



Fall 2024

Blue Water Nature Notes

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

www.dickinsoncountyconservationboard.com
(712) 336-6352

Welcome

Welcome to Blue Water Nature Notes! Find out about the latest updates within the departments of the Dickinson County Conservation Board as we have had a busy season since the Spring!



CONTENTS

Intro.....	p 1-2
Nature Center.....	p 3
Natural Resources.....	p 4
Regional Collection Center.....	p 5
Roadside.....	p 6
Environmental Education.....	p 7-8
Upcoming Programs.....	p 9
CFDC & DCCB.....	p 10
Volunteering.....	p 11

NATURE CENTER HOURS

Tuesdays -Saturdays
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Closed Sunday,
Monday & Holidays

DCCB STAFF

Executive Director
Lee Sorenson

**Community Relations
Coordinator**
Amy Heibult

**Environmental
Education Coordinator**
Danika Cox

Naturalist
Britney Snell

**Regional Collection
Manager**
Charles Vigdal

**Natural Resources
Manager**
Brian Cuperus

**Natural Resources
Technician**
Clay Pavelko

Roadside Manager
Tanner Bouchard

Roadside Technician
Tim Frostestad

It has been a roller coaster of a summer season with flooding in most of the NW Iowa region. The river was at record levels as seen in the photo, Horseshoe Bend was a flood plain for a month before water levels continued to go down.



Sherwood Forest Park has progressed significantly. The construction crew has been hard at work all summer despite the set back of rainy days.

Summer camps were adventurous with learning about our local wildlife and experiencing up-close encounters. This group was persistent to catch a dragonfly that kept making a quick escape!



We attended several parades and events like the Okoboji Blue Water Festival in Arnolds Park. Visitors were challenged with a game of matching aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Busy Bees

by Amy Heibult

Community Relations Coordinator

This year, Dee's Bee and Butterfly Festival was another great success! For those who may not know, this is Dickinson County Conservation Board's largest annual event, which is free to anyone interested in celebrating pollinators and learning about their important role in our lives and the world around us. The festival was founded by Delores' Dee' Maser and former Naturalist Barbara Tagami of the DCCB, who both saw the need to increase awareness about our struggling pollinators. This year, approximately 850 people filed into the Nature Center parking lot, including the overflow parking mowed especially for the big day. It was a beautiful sunny evening with a temperature of around 70°.

Every year, as Monarch butterflies start their migration flight, the Natural Resource Department of the DCCB captures close to 500 butterflies each year for members of the public to tag at the festival. The tag consists of a small 1/4 inch sticker with a specific code that is recorded with the date, location, and sex of the butterfly. Inside screened tents of the Nature Center, families that tagged butterflies received a certificate with the code that could be used to search on the MonarchWatch.org website to see if and where the butterfly was recaptured.

The fun continued for the evening just outside the Maser Monarch Lodge with the Camp Foster goat herd that Tammy and Josh Carr kindly brought for families to enjoy petting and brushing. Troy and Sarah Davelaar, who own Siouxland Prairie Farms, a native Iowa plant nursery and greenhouse, spoke with attendees about purchasing plants they could add to their gardens. Not too far away was the Water Rocks exhibit that Iowa State University staffed to educate attendees about the importance of wetlands. Later, Marlene Boernsen, owner of Boernsen Bee Honey, demonstrated the process of extracting honey from her beehives and putting it into honey jars.

A line of children could be found inside the lodge, anxiously waiting to have a bee, butterfly, or caterpillar design painted onto their faces by the patient volunteers. Behind the craft tables and the photo booth, friendly volunteers assisted kids with craft assembly or dressing up with fun signs or accessories to take pictures with Sweetie the Bee.

The evening was buzzing with activity outside at the Seek and Find in the gardens, and the line to the bouncy house was backing up to the paved trail that extends through Kenue Park. Next to the Nature Center, many families stopped by the Back Alley BBQ food truck where Michael Dunn and his crew were smoking brisket, serving hot dogs, and dishing up pulled pork sandwiches. The night was concluded in the amphitheater with a performance by Magic of Travis Nye, an Iowa native now residing in Sioux Falls. As the final act neared, Nye called a child to the front to assist him in making something appear in the empty container he had presented to the audience earlier. As the child called out, "Alakazam!", he abruptly lifted the lid of the container open, and four Monarch butterflies flew out. The festival ended with the audience clapping and smiling, watching the butterflies fly away as they, hopeful for the journey south.



