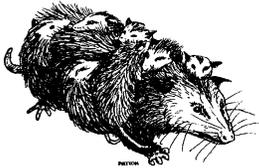


Pathways To Nature

Newsletter of the Webster County Conservation Board
Winter-Spring 2001

Contents

[Keeping the Wildlife Safe](#) | [From the Director's Desk](#) | [Ranger Report](#)
[Roadside Report](#) | [Public Programs](#) | [Bird Blind](#)
[New Conservation Officer](#) | [Forestry Forum](#) | [General Info](#)



The following article was written by Rachel Witcher, an intern/assistant for the WCCB EE program for the past year plus. This late spring/early summer she will be moving on and into a new direction in her life. We wish her the best and thank her for her outstanding work. What an asset she's been to our organization!)

Keeping the Wildlife Safe

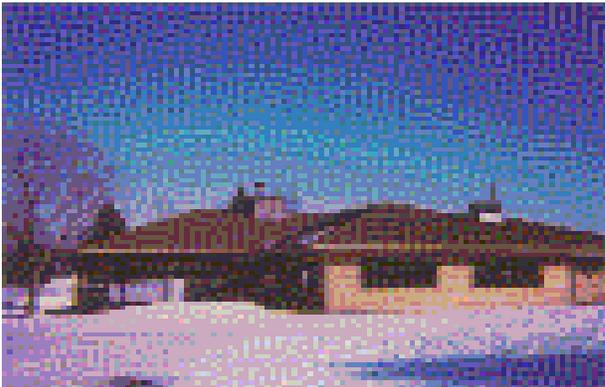
Spring has arrived, which means our wildlife are returning, awaking from winter slumbers and babies are soon to follow. Nice weather brings people into the outdoors as well. Unfortunately, some of our activities may be harmful for the young, inexperienced critters or unsuspecting adults. Listed below are 12 simple things you can do to avoid harming wildlife....

- 1. Keep your cats indoors** (especially during May and June)
- 2. Alert birds to large expanses of glass** in your home by breaking up reflections with stickers, decals, or aluminum pie pans.
- 3. Educate children to respect and care for all wild creatures and their habitats.** Kennedy Park Nature Center offers lots of good information and fun activities about our native Iowa for the whole family!
- 4. Pick up litter and refuse.** Simply cutting each circle of six-pack connectors can prevent entanglement.
- 5. Be alert when driving,** especially near wildlife refuges and rural areas. When possible, cautiously stop and move turtles from the road to the shoulder.

6. **Check the grass for ground nests before mowing.** If nest is found, try to be patient and allow the animals to use that grass patch for the few essential weeks necessary for raising young.
7. **Check tree branches for nests before pruning.**
8. **Place caps over chimneys and vents** to prevent animals from nesting in them or becoming trapped.
9. **Do not leave fishing line or fish hooks** unattended or lying about outdoors.
10. **Use non-toxic products** on your lawns and gardens. Contact local environmental groups to obtain ideas for safe alternatives.
11. **Motor oil should not be left in oil pans** unattended. Birds may fall into these pans and few survive.
12. **Leave healthy young wild animals where you find them** or call a wildlife rehabilitator for advice on what do to.

If you have questions regarding a found critter, local veterinarians can often supply you with information or the name of the closest rehabilitation center. For Webster County areas, contact Erika Andersen, DNR Game Warden at (515-571-0127), Karen Hansen at Kennedy Park (576-4258), or Linda Hinshaw a rehabilitator from Spirit Lake (712-336-3827).

From the Director's Desk



By Charlie Miller, Director

Many new and exciting things have been going on with the Webster County Conservation Board and staff this fall and winter. The new Bob Heun shelter is now completed. It is a beautiful facility that has replaced the old enclosed shelter at Kennedy Park. This new shelter's main seating room is 30 feet by 60 feet and should seat up to 150 people. There is also an attached covered patio with a beautiful view

overlooking Badger Lake. You will find a small kitchen just off the main seating room that is furnished with a refrigerator, a microwave, a sink and ample counter space with plug ins for your roasters and crock pots. The shelter is both heated and air conditioned for year around pleasure and has log siding for the rustic look. The attached restrooms will be available for those using the shelter as well as all other park users. The Conservation Board will be holding an open house for the shelter on Saturday, April 14, 2001, The Bob Heun family, whom the shelter is being dedicated to, will be the first group to use the shelter for a function on Easter Sunday, April 15th. If you are interested in reserving the new facility after that date, please call the Conservation Board office for more information. The rental fee for the new shelter will be \$50.00. The shelter will still be available for sledders during the winter months on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.



