's Operation ReLeaf is returning to Benton County Conservation. This program allows Alliant Energy residential customers to purchase three- to eight-foot tall landscaping trees for \$25.00 each. There is a limit of two trees per household, per planting season.

Operation ReLeaf participants must be Alliant Energy residential customers in Iowa and willing to pick-up their tree(s) on April 26th. Order forms can be obtained from Benton County Conservation (<http://www.bentoncountyiowa.org/departments/community-services/county-conservation/>) or at www.alliantenergy.com/CommunityAndStewardship/OutreachandEnvironment/OperationReLeaf.

This program is funded by Alliant Energy and administered by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, partnering with local conservation boards. Since 2001, over 60,000 trees have been planted in Iowa thanks to Operation ReLeaf events.

Thank You!!

We'd like to extend a special thank you to our local Theisen's for donating bird food for our feathered visitors (and squirrels). These hungry critters eat way more than our budget can afford, so this donation was much appreciated. If you'd like to donate to our Feeder Fund, please contact us at 319-472-4942 or info@bentoncountyparks.com

Meet the Hannen Park Ranger *by Collin Strickland, Hannen Park Ranger*

Hello! I'm Collin Strickland, the new Park Ranger at Hannen Park. I grew up on a small farm in Stanton, IA where I showed hogs and cattle in 4-H, and hunted deer. In high school, I was involved with almost every school sponsored event and was also a cadet on the Stanton Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department.

I attended Central College in Pella, IA and recently graduated in May of 2017 with Bachelor's degrees in Environmental Studies and Biology, with a minor in Chemistry. While attending Central, I was a part of numerous environmental and sustainability projects and groups. I helped create a residential sub-metering project to track student energy usage. I also did food related research for Central and worked in the college garden. I was a member of the Central College A Cappella Choir for 4 years and a member of the Central College Chamber Singers for 2.5 years. I studied abroad during the Spring semester of 2015 in London, England. While in London, I had an internship at the WWT London Wetland Centre where I helped take care of endangered waterfowl from across the world. I also helped replace a deck that overlooked two small ponds for public walking areas. Through one of my biology classes, I was able to take a field trip to Costa Rica where I explored three types of rainforests with classmates. I also sang with the choirs in Austria and Germany after graduation.



I've had two seasonal opportunities within the county conservation system. I've worked one season with Montgomery County Conservation and Marion County Conservation. At Montgomery County Conservation, I mainly groomed our parks and dealt with other small tasks as they came up. While at Marion County Conservation I groomed the parks but also worked on bigger projects and I was able to assist with park ranger duties. I've gained quite a bit of experience with each of these organizations and I feel truly grateful to stay in the field after college.

Most of my hobbies involve being outdoors. Back in southwest Iowa, I enjoy taking care of our small herd of cattle and working on the farm. I enjoy shooting my bow, competing in 3D shoots, hunting, and I'm hoping to do more fishing. I just recently started bow hunting and this year I was able to shoot my first deer with my bow.

I am extremely excited to be a part of Benton County Conservation Board and look forward to getting to know campers at Hannen Park. I've enjoyed my short stint in the conservation system and I truly feel like I can make the greatest impact in this field. Even though I started in December, I have already started to formulate projects for Hannen Park and hope to utilize my previous experiences to help me accomplish my goals as a Park Ranger. I look forward to serving Benton County Conservation. Happy camping!

All Who Wander, *Continued from page 1*

Tracks leading across the frozen landscape that end at an open hole in the ice where the beaver disappeared, tell me it was a routine adventure. No other tracks parallel the beaver tracks, so unless he felt danger from the skies, it appears he was doing his normal nocturnal routine. The fresh drag marks of small branches seem to confirm my hunch.



The scampering, zigzag, bounding tracks of a small animal leading up to a tree branch where a pile of walnut shells lay beneath it, announce the routine dinner table of a squirrel. Glancing underneath a nearby spruce, I see where another small mammal departed with large bounding leaps as it escaped its soon to be captor. With hind feet stretching out beyond its front feet, the rabbit could not outrun the fox as the evidence showed when I came upon a pile of fur, bloody snow, and one set of fox tracks leading away from the site of demise.

