

**A NEWSLETTER OF THE  
BREMER COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD**

**Fall 2022 Edition**

***Emerald Ash Borer Takes Hold of Alcock Park  
By Andrew Hockenson***

By this point many of you are familiar with the little green beetle known as the emerald ash borer. Some may be very familiar with it and dealing with trees in your own backyard. The invasive little pest originating from Asia, was first discovered in Michigan in 2002, and by 2010, found its way into NE Iowa. In February 2014, the beetle was confirmed present in Bremer County. Currently only 7 counties in Iowa have not had a positive emerald ash borer report, although chances are high that the entire state will see infested ash trees in the near future. In 2018, signs of infested ash trees at 7 Bridges Wildlife Area were very evident. As you drove through the area, the bark of affected ash trees had turned white from dieback, and from woodpeckers going after the beetle larvae. Most likely beetles had hitched a ride on some firewood as it was brought into the area, and spread from there. Ash trees grow very well in moist soils, and are commonly found along the Wapsi, Cedar, and Shell Rock rivers in Bremer County. The Wapsi River runs through 7 Bridges Wildlife Area, and at one time many ash trees thrived. Today the devastation is clear in the area. For those using the Wapsie River Greenbelt for hiking, hunting, fishing, etc., you may have also noticed the number of trees that have succumbed to the pest.

Although losing the ash trees in the wildlife areas is devastating, it is even more detrimental when dealing with mortality in the parks, cities, or private residences. That is exactly what we are dealing with at Alcock Park near Frederika. Like stated earlier, ash trees love growing along the Wapsi



*Photos show before and after picture of just one section in the campground on the west side of Alcock Park.  
(continued on page 2)*

***Bremer County Conservation Board Staff***

*Executive Director - Andrew Hockenson*

*EE Coordinator / Naturalist - Heather Gamm*

*Recycling Educator / Naturalist - Angie Auel*

*Natural Resources Technicians - Pat Hyde, Dave Steere,*

*Mike Weidemann & Nick Franzen*

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## *Emerald Ash Borer Takes Hold of Alcock Park (continued)*

River, which runs through this park as well. When the park was being created in the 1970's, trees were not necessarily planted in strategic places with several different species selected, rather trees currently growing were removed to create openings for camping sites, roads, picnic areas, and shelters. At the time, the trees already there were what was managed, and the primary tree species along the river was ash. The lack of tree species diversity had not been a problem until the emerald ash borer showed up in the park and went from tree to tree, essentially whipping out all the ash trees in the park. Once it took hold, it did not take long for the trees to perish. Just last summer there were noticeable signs the borer was present, such as dieback to the tops of the trees and extra branching off the limbs or lower trunk, but the trees were still green and alive. The ones showing the worst signs were marked for removal, but some were still looking okay. By spring of 2022, nearly all ash trees on both sides of the park had turned white from flecking bark and any remaining signs of life had disappeared over the winter. Well over 100 large, once great shade trees, now needed to come down. With the size and condition of the trees, there still is a timber market value to them. It is not as much as if they were still alive, but wood material from them can still be used for pallets. Loggers removed nearly 7 semi loads of logs from the park. Staff members have been working hard cleaning up the tops and remaining branches left behind, with stump removal of all those trees to follow. With the removal of a majority of the trees in the park, comes replacement. A small tree nursery has been started at one of the areas to hopefully help restock the park. It will take another 5-10 years, but staff members will be able to spade these young seedlings out once they've gotten big enough. This will help offset costs of purchasing new trees. There are also potential opportunities to spade trees from landowners willing to donate extra ones growing on their property. Plans are to potentially begin transplanting some of these larger trees this fall before the ground freezes. When planting new trees, it's important to use several varieties. There are many pests that can harm trees, and in instances like the emerald ash borer that primarily targets one species, a more diverse planting can help alleviate the problem of completely whipping out all the trees on your property. Fortunately, the other 3 main parks have ash trees, but with numbers far less than Alcock.