The Conservation Board is in the process of adding two additional areas, totaling nearly 60 acres, for the public to enjoy. One area is near Barnum and Clare that will total over 35 acres along the Lizard Creek. The second area is east of Fort Dodge and covers over 20 acres in which we hope to reestablish a nice prairie pothole surrounded by native prairie grasses and flowers. Both of these areas have good existing habitat on them and we feel with some tree and shrub plantings, food plots, prairie

plantings and wetland restorations, the areas will both be excellent for all types of wildlife to thrive. When the transactions are completed, these areas will provide recreational and educational experiences that will be readily accessible for all to enjoy. Without the support of Webster County Pheasants Forever, Calhoun County Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Webster County Whitetails Unlimited, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service these projects would not be possible. More information will be available when both of these transactions are completed.

The staff has constructed another display in the nature center remodeling and the staff has completed the bird blind. I hope you can get out and enjoy the new additions provided to you by the Webster County Conservation Board. Watch for new visiting weekend hours.

Ranger Report

Often times, the park rangers get left in the dust when it comes to recognition, when actually they are a vital link to the livelihood of the park system.

Wintertime is typically labeled the “off season” for most park personnel, but still there is plenty to do. The seemingly endless task of splitting wood is done in late fall and winter in preparation for the camping season. The building of a wetland diorama in the nature center was completed this winter also. Upkeep on the new shelter house is keeping the rangers busy. They do taxidermy and fur tanning to assist the environmental education program. There are ski trails to groom, ice fishermen to check, sleds to monitor, feeders to fill, wood duck boxes to prep and this year, countless hours of snow to move. And that’s just the winter season!! The tasks become even more numerous when spring comes.

The new bird blind was built this late fall by none other than our talented staff. And what a marvelous job they did for this new addition to the Environmental Education program.

Besides caring for Kennedy Park, the WCCB staff has 14 other areas to keep track of and try to maintain. Management plans must be written and carried out for these other natural areas. So it’s easy to see that the daily tasks of a park ranger are very diverse and usually labor intensive. Their efforts deserve appreciation.

Our rangers are Dave Scherff, Matt Cosgrove, and Pat Shehan—keep up the great work!!!

Roadside Report

By Scott Gebers, IRVM (*Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management*) Manager

Greetings from the Road Warrior! Hope everyone had a good Holiday season and didn't eat too much like I did. Here's a little update on the roadside plans for the upcoming year. Last spring IRVM received about 20 acres worth of native prairie seed to be used in roadsides throughout the county. The current plan is to finish Nelson Avenue from the Badger blacktop to Harlan Rogers Sports Complex. This should look very, very good in a couple of years.

Together with the city of Fort Dodge, IRVM received a grant for \$41,000 worth of seed, consisting of over 30 different wildflowers and 10 grasses. This very colorful seed mix will be planted this spring along Highway 169 from the Starlite Village north for one mile. Using time and patience, in three years this should look very impressive.

Once again, the Webster County IRVM program will be assisting landowners in getting their filter strips planted for 2001. All you have to do is give the IRVM office a call at 576-4258 and if there is room, you will be put on the list for planting. The price as of January 1 is still only \$20.00 per acre, which is a great deal. We will be taking applications for summer help starting in March. Don't be afraid to apply if you think you can help.

Until next time, we'll see you in the ditch!!

Public Programs Webster County Conservation ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS SPRING 2001

Deer rack measuring

Those interested in having their deer rack measured for the DNR Record Book should bring them in this day.

Date: Sunday, March 11 Time: 1-3pm

Location: Kennedy Park Reception Center Cost: Free

Open House for Bob Heun Shelter house

Meet at the new shelter house above the beach at Kennedy Park for a glimpse of what this brand new facility looks like and has to offer.

*Date: **Saturday, April 14** Time: **1:00 –3:00pm***

*Location: **Kennedy Park—new shelter house** Cost: **Free***

Earth Day Celebration

*Date: **Saturday, April 21** Cost: **Free***

*Location: **Kennedy Park Nature Center** Time: **2:00pm***

Meet at the Kennedy Park Nature Center for a guided birdwatching hike to the new bird blind and beyond. Bring binoculars. We'll watch birds and clean up the trail along the way. See the nature center's new wetland diorama following the hike. Come & celebrate Earth Day with us or find another meaningful way to celebrate it.

*Location: **Moorland Pond** Time: **4:00pm***

Using spotting scopes and binoculars, join the naturalist for waterfowl watching at our local Moorland Pond where the trumpeter swans are also located.

Wildflower Walk

Come witness the “newness” of the forest as new growth emerges in the form of woodland wildflowers such as hepatica, bloodroot, dutchman's breeches, etc.

*Date: **April 28th** Time: **2:00pm***

*Location: **Skillet Creek Indian Mounds** Cost: **Free***

Call for directions if necessary.

