Newsletter for Dickinson County Conservation Board & Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County

Blue Water Nature Notes

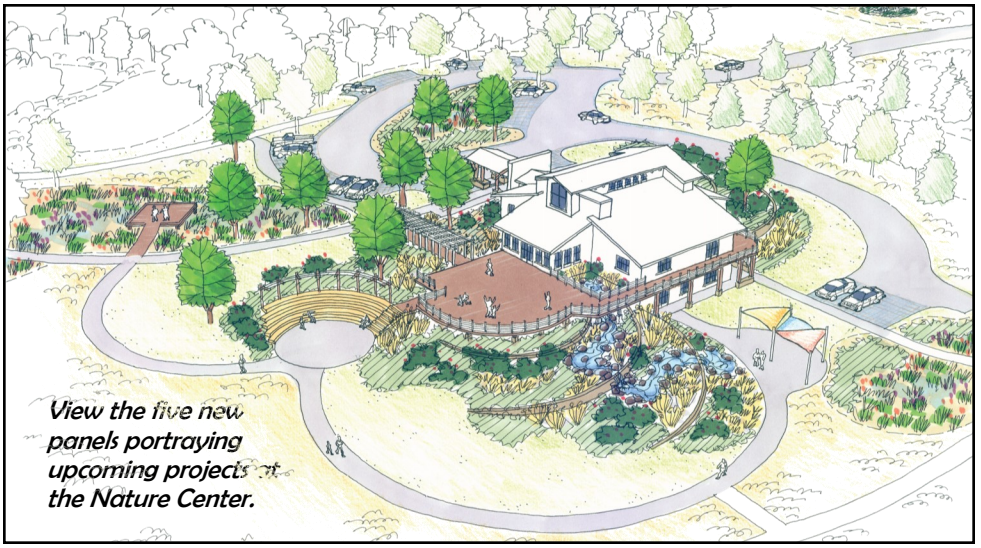
Volume 10, Issue 1 Summer 2011

Nature Center landscape and Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom projects slated to start this summer

Dedication, vision and a sense of preservation have been the drive and strength behind the developing Nature Center. This facility belongs to and is for the public, "to provide a peaceful retreat for visitors where natural, scenic and historical resources come together to create a living classroom to explore, learn and foster an appreciation for our natural world."

In the interest of fulfilling that mission the next big project is the establishment of the Nature Explorer Outdoor Classroom, to be developed in the oak savanna to the west of the Center. This project is one established by the Arbor Day Tree Farm and the design was done by the Dimensions Foundation of Lincoln, Nebraska. Look at the drawings on display in the Nature Center and talk to our naturalists about particulars.

Naturalist Barbara Tagami explained the function and purpose of the new classroom. "It will give students of all ages the opportunity to discover their inner naturalist by using natural components. Everything will be made from natural materials, such as a messy materials area where they can build, an art area where they can create masterpieces from natural items, an outdoor musical staging area and also a tree house. Kids will be able to muck in the mud and play in the sand. This will give people the experience of outdoor play, while teaching them the benefits and wonders of our natural world."



View the five new panels portraying upcoming projects at the Nature Center.

We are looking for major donors such as service organizations to help with this project.

The first phase of this project is slated to begin this summer. That includes the layout of the playground as well as landscaping around the building. Midwest Design Group Landscape Studio, and Matthew R. Matthiesen Landscape Architect are working together on the plans for the landscaping around the building. Volunteers are needed and welcomed to help with this project and others at the Nature Center. Please phone 712-336-6352 if you are interested in giving a helping hand.

