

CONSERVATION NEWS

A Newsletter of the Iowa County Conservation Board

VOLUME 25 ISSUE 3

SUMMER 2012



This year's summer seasonal staff. Back row left to right: Trevor Howe and Erik Chapman. Bottom row left to right: Electra Miller, Cecilia Hagen, Bailey Berger, Breanna Zimmerman, Aaron Prior, and Ason Santosus.

Not pictured: Cole Lahndorf.

in this issue...

Page 2 Creepy Camping

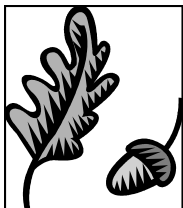
Page 3 State of the Conservation Department

Page 4 History of the Friends Foundation

Page 5 Fall Program Schedule

Page 6 Meet the Seasonal and UYC Workers

Page 7 ICCB News



Conservation Superheroes at ICCB

Faster than a speeding golf cart, stronger than a dump truck full of rocks, able to replace bridges and culverts in a single bound. It is a bird, a plane... No, it is the summer seasonal staff of the Iowa County Conservation Board. Summer blockbusters the last few years have focused on superhero movies. This year is no exception. While our workers certainly rise to the occasion like *The Dark Knight Rises*, they more closely resemble that other superhero movie this summer, *The Avengers*.

Like the Avengers, our seasonal staff is a hardworking, successful, and diverse team. Four of the team are members of the Urban Youth Corps or UYC. UYC is a program of the Iowa Department of Transportation. The workers and projects completed by them must be eligible through DOT guidelines. Another four team members are seasonal staff hired by the ICCB. These staff members usually have more experience and may have been involved with UYC or similar programs in the past. The ninth member of the team is an intern from Kirkwood Community College. Each brings a talent, complimentary to the others. When their powers combine, they're unstoppable.

Continued on Page 6.

Creepy Camping

Lake Iowa Park
September 28 & 29

Friday Night
Lake Iowa Speaker Series
Outdoor Movie

Saturday
Dummy Board Tournament
Pot Luck Lunch
Games
Trick or Treating
Haunted Hayrack Ride

For more information

Call

(319) 655-8465

Or Visit

<http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa.aspx>

State of the Conservation Department

By Mike Bode, Park Ranger and Acting Director

In the hustle and bustle of our line of work, rarely do we get a chance to pause and take a step back to look at the big picture. In our case, it seems we have been so gung ho on the progression of new and exciting projects over the past few years, that attention has been moved away from maintaining the gems that we've always had right there in front of us. From anyone that may manage land, employees, a home, or even a family, a common thread is shared; prioritizing. I personally like to make up written task lists, but it always seems that the priority of items on those lists is ever changing and some items keep getting pushed back.

Earlier this spring, shortly after our Naturalist Sean was hired, I took him around to show off some of our distinct natural features within some of our areas. To my surprise, our most diverse sections of native prairie plants had been overrun with invasive brush. Many of our pristine wooded areas had also become invaded by undesirable vegetation. Some areas had become hardly recognizable from memory.

I have always been envious of County Conservation Departments that have larger staffs with a bigger variety of equipment. Even though having this greater ability to deal with land management issues is a great advantage, persistence is always the best approach. With the influx of our seasonal staff this summer, we have been able to do some selective Timber Stand Improvement at Berstler Woods and Gunderson Conservation Area. We've also been able to cut, pull, and/or apply herbicide to invasive vegetation throughout many of our areas in the county.

We all take great pride in the new projects that have been undertaken in the past few years. From lake and pond renovations to the upgrades and expansion of our trail systems, we have kept moving swiftly between projects. The extremely detailed work that comes with the development of areas in and around our Nature Center continues to keep us busy as well. With all these new areas being developed comes even more maintenance responsibility, which continues to build up on our to-do list.

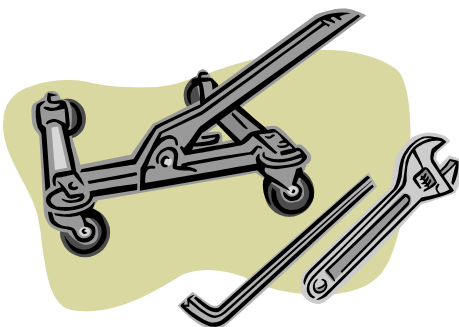
What you can expect to see over the next several months, is quite simply a focus on maintenance. From maintenance on vehicles and equipment where service intervals have increased, to the upkeep of our buildings and other structures; there is quite simply a lot to keep maintained. These essential functions are on the top of our priority list; just ahead of the 1600 acres of land that ICCB manages that are in constant need of attention. Maintenance, although not headline material, is our current priority.

Are you a fan of Lake Iowa park?

Visit our facebook page to get the latest news on park events and programs, campground updates, photos, and more!

www.facebook.com/LakelowaPark

Help us reach 1,000 fans!



