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www.co.page.ia.us

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Page County Conservation Board
2039 Highway 71
Clarinda, IA 51632
Phone/Fax 712.542.3864
pagecocons@iowatelecom.net

PAGE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

BOARD MEMBERS

Charles Spencer, Shenandoah
Don Priebe, Shenandoah
Tom Johnson, Essex
George Crawford, Clarinda
Ron Bitting, Clarinda

BOARD STAFF

Rich Wallace, Co-Director/Park Ranger
Charly Stevens, Co-Director/Naturalist

CONSERVATION CONNECTION

Quarterly Newsletter of the Page County Conservation Board

(Partially funded using REAP funds)

January-April 2011

ONE SEASON ENDS AND ANOTHER ONE BEGINS

Where did the summer/fall go? The month of January is half over; seems like time is quickly passing by.

We've been asked, "What do you guys do during the winter?" Some people think we take those months off, but in reality, just because we're not as high profile in the parks like in the spring and summer months doesn't mean we aren't there. The scope of work changes as does the season. Late fall prairie and grass burns are conducted. Timber stand improvement work is completed in the winter due to less leaves on the trees. Picnic tables are assembled and painted, litter is picked up, equipment repairs, if necessary, are done and the planning of spring projects is laid out. Then there are also the necessary reports to be filed and budget work, along with the readying of bulletin board materials and preparing camping registration receipts for the spring season. Actually, the list is lengthy—we just keep busy!

Rich Wallace, Park Ranger, has been employed with the Conservation Board for 22 years and Charly Stevens has been here 25 years. We have an anniversary to "celebrate" as we have been in our new location for a year now. It's quite comfortable and people are finding us to conduct necessary business.

As we look forward to the rest of 2011, we hope to see you, the park visitor, in the parks this coming summer. These areas are for you to enjoy. As a reminder, most of our county areas have ponds for fishing, **not for swim-**

ming. "No motor vehicles beyond this point" means exactly what it says. The posted rules and regulations are for your safety. On the other hand, please approach park staff if you have concerns or problems. The Conservation Board is also available to talk with.

In closing, spring will be here before we know it, with longer days and the grass will be greening up.

I do have quotes to pass along, both are about Rapp Park, but I wanted to include them in the newsletter. The first quote comes from Judy Powers: "I went out to Rapp Park several weeks ago and I love the progress that has been made. It really looks nice. My family has a memory bench out there on the west side looking out over the water. The day I was there the sun was bouncing off the water, so I sat on Jeff's bench awhile and enjoyed the view. Very calming effect. Can't wait for the rest to come together."

The second quote comes from Mrs. Ernest Liljedahl: "We just love it out at Rapp Park."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**FEBRUARY 2, 2011
GROUNDHOG DAY**



**FEBRUARY 5, 2011
PHEASANTS FOREVER
BANQUET**

Banquet will be held at Wibholm Hall. For more information contact Stanley Johnson at 712.586.4544 or George Crawford at 712.542.5352.

**FEBRUARY 18-21, 2011
GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

See complete article for details.

**MARCH 14, 2011
HUNTER SAFETY EDUCATION CLASS**

See complete article for details.

*The Page County Conservation Board
office will be closed on
Monday, February 21,
in observance of Presidents' Day*

GOT GARDENING QUESTIONS?

There is help available – call the Hortline at 515-294-3108, Monday through Friday 10 a.m.-noon and 1-4:30 p.m. Email address is hortline@iastate.edu. For other gardening information, you can check out their Yard and Garden Online at www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu and their Horticulture and Home Pest News at www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/

The Page County Conservation Board meetings are open to the public. Visitors are welcome.

