

B r e m e r B u i l d i n g

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BREMER COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Spring 2023 Edition

Spring is Coming by Angie Auel

As March draws to an end, Bremer County Conservation Board (BCCB) staff attention moves to opening up campgrounds. We plan on opening parks on Friday, April 28 if temperatures allow for water to be turned on for the season.



BCCB staff will also be focusing on controlled prairie burns this spring. Fire helps control undesirable vegetation, such as woody shrubs, trees, and invasive species. Fire also rejuvenates grasses and wildflowers in our prairies. Weather conditions such as humidity, wind speed, direction and temperature for the day of the burn make it difficult to know how many properties or acres staff will be able to burn this spring.



Bremer County Conservation naturalists begin to prepare for spring school field trips and summer camps! See pages 3 and 4 for all the fun summer activities!



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Recycling Educator / Naturalist - Angie Auel

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Growing network of radio stations provide important data on small animal migration by Iowa DNR

Iowa joined other Midwestern states and researchers in Canada and Central and South America to create a network of radio receiver stations to learn more about the long-distance migration patterns of birds, bats and insects.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System, motus being the Latin word for movement, began in 2013 by Birds Canada near Toronto. Motus is a system of coordinated automated radio telemetry stations used to track long-distance movements of small animals.

Antennas that are connected to radio receivers are being installed throughout the Western hemisphere. Birds, bats and insects are netted and trapped. Then they are outfitted with small tags that emit a radio signal every few seconds. When the tagged animal passes near a receiver station, it records the tag and identifies the animal to which it was attached. So multiple detections, over time, can build a map of migration for a tagged individual.

Iowa is an important flyway for migrating birds. As the state works to fill in its east-west radio receiver station fence, more birds will be detected providing more information on migration patterns that can inform conservation decision making. “We’re trying to increase the number of stations in Iowa and the Midwest to benefit current and future research,” said Anna Buckardt Thomas, avian ecologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Iowa began installing stations in August 2021 as part of a Fish and Wildlife Service Grant that funded equipment for 40 stations in the Midwest and a dozen in Central and South America. One of the stations is placed at Bremer County Conservation headquarters in Tripoli. This station is one of only three statewide, placed on County Conservation Board facilities. The stations are automated and have four antennas set to receive two radio frequencies. The larger antennas have a detection range of 9.3 miles, the smaller antennas can cover 6.2 miles. Once the system is installed, it is fairly low maintenance and is always on and ready to detect tags nearby.

The station near the town of Early, on the Black Hawk Wildlife Unit building, has had a lesser yellowlegs tagged at its wintering grounds in Columbia. The lesser yellowlegs was tagged in Columbia on April 19, 2022. It was detected in southern Costa Rica on May 4, 2022 traveling an estimated 48.5 miles per hour. Then it was detected in Kansas on May 7, 2022 and again on May 7, 2022 at the Missouri River Wildlife Unit for two minutes. Finally it was at the Black Hawk Wildlife Unit for five seconds.



MOTUS tower on the back of BCCB building.

“All that information is fed into one database so we can detect animals that were tagged by any other researcher in the database and they will be able to detect any tags we put out in the future. We’re adding an interesting and vital piece to the story of these birds,” Buckardt Thomas said.

Information on the project is available to the public and can be seen at motus.org. The stations are automatically updating the database so the data on the website is always current.

“We have a much better chance of detecting a tagged bird than to recapturing a bird that is only banded,” she said. “We will learn a lot about the birds’ migration routes and timing when they move through the area, and which Iowa habitats they are using.”

Thanks to the following for donating.

Bremer County Soil & Water Conservation District

Native Seeder maintenance

Lois Peters

Memorials for Virgil Matthias & Steve Garner

Trees Forever

Alcock Park Trees

Thomas Scott & Sarah Rada-Scott

Donation toward county parks

Dale & Peggy Rogers

Memorials for Jerald Brettmann & Marian Dunleavy & Ingawanis Woodland

Picnic in the Park

Picnics are meant to help you socialize with other families in the summer and get outdoors. Each family brings their own lunch items and a blanket to spread out on. Picnic tables are also available. Each week will have a book and activity. Please email Angie at angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us to reserve your spot. There is no fee for this program but you must register by May 31st.



**Cedar Bend Park -
East Shelter**
1267 205th Street Waverly
11:30 am - 1:00 pm

June 6 Beavers
June 13 Grasshoppers
June 20 Sandhill Cranes
June 27 Track that scat!

Mini Explorers

This program is for Kindergarten and 1st grade students. An adult needs to accompany the child to these events. Each week, we will explore a different park in the county and enjoy an activity together. Please email Angie at angie.ael@co.bremer.ia.us to reserve your spot. There is no fee for this program but you must register by May 31st.



10:00 - 11:15 am

June 8 Nature Playscape
at North Woods, Sumner
June 15 Canoeing & Build a Bridge
at Alcock, Frederika
June 22 Scavenger Hunt & Recycled Craft
at Cedar Bend, Waverly

Biking in Bremer County



Enjoy a leisurely pedal on the trail with Bremer County Naturalists. Participants must have completed 4th grade and up. Bring your bike, helmet, water bottle and dress to be outdoors which includes tennis shoes. Please register at <https://bit.ly/2023OutdoorExplorers> by May 31st. There is no fee for this program but you must register.

