

# CONSERVATION NEWS



*A newsletter of the Iowa County Conservation Board*  
**VOLUME 23 ISSUE 4**

**FALL 2010**

## ***Thanks for your support!***

The Iowa County Conservation Board members and staff would like to send out a big THANK YOU to all of our volunteers and donors for your assistance with our events this year. Creepy Camping, Christmas in July and of course, the Open House of the Lake Iowa Nature Center could not have been such a success without your support and generosity.

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### **Campgrounds Hosts and More!**

If you frequent Lake Iowa Park during the summer months there is a good chance that you are familiar with our resident campground hosts, Jerry and Glenda Eden. For ten years now, Jerry and Glenda have been welcoming campers to the park, handling camper registration, coupon books, and general park maintenance. What you may not know is that this duo also uses their creative talents to benefit Lake Iowa Park and its visitors.

Jerry is an avid photographer of park wildlife and events. He uses his photos to create videos of Iowa flora and fauna, of our specialty weekends, and he recently completed a great video documenting the building and recent completion of the nature center. If you participated in the Creepy Camping or Christmas in July hayrack rides, you watched Jerry's handiwork in the ride entrance videos.

If you have seen any "Hangin' out at Lake Iowa" shirts around the park, then you are aware of Glenda's talents.

Using her embroidery machine, Glenda creates custom Lake Iowa Park t-shirts and sweatshirts that are sold to raise money for the Park Activities Fund. A few shirts from this year are still available to purchase at the Nature Center. Prices start at \$13 for t-shirts and \$22 for hooded sweatshirts. Watch for a new shirt design to be unveiled in Summer 2011.

We'd like to thank Jerry and Glenda for lending their talents, and look forward to their return next summer.





Iowa County Conservation Board Members: (left to right) Gordon Dietze, Marcia Wehner, Vic Rathje, Shirley Messer, Jim Scandridge

### Board Member Recognized

Iowa County Conservation Board Member Vic Rathje was recently recognized by the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards for his 10 years of service to Iowa County Conservation. Congratulations Vic, and thank you to all of our board members for the work you do.



### Campground Pond Update

If you were a visitor to the park this summer or fall you may have noticed some changes with our campground pond. The pond was lowered significantly this summer to allow for silt removal, bank armoring, and an expansion of approximately 2 acres. Kinzenbaw Earthmoving of Marengo will complete the excavation work later this fall and through the winter.

## Eagle Scout Trail Project Complete

Carlin Michalek has been keeping in contact with the Iowa County Conservation Department for well over a year now, to see if we had any larger projects that he might be able to help us out with. We had been at a loss to come up with a worthy service project that would be very beneficial to the community. That all changed after the Urban Youth Corps project to create an interpretive loop trail behind the Nature Center started to take shape. Everyone involved with the project began to realize how nice the trail section between the ADA trail loop and the north shore of the pond turned out to be. Keeping that section of the trail “primitive” only made us think of how many more people could enjoy it if we could make it accessible. Once Carlin caught word of what we were thinking, he was off and running. He came up with a plan and started organizing a group of volunteers to help him complete his goal.

Carlin’s large crew of volunteers began clearing the ground, widening and straightening the trail, building up some of the low-lying areas, and installing more drainage tubes where they were needed. After completing his project, the ICCB staff now has enough room and solid ground to be able to lay the various layers of limestone needed to make the trail handicap accessible. We’d like to thank Carlin for the great work he and his crew did on what we now call, the “Carlin Michalek” ADA Trail Extension. This trail is expected to have high usage because of the proximity with the Nature Center and the campground pond, and will be utilized for many years to come.





## Urban Youth Corps Summer Projects

by Mike Bode, Park Ranger

In the last newsletter, you may remember a short write-up and picture of the Urban Youth Corps members that were employed by the Iowa County Conservation Department this past summer. We felt that the short blurb didn't do justice to the various projects that were undertaken by this crew, and wanted to go a little more in-depth about the work that was done.

To recap, the Urban Youth Corps Grant from the Iowa Department of Transportation provides youth the opportunity to learn and develop through transportation enhancement projects. The four members were Heather Stratton, Jon York, Justin Chapman, and Travis Timm.