The Board meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are held at the Conservation Center at 2039 Highway 71, Clarinda, IA

Please note these dates are subject to change:

February 8, 2011
March 8, 2011
April 12, 2011

The *Conservation Connection* is the quarterly newsletter of the Page County Conservation Board and is mailed to those persons on our mailing list. Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list need only to send their name and address to our office. There is no charge for the newsletter. Please help us keep our costs down and make sure you get your newsletter on time by keeping us informed of any address change. You may also request the newsletter electronically. Email pagecocons@iowatelecom.net or call (712) 542-3864. The newsletter can also be accessed from the website at www.co.page.ia.us

**Page County DNR
Conservation Officer**
Deborah Smith
712.520.0507

SW Recreational Safety Officer
Marlowe Wilson
712.250.0302

Fisheries Biologist
Gary Sobotka
641.464.3108
gary.sobotka@dnr.iowa.gov

District Forester
Lindsey Barney
712.482.6245
lindsey.barney@dnr.iowa.gov

**Environmental Protection
Division**
Dan Stipe–DNR Field Office #4
712.243.1934
dan.stipe@dnr.iowa.gov

Wildlife Biologist
Carl Priebe
712.374.3133
carl.priebe@dnr.iowa.gov

Great Backyard Bird Count Word Search

C R L O W O R C I F A I R L D S E E D A K C I H C V Y R W X
X H J E Y T X N L V O L S O W O O D P E C K E R T E B Z O P
E P I A C R K J M H R R G N B Z U V I H M C N N S Z H T R H
F Z V S J M O R I O L E N O H I C W A G C U A P P D Q M R E
I Q B L U E J A Y M O M W I O H N T N W T N O R U A H X A A
M V T L U B S Q B R V W H H T S B R H H O T I P D A B Q P S
I X O L B F A L C O N F B P B H E I A R T O R F B I V Q S A
G H E W K H O U S E F I N C H B O T R I U E O I D T N Z G N
R Y U J L O A G Y D K T L X Z A C L N D H S T K D L F A Z T
A Z F M V H G R E I R C B A P H M G O C I A H C C O O C L W
T L L J M E D T K U T G U I R S S W T G T N S Z Y U V G M X
I U T H G I L F R G B Q F D G C A A R S Y Q G W X S C E P Z
O E A G L E N M U D E F L R O R C X C O N S E R V A T I O N
N F C C M H G G T L I S S P B Y W O L L A W S W C J G O H R
N O R E H W L U B E S R E L L C B L A C K B I R D I U D U F
P F B T G U O F F I T M E F H I H F D P O I A V A I E D P F
Y N E S T L I N G F R R U K K D R I M H O R E P I P D N A S
K W A H C M P H A E R D G T B I N O C U L A R S M X C R F O

Word List

binooculars	field guide	ornithology
birding	flight	owl
blackbird	flycatcher	pheasant
blue jay	goldfinch	robin
cardinal	goose	sandpiper
chickadee	habitat	sparrow
conservation	hawk	spotting scope
crow	heron	swallow
cuckoo	house finch	thrush
dove	hummingbird	turkey
duck	migration	warbler
eagle	nestling	woodpecker
eggs	nuthatch	
falcon	oriole	

EMERALD ASH BORER UPDATE

A few issues back, we mentioned the Emerald Ash Borer, a little bug that may pose huge problems in the future for the Ash tree populations in Iowa. This update was received from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; while this does not affect Page County or adjoining counties at this time, it is still relevant to mention.



Iowa DNR visually surveyed ash trees for signs and symptoms of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). The trees were in high risk areas (sawmills and heavily used campgrounds). In 2010, the DNR surveyed 235 campgrounds and 29 sawmills in 55 counties. A total of 1,267 Ash trees were inspected and all were negative for EAB. Funding for that project came from US Forest Service grants.

Iowa DNR finished removing 412 sentinel (trap trees) in December 2010. The trees were girdled near the ground in 2009, and had all of 2010 to decline and lure any Emerald Ash Borer to the trap trees. All 412 trees were negative for this past trapping season. An additional 412 trees have been set up for 2011.