A fresh blanket of snow is like reading the final pages of a good mystery. The clues were there all along, but until the snow fell, I couldn't put all the pieces together. I know these animals exist and go about their daily routine, but the snow reveals their secret activity. One such mystery had me baffled for quite some time.

It was early Spring, a succession of warm days had occurred and I was out enjoying the muddy fields with my dogs. I came upon some shrubs that had been nibbled off at about waist high. Upon closer inspection I noted that a rabbit had nibbled them off, as rabbits nibble at a harsh 45-degree angle with a clean cross-cut. Deer also nibble at a 45-degree angle, but lacking the double incisors of the rabbit, their cross-cut appears as if smashed with a hammer, giving it a splinter effect. Now I'm familiar with Monty Python's Killer Rabbit, and thought at first this was evidence of this ferocious beast. This evidence I was looking at made me realize this was one massive rabbit. I pondered if perhaps I was getting my rabbit/deer facts confused.

After much contemplation, head scratching, and clueless moments, I gave up and walked away. Several moments later, sun bearing down on me, causing me to unzip my coat, it hit me. The winter had been fierce. Snow drifts had piled high in the fields, timbers, and ditches. My walk took me to a place where these drifts had succumbed to the intense heat of the sun, leaving only gnawed branches waist high.

This was no killer rabbit. It was simply a lightweight, cottontail rabbit, that was able to hop up the snowdrift and sit comfortably as it nibbled the branches of this tall shrub. The tracks and snow were gone. Sometimes, like that good mystery, you have to rewind and remember what occurred in the early pages of the novel, or in this case, the harsh winter we'd experienced.

Indeed, winter in Iowa can be harsh. But the mysteries unfolded after a fresh snowfall create a magical moment for all to discover and enjoy.

Protecting Iowa's Water and Land

On February 12th, four Benton County Conservation staff members and one Board Member drove to Des Moines to support IWILL (Iowa's Water and Land Legacy) at the Capitol. We joined over 130 other conservation board staff, board members, alumni, and other stakeholders.

In 2010, 62% of Iowa voters approved a constitutional amendment that established the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. However, in the over seven years since this trust fund was created, there has been no funding of the trust. IWILL brings Iowans together to support permanent and reliable funding that will be used to improve water quality, protect our productive agricultural soil, improve habitat for wildlife, and increase outdoor recreation opportunities.

We are in support of a permanent and sustainable method of funding the trust, which will benefit Iowa's natural resource protection and enhancement. With a small increase in Iowa's sales tax, the trust will be funded to preserve Iowa for our own and future generations. The trust fund would provide financial resources to support clean water, productive agricultural soil, and outdoor recreation. Nearly 2/3 of the revenue generated by the fund would be dedicated to improve Iowa's water quality. There will also be funding available to protect and enhance parks and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Please check out www.iowaswaterandlandlegacy.org for more information. You can also visit www.iowaswaterandlandlegacy.org/wise-solution/ for information on the bill that was introduced as a way to fund the trust. Visit these sources for more information and for help with how to contact your legislators in support of this bill.



Over 130 stakeholders packed the rotunda on February 12th in support of IWILL.



Staff members Karen Phelps, Jon Geiger, Scott Bahmann (behind Jon), and Caitlin Savage, and Board Member Shelby Williams (took photo) had the chance to meet with Representative Dawn Pettengill.

Thank You!!

Our deep appreciation to everyone who drops off cans/bottles for our Nickles for Nature fund. If you have donations for us, please contact us at 319-472-4942 or info@bentoncountyparks.com

Conservation Board Members

Daniel Gibbins: Urbana, Vice Chair
Dan Hill: Vinton, Member, Chair
Denni Randall: Belle Plaine, Member
Randy Scheel: Garrison, Member
Shelby Williams: Mt. Auburn, 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

Karen Phelps	Executive Director
Scott Bahmann	Rodgers Park Ranger
Aaron Askelson	Interpretive Naturalist
Caitlin Savage	Interpretive Naturalist
Jon Geiger	River Parks Ranger
Collin Strickland	Hannen Park Ranger
Zach Parmater	Conservation Tech/Ranger

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

***Please follow us on Facebook at Benton County Conservation
Visit us on the web at www.bentoncountyiowa.org or www.mycountyparks.com
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