"Nature is our natural playground, but it is not only ours, it belongs to every generation that comes after us."
-Author Unknown

Wallace photographic collection featured at Nature Center

Alfred Wallace

What started with the purchase of a $600 antique cabinet in 1979 has turned into a fascinating scientific discovery and media attention for Washington, D.C., attorney Bob Heggestad. His routine cabinet purchase is earning a place in science history. That's because of what's inside the cabinet: a spectacular Victorian-era collection of butterflies, moths, beetles, shells, and botanical specimens. Through handwriting analysis and careful documentation, Heggestad has demonstrated that the 1,700-item collection was assembled by a British scientist named Alfred Russel Wallace. There is no shame in failing to recognize the name. Wallace (1823—1913) was a brilliant field biologist who never cared about notoriety, which may explain why so few people know that he co-discovered the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Wallace did extensive fieldwork, first in the Amazon River basin and then in the Malay Archipelago, where he identified the Wallace Line that divides the Indonesian archipelago into two distinct parts, one in which animals closely related to those of Australia are common, and one in which the species are largely of Asian origin. He was considered as the 19th century's leading expert on the geographical distribution of animal species and is sometimes called the father of biogeography. To naturalists, this is huge.

Although the collection is safely tucked away and up for sale to such prestigious institutions as the Smithsonian and the American Museum of Natural History, the photographic imagery of its contents will soon be on display at the Nature Center. The display is in memory of Heggestad's parents. The Wallace Exhibit will open to the public on Monday, June 20, with a presentation by Heggestad from 6—8 p.m. at the Nature Center.

Read the entire story about the cabinet and its contents at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/07/AR2009020702104.html.

Explore Kenue Park

Home to a host of activities, Kenue Park has something for everyone. Managed by the Dickinson County Conservation Board, the park spans across 60 acres, and supports a variety of ecosystems that sustain a wide diversity of wildlife.

There is a glacially formed kame, which hosts a look-out platform. This allows visitors to see the area from a bird's eye view, and is a great place to read, relax, and even watch the fireworks on the Fourth of July!

Kenue Park is the home of the Nature Center, a state-of-the-art facility highlighting the area's natural wonders. The center is a must-see for visitors and local residents alike, and is the home for some new residents that live in the Osprey Hacking Station. There are restored prairie and wetland areas, a burr oak savanna and a great place to fly kites. There is a bike trail system, a butterfly labyrinth, a rock stacking sculpture, Dee and Kate's Butterfly House, and a self-guided fitness course. Visitors to Kenue Park can enjoy bird-watching, partake in bug-ology for insectigation, have a picnic, go cross country skiing or go on a snowshoe hike. Guided tours are available, and everyone is invited. For the technically savvy, there is a geocache site as well.

Kenue Park is constantly growing and changing. You and your family will get to experience something new each time you visit.

Kenue Park is also the home of the Westport Rural School Museum. Relive the days of the past in a one-room school. Quaint, quintessential, and charming, this school appears that the children are on their way, or are perhaps out for recess. The loving care it receives by the volunteers who are responsible for its upkeep can be seen the minute you enter this educational time capsule.

Kenue Park—explore and enjoy!

Gifting and donations perpetuate the vision

Last summer saw the long-awaited opening of the Nature Center. The Foundation played an important role in the funding of this project. With the help of generous gifts and grants from several other foundations and individuals, the final touches are either being completed or are in the design stage. Projects yet to be finished are the completion of the observation deck, final landscaping and the installation of the elevator.

In addition to the construction phase of the project, the Foundation was able to start an endowment fund to help maintain the Nature Center and its educational programs into the future. The Foundation was given a challenge to fund the endowment for $300,000. We are pleased to announce that we have reached over one-half of that goal! The endowment is being managed by Edward Jones and Co. of St. Louis, MO, with the Milford, IA office acting as the local contact.

Donations of cash, stocks or real property may be made to this fund either through the Edward Jones office or to the CFDC directly. We respectfully ask that you consider the Nature Center endowment fund in your next giving consideration.

We wish to thank all of you for your past and future support of this important project. *~Jack Jones, CFDC President*

Become a member—be an important part of this natural legacy

The backbone of the Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County, as with most foundations, is its membership. By becoming a member you are helping the Foundation to do its job which is to help, enhance and further the efforts of the Nature Center. Your membership contribution helps to fund our many events, programs, conservation projects, and the Dickinson County Nature Center.

To those of you who have already joined the Foundation...a hearty Thank You!! To those of you who are considering membership, please join.

If you are also interested in becoming active in our organization, we are looking for board members and volunteers to help with our annual events and Nature Center programs. The Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County meets the second Monday of every month, at 7pm in the Nature Center. The public is welcomed to attend.

