

CONSERVATION NEWS

A newsletter of the Iowa County Conservation Board

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SPRING 2011



Christmas in July

Friday & Saturday

July 22-23

Mark your calendars for our annual Christmas in July event! Join us for fun family activities, a great Christmas-themed hayrack ride, and of course- a visit from Santa himself. Watch for special camping rates for the entire Christmas in July weekend!



Friday Night Outdoor Movie

Serving Free Will Donation pop & popcorn

Saturday Activities:

Free Family Games 1-3pm

Located behind the nature center

Santa's Visit & Crafts 6-8pm

Inside the Lake Iowa Nature Center

Lighted Hayrack Ride ~9pm start

Tickets available at 8:30pm



1st Birthday Celebration!

On July 23, the Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation will be celebrating the first anniversary of Lake Iowa Nature Center's grand opening. The event will include a dessert walk and lunch to benefit projects and programs at the nature center.



in this issue...

Page 1 Special Events

Page 2 Park Projects

Page 3 Recent Happenings

Page 4 Program Calendar

Page 5 For the Birds

Page 6 Camping with Dogs

Memorial Day Weekend

Saturday, May 28

Pancake Breakfast 7:00-11:00 am

Free will donation to benefit special events

Outdoor Gear Porch Sale 7:00am-noon

To benefit programs and projects at the nature center

Dummy Board Tournament 10:00 am start

\$10 entry per team, registration starts at 9:45 am

Larry Goodman Band 6:00-9:00 pm

\$6 at the door, food will be available



Progress, Progress, Progress...

By Lee Sorenson, Director ICCB

As I am about ready to begin to write my newsletter article, I look out my window from my office located in the nature center, smile and start to laugh. There are several birds attempting to build nests on every narrow ledge they can find, so far with little success. The only places that nests are possible were taken over a year ago by some sparrows, which have graciously spoken for those spots again this year. Both the male and female sparrow sit on the porch rail and look around as if to do an inspection of their home and its surroundings, making sure everything is where it should be. Watching the sparrows leads me into one of the success stories of this past winter; the building of our bird blind. This building is 30 feet long and 6 feet wide and will contain a row of benches where the public or school groups can go inside and sit or stand to watch birds in a natural setting. This project was funded by an Iowa County Community Foundation grant for the building materials and was then constructed by ICCB staff and volunteers. We have multiple feeders up in this area to attract a variety of birds and



Young volunteers Vivi and Kenna McGee create nesting material boxes for the birds..

On the east side of the building, the Butterfly Garden will be planted in May by the Iowa County Master Gardeners. Specific plants were chosen in order to create an area that would promote the most diversity of butterflies. We will also be planting

We also have been working on the landscaping for the nature center. As many of you remember, the area around the center was all dirt last fall. Since that time, we have grass growing on the front lawn and the back area was seeded this spring.

native grasses and forbs on the outside of the ADA trail that goes around the back of the nature center. This will give some color to the area and help reduce the maintenance for our staff. Once this is completed, the setting of the nature center will be spectacular. For you fitness buffs, if you walk the trail 12 times it equals a mile.

There are a few things still in the process; such as the trail down to the campground pond. Due to weather conditions, we have not been able to get the rock down on the trail at this time, but hopefully by summer we will have that completed. Along with that is the campground pond renovation. The pond has been excavated and is filling with water, but we still have all the shoreline protection to put into place which will take several months to complete. Just a reminder, this pond does not have any fish in it at this time and will not be stocked until late fall.

So as you can see, we have our hands full with projects that will make your stay or visit at Lake Iowa Park that much more enjoyable. If you are not already a 'fan' of the Lake Iowa Park Facebook page, make sure you check us out to get the latest information on upcoming park activities as well as great photos of past events.



there will be nearly 40 native shrubs and trees planted this spring. Like all living things, birds like to eat, so please consider participating in our 'Sponsor a Feeder' program.

Iowa County Hosts CCPOA Spring Training Workshop

Every fall, most law enforcement officers from the County Conservation Board system attend an educational workshop in Des Moines at Camp Dodge. This workshop only covers some of the required yearly training, the rest is held through three regional workshops throughout the state covering western, central and eastern Iowa. On March 29, Iowa County held the Eastern Iowa Spring Workshop in the new Lake Iowa Nature Center. Officers traveled to Lake Iowa Park from counties as far west as Adair County, Chickasaw County in the north, and even from the very southeast corner of the state, Lee County. There were 62 officers in attendance out of the 150 officers statewide. Topics that were discussed ranged from trauma and medical emergencies presented by Iowa County Ambulance, fraudulent documents by ICE, and Iowa weapons laws and utilizing your local K-9 Units presented by the Iowa County Sheriffs Office. The day was a huge success for everyone involved.