Some happy faces at Dee's Bee & Butterfly Festival



Oriental Bittersweet

by Brian Cuperus

Natural Resource Manager

Oriental bittersweet is an invasive vine that poses significant ecological threats to Iowa's woodlands. We have never seen it in Dickinson County until this year, where we noticed it on three of our properties. The good news is that we found it in its early stages, which is key to managing it and hopefully successfully eradicating it. We have done herbicide treatments on it, and it looks to be working. Another good thing about finding it early is that it has not done much, if any, damage to our woodland areas where it is located and hasn't taken much time or money to control. We will continue to monitor the infestations and take necessary steps to control them.

Oriental bittersweet is a problem for our woodlands because it rapidly grows and can cover trees, shrubs, and structures. The weight of the vines can cause physical damage to trees, breaking branches, and weakens their structural integrity. Its vigorous climbing habit allows it to smother and outcompete native plants by blocking sunlight, which disrupts the growth of understory vegetation. This behavior reduces biodiversity and alters habitats essential for wildlife. Oriental bittersweet can also be problematic because it can grow on buildings, powerline poles, and any other structures, which could also impact the structural integrity.

There are various ways to control oriental bittersweet, but it is important to know what will control the vine and what methods will enhance its population. Herbicides are the most effective way to control the population but can have negative effects on nearby plants. Prescribed burning and mechanical control, such as mowing and hand pulling, will temporarily control the vine but will make it resprout and stimulate resprouting.



Oriental bittersweet fruit and invasive behavior



Appliances: What happens to them?

by Charles Vigdal
Regional Collection
Manager



Appliances are part of everybody's life, and we often don't notice or think about them until they break. Eventually, everything breaks, and one day, you come home to a hot, humid house, or you open your freezer to a smelly mess. Now, you must figure out what to do and clean out a freezer! You should always call a repairman and try to fix said appliance and extend its life, which is the most efficient thing you can do, but sometimes it is at the end of its life. Where do all these broken appliances go, and why can't you just put them in your trash?

Why can't I throw my appliances in the trash?

There are a couple of reasons why you just can't go to the landfill and throw out your old fridge, microwave or water heater. First and most importantly, an appliance can contain hazardous materials that we do not want in sitting in the landfills. Some, but not all, contain parts or chemicals that can be damaging to people's health or the environment. Some of the examples of hazardous chemicals can be freons, oils, asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), lead, rechargeable batteries, and mercury. These need to be taken out, and then the hazardous parts can be disposed of through a special process like incineration or sent to a particular landfill where they are stabilized and buried. It takes a permitted facility and certified appliance de-manufacturer to know these hazardous parts and take them out to be considered safe for the rest to be scrapped or thrown away. All demanufactured appliances that are taken apart in Iowa are recorded by the facility and must report to the Iowa DNR every year to make sure they are following the state and EPA rules. The second reason is there are valuable recyclable materials to be reused in every appliance. Metals such as copper, aluminum and steel can be taken and sold, keeping these valuable resources out of the landfill. Unfortunately, most to all plastics will get taken to the landfill since appliances are rarely made of recyclable plastics.

Where should I take my broken appliances?

The first place you should start is by calling your city. Most cities will pick up your broken appliances after buying a tag, which can be very convenient. If you live in unincorporated or rural areas you can contact your local Regional Collection Center, landfill or transfer station to find out the proper place to take them. You could also check your electric or gas company and see if they have any programs where they will come pick up your old appliances for sometimes no charge or even give you a rebate.

Like with all things, if you take care of your appliances and do preventative care, they should save you money and last you a very long time!