2012 Iowa County Conservation Board

***Vic Rathje, Amana
Jim Scandridge, Victor
Marcia Wehner, Williamsburg
Gordon Dietze, Millersburg
Shirley Messer, Ladora***

Iowa County Conservation Board Staff

***Mike Bode, Park Ranger
Sean Curry, Naturalist***

History of the Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation

By Randall Betz, Former Chairman

This organization was officially formed in September, 2001 with election of officers, the approval of the by-laws and articles of incorporation as a non-profit organization designed to raise money for a new nature center, and to further the activities of the Iowa County Conservation Board. It consists of about 12 members who serve three year terms.

One must go back prior to the above date to understand the events leading to the formation of this organization. Maria Koschmeder, naturalist, was instrumental in getting a group of interested people together to form a "conservation center committee" in January, 2001. Sub-committees formed at that time were: (1) building, (2) fundraising, (3) marketing, and (4) steering. These committees went to work. The building committee visited other nature centers, selected a tentative building site, and selected floor plans. The fundraising committee developed fundraising strategies and considered writing grant proposals. The marketing committee developed a brochure and contacted several architects, with Knapp-Warden of Cedar Rapids being chosen to develop the schematic drawings of the proposed building. The steering committee set up the by-laws and articles of incorporation with the voluntary services of a local attorney.



The Lake Iowa Nature Center was made possible by the hard work of the Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation.

After the foundation was formed, Steve Rose of Rose and Weinbrenner, CPA's, volunteered to handle finances for the organization. A fundraising consultant, Gary Vance, was hired to do a feasibility study which showed that there was definite support in the county for a new nature center.

One finding from the feasibility study showed that people wanted a hard surface road out to Lake Iowa and were much more likely to give financially if it were in place. After several meetings, the Iowa County Board of Supervisors financed a study to determine the best options as far as the road was concerned. It was eventually decided to seal coat the present road to the lake. This was started in 2005 and is often done every other spring to keep the road in good shape.

All through the years leading up to the construction of the nature center in 2009-2010, fundraising for the nature center had been the main thrust of the foundation. Numerous breakfasts, dinners, raffles, and other types of fundraising were conducted. Solicitation by mail has been used for several years. Presentations have been made to school boards, city councils, and service organizations. The Friends Foundation continues to have fundraisers to help provide funds for projects at the nature center. The most recent financial contributions have been to the completion of the Playscape area and the Traveling Exhibit.

The biggest stimulus was the awarding of the State of Iowa CAT grant, written by Maria, of \$428,000, with a stipulation that we had 90 days to go out and raise an additional \$71,000. Iowa County citizens and organizations came together and the money was raised. The Board of Supervisors pledged \$250,000 and the Conservation Board over \$100,000. Other smaller grants were also received. The donor board at the nature center, which was donated by the Friends Foundation, lists all the donations made by individuals, companies, and organizations through 2010.

Continued on Page 5

History of Friends from Page 4

After the CAT Grant was awarded, Knapp-Warden was hired by the Conservation Board to draw up the specifications and drawings to get things ready for bidding and the awarding of a contract to the low bidder. In the meantime, the building committee from the Friends Board met with the architect on many occasion to help him in the final plans and to make recommendations to the Conservation Board for their final approval.

The Friends Foundation continues to be active in providing funds and financial support for the various activities at the nature center and Lake Iowa. It was a ten year journey from the beginning to the completion of the nature center. At times the future looked bleak, but the foundation never gave up. We are proud of our building and know that it wouldn't have happened without the tremendous support of literally hundreds of people in Iowa County and surrounding areas. Contributions were not only financial, but also in labor and other donations. We are truly thankful for the support we have received and that we were able to lay the groundwork for the Conservation Board to bring this to a successful completion.

**Fall Program
Schedule**



Outdoor Cooking

5:00 PM Friday, September 14, 2012
Fee: \$5 per person

Basic GPS

9:00 AM Saturday, September 22, 2012
At Gunderson Wildlife Area

Beginning Birding

7:30 AM Saturday, October 13, 2012

Call (319) 655-8466 to register.
Please register at least two days before the scheduled program. All programs meet at the Lake Iowa Nature Center unless noted.

**Lake Iowa
Speaker Series**
*at the
Lake Iowa Nature Center*

7:00 PM Friday, August 24, 2012
Phil Hey
Learning Where We Are: Natural History as Science for the Common Reader

7:00 PM Friday, September 28, 2012
Bill Koch
Prairie Whitman: Walt Whitman's poetry of nature is highlighted.

Both programs are free and open to the public. These programs are made possible in part by a grant from Humanities Iowa.

Be sure to watch the mycountyparks website, local newspapers, and display cases at Lake Iowa Park for information on more programs offered by the ICCB.

Seasonal Staff from Page 1.

These nine individuals have worked together this summer to accomplish some incredible projects at Lake Iowa Park and the other ICCB areas. Here is a sneak peak behind the secret identity of our ICCB Superheroes.

Bailey Berger attended Williamsburg High School. She lives in Conroy. Berger is studying anthropology and history at Iowa State University. She recently had the opportunity to study abroad in the Czech Republic. While there, she was digging on an excavation and found artifacts belonging to the people of 9th century Great Moravia. This is her second year working for the ICCB. Last year she was a UYC worker. Berger is the lead seasonal worker this year. In her free time she can be found enjoying the outdoors and going on adventures.

