

IN A NUTSHELL

MARION COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Our purpose is to provide conservation, recreation and educational opportunities to promote understanding and appreciation with a sense of empathy and responsibility towards our natural communities.

CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENTS NEARING COMPLETION

AT

ROBERTS CREEK PARK

Steve Edwards
Director

Over the past eighteen months, MCCB staff has been busy working on a complete makeover of the west half of the existing west campground at Roberts Creek Park. The goal was to keep the same total number of camping sites, but spread them out and provide higher quality sites by upgrading to full service sites. However, before any work could begin, the MCCB needed to make sure that there were no ecological and archeologically sensitive areas within the construction site. The MCCB contacted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and, with their help, determined that there were no archeologically sensitive sites in the area. There was, however, a small orchid known as *Oval Ladies Tress* that was found growing in the area. Sixty-eight of these orchids were identified and moved (mitigated) to a new growing location. Indiana Bat mist-net surveys were performed in late May and early August, to make sure that there was no significant population of these Federally endangered bats in the construction area. With these environmental impact reports completed all the proper approvals received, it was time to start work.

The first phase of the project involved constructing 21 new full service camp-sites in a heavily timbered area at the west end of the existing campground. These sites would have 50/30/20 amp service, sewer drops and water hydrants making them the only full service campsites around Lake Red Rock. Starting in the late fall of 2008, staff removed trees and brush from the construction area, care was taken to work around and leave as many of the sizable trees as possible. In the end, the majority of the vegetation removal was low quality trees less than 8" in diameter and the non-native invasive shrub species, Autumn Olive. After the area was opened up, the campground loop road and camping sites were located and marked. As sites were laid out, staff tried to keep in mind the different camping styles people enjoy, some like to be close together, others want separation between sites and still others want a mix of the two. Camping pad sizes would also vary, with lengths running from 50' to 72' and widths usually around 16' or enough to get two vehicles on the site,



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along with a camping unit. Throughout the winter months and into spring of 2009, crews worked on in-stalling water, sewer and electric lines as weather permitted. Wet conditions persisted throughout spring and the first half of summer slowing work and delaying the final elements of the project, namely the hauling of granular surfacing material for the roads and camping pads until the first week of August. The 21, new, full service camp sites became operational the second week of August, just in time for the annual Knoxville Nationals Sprint Car Races.

The final phase of the campground renovation project started just after the Labor Day weekend, when a section of the existing west campground was closed and all picnic tables, cooking grills and old electric boxes removed. This section of campground had 32 low quality camping sites that were close together. The goal here was to replace these 32 sites with 16 high quality sites with greater distance between sites and full service at each. With greater distance between sites, staff is able to landscape around them without interfering with parked vehicles. Due to the fact that this area was already used for camping, only a tree or two was needed to be removed to make room for new camping site locations. Of the 16 newly developed sites, eight are "drive-through" sites. Throughout the fall, staff and crews completed running new water and sewer lines to this area, electric lines were trenched and new electric pedestal boxes set. The first blizzard of the season in early December put a halt to the construction. However, the most time consuming portion of the project, that being the installation of water, sewer and electric lines, was completed before the first snowflakes fell. This puts us in great shape to finish the project by the end of April 2010, with only placing rock on the pads, completing final electric hookups and working on grass seedling and landscaping left to complete. Of course Mother Nature always has the "trump" card called rain, so she will dictate the final completion date!

I encourage everyone on your travels through Marion County to stop by and check out our county parks, there is always something new going on.

NEW PLAYGROUND TO BE INSTALLED AT ROBERTS CREEK PARK

This spring, MCCB staff will be installing a new multi-station metal playground in the west campground at Roberts Creek Park. This new playground will replace a 25 year old wooden structure that was removed last fall. The new unit meets all ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) requirements and installation is scheduled to start as soon as weather permits.

This playground is identical to the new system that was installed at Marion County Park last summer.

Services Provided by the MCCB Spring is Coming!

The MCCB staff assists private landowners by making equipment available to enhance their land for wildlife habitat, reestablishment of native prairie grass and assistance in planning areas in the Conservation Reserve Program. The Marion County Pheasants Forever Chapter donated two Truax seed drills for use by landowners and can be reserved by calling the park officers at the appropriate sites: Contact Roberts Creek Park (641-627-5507) for the Vicon Broadcaster, tree seedling planter and two-row planter. Contact Cordova Park (641-627-5935) for the 6' seed drill and Marion County Park (641-828-2214) for the 8' seed drill. Technical assistance is provided from the staff for prairie plantings, wildlife habitat planting, wildlife and fish structure. The Marion County Conservation Board Director performs on-site inspections for the Forest Reserve Program.

Chief Golden Eagle, Yank-ton Sioux Nation, South Dakota was hosted by the Marion County Conservation Board Sept. 15 to celebrate the Fall Migration with a "Blessing of the Birds". The Chief shared honor and reverence to the Des Moines River Watershed as the migration of neo-tropical and short distance mi-grants leave their breeding grounds. Lake Red Rock is a premiere birding area with great opportunity to share First Nation Culture integrated with water quality awareness. The event was held near Horn's Ferry Bridge below the Lake Red Rock

3rd Annual "Blessing of the Birds"



Dam. The event was highlighted with Chief Golden Eagle, and Tom and Karol Little releasing two, first year, Bald Eagles which were found in a concrete cistern by the Little's. A four year old Bald Eagle was re-leased by Todd Braden who assisted with the rescue on the Des Moines River. The eagle was wrapped in ditty pole line. Thanks to all that assisted with the birds' rescue and Kay Neumann, SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) for her time and efforts to rehabilitate and return the birds to Marion County for this event.