Iowa DNR, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and USDS also worked on hanging the purple sticky traps throughout the state. (We had some of these traps placed in our county parks so they could be monitored for EAB.) A total of 1,554 purple sticky traps were set up in the 10 counties along the Mississippi River in a 1.5 mile grid. This was part of the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) Delimit Survey to detect the bug. In addition, 328 of these purple sticky traps were dispersed throughout the rest of the state at high risk sites (campgrounds and sawmills). All of the traps were placed in May, checked and serviced in July, and removed in September. A single purple sticky trap was found positive for Emerald Ash Borer. That single trap had 13 adult Ash Borers on it. That was on land owned and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



A firewood labeling rule was also implemented beginning January 1, 2011. Packaged firewood offered, exposed, advertised or held for sale must bear a clear and conspicuous declaration of: identity of the commodity (example: firewood), net quantity in terms of cubic feet or cubic meters, name and address of manufacturer, packer or distributor if the packages were not produced on the premises where they are offered, exposed or held for sale, unit price must be posted and harvest location of the wood by county and state. There are similar requirements for bulk firewood. For more information on the labeling requirements you can contact IDALS Weights and Measures Bureau at 515.725.1492 and/or IDAL Entomology and Plant Science Bureau at 515.725.1470. Best advice on firewood – buy it local and burn it local.

There is also an EAB resource kit available at: www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/eab/. There is an insecticide option for protecting Ash trees from EAB at: www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/eab/files/insecticidefs.pdf. If you want to read the latest forest health information for the state of Iowa, visit www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/files/fhr2010.pdf.

One more resource, landscape trees, are dying prematurely. In many cases, this is because the correct care wasn't given at the time of planting and/or throughout the life of the tree. To help us take better care of our trees, the U.S. Forest Service has created a Tree Owner's Manual. Similar to the manuals that come with many things we buy, such as vehicles and appliances, this booklet includes a parts diagram, instructions for installation, tips for troubleshooting and more. This handy reference can be downloaded at www.treeownersmanual.info. If unable to get your own copy, the Page County Conservation office has copies available.

WHAT IS THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT AND HOW CAN I HELP?

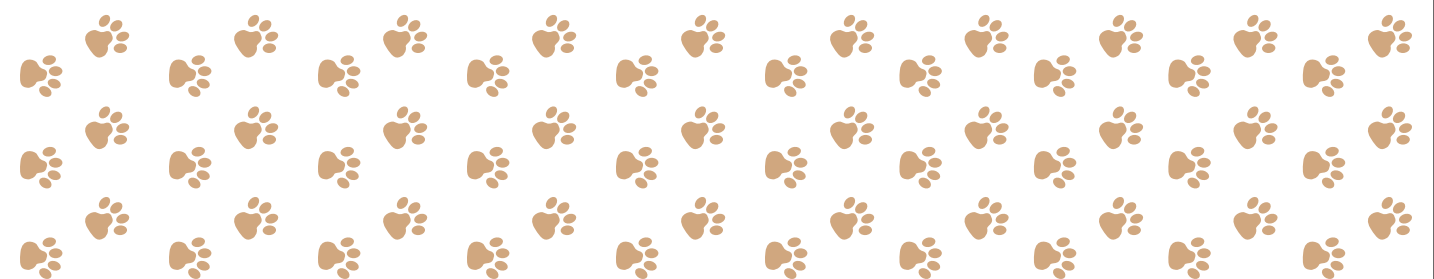
The 14th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event, February 18-21, 2011, that lets bird watchers of all ages count birds to create a real snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate from the novice to the expert. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's a free event and it helps the birds. You tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report your counts, go to the Great Backyard Bird count website at www.bird-count.org. The information gathered will help scientists and others compare the timing of bird migrations with past years, identify bird diseases affecting birds in different regions, and determine how this winter's snow and cold influence the bird populations, among other things.



HUNTER SAFETY CLASSES TO BE OFFERED IN CLARINDA

Residents and non-resident hunters born after January 1, 1972 must satisfactorily complete a hunter's education course in order to obtain a hunting license. Classes begin Monday, March 14, and continue on the 15th, 17th, 21st, 22nd, and 24th from 7-9:30 p.m. They will be held at the American Legion at 107 West Washington Street in Clarinda.