Help us build a better understanding of our natural surroundings by using the membership form below. Please fill it out, talk to your friends and coworkers, or pass it on to someone else who can offer us their support.

CONSERVATION FOUNDATION OF DICKINSON COUNTY
Box 973—Okoboji, IA 51355

Member Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email Address _____

◊ **I am interested in volunteering**

CONSERVATION FOUNDATION OF DICKINSON COUNTY

◊ **Robin**—Student membership **$15**

◊ **Goldfinch**—Individual membership **$30**

◊ **Cardinal**—Family membership **$40**

◊ **Bluebird**—Contributing membership **$50**

◊ **Oriole**—Sustaining membership **$100**

◊ **Wood Duck**—Patron membership **$250**

◊ **Great Blue Heron**—Vision membership **$500**

◊ **Osprey**—Foundation membership **$1000 and up**

New display ROCKS!

Have you ever bent down and picked up a rock from the ground? Did you marvel at its shape or color? Did you notice something "special" about its characteristics? If so, you may call yourself a "rock hound."

Rock hounds are people who enjoy finding and collecting rocks and minerals. It can be a hobby, a scientific adventure, a scientific study, or even a business!

A rock hound needs no special training. Just by becoming one, a rock hound learns his or her passion. There are just a few things rock hounds need in their bag of tricks to be successful. First, a steel hammer with a steel head will allow you to break rock and dig into the ground. A bag to keep your tools in, as well as the treasures you find, should be sturdy and have a strap and be able to be securely closed.

Look for the unusual...the type that captures your attention."

Newspapers or other wrapping paper should be in your bag so you can protect your findings from rubbing and breaking against each other. A notebook is important to keep track of your rocks, and where you found them. Add a chisel, safety goggles, a pocket knife, and a magnifying glass to your kit, and your rock hound experience can begin!

Jerry Wiekamp of Spirit Lake has been collecting rocks for about 40 years. He started his career with geology courses, and had an uncle that was in mining in Missouri. He started trading rocks with his colleagues, and his rock collection began to grow. He looked at road cuts, and his collection began to grow. Vacations in Canada, and to vacation trips to rocky areas, he was constantly looking for specimens. He did buy a few at some rock shops, but for the most part, he found them himself. He has a gold nugget that he found a mile and 3/4 below the surface at the Homestake Gold Mine, which he considers his prize possession (not on display, but safely tucked away).

Jerry's collection is comprised of a quarry of cool rocks. He has igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks, as well as wonderful examples of minerals. Marvel at his gypsum desert rose from Mexico, talc from New York, peacock ore from Arizona or milky quartz from Colorado. There is slate, sandstone, sulphur and cinnabar. Hematite, shale, agate and feldspar. There are Apache tears and fossil fish.

Jerry says that the most important thing to remember when looking for rocks is to look for the unusual, the type that catches your attention, and that you don't see every day. "Around here, you won't find a huge variety of special kinds," says Jerry. "But you can begin to learn the basics of rock hunting, and become familiar with what is common, and then begin to search for those more unique specimens."

The lakes area has many opportunities for budding rock hounds. Rocks become naturally polished with the waves washing over them, and fossils were left behind by the glaciers. Along with that, rocks that are not native to this area can sometimes be found, if a keen eye can capture the glint of a genuine gem.

Jerry Wiekamp has been collecting rock specimens for more than 40 years, and has some beautiful rocks and minerals on display at the Nature Center.

What's a docent? How can I become one?

The Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County will sponsor a volunteer docent program at the Nature Center this coming summer. Youth ages 12 and over and adults are encouraged to apply. Only time and enthusiasm are required!

Volunteer docents are asked to commit a few hours per month to work at the Nature Center. Opportunities will include:

- Working in the gardens
- Leading nature hikes
- Monitoring monarch larva
- Feeding and caring for animals on display
- Designing and building exhibits
- Helping with special events
- Greeting and assisting visitors
- Helping maintain the Nature Center

By volunteering at the Nature Center, docents will make programs possible and affordable for more children and families, learn new skills, meet friendly people, learn more about nature and the environment, and work in a special place that needs your help.
If you are interested in becoming a Nature Center Docent, please call or stop by the Nature Center and the staff there will help you discover your inner naturalist!