Benefit Dinner a Success!

Exciting, fun, enjoyable and delicious were some of the comments a few weeks ago when the Friends of the Iowa County Conservation Foundation held their first annual banquet located in the Lake Iowa Nature Center. The Friends Foundation sold 107 tickets for the banquet that was catered by Phat Daddy's of Marengo. During the banquet, a silent auction was held with 30 items ranging from homemade wines, to yard art, bird houses, jams and jellies, Riverside Resort tickets, wildlife prints and much more. The President of the Friends Foundation, Quenten Offerman, stated, "As this was our first banquet we held in our new nature center, I was very pleased with the turn out and satisfaction of those who came. A special thanks goes to Phat Daddy's who did an excellent job catering, Lake Iowa Park for the donation of door prizes, and all of those who donated and bid on our silent auction items. The support from the community has been great for the nature center." Overall the evening raised \$1,502 that will be used for special projects in and around the nature center. Our thanks to everyone that attended. We look forward to next year's banquet.



Mike Bode, ICCB Park Ranger, is taken down by a member of the local K-9 Unit.

2nd Annual Outdoor Gear Porch Sale

Saturday, May 28 7:00am-noon

The Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation is seeking donated items to be sold at the porch sale.

Anything outdoor related and in good condition is needed- camping equipment, yard art, garden tools, plants, recreation equipment, etc. Please drop off donations to the Lake Iowa Nature Center by May 27.

All proceeds will benefit programs and activities at the nature center. Thanks for your support!



Spring and Summer Programs

Lake Iowa Nature Center

May

Breakfast with the Birds
Saturday, May 21 9-10 am

Wildflower Hike
Saturday, May 21 1-2 pm

June

Free Fishing Weekend Activities
Saturday, June 4 10 am-noon

Dutch Oven Brunch*
Saturday, June 11 9-11:30 am

Family Orienteering*
Saturday, June 11 1-4 pm

Breakfast with the Birds
Saturday, June 25 9-10 am

July

All About Bluebirds
Saturday, July 9 10-11:30 am

Composting 101
Saturday, July 9 2-3 pm

Kids Campfire Lunch*
Saturday, July 30 11 am to noon

Dutch Oven Just Desserts*
Saturday, July 30 2-4 pm

August

Family Campout*
Friday, August 12 to Saturday, August 13

***Must register at least three days in advance. There is a \$5/person fee for cooking programs and a \$10/immediate family fee for the campout.**

Nature Day Camps

Get closer to nature this summer at Lake Iowa Park! Two different nature-themed day camps are scheduled for Monday thru Friday, June 13-17 and July 11-15. A camp for 5-8 year olds will take place from 9 am until noon, and the 9-12 year old camp will be from 1 until 4 pm. Pre-registration is required. There is a \$20 fee per camp to help cover the cost of snacks and supplies. A camp flyer and registration form can be picked up at the nature center or downloaded from our website at: www.mycountyparks.com/county/iowa.aspx

Program Schedule:

Week 1 June 13-17 Wildlife Investigations

- Insect Invasion
- Slime and Scales
- Budding Birders
- Amazing Mammals
- Fishing Frenzy



Week 2 July 11-15 Plant Explorers

- Seed All About It
- Tales of Trees
- Prairie Pastimes
- How does your garden grow?
- In the Water



To register for a program or for more information, please call (319) 655-8466 or e-mail iccbee@netins.net

Lake Iowa Park has gone to the birds!

By Laura Stephens, Naturalist ICCB

It seems that we have gone a bit bird-crazy over here at the nature center. After the initial construction of the bird blind by volunteers in March, much time has been spent completing the finishing touches on the blind itself, putting up posts and hanging feeders, woodchipping the area surrounding the blind, researching and ordering bird-preferred native plants, and building brush piles to encourage timid birds to come just a bit closer. And of course in the midst of all of this, we have been doing a bit of bird watching too.

