

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

**Fall 2023 Edition**

***Summer Season Wrap-Up  
By Andrew Hockenson***

It has been a nice eventful summer with the completion of a few projects that have been planned for a while. One project that has been in the making for several years is the cable walk bridge connecting the east and west sides of Alcock Park. With the help of generous donations raised by the citizens of Frederika, and a Wes Crawford memorial benefit donation, the bridge is now open for use. This bridge replaces the original wooden bridge that was washed out for the final time after severe flooding in the fall of 2016. This new bridge sits much higher and is a foot above the 100 year flood elevation.



Alcock Park cable walk bridge



Grump Trail Crane Creek Bridge Pillar Concrete Repair completed by Matt Construction out of Sumner

The dry summer provided a great opportunity for crews to work on the Grump Trail Crane Creek bridge pillars. Over the years silt, sand, and water had deteriorated portions of the concrete that surrounds the steel I-beams. It was decided to essentially construct a concrete cap around the two sets of five pillars to cover up and reinforce the bad portions of the concrete. With low water levels, crews were able to route the water around the pillars. Forms were then constructed, any remaining water pumped, and concrete poured. Once the concrete cured, forms were removed and the process began on the other set.

Camping numbers at Cedar Bend have been on the rise the past few years. The park has seen many improvements, which have included upgraded electrical service and some gravel camping pads. The 7 gravel pads have been a hit with campers. The board had planned on converting 7 or 8 more grass

***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*

***Board Members***

*Chairperson - Larry Pavelec*

*Vice Chair - Mandie Sanderman*

*Richard Harms, Stacey Snyder, Kevin Korman*

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## Summer Season Wrap-Up (continued)



New gravel camping pads at Cedar Bend Park

sites to gravel, and this summer, staff members were able to get that done. The sites were laid out, carved in with the skid steer, and spread with gravel. Campers were watching as the sites were being made, with some “moving in” as soon as the sites were ready.

New wayfinding signs were also added at Cedar Bend. Look for the brown sign at the edge of the camping area pointing you to the paddle launch and east and west shelters. Each of those sites also has their own sign to help you get where you’re wanting to go.

Also at Cedar Bend, the conservation board is discussing the possibility of adding a full service cabin overlooking the beautiful Cedar River. The cabin would consist of two bedrooms, a bathroom, and kitchen. It would be heated and air conditioned and be open the same time frame as the campground (May 1-Oct. 31). We have a floor plan and location in mind and are beginning to put together an informational brochure. With a project as large as this, donations can play a huge role into seeing it through. Supporting this project in any way financially or with in-kind services can really go a long ways into how quickly our idea can become a reality. Anyone interested in finding out more can call our office at 319-882-4742. Look for more on this project in future newsletters.

At this point in the camping season, park usage has been pretty similar to last year, with the exception of North Woods Park. Camping numbers for that park are much higher than a year ago, with last year being the highest to date. With the improvements such as the nature playscape and new upper campsites, hopefully this upward trend will continue throughout the years ahead.

There is still time to get out and enjoy the last month of our camping season. Some of the best outings of the year are still ahead of us. With colorful leaves, watching or listening to your favorite instate college football team, or sitting around a warm campfire that’s cutting the evening breeze, fall is the perfect time to get out and enjoy all that Bremer County has to offer.

## Disc Golf Baskets



Bremer County Naturalists were able to purchase six additional traveling disc golf baskets this summer. Donations to the Bremer County Nature Alliance allowed naturalists to add the six baskets to their four previously acquired baskets. Now area students can play a ‘round’ of nine. In addition, naturalists can check out equipment to two schools at the same time. These additional baskets will help keep up with demand. Bremer County Naturalist, Heather Gamm, took the disc golf baskets to Waverly Shell Rock’s Go Hawk Hustle recently. Thanks to all those who generously donated in the past year!