White appliances sorted outside of the Regional Collection Center

Woody Vegetation Management in County Right of Ways

by Tanner Bouchard
Roadside Manager

As you may have noticed, our roadside vegetation managers have been actively cutting trees and managing brush and woody species along our roadways. We want to take a moment to explain the reasons behind these essential activities and their benefits for our county and other members of the communities that use our county road systems.

The primary goal of cutting and spraying woody plant species for roadside vegetation management is to ensure the safety of all road users. Overgrown trees and dense brush can obstruct visibility for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians, or worse, increase the risk of accidents. By maintaining clear sightlines at intersections and along curves, we enhance safety for everyone. With so many distractions on the road and hazardous winter road conditions, keeping the right of way clear from brush and trees ensures that if someone were to veer off the road, they would not run into the trees and prevent serious injury.

Dead or dying trees pose a significant hazard, especially during storms or high winds. Our team proactively removes these trees to prevent them from falling onto roadways, potentially causing injury or damage. This preventative approach helps protect our community from unforeseen risks.

Some woody species can be invasive, outcompeting native plants and disrupting local ecosystems. By managing brush and invasive species, we support biodiversity and promote healthier habitats for local wildlife. This not only benefits the environment but also enhances the beauty of our community.

Vegetation can encroach on roadways, sidewalks, and utility lines, causing damage and creating additional maintenance challenges. Regular management helps preserve our infrastructure, ensuring that roads remain safe and accessible for all. A well-maintained roadside contributes to the overall aesthetics of our community. By carefully managing vegetation, we can create inviting landscapes that reflect our commitment to a vibrant environment.



Before and After photos of a county roadside sight cleared of cedar trees

Escape the Nature Center!

by Danika Cox
*Environmental
Education Coordinator*

Escape rooms have become popular in areas across the United States. Each one offers a unique challenge where participants work together to solve clues, decipher riddles, manipulate hidden objects, interact with characters, locate keys, and much more, all to accomplish one goal: to escape! The Dickinson County Nature Center offers a similar experience but with a twist. Most escape rooms begin with an empty room that is filled with things to fit a certain scenario players must then use to escape. We have an entire building already full of fascinating things for you to discover. Players will get one hour to solve the mystery surrounding a destroyed campsite, all while enjoying the nature center. This event is a great opportunity for those who may not necessarily be interested in nature to get a chance to explore and learn about it in a fun, new way.

Escape the Nature Center is also great for building social skills among your family, friends, or even coworkers by allowing you to work together as a team where collaboration, leadership, communication, and problem-solving are key to your success. The memories and laughter you share while playing the game are sure to leave you coming back for more! We offer this program twice each year with multiple time slots available to help fit your busy schedule. Our first session was so much fun, and we are looking forward to the next one happening on October 14th. To register your team, go to www.dickinsoncountynaturecenter.com and click on the Programs and Events tab. If you are unable to make it, keep checking our website or Facebook page for details about the next one happening in 2025! This event is one you don't want to miss and one we enjoy sharing with you.



A family took on the challenge and escaped in time



Another successful escape

No School, No Problem

by Britney Snell
Naturalist

Hey, parents - do not let your kids face boredom while on break from school. Dickinson County Conservation Board offers four No School Camps during the school year! Let your kid enjoy an all-day adventure from 9 AM - 3 PM to build friendships, explore nature, and foster a curious mind in a safe environment. Each camp features a theme which incorporates a variety of activities. During the camps, activities may include exploring outside, trying a new skill, meeting live animals, playing with friends, or creating a craft. In addition, campers will enjoy two snacks provided by the DCCB staff.

Last year, campers took a trip around the world at the 7 Biomes of the World camp. We journeyed to the desert, through craft and live animal encounters, and ate an oceanic treat that all the kids enjoyed. The group walked through our oak savannah in search of local wildlife, from birds to bugs. The Environmental Education staff saw friendships forming, smiles on faces, and new connections to our natural world. We love that these camps provide a fun, unique opportunity for the kids to explore in new ways while taking a break from the normal routine of the classroom.

Check out the dates and themes below. Please check your school calendar to ensure your student is off on the corresponding day.