To pre-register for this class please contact Charly at the Page County Conservation Office at 712.542.3864 or 712.370.1158.



2011 FISHING & HUNTING LICENSES

Your 2011 licenses can now be purchased and here are a few reminders.

Fishing: Iowa residents and non-residents 16 years or older are required to have a valid fishing license on their person while fishing and have paid all the applicable fees.

Hunting: Residents under 16 who hunt under the direct supervision of the properly licensed parent or guardian, or other competent adult with the consent of the parent or guardian, do not need a hunting license or to pay the habitat or migratory game bird fee. One properly licensed adult must accompany each unlicensed hunter under age 16. Residents 12 to 16 years old may hunt without adult supervision, but must have a hunting license and must have passed a hunter education course.

THANK YOU!

Eric Miller, Ethan Woldruff, Trevor Sunderman, Collette Carlson and Westley Baker – IWCC students for picking up litter at Nodaway Valley and Ross Parks

Jack Lin and Matthew Brown – High School students for mulching 25 trees at the Conservation Center

Tommy Potts – donation of 5 lilac bushes
Wal-Mart – 32 bags of deer corn

RAPP PARK CAMPGROUND DONATIONS:

Bob & Sally Iske, Doug & Linda Monroe, Steve & Nancy Erickson, Ken & Tiffany Swank, Kim & Theresa Swank, Ernest & Jeannine Liljedahl, Pat Tillman, Pella Rolscreen Foundation, Derry Wolford, Jim Walter, David & Marjorie Freeze, Arnold Tiemeyer, Eunice Henn, Jerry Sharp (construction materials), Gary Falk (labor), City of Shenandoah (construction materials)

CREATURE FEATURE – GROUNDHOG

Groundog, woodchuck – both are common names for the same animal, or if you prefer the scientific name, *Marmota monax*. Groundhogs are in the rodent family, most closely related to squirrels. Their coats are grayish brown. They generally weigh 4-14 pounds and their length from tail to nose is between 16-27 inches – quite the stocky little animal, with a flattened head.

The groundhog is common in the U.S. and Canada. At the time of settlement, groundhog populations were low, but as settlers cleared forests and opened up other areas, their population expanded. The preferred habitat is edges of woodlands and brushy streams, with open areas nearby.

Groundhogs are burrowing animals and therefore have sturdy claws for digging. They also are one of Iowa's few mammals that are considered to be a true hibernator; the heart rate slows down as well as their body temperature. Their front teeth, which grow continuously, are kept short from all the gnawing they do, and quit growing during hibernation.

Groundhogs' preferred foods are grasses, wild herbs, clover, alfalfa and garden vegetables. On rare occasions, they may eat snails and insects. With the ability to climb trees, they'll eat the leaves, bark and small branches.

In the spring, 4-5 young groundhogs are born with their eyes closed and no fur. They grow fast, and within 6-7 weeks they finally come out of the burrow. By mid-summer they are independent enough to leave and build their own burrows. They are mature around two years of age.



Groundhogs' life expectancy is around 4-6 years in the wild. They are a natural prey source for fox, coyotes, bobcats, large hawks, dogs and of course, vehicles.

For the kids – *Groundhog Gets a Say*, written by Pamela Curtis Swallow – Only a one-day holiday for groundhogs? That hardly seems fair to the wise and experienced groundhog in this tale. “We don't just do the weather,” he explains. “Groundhogs deserve better!”

To prove it he points out lots of fun facts about his kind. For example, groundhogs may whistle, especially when

danger is near. Their digging skills are legendary, and their burrow designs are very efficient. Groundhogs have teeth that keep gnawing, and sensitive noses and ears with flaps that keep out soil when they dig. Reading this book may turn your child into a marmotologist (someone who studies groundhogs).