Additional information on the emerald ash borer or tree species selection when planting, can be found through Iowa State University Extension and Outreach <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/emerald-ash-borer> and the Iowa DNR <https://www.iowadnr.gov/conservation/forestry/forest-health/emerald-ash-borer>

## *Iowa Young Birders by Tyler Harms*

On April 9, 2022, 20 young birders, parents, and grandparents gathered at Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area to assist with the annual Sandhill Crane count organized by Bremer County Conservation Board. Our very knowledgeable local guide for the morning was Heather Gamm, Naturalist for Bremer County Conservation Board. Before heading out to the marsh, Heather first shared with us some information about the area and about Sandhill Cranes, whose populations have been increasing in and around Sweet Marsh for the past several years according to their count data. We were excited to contribute to this important effort!



Arriving at the marsh, we were greeted with a cacophony of bird sounds. After only a few minutes, we already heard Sandhill Cranes calling from a distance and had a flock of Greater White-fronted Geese fly over. We finished the morning with a total of 30 Sandhill Cranes along with 25 additional species which included 13 species of waterfowl. Spring is obviously a great time to visit your local marsh!

**Thanks to the following for donations to BCCB. March 2022-Aug. 2022**

### **Wes Crawford Benefit**

Alcock Walk Bridge

### **Denver Class of 1998**

Wes Crawford memorial for a bench at Alcock Park on the east side

### **Sumner Building**

#### **Center**

Playscape Library and Post

Karen Tyrrell memorial of 3 trees for North Woods Park and BCCB Office

### **Memorial money from Arley Hahn Estate**

#### **Lois Peters**

Memorials for Jan Woodring Kerry Bergman Marion Stone

#### **Sue Lahr**

Recycled Plastic Bench for Cedar Bend Park

### **BCNA Donations**

Jennifer Lancaster Picnic in the Park donation

## *Nature Playscape by Heather Gamm*

Bremer County Conservation staff has been dreaming up a nature playscape to replace the play equipment at North Woods Park. The playscape became usable this summer. Although, we hope to add finishing touches by 2023.

Features:



Spools were donated. Staff sanded them and added a tic tac toe game and checkers. They also serve as a touch table. In June, a widow donated her husband's collection of deer antlers towards the touch table.



Staff installed the spider web climber, hammock and musical instruments.



In April, Naturalists worked with the Sumner Public Library to co-host a Stepping Stones class. Each participant/family made a stone for themselves in addition to one for the playscape. During July, more stones were added after summer kids helped make and decorate additional stones. These are meant for children and adults to step on or play The Floor is LAVA!

Staff moved stumps into a reading circle. Logs are available to climb on.



The Little Library was designed, built and donated by Sumner Building Center. Books were donated by the Sumner Public Library Foundation. Staff installed and filled the library with books. The purpose of the Little Library is to offer campers and those using the playscape with books during their time at the area. In addition, if you bring a book, you can take a book!

Staff built a plexiglass drawing board.



All in all, it is a unique play area. Join Naturalist, Heather Gamm, for a **nature playdate at the playscape**. It will be held **September 11 at 2pm**. We will play together, listen to a book, and have some activities. All ages are welcome to join. The program is free and there is no pre-registration required.

*Thank you Bremer County Pheasants Forever and  
Whitetails Unlimited Cedar Wapsi Chapter*

A huge thank you to Bremer County Pheasants Forever and Whitetails Unlimited Cedar Wapsi Chapter! Bremer County Pheasants Forever donated money to purchase eight UMAREX Embark .177 pellet guns, two rifle racks, two lockable rifle storage units, air rifle maintenance kit, and 10 pairs of safety glasses. Each year county conservation staff offer pellet gun programs to those in Bremer County. Naturalists wanted to increase their pellet gun usage but the pellet guns needed to be replaced. Thanks to Pheasants Forever, conservation staff are now able to use new pellet guns and increase the number of students that can shoot at a time.



