

CONSERVATION NEWS

A Newsletter of the Iowa County Conservation Board

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Cub Scout Pack 225 from Williamsburg and ICCB employees pose in front of a brush pile created during a volunteer work day at Lake Iowa Park

Cub Scouts Volunteer at Lake Iowa Park

By Sean Curry, Naturalist

On November 3, 2012 Cub Scout Troop 225 based out of Williamsburg joined ICCB employees Sean Curry and Ian Perkins to help with natural resource management. The group completed 75 volunteer hours and took part in invasive species removal and prairie restoration activities.

The twenty six volunteers were mostly members of the troop and their parents. They stacked brush which had previously been cleared. Prairie remnants and a hiking trail had been grown over by invasive brush at the site.

“It’s a worthy cause,” according to Pack Committee Chair, Shane Phillips. “Our pack spends a lot of time at this park... We’re giving back.”

Besides completing the volunteer work, the group also learned about invasive species management, viewed prescribed fire sites, and enjoyed a snack.

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Space Invaders!

By Ian Perkins, Invasive Species Removal Specialist

Throughout Iowa County there is a persistent and encroaching threat to our natural habitats. Native plants and animals, adapted to living in Iowa, are being out competed and replaced by these invaders. These invasive species have been called alien, exotic, non-indigenous and non-native. They cause environmental, economic and even physical harm. Some were introduced on accident perhaps by a ship's ballast water or in the wood of a shipping crate. Others were intentionally introduced to control soil erosion, provide wildlife cover or simply because they looked pretty in gardens or landscaping. Since being introduced they have taken off and are taking over. Wetland, prairie, even forest habitats are not safe from these biological intruders. The consequences can be dire. Once invasive species take over an area, biodiversity (the living organisms in an environment) plummets. Invasive species can decrease forest regeneration, water quality, and even property values. Here are a few invasive plants to be on the look out for. Additional information on these and other invasive species can be obtained by contacting the ICCB, Iowa DNR, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Identification:

- Bushy shrub, can grow 20'.
- Berries: pink/red berries. One shrub can produce up to 6 lbs of fruit.
- Flowers:
- Leaves: 1" wide, 1-3" long, ovalshaped, smooth edge, silver-white underside.

Threat:

- A native to China and Japan, it does well in poor soil conditions.
- Invades open and semi-open habitats.
- Alters nitrogen cycle in plant communities.
- Abundant producer of fruit. Easily spread by animals.

Control:

- Manual: Seedlings may be pulled when soil is moist, but remove entire root system. Will resprout vigorously if mowing, cutting or burning is not followed up with herbicide.
- Chemical: Cut stumps may be treated with an active ingredient glyphosate or triclopyr herbicide. Foliar spraying is also effective on smaller plants.



Clockwise from top left: Autumn olive berries, leaves, and the whole plant.

Lake Iowa Deer Management Hunt

By Mike Bode, Park Ranger and Acting Director

Harvest Numbers for the Lake Iowa Deer Management Hunt

Year	Total Deer	Does	Button Bucks	# Harvested by Bow	Times Hunted
2008-'09	82	64	18	47	279
2009-'10	37	30	7	21	213
2010-'11	36	30	6	17	183
2011-'12	18	16	2	4	184



A large majority of areas in the state have seen deer numbers decline over the past couple years, and numbers from our special zone hunt at Lake Iowa Park, show the same trend. Of course, there are many factors that have to be considered when you're looking at local deer herd numbers. A main factor to consider is that Lake Iowa Park had been a safe haven for deer for well over 30 years. Typically, when a preserve like ours is opened to hunting, results aren't noticeable until at least three continuous years of harvesting have occurred.

This summer it had become apparent that the deer population in and around Lake Iowa Park had been reduced. Sightings of deer had declined and ones that were seen weren't so "tame" like in the past when they would hang out undisturbed just a few yards from vehicles and people.

As you can tell from the trends in the data above, lower deer numbers have ultimately led to less harvest opportunities. As we get closer to our objectives in managing our deer herd, it is not the time to abandon the deer hunt.