Thanks to the following for donations to BCCB. April 2023-Sept. 2023

**Dale & Peggy Rogers**

Memorial for Jeffrey Wolter

**Larry & Vicki Pavelec**

Donation toward cabin project

**Bremer County Soil & Water Conservation District**

Native Seeder maintenance

**Daniel Rochford**

Donation towards wildlife areas/parks

**Frederika Town N Country Women Citizens of Frederika**

Alcock Walk Bridge

**Bremer County Pheasants Forever**

Skid steer tree puller attachment

**Dennis & Wanda Niemeier**

Donation towards replacing picnic tables at East side Alcock Park

**The Safari Club - Iowa Chapter**

Two Bow Cases and Air-rifle Pellets

## *Nature Playscape Open House by Emily Callahan, BCNA President*



Angie Auel and Heather Gamm, Naturalists for Bremer County Conservation, spend a large portion of their working hours planning and implementing nature and environmental programs for youth and adults in Bremer County. In addition to programming, they aspired to build a nature playscape in Bremer County. On June 8th, Angie and Heather, and Bremer County Nature Alliance board members,



held a grand opening event for the nature playscape located at North Woods Park in Sumner. Over 50 kids and adults attended the grand opening which included grilled hot dogs, chips, and lemonade. The event also served as a Bremer County Conservation Staff Appreciation Lunch. Each year the Bremer County Nature Alliance provides a meal to Bremer County Conservation employees to recognize the efforts they put in all year to ensure that Bremer County residents have an abundance of outdoor spaces to enjoy year-round. The playground features numerous natural play pieces such as logs, stumps, a climbing web, and musical instruments. The completion of the nature

playscape was made possible through a variety of community contributions including a grant from Community Foundation Grant, an entryway arch built by the Sumner Fredericksburg High School IT class, small wooden picnic tables donated by Sumner Building Services, and donations from the Bremer County Nature Alliance.



## *Thanks to Girl Scouts Troop 1243 for Playscape Addition*



Troop Leaders, Kerry Larson and Joy Becker, contacted Bremer County Conservation about doing their Bronze Award. The Bronze Award is earned by completing a Take Action Project, where you discover an issue or need in your community that you work on to improve.

After meeting with naturalist, Angie Auel, the girls decided to build a shelter at the Nature Playscape in North Woods Park, north of Sumner. The girls gathered wood from one of their homes, and met out at North Woods on August 27, 2023 to complete the project. Angie Auel said "This is a great new addition to our nature playscape and we are thankful the girls choose Bremer County Conservation to work with on their award!"



## 35 Years of Environmental Education in Bremer County



At the August 3, 1988 meeting of the Bremer County Conservation Board members, candidates were interviewed for the very first naturalist position in Bremer County. Gloria Fallis was hired that month and began her duties by September 7. Early records indicate that some of her first program offerings included camouflage, scavengers, deer and birds. Fourteen more programs were offered by the end of the school year. She also secured program supplies like models, butterfly and pond nets, fishing poles, animal tracks, curriculum books that are still used today. She helped schools plant trees. She used slide presentations. She began summer programming in the parks for youth. She also put up Kestrel Boxes that are still in existence today. Gloria left in August of 1990.

Darrin Siefken (1990-2001) was hired by September 1990. His first programs included conservation careers, bats, birds, orienteering, a creek walk, camouflage, animals and nature and walnut dying. Darrin began helping St. Paul's Lutheran in Waverly with the annual Night Hike (Halloween Hike). He created a 5 year EE plan. He began recycling at area schools and cities. He began the Explorer Post with skiing being the first activity in January 1992. He upgraded the computer files. He continued the Cedar River Cleanup. He began teaching hunter education. He started the frog & toad survey that continues today. He created the Interpretive Trail at Cedar Bend Park in 1992. He began the 5th grade field day. The 1992 Outstanding New County Conservation Board EE Program was awarded to Darrin and Bremer County. He created an intern program that led to hiring a Recycling Coordinator/Assistant naturalist in 1998. Darrin began the Annual Sandhill Crane Count. Darrin received the Outstanding County Conservation Board Environmental Education Program award in 2000. Darrin left in 2001 to become the ISU Extension Director. He has since left that position to become owner of CrawDaddy Outdoors in Waverly.