Whitetails Unlimited Cedar Wapsi Chapter donated money to purchase five archery targets and six bows. Each year naturalists offer numerous archery programs to those in Bremer County. Naturalists have increased their archery usage over the last two years with 34 programs and 389 participants. With the new bows and targets, naturalists increased the number of students that can shoot at a time.

Thanks to these donations, conservation staff were able to upgrade the old equipment that was breaking down. The more conservation staff can continue to educate our community about the outdoors, the more conservation minded people we have.

*Bremer County Campgrounds by Angie Auel*



Have you visited any of the four campgrounds Bremer County Conservation manages? All have electricity, flush toilets, showers, and playgrounds. Camping is first come first serve at all campgrounds. Shelters, which can be reserved, water, recycling stations, and dump stations are located in each park. Firewood is available for \$5 a bundle. All parks contain many miles of hiking trails that travel through different habitats and offer nature enthusiasts the beauty of Bremer County. Park gates are open May 1 - October 31. Hunting is allowed in the parks November 1 - January 10 after which the parks provide numerous opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and birdwatching. North Woods, north of Sumner, recently had new campsites added to the top portion of the park by the restrooms. These campsites offer electricity and water. They are the first campsite to have water hook up available in Bremer County Conservation parks. The sites are located within walking distance to the Nature Playscape!! Go enjoy fall



camping with your family at these new sites or the other three campgrounds in Bremer County before the gates close October 31!

## *A Glimpse of Summer by Angie Auel*

Heather and I have had the pleasure of hosting programs all summer for all ages. We have enjoyed getting all of the families and children OUTDOORS this summer. Below is a small glimpse of what our summer was filled with.

We filled June with Picnic in the Parks on Tuesdays, Mini Explorers on Thursdays, along with library programs throughout the county and a few field trips. We had 146 people attend Picnic in the Parks! We had fun learning about birds, butterflies, flags, and bones. Then we started a new program called Mini Explorers which was focused on PreK-1st grade students. An adult was required to attend all events with the children and we had 140 participate!



We featured a different Bremer County park each week. We enjoyed learning about Fish and Snails at Cedar Bend, Animals in the Forest at Ingawanis Woodland, Birds at Babcock Woods, and Yoga in the park at North Woods along with a trash to treasure craft and playing at the NEW NATURE PLAYSCAPE! We loved going to our local libraries this summer to talk about camping and the great outdoors. I had even more fun talking about POOP at the libraries! I taught the kids that we can look for signs of animals including their scat (aka poop).



July was jam-packed with Outdoor Explorers Beginners (2-3rd grade), Intermediate (4-5th grade), and Advanced (5-8th grade), along with more field trips! Four weeks worth of survival, birds, painting rocks, water fights, fishing, stand up paddle boards, kayaking, compass, GPS, disc golf, slacklining, solar s'mores, pellet guns, archery, stepping stones, creek stomp, and biking. My highlights were watching two girls catch their first fish ever and Maverick taking a picture "all about the angle," to make his fish appear larger!



Ms. Heather took charge of the August field trips of kayaking and fossil hunting. It was a busy summer but fun was had by ALL! If you want to sign up your child for next year's camps or field trips, look for information in our March newsletter or email me at [angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us](mailto:angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us) to be put on the list to find out about our programs! Enjoy more pictures of our summer.



## Bremer County Nature Alliance (BCNA) by Emily Callahan



“This is the power of gathering: it inspires us, delightfully, to be more hopeful, more joyful, more thoughtful: in a word, more alive.” These words, spoken by Alice Waters, rang true for organizations and nonprofits all over the world this year as in person gatherings became the norm again. The Bremer County Nature Alliance nonprofit was no exception as they hosted their Member Appreciation Banquet on April 2nd, 2022 at the Denver American Legion, their first in person banquet since 2019. The purpose of the annual banquet was to offer a time for Bremer County Nature Alliance supporters to gather and connect with like-minded individuals as well as raise money to support the efforts of Bremer County Conservation. Attendees enjoyed a catered dinner with homemade desserts and had the opportunity to participate in a variety of raffle drawings. Raffle prizes ranged from a 12-foot kayak donated by CrawDaddy Outdoors to handmade decorations to ice cream gift certificates. Almost all the 72 people who attended the banquet left with a prize and over \$3,700 was raised to support Bremer County’s environmental education and natural resources program. The exclamation point to the evening was a fascinating presentation by Linda Nebbe, a local wildlife rehabilitator. Linda brought