We're not alone in our fascination of our feathered friends; birdwatching has become one of the fastest growing outdoor hobbies. The US Fish and Wildlife Service reports that 57.3 million Americans identify themselves as bird watchers. This ranges from the casual observer that peers out the window while sipping a morning coffee to the more dedicated enthusiast with an ever-growing life list of birds that have been spotted. I probably fall somewhere in the middle, with aspirations of eventual birdwatching greatness.

It's no great mystery why birdwatching has become so popular. It's fun, it's relatively inexpensive to get started, you can do it almost anywhere, and it's only as time consuming as you want to make it. Starting to watch birds can be as simple as paying more attention to the birds that are around during your normal activities- you'll be amazed at the variety you can find!

As you get more serious, a decent pair of binoculars and a good field guide are a must. One of my favorites for beginning birders is *Birds of Iowa* by Stan Tekiela. Since it only contains birds from Iowa you avoid the risk of searching through and locating the EXACT bird you have seen, only to discover that it is limited to a remote region of south-west Texas. Another bonus is that the book is arranged by color which is useful when you are still working on identifying the different families of birds.

Once you are out searching for birds to watch, you'll soon discover that hearing a bird happens much more frequently than actually seeing one. Enter CD's, MP3's, audio field guides, Identifiers, and oh yeah- there's an App for that too! Learning bird songs is a rewarding process, and it's something that I hope to improve upon this summer as well. If you are a birder, aspire to be one, or just want to try something new, I encourage you to attend a birding program this summer or just come out and spend some time in the bird blind. Birding is truly a life-long hobby that anyone can enjoy- we hope to see you out at the bird blind soon!

Help feed the birds! Adopt-a-Feeder Program

The bird blind is a great place to spot birds because it's packed full of bird feeders, but the costs to keep those feeders full can really add up! Please consider sponsoring a feeder for the year with a gift of \$100 or more. Your generous donation will be recognized on our birding area display. A donation form is printed on the back page of the newsletter- please check "feeder sponsorship". Gifts of black oil sunflower seeds, thistle seeds, peanuts, and new or gently used bird feeders are also welcome and greatly appreciated. Thank you!

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Shirley Messer, Ladora

Iowa County Conservation Board Staff

Lee Sorenson, Director
Mike Bode, Park Ranger
Laura Stephens, Naturalist



Did you know?

- The Peregrine Falcon can dive at speeds up to 200 mph.
- The American Woodcock is the world's slowest flyer, cruising at brisk 5 miles per hour.
- An Emperor Penguin can stay submerged in water for 18 minutes.
- Snowy Owls can endure temperatures of -80°F.
- The Barn Owl has the keenest hearing of any bird.
- The smallest bird in the world is a Bee Hummingbird with just over a 2 inch wingspan and weight of 1.6 grams.
- A Tundra Swan has the most individual feathers of any bird- 25,216!
- The nearly 12 foot wingspan of the Wandering Albatross is the largest in the world.
- The Crested Argus Pheasant boasts the longest tail feathers which max out at nearly 6 feet.

Facts taken from:
The Bird Almanac: A Guide to Essential Facts & Figures of the World's Birds
 by David M. Bird



Attention Pet Owners:

By Mike Bode, Park Ranger ICCB

Preaching to people about following park rules has never been something I've enjoyed, but sometimes it's one of those necessary evils. The reoccurring problem over the past few years is park users being lax about keeping their pets leashed at all times, as well as pet owners not cleaning up after their pets.

The Iowa County Conservation Board leash law is identical to that for state parks, stating that no pet shall be allowed to run at large on any ICCB managed area. These animals shall be deemed as running at large unless they are carried, lead by a leash, or are kept confined in or attached to a vehicle.

Many of the violators of this law are the owners of smaller dogs. I've seen many little dogs "loose" in the general vicinity of people's campsites. Very often dogs without a leash will also be seen walking to and from vehicles and campers. Many people ask me what possible harm these instances could cause. The thing is that no matter how well trained a pet can be, natural instincts to chase wild animals or to "square off" against another dog, can overpower the owner's ability to control their pet. Their pet could end up in a fight with the possibility of someone getting injured. Both circumstances could have easily been prevented had all pets been leashed.



Dogs aren't the only pets that frequent our parks. We have many cats that stay inside campers and the occasional leashed cats that you'll see out on walks. We even have a pet rabbit that frequents the campground. I know that I've been out

walking my dog through the campground while this rabbit was on the owner's lap sitting next to a campfire. In that situation, not only was I thankful my dog was on a leash, I was glad that I had a firm grip when he noticed the rabbit. As you could imagine, from ferrets to iguanas, any pet that can be leashed we've seen out in our parks.