2011 Summer

Family fun exploring nature

"Birding on the Greens" For the early birders this is a lovely outing on Brooks Golf Course! We meet at Brooks Golf Club parking lot on the 1st Monday of every month at 7:00 AM and caravan in golf carts in search of our fine feathered friends. We take a survey of the variety and number of species of birds for this Audubon certified golf course. June 6, July 11, August 1

"Monday Evening Outings" 6-8 PM. Join us on Monday evenings for a presentation on various environmental topics about recycling, energy, history, culture, wildlife, local ecosystems and global affairs. Some evenings we'll go explore the wild places in Dickinson County as well as learning about wild edibles, alien invaders, and more. June 6, 13, 20, 27, July 11, 18, 25, August 1, 8

June 6th—Dickinson County Greenwaste Recycling Center—John Walters
June 13th—Iowa Great Lakes Trees—Peter Vander Linden
June 20th—Alfred Russell Wallace Exhibit—Robert Heggestadt
June 27—Wild Edibles—Barbara Tagami
July 11th—Mongral Rally—Carrie Williams
July 18th—tba
July 25th—tba
August 1st—Birds and Audubon—
August 8th—CF of DC Annual Meeting

Thursday Programs for Kids

Young Nature Explorers for (pre-schoolers- 2nd grade) 10-11 AM. These programs are sensorial, hands-on experiences geared to curious, adventurous little pre-scholars. Siblings and parents are welcomed. Thursdays-June 9, 23, July 7, 21, Au-gust 4.

Junior Naturalist for (3rd- 6th grade) 2-3:15 PM. These programs are for your young naturalist and are geared to stimulate their investigative and observation skills in viewing the natural world. Thursdays- June 16, 30, July 14, 28, August 11.

Kayak a Wetland Every Friday morning at 8:30 AM, we meet at the Nature Center and caravan to a wetland or lake and kayak into natural areas exploring and observing wildlife. Programs start the first week in June and run through August 12th. Kayaks and instruction are available for a freewill donation of $35.00. Following is the schedule for locations of this year's wetland

June 3th – Prairie Lake
June 10th – East/West Hottes Lake
June 17th – Center Lake
June 24th – Virgin Lake
July 1nd – Trappers Bay, Silver Lake
July 8th – Diamond Lake
July 15th – The Grade, Big Spirit Lake
July 22rd – Pearl Lake
July 29th – Little Spirit Lake
August 5th – Wahpeton Canals
August 12th – Little Swan Lake

Program Schedule

Camps for Kids

This summer we will have week-long day camps, a series of "One World, Many Stories" one-day camps and an overnight camp for kids.

June13-17
"Microscopic Studies" Camp – this is a half-day camp
(1st—3rd Grades) at 9am to12pm
(4th—6th) Grade at 1pm to 4pm

June 17-18
"Camping Camp" (4th- 6th grade) – this is an overnight camp at the Nature Center
Starting at 4pm June17th going to 10am June 18th, includes dinner and breakfast and fun!

July 6. 13, 20
"One World, Many Stories", a series of one day camps focusing on cultures from around the world- stories, art, culture and connection to the natural world. Instructor: Marta Barnard, Willow River Arts

August 1-5
"Green Technology" Camp (4th to 8th Graders)- Exploration into electricity, solar and windpower with experiments on using these alternate energies are all a part of these fun camp.

For more information about these programs,

Please contact Dickinson County Naturalists:
Barbara Tagami,
712 330-1080 or btagami@co.dickinson.ia.us
Charles Vigdal,
712 331-1493 or cvigdal@co.dickinson.ia.us
Or the Nature Center at 712 336-6352

Osprey thrive in Iowa Great Lakes area

Five years ago, a hacking station was built on the Nature Center property with the hopes of reintroducing this majestic raptor into an area that was once home to this area. The first nesting pair identified in the area nested at the Spirit Lake Middle School in the lights at the baseball field. A nesting platform was quickly erected so that the wild nesting pair of osprey could more easily nest in the years to come.