a very special friend with her, a Barred Owl she is currently rehabilitating. Linda shared captivating and inspiring stories about her 20 years of experience working with wild animals. Each person in the room was left wanting to learn more about her wonderful work. As the Bremer County Nature Alliance begins to plan events to close out 2022 and anticipate events in 2023, please gather with us. Chances are you might leave the event feeling more inspired, hopeful, joyful, or alive.



## Upcoming BCNA Opportunities

### Waverly Brookwood Park Disc Golf Course

On **Friday, September 2**, this course will be open to the public. The course has 18 holes. Hole number 1 was sponsored by the Bremer County Nature Alliance. Course Maps are available online or in the app at UDisc. The signs will be finished and placed in the spring of 2023. Meanwhile, check it out. You can purchase discs from CrawDaddy Outdoors in Waverly.

### Winter Picnic at Ingawanis Woodland

Come join Bremer County Conservation Naturalists and BCNA Members for a Winter Picnic on **February 5 from 1:00-3:00** at Ingawanis Woodland. We will have snowshoes available if snow conditions are right. We are inviting families to take a short winter hike, enjoy a fire and s’mores, and learn more about the outdoor world.

### Bremer County Nature Alliance Banquet

Plans are underway for our Annual Banquet that will be held on **March 25, 2023 or April 1, 2023, 5:30** pm depending on location availability. We’ll have a BCNA update followed by dinner and then our speaker. Please consider joining us for an enjoyable and informative evening. More details to come on Bremer County Nature Alliance Facebook page.



## *Monarch Tagging*



Bremer County Naturalist, Angie Auel, will teach about Monarch butterflies and their life cycle. Come to discover how to identify male and female Monarchs and learn how to tag/release Monarchs on their journey south to central Mexico. Bring the whole family for this educational program. The Bremer County Conservation Board is participating in the Monarch Watch tagging program. The naturalist invites people come try to catch Monarch butterflies, all equipment is provided. **Tuesday, September 13 at 5:30 pm.** The location will be at the **Wavery Public Library**. For more information, please



email Angie Auel at Bremer County Conservation at [angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us](mailto:angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us) For more information about Monarch Butterflies or to purchase your own tags, log onto: [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org).

## *Save the date: Forest Friends Halloween Hike Monday, October 24*

Bremer County Conservation will host its annual Halloween Hike at Ingawanis Woodland 2588 Hawthorne Ave. Janesville, IA. This is a fun evening in the woods with baggie of treats at the end. You will follow a luminary-lit trail. The theme is Forest Friends with a cottontail rabbit, white-tailed deer, snail, toad, and a woodpecker. We encourage a \$3 (cash or check only) donation per person but realize that this may not be possible for every family. We gladly accept and appreciate any donation you can give. All proceeds go towards the Environmental Education program. You must reserve a spot by sending an email to [angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us](mailto:angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us) Reservations will begin September 6.



## *Wreath Making*



Bremer County Conservation will host two Wreath Making classes at Eagle Lodge on **Thursday, December 1st at 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm.** Eagle Lodge is located at Ingawanis Woodland (2588 Hawthorne Ave. Janesville). The \$30 registration fee covers all the materials needed to make and take home a beautiful wreath to decorate your door through the holiday season. Space is limited to 12 participants at each time. Call Heather Gamm, Bremer County Naturalist at 319.231.9640 or email her at [naturalist@co.bremer.ia.us](mailto:naturalist@co.bremer.ia.us) to reserve your spot by Wednesday, November 30.



# Bremer Bulletin

Bremer County Conservation Board  
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## BREMER BULLETIN

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### *Bremer County Conservation Board*

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