Information from similar hunts throughout the state, show that the variations in harvest opportunities (which ultimately effect harvest) are one of the best ways to keep the herd numbers in balance.

Dealing with herd density issues and how to manage other aspects of our zone hunt, we're glad we have similar hunts to compare to. This has kept us from making any knee-jerk reactions like eliminating our hunt as numbers approach a more sustainable level. When fall finally rolled around the crops came out of the fields, then shotgun season began, and ostensibly every deer in the township has headed to Lake Iowa.

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Lake Iowa Park?**

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and programs, campground
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A New Face this Fall & Winter Season

By Sean Curry, Naturalist

Since early October, you may have noticed large and expanding piles of honeysuckle and autumn olive on Iowa County Conservation Board property. Perhaps you have taken note of areas once covered with these invaders, becoming open again. If you have driven through Lake Iowa Park, you undoubtedly have seen the blackened aftermath of prescribed burns. This work is being accomplished with the help of the ICCB's newest fall/winter seasonal staff member Ian Perkins. During his time with us, Ian is focusing his time and efforts primarily on invasive species treatment and habitat restoration. So, what else do we know about this newest addition to ICCB?

A transplant originally from northwestern Wisconsin, Ian now resides in Ladora. Ian joins the ICCB with several years of experience in natural resources fieldwork. Prior to joining us in Iowa County, Ian worked this past year for the National Park Service at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. He was a crew leader for one of the park's invasive tree crews. One important aspect of that job was removal of nonnative and introduced invasive Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*) from dune habitat along Lake Michigan. These rare freshwater sand dunes are home to a number of rare plants and animals, including the federally threatened pitcher's thistle (*Cirsium pitcheri*) and the federally endangered piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*). In 2008 and 2010, Ian lived in Bemidji, Minnesota while he completed two full terms with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota. This AmeriCorps program involved a variety of natural resource management projects including, invasive species removal, prairie restoration, wildland firefighting and disaster response. In August to September of 2008 Ian was part of a group of corps members who volunteered to assist with flood damage in Cedar Rapids, IA. In 2009 Ian lived overseas in New Zealand and was employed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). While with DOC, he worked in the Westland Tai Poutini National Park, which includes the tallest point of the Southern Alps (Aoraki/Mt Cook), numerous

glaciers and rainforests. In his opinion, the most notable (and enjoyable) work for DOC was with the rowi/Okarito brown kiwi (*Apteryx rowi*) and large alpine parrot, kea (*Nestor notabilis*). Both species of birds are threatened by invasive nonnative species. In this case the introduced culprits are the Australian brush tailed possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), stoat (*Mustella erminea*) and rats (*Rattus spp.*). These introduced mammals raid nests, destroying eggs killing young and adult native New Zealand birds. Ian worked at radio collaring rowi and kea, tracking individuals, and locating nests. In the case of the rowi, once nests were located eggs were removed so that chicks could live on predator free islands until they were large enough to fend off invasive predators. Ian also worked two seasons in northern Wisconsin on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, for the US Forest Service. There he conducted rare plant surveys and was involved in invasive plant removal (a bit of theme developing) in the forest's Eagle River-Florence district. In 2007, Ian graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point with a bachelor's degree in biology and a minor in conservation biology.

Ian's interest in conservation work is based on a variety of experiences. They include camping trips with his family and scouts as a young kid, access to and quality of public lands throughout the Great Lakes region, and opportunities to travel within and outside of the US. However, the tipping point for him was in a high school ecology class. There he was introduced to Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, a book which continues today to have a profound impact on guiding our relationships to the resources around us.

Outside of work Ian's interests generally are outside. He enjoys hunting, hiking, snowshoeing, collecting wild edibles (especially mushrooms and especially morels), and traveling (although you might have been able to guess that). Ian is also a fan of anything "do it yourself" and at the top of that list is homebrewing.