WINTER BIRD FEEDING

If you want to start feeding wild birds, there are at least three things to consider: 1. Learn what birds are normally seen in your area. Some birds come at different times of the year. 2. Decide the best place to install your new bird feeder—in a tree, on a hook, pole or some other device. Make it easy for them to access and easy for you to clean and re-fill. 3. Choose the correct feeder and consider more than one type. There are tube feeders with large holes for large seeds, small tube feeders for finches, wire mesh feeders for woodpeckers, suet baskets and hummingbird feeders. Some birds prefer to eat off the ground or a platform feeder. Birds like cardinals and thrushes, for example, will prefer to feed close to brush and trees for safety sake. If birds don't “find” your feeder immediately, be patient or move your feeder to another location. A variety of foods and feeder types equals attracting a variety of wild birds. Always provide a source of heated water.

Other foods to consider are **Corn** – cracked, shelled, or ear corn is always on the menu during the winter. Smaller bird species like the cracked variety while larger species like the Blue Jays prefer the ear or shelled. **Niger Thistle** seed works well for finches and other smaller birds. **Black Oil Sunflower** seeds offer a high fat content which helps keep the birds warm, so would be a good choice for attracting blue jays, finches, cardinals, woodpeckers, and juncos to name a few. **Safflower** seeds would be a good choice as it isn't a choice

Winter Feedingcont. on pg. 5

FEATURED TREE – EASTERN RED CEDAR

The Eastern Red Cedar is a very common conifer found throughout the state of Iowa. Despite the name, the Red Cedar is not a true cedar, as it belongs to the Juniper family. Rather than needles, cedar trees develop scale-like leaves that are close to the twig. They are also recognized by their dark red-brown wood. Instead of hard cones, the red cedar produces a softer cone that is dark blue and berry-like. These cones are very popular with songbirds and mammals alike. Seeds that are eaten are passed through their systems and deposited in places like ditches and fence rows, and in old, abandoned fields.



The Red Cedar will thrive in some of the poorer soils, thereby invading over-grazed pastures that we so commonly see. The tree is also used in wildlife plantings, landscaping and windbreaks. The wood itself is fragrant



and has the ability to repel moths; it is often used for furniture making. Cedar posts are also utilized for shingles and fence posts.

The Eastern Red Cedar is also believed to be the oldest tree species in Iowa.

Winter Feeding.....cont. from pg. 4
for squirrels and starlings. **Nuts** – the meat of nuts like peanuts, sunflower, pistachios, walnuts, and pecans are good food sources. Some insect-eating birds will consume nutmeats because they resemble insects. Don't forget the **grit**; birds don't chew, so their gizzard grinds up the seeds for digestion. It can be added to the food source or offered in a separate feeder. What about offering fruit? Depending on the bird species, cranberries, cherries, raisins, apples, blueberries and papaya can be offered. The easiest and cheapest way to provide fruit is to purchase wild bird feed that contains real fruit not fruit flavorings.

Suet is the hard, white fat found around the kidneys and liver and is an important source of ready energy for many species of birds, especially in the colder winter months. Wild birds need very high levels of fat to survive, but it should be offered as a supplemental food since it is low in protein, vitamins and minerals. Woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches can be regular visitors to suet feeders. Suet “cakes” are usually hung from tree branches or poles or regular wire holders as well as home-made suet logs as mentioned below. Some suet cake products may also contain insects.

Here is a quick and easy suet meal to make and provide for your backyard birds with this source of food that may attract a wider range of birds to your yard. Fruits, nuts, and seeds can be added.

Ingredients

1 c. smooth peanut butter 1 c. vegetable shortening 1 c. white flour (not self-rising)
3 c. yellow corn meal (not self-rising)

Mix ingredients together well and place in a suet log (see instructions) or simply smear the paste on the trunk of a tree, branch, post or other solid object where birds can find and reach it.

Store the remainder of the unused suet in a closed container in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Suet Log

Use an 8-12 inch long by 3-6 inch diameter log. Drill a couple of 1-inch diameter holes to depth of 1-inch. Smear suet in each hole. Hang with cord, attached to log with a screw eye.