These UYC members will probably never forget the first project that they worked on together, clearing a ten-foot wide path along the north boundary of Lake Iowa Park. This path was to be a half-mile long and go along the remnants of an old dirt road that had been closed for decades. To say that this boundary was slightly overgrown would be a huge understatement. Armed with just chain saws and hand-held brush-cutters, they steadily worked their way from end to end. This "path" can now serve as an access trail for maintenance, patrolling, as well as hiking. The biggest benefit from my standpoint is that it can be used as a firebreak for managing a section of the park that was otherwise unmanageable.

The second project that UYC members worked on was the Interpretive Wilderness Trail that was planned for below the new Lake Iowa Nature Center facility. Members had to plan where to take the trail in regards to the lay of the land and also the natural areas or items that they would like to highlight along the way. This trail ended up, coming off of the Ila Misbach Morse and Henry George Morse memorial ADA trail loop, heading down to the campground pond, and making a loop back around to the beginning. Members would again get to work on their skills of brush removal as well as dirt-work.

A project that this group got to work on at Gateway Park and Preserve, was the management of a second-year prairie planting along V66, with a section of the property's hiking and biking trail running through it. UYC members learned to identify plants and removed unwanted parsnip, sweet clover, willow, locust, and multi-flora rose from this prairie and the area that surrounds it.

Brush removal from the roadside along G Avenue on the west boundary of Lake Iowa Park is another project none of us will soon forget. It ended up being at the end of the schedule, during the hottest stretch of the summer. Talk about labor-intensive, each woody stem had to be cut off at ground level from down in the ditch and then drug up to the road and thrown in the dump-truck to be hauled away. To finish it off, each of the "stumps" then had to be treated with pesticide to ensure that the brush would finally be gone for good.

The final task that the UYC members took on, was the replacement of multiple drainage culverts under the road around Lake Iowa. The original metal culverts that were put in over 30 years ago were all starting to rust through within the past couple years. Water had started eroding dirt from around the culverts causing the shoulders, and in some spots the road, to cave in. Some of the larger culverts were in the worst condition and were the ones that got replaced by the UYC members. With each of these culverts they had to tear out the road above with a backhoe. Following this, they put sand around and above the culvert and packed it. Finally finishing it off by rebuilding the road with rock and asphalt.

You probably noticed the reoccurring theme of brush removal throughout this project list. Most of these projects were in hard to reach areas where brush cutting machinery could not reach. These labor-intensive

projects had been put on hold for many years mainly because our staff didn't have enough time to do them. That is why the UYC Grant was a perfect fit. We'd like to thank Heather, Jon, Justin, and Travis for all their dedication and hard work that was put into these projects, and we hope that the experiences and skills obtained while working here, will be useful down the road.



UYC Culvert Project

# Fall & Winter Programs

Lake Iowa Nature Center

## Dutch Oven Cookout

Saturday, November 13  
Noon - 2 pm \$5 per person

Last chance to cook outside before winter sets in! Enjoy making fall favorites the old fashioned way including chili, cornbread and apple crisp. Must pre-register by Nov. 11 by calling (319) 655-8466 or e-mailing [iccbee@netins.net](mailto:iccbee@netins.net)



## Recycled Crafts

Saturday, December 11  
1:00-2:30 pm

Feeling crafty? Come try your hand at making a variety of recycled crafts- just in time for the holidays! This class is great for older children or adults. Children must be accompanied by an adult. All supplies will be provided, but feel free to bring along old Christmas cards and a magazine or two if you'd like.



## Kid Program: Winter Birding

Saturday, January 8  
1:00-2:30 pm

Why do some birds migrate while others stay here? Find out the answer to this question and more as you discover the birds staying for the winter at Lake Iowa Park. Use binoculars, learn basic bird ID, and make a tasty treat for your own backyard birds in this fun and interactive class. For ages 5 and older. Children must be accompanied by an adult.



Have an idea for a great program? We welcome your input! Send your suggestion to [iccbee@netins.net](mailto:iccbee@netins.net) or call (319) 655-8466

## Ice Fishing 101

Saturday, February 12  
9:30 am - noon



This is a great way for kids or adults to be introduced to the sport of ice-fishing. Meet at the Lake Iowa boat ramp at 9:30 am to learn about fishing equipment and safety. Then head out on to the ice to put your new skills to the test. All equipment will be provided. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Anglers over the age of 16 must have a valid Iowa fishing license.