- *January 3rd - K-3rd grade - PJ's & Predators at the nature center*
- *January 20th - 4th - 8th grade - Outdoor Day at Horseshoe Bend Wildlife Area (Celebrating International Take a Walk Outdoors Day)*
- *March 17th - K-3rd grade - Green in Nature at the nature center*
- *April 18th - 4th-8th grade - Meet the Feet at the nature center*

Registration for each program will open eight weeks prior to camp, and the cost is \$15 per camper. Give your child the opportunity to get out of the house and explore this year on No School days!



*Campers meeting Olive,
an animal ambassador
of the Nature Center*



Upcoming Programs & Events

Kenue Coffee Hour (Adults)

October 3rd- *The Story of the Coffee Bean* - The Well Coffeehouse & Eatery

November 7th- *Owls* - DCCB Education Coordinator, Danika Cox

December 5th- *Birding* - ISU Extension and Outreach

Nature Tots (Ages 2-5 yrs)

October 9th- *Itsy Bitsy Spider*

November 13th- *5 Fat Turkeys*

December 11th- *Frosty the Snowman*

Homeschool Ed-Ventures (Ages 5-12 yrs)

October 17th- *Outdoor Skills Day*

November 21st- *Animals of the Past*

December 19th- *Diggin' Fossils*

Family Nature Night (Families)

October 25th- *Howling Halloween- "Unmasking the Monsters"*

November 22nd- *Hibernation Aggravation*

December 20th (moved due to Christmas holiday)- *Winter Solstice Celebration (Horseshoe Bend)*

Special Events

October 14th, various time slots available - *Escape the Nature Center Session 2*

November 15th- *Women In Nature Day (WIND) at Night*

November 16th- *Grandparents Day at Kenue Park*



To learn more or register for our programs visit
www.dickinsoncountynaturecenter.com

Conservation Board Members

Chair: Steve Anderson

Vice Chair: Eric Stoll

Members: Joan Gronstal, Douglas Nielsen, Robert Waters

BOS Liaison: Steve Clark



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."

Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County

President: Rebecca Peters

Vice president: Wade Brantley

Secretary: Erika Leupold

Treasurer: Mike McFarlin

Board members: Tom Maser, Leah Streeter, Jim Tuel, Ron Williams, Mary Kay Donovan, Lisa Leopold, Linnea Johnson-Scott



The Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County (CFDC) is an independent, non-profit organization that supports the projects, education, and conservation efforts of Dickinson County. By becoming a member you can personally be involved with improving your local county parks, assist with land acquisition, improve and support the Dickinson County Nature Center, and help conserve native wildlife and habitats.

Membership Levels:

Robin - Student \$15
Goldfinch - Individual \$30
Cardinal - Family \$50
Bluebird - Contributor \$75
Oriole - Sustaining member \$125
Wood Duck - Patron \$250
Great Blue Heron - \$500
Osprey - \$1000+

Projects aided by CFDC funding:

- Sherwood Forest Park
- Augmented Sand Topography Exhibit
- Pollinator Paradise
- Snowshoes for Winter Programs
- Nature Center Parking Lot
- and SO MUCH MORE!

Become a member by visiting the Dickinson County Nature Center, 22785 Nature Center Road, Okoboji, IA 51355. You can also go to www.dickinsoncountyconservationboard.com/foundation.

Interested in Volunteering?

Volunteers are a vital part of what we do here at the Nature Center! The special part of volunteering here is the many faces that one gets to see everyday. Young or well-seasoned, it is never too early or late to learn something new about our natural world.

Volunteers are the friendly faces at the front desk or at Westport Schoolhouse. Not only do they show visitors the facility, but also can take the opportunity to connect and teach the public. Many volunteers have joined because they also wanted to learn more about our environment, wildlife, and local historical culture. Sharing that passion and knowledge with others is at the core mission of the Dickinson County Conservation Board. We greatly appreciate our volunteers and could not carry on without them.

Monthly volunteer meetings are regularly held on the first Monday of the month at 10:30 a.m., unless moved due to a holiday or weather.

If you have an interest of volunteering at the Nature Center or Westport Schoolhouse, speak with Amy Heibult at the Nature Center or call (712) 336-6352.