Erik Lee Chapman is from Williamsburg. Chapman started working in conservation with an internship at Lake McBride. Since 2008 he has worked for the Iowa County Conservation Board. He started as an AmeriCorps volunteer and has worked his way up to Maintenance Ranger. Chapman, who enjoys working outside, is currently studying biology at Iowa State University. He is especially interested in aquatic sciences. In his free time Chapman likes to ride horses, golf, go fishing, and generally be awesome.

Cecilia Hagen graduated from HLV High School and is from rural Victor. Hagen will be starting her sophomore year at the University of Iowa this fall. She plays trombone in the university marching band. Occasionally she returns from the big city to visit her beloved Sam and Dundee, her horse and dog. Hagen is a UYC worker. She has had the opportunity to learn to operate lots of different equipment this summer.

Trevor Howe attends Iowa Valley Junior-Senior High School. This fall he will be a junior. Howe lives in rural Marengo. He is active in both 4-H and FFA. You may have recently seen him showing livestock and winning classes at the Iowa County Fair. Besides his interest in agriculture and conservation, Howe is also a talented musician. He plays both the saxophone and guitar. Howe is also a UYC worker.

Cole Lahndorf lives in Victor and will be a senior at HLV this fall. Lahndorf is another UYC worker. He enjoys working in conservation and previously job shadowed ICCB ranger Mike Bode. When he isn't working, Lahndorf enjoys various sports. Some, like football and baseball, he takes part in through school. Others, such as bow hunting, he pursues on his own.

Electra Miller, originally from Nebraska, currently lives in Conroy with her husband and children. Miller is studying parks and natural resources at Kirkwood Community College. She is completing an internship as part of that program with the ICCB. She considers this time to be great experience for future employment. Her passion for the outdoors has lead her somewhere most of us never go. Miller is a certified scuba diver.

Aaron Prior is from Marengo and graduated from Iowa Valley in 2011. He is attending Kirkwood Community College and just enrolled in the parks and natural resources program. Prior wants to work in conservation because he has always enjoyed the outdoors. His favorite thing about working as a seasonal worker this summer is the variety of projects.

Ason Santosus resides in Brooklyn. This fall Santosus will be a junior at Brooklyn Guernsey Malcolm Junior Senior High School. He is the fourth UYC worker this summer. Santosus enjoys his seasonal employment because it gives him the opportunity to work outside. When not at work Santosus can be found riding motocross. His current bike is a Honda 125.

Breanna Zimmerman is from Williamsburg and graduated from high school in 2009. She attended Kirkwood Community College for two years before transferring to Iowa State University. Zimmerman is studying environmental science. After working as a farm hand and doing golf course maintenance, Zimmerman was looking for a change. Since she has always been passionate about the outdoors, ICCB was a good fit for summer employment.

We, at the ICCB, are lucky to have this incredible team this year. Each and every one of them is truly a conservation superhero. Thanks for a great season.

Property Highlight:

Simmons Timber Preserve

Located deep in the lowlands of the Iowa River Valley is Simmons Timber Preserve. Simmons Timber Preserve is 97 acres of river valley lowland that is located on the north side of the Iowa River. The Iowa County Conservation Board obtained the land through an agreement with the Simmons family and was part of the late Lloyd Simmons estate.



A large oak tree at Simmons.

Simmons timber preserve is predominantly silver maple, cottonwood, black willow, and reed canary grass scattered with bur oak trees. Much of what can be seen now has remained the same for a very long time. Many of the trees located on the site are large and old, an interesting sight for everyone to see. At one time, Simmons was a large island, water locked in the middle of the Iowa River. The north and eastern boundaries of the property are part of the old river bed. This was the scene for much time, until the main river channel was rerouted to what it is today, leaving Simmons open by foot.

As of now, Simmons is difficult to be accessed by the general public since it appears to be land locked by private property. The projected plans for this remote area are in the making. Preliminary plans include locational signs, a driveway to access the area, a parking lot, and hiking trails. If you like places that seem untouched and isolated, then Simmons is a great place to be. Look for Simmons Timber Preserve to be more accessible soon.


To find Simmons, drive north of Marengo on V66, go west 1/4 mile on F-15, south on LL Ave until it ends, and look to the west. The sixteen foot wide access is currently marked with "T" posts.

Old Nature Center Burned

The old nature center at Lake Iowa Park was burned down on Tuesday, July 17th with the help of the Ladora Fire Department. The building was in disrepair and considered unsafe. The Ladora Fire Department set and monitored the fire as a training exercise. Several members of the local community came out to watch the burn and say goodbye. In the future, the Iowa County Conservation Board hopes to use the location for other purposes.



Iowa County Conservation News
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 Lake Iowa Park
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 Ladora, IA 52251

For more information about the
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- Conservation News newsletter
- Habitat improvement/development on ICCB areas
- Nature Explore Playscape Project
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Send to ICCB, 2550 G. Ave, Ladora, IA 52251

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