# What's on the Menu? Feeding Birds in Winter

by Laura Stephens, Naturalist

While many Iowa birds head south for the winter months, there are still plenty of feathered residents that stick around for the snowy season. Since food becomes more scarce in winter, setting up a backyard buffet is a great way to attract a variety of birds to your home. By including different types of feeding stations in your yard, you are sure to experience all that winter birding has to offer.

Here's a list of a few of the best winter foods:

## **Black Oil Sunflower Seeds**

A bird feeder classic, black oil sunflower seeds contain high amounts of fat, oils, and nutrients, providing instant energy for the consumer. They are a highly preferred food for many kinds of birds. Try buying hulled seeds to avoid a pile up of shells under the feeder.

## **Suet**

Suet is the term for solid beef fat found around the loin and kidneys. It's packed full of energy for winter birds. Suet cakes are a tidy pre-packed form of suet mixed with bird seed that can be found at nearly any store that sells wild bird food. The more adventurous types can buy raw suet from a meat shop (get it pre-ground if possible) and concoct custom suet cakes at home. Check in books or online for a variety of recipes and instructions. Suet is best presented in a hanging bag or wire cage, but you can also try smearing it in the crevices of trees or logs.



## **Peanuts**

Whole or shelled peanuts are another easy and relatively inexpensive food that is high in fat and calories- seeing a theme? While not as widely preferred as sunflower seeds, peanuts will attract birds such as blue jays, woodpeckers, and cardinals. Even chickadees and titmice will stock up on the smaller nuts. Spread peanuts out on a platform feeder so they are available to all birds. And of course, be sure to only buy nuts that are unsalted!



## **Nyjer**

Sometimes referred to as 'black gold' due to its hefty price tag, nyjer is a top pick for finches. Although it is occasionally confused with our native thistle, nyjer is actually native to Ethiopia. The seed is heat treated to prevent accidental germination. Nyjer should be fed in specialized thistle feeders or bags to minimize wasted seed.



## **Fruits**

Most fruits and berries that birds enjoy through the warmer months are not available during the winter. Provide a fruit treat for your visitors by cutting up pieces of apples, oranges, or bananas. Birds will also eat dried fruit bits to. String up the pieces like fruit garland or use small sticks as skewers. Don't forget to pick up the string once the fruit is gone.

## **Millet**

Millet comes in red and white varieties and is preferred by ground feeding birds such as dark-eyed juncos, mourning doves, and native sparrows. No feeder is necessary for millet, just scatter a few handfuls on the ground.

## **Bagged Seed Mixes**

In general, it is best to avoid pre-mixed commercial bird seed. These mixes frequently contain lots of filler seed, such as milo, that is not overly preferred by any birds which results in lots of uneaten seed (and wasted money). Read the label or inspect the mix to determine how much of the content is a 'good' seed and what percentage is just cheap filler.

## **Fresh Water**

Maintaining a consistent water source is one of the best resources you can provide. Set out a small heated water dish and refresh the water frequently.

For more information on bird seed, types of feeders, and bird feeding tips and tricks visit any of these informative websites, or check out books at your local library or bookstore.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology: [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org)  
Bird Watcher's Digest: [www.birdwatchersdigest.com](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com)  
National Bird Feeding Society: [www.birdfeeding.org](http://www.birdfeeding.org)



## Masters of Winter

Do you think you handle winter like a pro? Read on to discover examples of impressive winter survival by our very own Iowa wildlife.