Hunter Safety Instruction

Contact Nordquist Sports & Marine to pre-register. Registration packets must be picked up there also prior to the first day of class. Class is free and size is limited to the first 50 applicants. Iowa law requires all persons born after January 1, 1967 to pass this course before being certified to purchase an Iowa Hunting license. You must be 12 years or older and attend all three sessions of the class to be certified.

Class 1: March 26, 27, & 29 Class 2: April 2, 3 & 5

For each class: First 2 nights——**Kennedy Park Shelter from 6:00-9:30pm**

Third night——**Voc/Tech Bldg at ICCC from 5:30-9:30pm**

Conservation Camp for Boys & Girls

Though this is not truly a camp offered through WCCB, we will take sign up for a limited number of boys and girls from this area. It's a 3 day overnight camp with lots of outdoor recreation and environmental principles taught. Webster Co. Pheasants Forever pays \$75 registration fee. Space is limited so call early.

Location: **Springbrook EE Center in Guthrie County**

Dates: **June 6-8 or July 25-27 for Girls**

June 20-22 or Aug. 8-10 for Boys

Iowa water

***Those interested in SIMPLE water testing ——please call Karen at 576-4258.

A new water testing program is being started in Webster County for the purpose of only collecting data. All the equipment is supplied for a person to borrow to test water. If you want your very own equipment, it can be provided to you if you go through the training classes.

Grant money from Wal-Mart was given to the EE program for the purchase of equipment for water quality. THANKS SO MUCH!!!!

This is an exciting new program in Iowa and the future of our streams and other bodies of water depends on it. All help would be appreciated.

CRP WETLAND

Attention Landowners——A new pilot program will allow landowners to enroll small wetland areas and adjacent buffers in the continuous signup of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). You may be eligible to receive incentive payments while enhancing wildlife habitat and improving soil and water quality. Signup is easy. However, the most Iowa can enter is 150,000 acres. Don't miss this new and unique opportunity——contact your local NRCS office. The phone number for the NRCS office in Fort Dodge is 573-4411

Bird Blind



Just inside the entrance to Kennedy Park looking toward the lake is a new building called a bird viewing blind, constructed by our own talented staff. A huge thank you to Beisser Lumber Co. must be extended for their donation of half the materials. We really appreciate their support. This structure will add a new twist to the interpretive program by allowing the public to use it for observing birds from inside a cozy enclosure with small viewing slats. A feeding station located outside the viewing slats will

entice the various Iowa bird species to feed up-close while people in the blind quietly observe them.

Interpretive posters and information inside the blind will give visitors an opportunity to learn more about the birds that live in and migrate through Iowa. The bird blind will likely get extensive use by children on school field trips, scout outings, day camp excursions, etc. But it's not just for kids! We hope the entire public sector uses the bird blind for their bird viewing enrichment. The building is even accessible for wheelchairs. The trail leading to the bird blind begins at the Model Backyard, and though the trail is not wheelchair accessible, our hope is that sometime in the near future it will be.

Come and visit the bird blind. Bring the family or come alone. Park in the first parking lot and start the trail in the Model Backyard. And enjoy our feathered friends!!!

New Conservation Officer

by Erika Andersen

In case you hadn't noticed there is a new face behind the wheel of the game warden's truck as it travels the roads of Webster and Calhoun Counties. I'm finally here and I would like to introduce the face behind the wheel. My name is Erika Andersen and I'm the new conservation officer for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau.

As I was driving through the Boone Forks area the other day, trying to think of what I would say in this article, I started to remember all the roads I have been down that have finally brought me to this point. I grew up in New Hampton, in northeast Iowa. From there I went to Luther College in Decorah graduating with a degree in Biology. My interest in conservation started early with a summer job as a natural resources aide for the Chickasaw County Conservation Board.

During my internship I met and rode along with some of the DNR Officers in the area. After several rides I decided that I really liked the blend that officer career offered. I enjoyed the satisfaction of protecting the natural resources as well as educating people about resources. So, with the idea of being a game warden constantly in the back of my mind, I continued down my road. I found myself sitting in a blind turkey trapping for the DNR, and working as a naturalist/ranger in Minnesota. Franklin County Conservation

offered me a full-time naturalist position, which I accepted. But I still couldn't ignore that little game warden in the back of my mind, so when I heard that Wisconsin was hiring Deputy Conservation Wardens, I jumped at the chance, and was hired. I attended the Law Enforcement Academy and started in the field. I returned to my home state this past July, when I was offered a position as a Conservation Officer for Iowa.