According to tribal elders of the Omaha nation, accounts of ospreys nesting along Iowa waterways are included in their oral traditional stories.

Thanks to a program put in place by the Department of Natural Resources, osprey can now be found in several areas thoughout southern Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Ohio. To date, osprey have been placed at Macbride Raptor Project at Coralville Reservoir, Black Hawk County Conservation Board (CCB) at Hartman Reserve Nature Center, Polk CCB at Jester Park, Boone CCB at Don Williams Lake at Clear Lake, Linn CCB at Wickiup Hill, Marion CCB at Elk Rock State Park, Saving Our Avian Resources at White Rock Conservancy, Dickinson CCB at Spirit Lake, and Dubuque DDB at Mud Lake. Project fundraising is provided by the organizations doing the releases, at a cost of $525 per bird.

Thanks to the assistance of volunteers and conservation partners, ospreys have returned to Iowa as a nesting species. They are at the top of the aquatic fool chain, so they are a good indicator of a healthy environment. By preserving habitat and clean water, we can hope for continued improvements in the quality of all our lives.

Unique raptor is an angler

The Osprey is a unique bird that is unmistakable when seen at close range. It is the only species in its family, and it is found worldwide. Its breast and belly are mostly white, with some dark streaks. The white extends out the wings, but the primaries, secondaries, and tail feathers are mottled black-and-white. The back is mostly black or dark brown. The head is distinctive with a white crest, a face bisected by a dark eye-stripe, and yellow eyes. While there is much variation, the female tends to have a streakier breast than the male. The Osprey's talons are uniquely adapted for catching and carrying fish: their surfaces are rough, and their toes can be held with three forward and one back, or with two forward and two back, an arrangement seen in owls but not in other diurnal raptors.

In flight, they are most often confused with gulls because of their long wings, which are bent at the wrist. However Ospreys have a bounce to their flight that gulls lack

MEASUREMENTS: The Osprey has a body length of 21 - 24 inches, a 5 - 6 foot wingspan, and weighs 2 1/2 - 4 1/2 pounds.
HABITAT: The Osprey lives throughout the world near bodies of water, like lakes, rivers, marshes, mangroves, and seashores.
DIET: An Osprey's diet is almost exclusively live fish, and includes a wide variety of fish species. The Osprey uses low, slow flights over water, and occasionally hovers to search for prey. When a fish is spotted, Osprey make dramatic dives from heights of 30 - 120 feet to plunge feet first into the water after their prey.
REPRODUCTION: The nest is made of sticks and other material in trees, on cliffs, on man-made structures like power poles, bridges, buoys, and elevated platforms, or on the ground. The female lays 2 - 4 eggs that are incubated for 35 - 40 days. The chicks tend to hatch sequentially, 1 - 5 days apart. The young fledge at about 7 - 8 weeks of age, but are usually dependant on the parents until the fall migration. Ospreys become sexually mature at about 3 years of age.
NAME DERIVATION: The scientific name comes from the mythical king of Athens, *Pandion*, whose daughters were turned into birds, and the Greek words *halos*, which refers to the sea, and *aetos*, meaning an eagle. The common name is from the Latin word *ossifragus*, meaning "a bone breaker." Ospreys have also been called Sea Hawks and Fish Hawks.
INTERESTING FACTS: Unlike Bald Eagles, an Osprey can become completely submerged during its dive into the water and still be able to fly away with its prey. Bald Eagles are usually limited to plucking fish at the surface of the water as they fly by.

Ospreys have an opposable toe that can face forward or backward. While the bird is perched, it usually has three toes in front and one in back. When an Osprey catches a fish, its feet and toes are positioned with two toes on either side of the fish, one foot ahead of the other. The head of the fish faces forward in a streamlined position for transport through the air.

Courtesy of the Perigrine Fund

Reduce, reuse, recycle...at recycling facility

Recycling is the process of taking a product at the end of its useful life and using all or part of it to make another product. The internationally recognized symbol for recycling includes three arrows moving in a triangle. Each arrow represents a different part of the recycling process, from collection to re-manufacture to resale.