Campers that are "off by themselves" or are camping during the "off season" tend to let their pets run free more frequently as well. They figure that their pets aren't bothering anybody, because there is hardly anyone around. The thing is, that you never know when violating this rule will effect somebody. Many late nights when walking through the campground, I've stumbled upon dogs running at large in the darkness. It's usually fairly close to where their owner's campsite is, but I am always at least startled. For people that are uneasy around dogs, I could see an encounter like that being quite traumatic.

Another place we have a lot of issues with dogs off leashes is at the beach. We actually have another specific rule in place that does not even allow pets on or around the beach, even on a leash. People still want to run in the sand and swim with their pets off of a leash. Many times breeds that are often classified as "aggressive" are the ones that we're dealing with in this "beach setting". No matter how you feel about generalizations people have regarding different breeds, no one should have to feel uncomfortable for one second or have anything more to worry about while at the beach. This actually goes for any breed and leads us into the other big problem we're having with pets and why pets haven't been allowed on beaches; people not cleaning up after them.

Cleaning up after your pets is never going to be the highlight of your trip to one of our recreation areas. However, this is exactly the responsibility you take on when you choose to bring a pet along. In the

Lake Iowa Park campground, for example, we've identified the problem and have made it even easier for pet owners to clean up. Bags are provided at multiple locations for owner's convenience. There can be such a negative impact on people when they set up to camp, only to realize the previous occupants must have had a horse with the amount of waste left behind. Anyone who's ever been on a riding lawn mower and ran over even just one pile from a neighbor's dog knows how nasty it can be, let alone having to deal with it right in your camp area.

So what is the Iowa County Conservation Board going to do about these pet owner issues? We used to talk to violators, explaining some of the reasons the rules exist, ultimately getting them to be compliant. For some that were less receptive, verbal warnings, followed by certified letters, and finally park evictions have been done. After much discussion, large signs have been ordered to go up near the entrance to Lake Iowa Park this spring. These signs explain these two laws and convey our zero-tolerance policy. How will violators be dealt with? At first, a warning may be given, all other times a citation will be issued. The total fines including surcharges and court costs are \$73.50 for an animal off the leash and \$100.50 for not cleaning up after your pet (littering). These fines are not intended to punish pet owners, but to encourage responsible ownership in order to make everyone's visit to our parks a positive one.

Top Tips for Canine Camping

DUE TO INCREASED COMPLAINTS OF DOGS RUNNING WITHOUT A LEASH WE WILL NO LONGER JUST WARN PET OWNERS. IOWA CODE 461.45 REQUIRES ALL PETS BE LEASHED AND UNDER CONTROL BY THEIR OWNER WHILE IN ANY STATE OR COUNTY PARK. ANYONE CAUGHT RUNNING THEIR PET WITHOUT A LEASH IN LAKE IOWA PARK WILL BE TICKETED- A SCHEDULED FINE OF \$73.50. PLEASE BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER PARK USERS AND FOLLOW PARK RULES AND REGULATIONS.

Exact wording that will be on posted signs at the park.

Camping with man's best friend can be a blast! Follow these 5 tips to make your next trip a great experience for you, your dog, and your campsite neighbors.

1. **Health Check:** Make sure your dogs vaccinations are up to date. Consider using a preventative medication to combat fleas and especially ticks.
2. **Proper ID:** Attach a tag to your pet's collar that includes your pet's name, your name, your address, and a phone number that you can be reached at while camping.
3. **Bring Supplies:** A leash is a must, but also consider a tether for when your dog is at the campsite. Bringing along your dog's water and food dishes and a few favorite toys may help him feel more comfortable in new surroundings.
4. **Respect the Neighbors:** Be polite and courteous to other campers and be sure to follow all park rules. Not everyone enjoys camping near dogs, so do your part to leave a positive impression on others.
5. **Know Your Dog:** Many dogs seem to love a new adventure, but not all dogs are well suited to camping. A good camping companion should be well behaved, quiet at night, and not aggressive towards people or other animals.

If your dog is new to camping, start with short trips to see how your pet handles the experience.




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

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

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Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please earmark my donation for:

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 Gateway Park Improvements
 Environmental Education materials & equipment
 Conservation News newsletter
 Habitat improvement/development on ICCB areas
 Bird Feeder Sponsorship
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