Among regular law enforcement duties my main role is to protect the state's natural resources and the people who use them by enforcing fish and game regulations, as well as ATV, snowmobile, and boating laws. Education is also an important part of a conservation officer's job, so I am available to talk with school groups, sports clubs, civic or private groups, hunter education classes, etc. I'm anxious to meet everyone and hope you will call me with any questions or concerns you have. I can be reached at (515) 571-0127.

Forestry Forum

Information provided by ISU Extension

Pine Wilt

Pines have earned a secure niche in America's urban landscape thanks to their diversity, adaptability, and beauty. Over the past 20 years, however, a disease called pine wilt has killed so many Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) in the Midwest that extension specialists in several states no longer recommend planting this once-popular species as a landscape tree.

Pine wilt typically kills Scots pine within a few weeks to a few months. The needles initially turn grayish green, then tan-colored to brown. Resin flow from the wood also ceases as the tree declines. Other pine species are occasionally killed by pine wilt, and display a similar pattern of symptoms. The disease appears occasionally in Austrian, jack, mugo, and red pines, and rarely in white pine. In the Midwest, however, more than 90 percent of the trees killed by pine wilt have been Scots pine. Native pine species are usually not susceptible to pine wilt. White pines are the only native pine species in Iowa.

Pine wilt attacks pines through the help of several organisms. The pinewood nematode, the pine sawyer (longhorned) beetle, and blue-stain fungi are the culprits. The microscopic-sized nematodes feed on blue-stain fungi that live in dead and dying pines and on the living plant cells surrounding the resin canals of pines. Nematodes move from tree to tree in the trachea of the sawyer beetles.

It is important to autopsy sick pines for pinewood nematode because of the chance of epidemic. To confirm the presence of pinewood nematode in a dying or dead pine, it's necessary to extract the nematode from the wood. A wood sample should be taken from the lower trunk or the base of lower limbs. A disk of wood, 1 inch in thickness and 3 to 4 inches across, makes an adequate sample. Careful microscopic examination is needed to avoid confusing the pinewood nematode with the many harmless species of nematodes that live in trees. Nematode extraction in Iowa can be done at Plant Disease Clinic, 351 Bessey Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011.

Despite intensive research, no highly effective management tactics have emerged against pine wilt. Chemicals have so far proved to be impractical or ineffective. The best management practice is containment of the disease through sanitation that can prevent or slow the spread of pine wilt. Cut the dead pine in early spring to remove the hibernating beetles that will not emerge until the weather warms in the spring. Do not save wilt-killed pines as firewood because beetles can continue to emerge from the logs. And there is minimal risk of spreading pine wilt in infested wood chips.

Scots pine and Austrian Pine should be avoided in Iowa due to disease problems. Spruces, firs, hemlocks, white pine, northern white cedar, eastern red cedar, and other junipers face little threat from pine wilt. And remember that native species are less susceptible to general disease problems than exotics are. The 2 native evergreen species in Iowa are the white pine and eastern red cedar.

To find out more information about the pine wilt disease, contact Webster County Conservation at 576-4258 or Webster County ISU Extension at 576-2119

New District Forester

Webster County is pleased to announce a new working partner in the environmental/conservation field. Wayne Fuhlbrugge of Webster City has been working with the DNR Forestry Division for years and has now moved to central Iowa to serve the folks of this area. Still working for the DNR he works with landowners on site to help them manage forest AND prairie land. If you have any forestry or prairie related questions or want an on-site visit, call Wayne at (515) 832-3585.

Webster County Conservation

Staff

Director	Charles Miller
Roadside Manager	Scott Gebers
Naturalist	Karen Roosa Hansen
Park Ranger	Dave Scherff
Park Ranger	Matt Cosgrove
Park Ranger	Pat Shehan
Secretary	Cindy Knickerbocker

Board Members

Mark A. Thompson	Fort Dodge
Joan Harp	Fort Dodge
Orville O'Connell	Fort Dodge
Brad Luke	Lehigh
Dave Cramer	Dayton

Call for Volunteers

We would again like to offer visiting hours for the nature center at Kennedy Park, and the chances of this happening greatly increase with volunteers. I am calling on the public for help in this area. It's not difficult. Some even look forward to the opportunity to spend time in the park and learn about nature. Two or three hours on Sat. & Sun. is my goal. It's a matter of turning on lights and greeting people—really that simple! Please call Karen at 576-4258 if you'd like to help—even if it's just once.

Webster County Conservation
1415 Nelson Ave.
Fort Dodge, IA. 50501

Phone: 515-576-4258

Fax: 515-574-3763

E-mail: conservation@webstercountyia.org

[Keeping the Wildlife Safe](#) | [From the Director's Desk](#) | [Ranger Report](#)
[Roadside Report](#) | [Public Programs](#) | [Bird Blind](#)
[New Conservation Officer](#) | [Forestry Forum](#) | [General Info](#)