But what does all this have to do with you? Well, recycling is a simple way that you, as a consumer, can help out the environment, create a profitable market for recycled goods and help preserve natural resources from being depleted. So...let's get involved!

Dickinson County has been instrumental in helping it's residents reduce, reuse and recycle a variety of materials. The Dickinson County Landfill Commission is a consortium made up of leadership from the cities of Arnolds Park, Lake Park, Milford, Okoboji, Orleans, Spirit Lake, West Okoboji, Wahpeton and Dickinson County.

Fees charged by the DCLC for facility usage are set to cover only costs associated with final waste disposal of materials and for on-site staffing, which is covered by staff from the Dickinson County Conservation Board.

There is a wide variety of materials that can be taken to the site, which include hazardous household materials, electronics, tires, white goods, scrap metal and yard waste.

Please note that the recycling center's site attendant has discretionary authority to adjust disposal fees based on items and/or volume of materials brought in for disposal. The recycling center has available, free of charge, wood chips and compost. Wood chips are beneficial for planting and care of trees and bushes by inhibiting weed growth and conserving moisture. Compost is beneficial to enhance soil fertility and lessen soil compaction.

Be proactive, and consider the three R's when you clean up around your home, your business or when helping others. Contact the Recycling Center if you have any questions on any household hazardous materials.

The facility is located at
2260 220th Street, (A34)
east of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Milford.
Hours of operation are
Tuesday thru Friday—9 am to sunset
Saturday—9 am to 1 pm
Questions: 712-338-2738
www.dickinsonrecycling.com

Young Explorer Nature Corner

Hey young nature explorers, you have some friends at the Nature Center that would like you to come and visit them, but first, you have to figure out who is who! Read the clues below, and see if you can figure our which animal is which! Then come to the Nature Center, and see if you are right! Read the description and write what kind of critter it is in the blank left of the name.

_____ **Rosie** is one of the most popular pets of her kind, and they come in many beautiful colors. They are known to be hardy and docile, which means healthy and calm.

_____ **Itsy Bitsy** gets her name because she gives off a musky odor when she is handled, just like her furry counterpart. She can shake her tail and hiss, but won't hurt you!

_____ **Michelangelo** is a work of art and appears as if someone has painted her belly with water colors! She sure can swim, and loves to bask in the sun.

_____ **Speedy** lives up to his name. You have to keep an eye on this little guy, because he sure can move! Don't worry if he loses his tail—it will grow back.

_____ **Wally** is lucky, because he will always have a home at the Nature Center. Anglers come from all over to try to catch others just like him.

_____ **Zorro** has a mask, is large, elusive and lives in fresh water. The record for the largest caught of his kind in Iowa weighed a whopping 50 pounds and was 52 inches long.

_____ **Sal and Company** are a group of critters who look like lizards, but are amphibious, and really love to burrow. They like to eat worms, insects and spiders.

Put on your thinking hats...can you think of any other friends that should live at the Nature Center? Write them below, and bring your list with you when you come and identify the creatures that already call the Nature Center their home.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Dickinson County Conservation Board
1918 240th St.
Milford, IA 51351

Dickinson County Conservation Board Members

Joan Gronstal—Chairperson
Don Lamb – Vice Chairperson
Steve Anderson – Member
Kathy Kleen – Member
Pam Jordan - Member

Dickinson County Conservation Board Staff

John Walters – Director
Barbara Tagami – Environmental Ed Coord./Naturalist
Charles Vigdal – Naturalist
Karess Knudtson—Naturalist
Arin Miller—Naturalist intern
Angie Wills—Executive Secretary
David Booth—Conservation Technician

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Barbara Tagami – Member
Emily Lawler—Member
Paul Arnold—Member
Becky Peters—Member
Charles Vigdal—Member
Erica Leupold—Member
Jim Tuel—Member

Mission Statement: To encourage environmental awareness among visitors and residents while fostering appreciation, preservation and conservation of the Iowa Great Lakes region's unique cultural history, glacial geological formations, native species and natural habitats through education and action.