Tammy Turner (1998-2007) was hired part-time on September 21, 1998. By December of that year, funding was secured to bring her on full time as the Recycling Coordinator/Educator for Bremer County. Tammy spent numerous hours educating city staff and residents about the importance of recycling and reducing our waste. In addition to the recycling program, she assisted Darrin Siefken with environmental education programs. She arranged for Bremer County Conservation staff to put up the recycling sheds at each camping park. She sold all of the recyclables that came into the County Recycling Center that existed at the old county home site. She created the vermicomposting bin that still exists. It uses worms to break down human food waste. She helped publicize the Bremer County Regional Collection Center for Household Hazardous Waste. It is still open today at the Landfill. Some of her passions involved water quality snapshots and monarch butterfly tagging. In 2004, Tammy received an award for her involvement in the Wapsie River Watershed Snapshot. She also helped area residents get backyard compost bins. She left in October 2007 to work with Black Hawk County. Today she is employed with INRCOG (Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments.)

In the spring of 2008, Kate Zimmerman was hired. The position changed from being one of Recycling Coordinator to Recycling Educator. Kate was not in charge of the county recycling program because it was being handed off to the individual cities as their responsibility. Kate started presenting education programs to the nursing homes and assisted living homes in Bremer County. She enjoyed helping to band kestrels, loved prairies and Monarch butterflies, and helped lead a trip to the Boundary Waters. She nominated local nature hero Arley Hahn for the Heroes Among Us award for his involvement of saving a Pelican at Sweet Marsh and continued the vermicomposting program. Kate implemented the start of the new Bremer County site on MyCountyParks.com, the first collective state-wide website for all county conservation departments. She helped create summer participant lists when the City of Waverly gave up



their Park & Rec program. She left in September 2010 to become a Director for Ringgold County Conservation. Kate is now the Executive Director at Whiterock Conservancy, a 5,500 acre, nonprofit land trust dedicated to providing educational and recreational opportunities for the public, improving and protecting the land through conservation and more.

In December of 2010, Chelsea Ewen (2010-2012) was hired. She continued many past programs including all the nursing home and assisted living ones. She helped with the scouts Klondike Derby. She served as Assistant Commissioner for the Soil and Water Conservation District. She enjoyed outdoor cooking programs especially with WSR Middle School students. Wild edibles are her passion and she presented programs on them and attended local Farmer's Markets. She created displays for the Health and Wellness Fair. She assisted with Kestrel Banding. She helped preserve several bird species. She wrote numerous articles for the newsletters. She attended a Recycling Conference to continue Bremer County's efforts to educate about this important topic. This included acquiring a MRF (Materials Recovery Facility). Chelsea created the Bremer County Facebook page. She enjoyed raising Monarchs from caterpillars. She was trained in water monitoring, frog and toad surveying and Growing Up Wild curriculums. She served as a guest for the 4H Omelet Breakfast. Heather and Chelsea attended the National Association for Interpretation conference in Minneapolis in 2011. They were awarded the 2011 EE award for Outstanding Program with 2 or more naturalists.



In September of 2012, Sarah Beckman (2012-2019) was hired. Sarah developed new programs such as Squirrels & Acorns, Oviparous Animals, EcoBeaver for the classroom. She also started a Wreath Making Class for the general public. She coordinated the Halloween Hike annually and moved the location to Eagle Lodge at Ingawanis Woodland in 2013. She coordinated a production of the Lorax play for 750 WSR Kindergarten – 4th grade students with school librarian, Janet Hurley. This was followed up by tree plantings at the 3 elementary schools. She continued numerous Nursing Home and Assisted Living programs. Heather and Sarah created a new summer program called Extreme Outdoor Kids that involved slacklining, mountain biking and whitewater kayaking. She enjoyed working with adults at North Star and doing programs with them. She attended many workshops during her time at Bremer County. She offered ice fishing during Waverly Snowfest celebration. She visited Hawkeye Community College to visit with students about careers. She helped with the Crane Count. She especially loved summer Outdoor Explorer programs with youth. Biking, Kayaking, Stand up Paddle boarding and making terrariums were some of her favorites. She enjoyed taking care of the salamander in the office and doing classroom visits with him. She was the best at rescuing wildlife when it needed help. She would work with Linda Nebbe, Wildlife Rehabilitator to bring numerous animals back to their wild homes. In May 2019, Sarah had a baby and resigned later that summer to spend more time with him.