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Continued from Space

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Identification:

- • 1st year plant:
 - • Leaves: dark green (year round), heart shaped with wavy edges, 1-6” tall.
- • 2nd year plant:
 - • 1-48” tall stems.
 - • Leaves: alternate, rounded at base heart shaped, triangular and toothed towards top of stem.
 - • Flowers: white, small and clustered at top of stalk.
 - • Fruit: resemble slender bean pods, 1-2” long.
- • Smells like garlic when crushed.

Control:

- • Mechanical: Pull at base to remove root. Flowering plants should be bagged to prevent seed dispersal. Burning in fall for consecutive years will diminish garlic mustard. If doing a spring burn, time the burn early to avoid damaging native plants.
- • Chemical: Foliar spray in early spring with a 1-2% triclopyr or glyphosate herbicide. Follow up on new germinations throughout the year.



Above: the heart shaped leaves of a 1st year plant.



Below: 2nd year plant with flowers.

Continued from New Face

Though he did work at a microbrewery in Wisconsin, he prefers being an amateur and making beer at home. Also, Ian mentions that he has recently begun reading *The Emerald Horizon: The History of Nature in Iowa*, by Cornelia F. Mutel, and would welcome additional natural history reading suggestions.

Although relatively new to our state and county, Ian has been hard at work applying his experience and abilities to curbing the threat of invasive species on ICCB property. He is excited and encouraged to have already had the opportunity to meet a number of great people and volunteers who share his interest in preserving the natural legacy of this area. He looks forward to meeting and working with many of you during his time with us.

Indiangrass Hills Partnership

By Mike Bode, Park Ranger and Acting Director

We'd like to shed light on a recent partnership that continues to grow with the employees, founders, and curators of the nationally known Indiangrass Hills (IgH) conservation area. Earlier this fall we had an invitation to help assist on a prescribed prairie burn at IgH. It was apparent that our assistance was greatly appreciated, and their crew wanted to extend us an opportunity to utilize their skills and resources in the future as well. As you could imagine, it didn't take us long to think of projects that would make the most impact, and that we might not otherwise be able to tackle with our limited staff. Their assistance was utilized for prescribed burning, selective brush cutting and stump treating, and even harvesting remnant native prairie seed. We have since been back to assist them with a second burn, where our assistance meant that they were able to complete the entire unit when conditions were optimal.

I can only imagine what this new found partnership will have in store for the future. Having professionals dealing with the same day to day land management issues, gives us an immeasurable amount of collective knowledge. This ultimately enables us to more effectively and efficiently keep things moving forward.

FRIENDS OF IOWA COUNTY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Each year the Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation send out a fundraising letter to help raise money and support for Iowa County Conservation and the Lake Iowa Nature Center. Below is their letter for this year. If you haven't already given, please consider giving the gift of conservation this holiday season.

To: Lake Iowa Nature Center Supporters
From: Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation
Subject: 2012 Annual Fund Raising Drive

Hello to all of you who have been part of the completion of the Lake Iowa Nature Center and those of you who may not have had an opportunity to get acquainted with the happenings at Lake Iowa. Our county has much to be proud of in the facility built at Lake Iowa. It is here for all residents of the county and beyond. Since the building was completed, we now have a gorgeous butterfly garden surrounding the building that is certified as a Monarch Waystation. The bird observation blind feeds many of our feathered friends and allows us to view many species of birds. New trails are here for us to hike and view many areas of the park. And our newest addition is the Nature Explore Playscape, an outdoor classroom, for children of all ages to engage in free play as they explore the natural world. Our committee sponsored the Trees for 5th Graders this year, a program that distributed a tree to all 5th graders in Iowa County.

We couldn't have done all these projects without you, the residents, businesses, and supporters of the Iowa County Lake and Nature Center. We have more exciting plans for the Nature Center but they of course cost money. We want to complete the Nature Explore Playscape with outdoor musical instruments. We would love to help with financing exhibits inside the Nature Center and continuing to help cover the costs of maintaining the nature center.