- The woodchuck is the definitive winner in the category of hibernation. Their metabolic activity is suppressed so significantly that their body temperature may dip as low as 39-40°F, with their heart beating only 4 to 10 times per minute. This state of hibernation may last from 3-6 months.
- While some amphibians such as the American toad have the ability to dig deep into the dirt to keep from freezing, smaller frogs do not have the ability to burrow. Wood frogs and spring peepers are two species that produce high concentrations of glycerol in their vital organs to prevent them from freezing. Their extremities may freeze and their hearts may stop beating, but when warmed in the spring they miraculously come back to life.
- Voles are a small mouse-like rodent that stay active throughout the winter. In order to stay warm and protect themselves from predators, voles form an impressive labyrinth of tunnels in the subnivian space—the area between the ground and the surface of the snow. Unfortunately for the voles, foxes and coyotes are able to locate the voles by sound, punch through the snow, and then snatch their prey that has been trapped in the snowy tunnel.
- Chickadees survive the winter by going into a nightly state of torpor, almost like mini-hibernation. Their body temperature drops by 10-15 degrees which allows them to save up enough energy to survive until the morning. They wake early in the morning to begin replenishing the energy that was used the night before.



### Check us out online...

Become a fan on **facebook**  
 Search 'Lake Iowa Park' to get  
 the latest on park news, photos, events  
 and more!


**New Website!**  
 Visit our website at  
[www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa](http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa)  
 to learn more about our parks, facilities,  
 and events.

### \* Wish List \*

The following items are needed for our conservation education and public programs. If you wish to donate an item, please drop it off at the nature center.

Thank you!!

- \* Cotton fabric scraps
- \* Assorted buttons
- \* Fishing poles in good condition (spincasting, closed reel)
- \* Used nature/wildlife magazines
- \* Old Christmas cards (for Dec. program)
- \* Cleaned plastic peanut butter type jars

2010 Iowa County Conservation Board	Iowa County Conservation Board Staff
<p><i>Vic Rathje, Amana</i>  <i>Jim Scandridge, Victor</i>  <i>Marcia Wehner, Williamsburg</i>  <i>Gordon Dietze, Millersburg</i>  <i>Shirley Messer, Ladora</i></p>	<p><i>Lee Sorenson, Director</i>  <i>Mike Bode, Park Ranger</i>  <i>Laura Stephens, Naturalist</i></p> 

## **Lake Iowa Nature Center Projects**

### **To supporters of the Lake Iowa Nature Center:**

We are pleased to report the Lake Iowa Nature Center is completed and it is such a beautiful facility. We have held multiple environmental programs in and around the building for both the public and school groups, sponsored dances such as Larry Goodman and Don Anders Band, and even hosted a local swing dancing group. The building has also been rented for special occasions such as graduations, birthday parties, anniversaries, meetings, and wedding receptions. We have also noticed multiple high school seniors getting their pictures taken around the building. Everyone has been exceptionally pleased with the facility.

But don't let the funding stop now, there is so much more to do. Several projects are still in the works including blinds for the windows, acoustical reduction in the basement, and a hard surface for the parking lot. We are also in the planning stages of developing displays in and around the building for children and adults to learn about Iowa habitats and wildlife.



A donation form is printed on the back of this newsletter. Please check 'Lake Iowa Nature Center' if you would like your donation to go towards this project. Fill out and send to ICCB along with your donation. You may also make a pledge that is a donation for a number of years or volunteer your time working in the new nature center or for other events.


We thank you for all your past, present and future support, not only to the Lake Iowa Nature Center construction but for material donations and for all the hours that you volunteer your time to help with events held for the Friends Board and the Iowa County Conservation Board.

With much appreciation,  
The Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation



**Iowa County Conservation News**

Iowa County Conservation Board  
Lake Iowa Park  
2550 G. Ave  
Ladora, IA 52251

For more information about the  
**Iowa County Conservation Board,**  
please contact us 

**Director** 319-655-8465  
iaconservation@aol.com  
**Park Ranger** mbode@co.iowa.ia.us  
**Campground Hosts** 319-655-8465  
**Naturalist** 319-655-8466  
iccbee@netins.net  
**Fax number** 319-655-8400  
**Website** www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa

**Thank you for supporting the Iowa County Conservation Board programs with your tax-deductible donation:**

Enclosed is my donation for:

\$50     \$100     \$500     \$1000  
 \$5000     Other

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please earmark my donation for:

- Lake Iowa Park Improvements
- Gateway Park Improvements
- Environmental Education materials & equipment
- Conservation News newsletter
- Habitat improvement/development on ICCB areas
- Lake Iowa Nature Center Project
- Use my donation where needed most

Send to ICCB, 2550 G. Ave, Ladora, IA 52251

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