In October of 2019, Angie Auel was hired. In spring 2020 when Covid canceled 2.5 months of school programs, she helped Bremer County Conservation go online with You Tube videos. She created the permanent kiosk signs in campgrounds. Angie helped transition files to Google for ease of use including the naturalists' calendar. She is the editor of the Bremer Bulletin newsletter. She secured grants for pellet guns, disc golf equipment and archery equipment. She cares for the red worms and continues to do educational programs on vermicomposting.



In July of 2001, Heather Freidhof (Gamm) was hired to succeed Darrin Siefken. Heather has been employed with Bremer County ever since. She has added many new programs to the list and acquired various program supplies. In 2016, she helped create the Bremer County Nature Alliance with Frank Frederick (former Director of Bremer County Conservation). She has attended numerous conferences to continue learning. She currently serves as an ExCom member of the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition. She has enjoyed working with high school students competing at the Iowa Envirothon but her biggest job highlight has been helping lead Wilderness Trips with Waverly - Shell Rock high school students.



## *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 free biking events, Picnic in the Park on Tuesdays, Mini Explorers on Thursdays, along with library programs throughout the county and a few field trips. We had 206 people attend



Picnic in the Park! We had fun learning about beavers, grasshoppers, sandhill cranes, and scat. Mini Explorers which focused on PreK-1st grade students, with an adult, had 88 participants! We featured a different Bremer County park each week. We enjoyed rock painting and the nature playscape at North Woods, canoeing and building bridges at Alcock, and stained glass windows at Cedar Bend. We loved going to our local libraries this summer to talk about birds, frogs, and insect sounds.



July was jam-packed with Outdoor Explorers— 22 Beginners (2-3rd grade), 21 Intermediate (4-5th grade), and 7 on a kayaking Advanced (5-8th grade) adventure, along with more field trips! Four weeks worth of team building, ants, tie dying, shadows, fishing, stand up paddle boards, kayaking, compass, GPS, disc golf, slacklining, solar s'mores, pellet guns, archery, stepping stones, creek stomp, and biking. My highlight was watching the kids create their own shadow puppet shows. In August, we finished our field trips of kayaking and fossil hunting. 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.



## *Frostbite Halloween Hike Monday, October 23*

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 treats at the end. You will follow a luminary-lit trail. The theme is Frostbite with a penguin, snowy owl, caribou, and walrus. 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 for this event, however it is **FULL**.

There are 18 different species of penguins, only two make the Antarctic continent their true home, although others breed on the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, where conditions are less harsh. Fun fact about penguins is the blood flow to their feet is tightly controlled, with reduced flow in cold conditions. Heat exchangers at the top of penguin legs take heat from the blood flowing to the feet, and use it to heat up the blood flowing back into the body.



## *Charcuterie Board Wood Burning*



Bremer County Conservation will host a Charcuterie Board Wood Burning class at Eagle Lodge on **Wednesday, November 1st at 6:00 pm**. Eagle Lodge is located at Ingawanis Woodland (2588 Hawthorne Ave. Janesville). Participants will learn step-by-step instructions on creating a stencil, using a heat gun, and the chemical reaction needed to create a unique charcuterie board to take home. An example is pictured to the left. The cutting board that will be provided is on the right. Each participant will also get to make a wooden Christmas ornament!

Participants must pre-register and pay a \$30 registration fee before October 25 at 4:00 p.m. to reserve limited spots. Once registered, participants will be contacted to decide on the stencil they would like created for their board and ornament. To register, email Angie Auel at [angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us](mailto:angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us).



## *Wreath Making*



Bremer County Conservation will host two wreath-making classes at Eagle Lodge on **Thursday, November 30th at 4:00pm and 7:00 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 29.



# Bremer Bulletin

Bremer County Conservation Board  
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## BREMER BULLETIN

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### *Bremer County Conservation Board*

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