We are indebted to those of you who have given so generously in the past. We need your continued support. Please consider a pledge/donation to our efforts. Enclosed is a pledge/donation form along with an envelope for returning your donation.

We will be having our 3rd annual dinner/auction in April 2013 and would love to see you there. Watch the papers for details.

Thanks to all who have helped over the years developing this magnificent facility. For those of you who aren't familiar with the lake and facilities, do stop by to see what a gem Iowa County has.

Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation
Lake Iowa Nature Center
2550 G Ave
Ladora, IA 52251

If you have questions, contact Bill Shafer, Treasurer at 319-668-2565

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT: ENGLISH RIVER WILDLIFE AREA

Information Compiled by Mike Bode, Park Ranger and Acting Director

While going through a rundown of ICCB managed areas and what they have to offer, we realized that the most recent land acquisition that we were involved in was not properly publicized on our end. I am talking about the Nolan Addition to the English River Wildlife Area. Although locals refer to the area as Fuller / Green Valley, the Fuller Addition makes up only a part of the wildlife complex that is the English River Wildlife Area. Never been to this wildlife area before? Simply head for the spot where Iowa, Keokuk, and Washington Counties meet.

From hunting waterfowl, deer, or any upland game to having a large wild area for exploration no matter what the season, this area proves to be an asset to the public in many ways. Check out the unofficial news release that follows:

The Nolan Addition to the English River Wildlife Area, has become an additional 167 acres of fully developed wildlife habitat and public hunting ground for all to enjoy.

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation took the lead role in negotiating and protecting this critical property while funding was secured to complete the bargain purchase utilizing money from a host of key sources including the following:

- Wildlife Habitat Stamp Fund Grant: This stamp that all hunters and trappers in Iowa are required to purchase will supply \$66,792. This funding came through a very competitive grant process, scoring second out of all projects- projects that requested over \$2 million dollars while \$500k were available.
- Pheasants Forever: Always a key funding source for the protection of critical acreage, several chapters of Pheasants Forever joined forces on this one as follows:
 - ◊ Washington County \$5,500
 - ◊ Iowa County \$5,200
 - ◊ Keokuk County \$7,500 (Chapter Folded)It could not have happened with out them, join your chapter!
- Iowa, Keokuk, & Washington County Conservation Boards each contributed funds to make their county total \$15,037, (money generated from a crop lease associated with the English River Wildlife Area- thus, there were no

property tax dollars involved.

These three county conservation boards will jointly manage this property, just like they are with the 165 acres immediately north of it.

The property will be fully developed through the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program while under ownership of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (since government agencies are ineligible). This development will include excavating an entire series of pot holes for waterfowl, restoring the prairie, and a host of other habitat improvements.

The Nolan Addition to the English River Wildlife Area brings the wildlife habitat and public hunting area acreage total up there to over 780 acres! This property features the junction of the North and South Forks of the English River as well as Iowa, Keokuk, and Washington Counties. A crop lease of the acres appropriate for such activity provides revenues for maintaining it. The balance has been developed and is managed as a combination of timber, grassland, and wetlands, all available for public use.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY:

DC Nolan originally purchased this property in 1946. This family owned and operated the property as a farm, including constructing a fairly involved flood protection system consisting of a dike and “flap gates” intended to keep the South Fork of the English River from backing into their crops in the 1970’s.

In 2007, the property was placed in the Wetlands Reserve Program, a federal program that purchased the cropping rights from property for \$509,200 (\$3,045/acre). This program also included provisions for restoring the property to wetlands and prairie.

In 2008, heirs sold the land to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for \$100,000, which included a generous donation of \$84,000 when compared to its appraised value.

In 2009, the Washington, Iowa, & Keokuk County Conservation Boards received a Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant in the amount of \$66,792 towards the total purchase price (including an appraisal and other transfer costs) of \$111,900. The remainder of the funding is equally divided amongst each of the three CCB’s involved (\$15,036 each), which was raised through a combination of crop lease and Pheasants Forever contributions.

Iowa County Conservation News
 Iowa County Conservation Board
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