Todd Braden

Tom Little

Upcoming Hunter Education Courses for Spring 2010

The Marion County Conservation Board, Marion County Sportsman's Club, IDNR with assistance from the M.C. Recorder's Office will be sponsoring hunter education courses the following dates.

March 11 and 13, 2010 June 17 and 19, 2010, August 26 and 28, 2010

You must attend both dates to become certified. Classes are held Thursday evenings and Saturdays at the Marion County Sportsman's Club east of Knoxville. Registration can be made up to one month in advance at the Marion County Recorder's Office. Workbooks and assignments are given at the time of registration.

For further questions regarding Hunter Education, please call Ken Kenyon, IDNR, at 641-891-1246.

Economics dominate current conversations related to outdoor recreation. Two factors that nearly always get weighed are; how much will it cost? and what do you get in return? These can be somewhat difficult to ascertain, due to the fact that one is a definitive measurement and the other has to be arrived at thorough assessments outside of the actual resource. Depending on what results are considered prudent to the formula, their affect may be profound on the calculations. Some considerations would not have any way to quantify their benefit, and consequently will not have an assigned value in the final equation. Rather simply put: how do you measure quality of life?

It is easy to track expenditures budgeted for a park, wildlife area, waters to fish or the roads used to access these resources. All will need personnel for management. All will need equipment and tools for maintenance. All will need components to enhance the resource to meet the demand. Examples might include an electric pedestal for a camp site, native grass seed for a wildlife area or a dock for a boat ramp. These expenses are offset in a variety of ways. Direct usage fees collected from camping and licenses sales. Excise taxes on the purchase of specialty products, where a portion of the sales tax is designated for a resource. General revenue funds generated from property, income or sales taxes.

How is the "bang for the buck" tallied? A variety of studies have tried to tabulate the amount of revenue generated from our public areas. Many different variables can be incorporated as data to reach a dollar amount, such as groceries, fuel, clothing, services or transportation costs associated with activities in our public parks and management areas. One such compilation, based just on the 11,000 County Conservation Board camping sites across the state of Iowa, suggested that 50 million dollars of local economic impact was generated in 2007. If all county activities are included; daily trail usage, cabin rental, hunting and fishing, the bottom line number could increase six fold to 300 million dispersed around the state. That potentially could be a return in monies four times greater than the expenditures. Again these formulations do not include the intangibles that cannot have value assigned to them. How can we put a number on a family gathering at a picnic shelter, camping with friends, catching a fish or smiles on stress relieved faces?

Public area usage increased in 2009, some agencies reported all time high numbers for camping. There can be several reasons for the surge, depleted personal budgets looking for low cost recreation, a complete new set of non-resident visitors or enhanced public facilities to entice recreationists. Renovating lakes to improve water clarity and bolster the fisheries resource have been attributed to a rise in visits by outdoor enthusiasts. This is one example of expenditures with positive results, both economically and environmentally. Normally, cause and effect would suggest that when demand is high, supply should not be cut.

Hopefully budgetary constraints will not cause a regression in the progressive strides that have been gained for our natural resources and recreational opportunities. Any set-backs may take twice as long to repair at three times the cost. Once again, it is difficult to quantify quality of life. Enjoy your times in the outdoors. More later.....

22nd Annual BALD EAGLE DAYS

Saturday, March 6, 2010

10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

**Central College's Graham Conference Center,
Douwstra Auditorium and Lake Red Rock's
North Tailwater Recreation Area.**

**LIVE EAGLE SHOWS, RAPTOR SHOWS, ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR, RON HUELSE PHOTOGRAHY;
OUTDOOR EAGLE VIEWING BELOW RED ROCK DAM, AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!!!!**

THANK
YOU

On behalf of
the MCCB,
a big thanks to
all of you who
have
volunteered
your time &
energy,
support,
material and
monetary
donations.

Fall Migration Celebration/Blessing of the Birds

Chief Golden Eagle, Yankton Sioux Nation

With assistance from:

Pat Schlarbaum, IDNR Wildlife Diversity; Joe Plum, Educator & Poet;

Kay Neumann, S.O.A.R;

Mr. Ron Huelse, Eagle's Edge Photography

With special thanks to:

Tom and Karol Little

Todd Braden

2009 OSPREY RELEASE

Kay Neumann, SOAR; IDNR Wildlife Diversity and Curt and Karen Schwanebeck for making
the smooth transition of 2 young Osprey to the Gladys Black Raptor Learning Site for Release;

Ron Huelse for his continuous energy towards the Osprey Project

Osprey Sponsor, Theo vandenBroek

Denny Waits and Osprey Friends for all the fresh fish

*“Those who have the humility of a child may find again the key to
reverence for, and kinship with, all life” J. Allen Boone*

In a Nutshell is the Marion County Conservation Board's newsletter. It is to serve as a link between the conservation board and the public. If you have any ideas for articles or would like to donate your artistic talents for this publication, please contact the Marion County Conservation Board. You may also view our newsletter at <http://co.marion.ia.us>. Go to the Conservation home page and view forms, newsletters and upcoming events. If you wish to receive In a Nutshell, fill out the blank below and send it to Cordova Park, 1378 Hwy G-28, Otley, IA 50214. You may call (641)627-5935 to be added to our mailing list or, email us at cordova@dishmail.net

YES! I would like to receive In A Nutshell free of charge

Name: _____

Address: _____

Donation (optional) _____



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Marion County Conservation Board

4th Floor Courthouse

Knoxville, IA 50138

641-828-2213