June 7 9:30-11:30 am Readlyn Grump Trail
June 14 9:30-10:45 am Sweetwater Trail in Tripoli

Field Trips

Trip to Heery Woods
(Clarksville) in Butler
County

Participants will go fishing and kayaking at Sportsman's Park. Then they will get involved with numerous team challenges and get to check out the nature center at Heery Woods.

Date: Monday, June 19
Time: 9:30am – 3:00pm
Age: Completed 3rd grade and up
Fee: \$20

Waverly Archery Club
in SE Waverly

Participants will meet at the Waverly Archery Club near Babcock Woods. All equipment will be provided. We will begin our day shooting at a target, then walk through the woods to shoot at the 3D animals.

Date: Wednesday, June 21
Time: 9:00am – 11:00am
Age: Completed 4th grade and up
Fee: \$10

Hawkeye Buffalo Ranch
and Twin Ponds
Nature Center

This group is off to Chickasaw County to get up-close and personal with animals! Participants will take a hay wagon ride in the buffalo pasture and feed the buffalo ears of corn by hand. Then we will travel to the nature center, where we will touch live animals before fishing at the pond.

Date: Friday, July 21
Time: 9:30am – 3:30pm
Age: Completed 3rd grade and up
Fee: \$30



Field Trips

Rockford Fossil Park near Rockford, Iowa

Travel to the Devonian Age when Iowa was an ocean. That's before the dinosaurs! Participants will tour the Fossil & Prairie Center before going out to look for fossils.

Date: Tuesday, August 1
Time: 10:00am – 2:30pm
Age: Completed 3rd grade and up
Fee: \$20

Extreme Kayaking at Manchester Whitewater Park

CrawDaddy Outdoors will provide all the gear and training for this epic adventure! Participants will meet in Waverly and ride with a naturalist or Darrin Siefken, CrawDaddy Outdoors owner. Some kayaking or canoeing experience is preferred.

REGISTER ONLINE for this program! Here is the link to register.

<https://bit.ly/2023whitewaterkayaking>

Date: Monday, August 14
Time: 9:00am – 3:30pm
Age: Completed 5th grade and up
Fee: \$40 (Pay online)

Location to meet: Behind CrawDaddy Outdoors at 9:00am or in Manchester at 10:30am

Subscribe!

Find Bremer County Naturalists on social media!



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“Bremer County Conservation”



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Summer Outdoor Explorers Programs

To register for any Outdoor Explorers events, please register online at <https://bit.ly/2023OutdoorExplorers> then pay at <https://givebutter.com/BCNAOutdoorExplorers> for the amount of the class or combination of classes. Please email Heather Gamm at naturalist@co.bremer.ia.us if you have any questions.

Beginner Outdoor Explorers

Ensure your child is outside this summer by signing them up to enjoy and learn about the great outdoors! Outdoor activities are listed below. Your child may take this class 2 years in a row. Most activities will alternate every other year.

Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 - 11:15 am

Grades Completed: 2nd - 3rd

Place: Cedar Bend Park East Shelter (1267 205th Street, Waverly)

Fee: \$35

Date	Activity
July 6	Get to Know You Games/Flag Themed
July 11	Ants on a Log
July 13	Fishing/SUP/Kayaking
July 18	Color Day
July 20	Water, Water Everywhere
July 25	Compass
July 27	Shadows Around Us



Intermediate Outdoor Explorers

Participants will enjoy a longer session to engage in hands-on activities. This Outdoor Explorers group will meet at various locations around Waverly. Please be on time for all activities. Children should bring a water bottle and dress to be outdoors which includes tennis shoes.

Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Grades Completed: 4th - 5th

Place: various locations around Waverly

Fee: \$55

Date	Activity	Location
July 6	Intros, Slacklining & Disc Golf	Brookwood Park
July 11	Outdoor Cooking, Digital Scav. Hunt	Cedar Bend Park
July 13	Fishing/SUP/Kayaking	Three Rivers Park
July 18	Pellet Guns/Archery/Stepping Stones	Cedar Bend Park
July 20	Creek Stomp	South Riverside Park
July 25	Geocaching	Around Waverly
July 27	Biking (Bring your bike & helmet.)	South Riverside Park

Advanced Outdoor Explorers

This group meets for two sessions on Mondays in July. If you sign up for only one event, the price will be as follows: \$20 for kayaking and \$10 for biking.

Days: Mondays from 12:00 - 3:00 pm

Grades Completed: 5th - 8th

Fee: \$30 for all dates

Date	Activity	Location
July 24	Biking (Bring your bike & helmet)	Waverly Rail Trail
July 31	Kayaking	Shell Rock River

American Kestrel Nest Boxes Researched by Heather Gamm

Bremer County's original naturalist, Gloria Fallis, wrote an article about placing American Kestrel boxes on December 20, 1989. It stated.

Recently, I have been getting inquiries about "Sparrow Hawks". Do we have them here in Bremer County? What do they look like? Are they those small birds that sit on wires and stare at the road ditches? The answer: yes.



Picture by Larry Reis, Winneshiek County Conservation

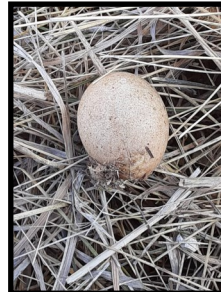
Although still called a "Sparrow Hawk" by many people (the name was changed to American Kestrel to eliminate confusion with another "Sparrow Hawk", and to discourage negative attitudes toward a songbird "killer") the American Kestrel is actually a falcon. Falcons are stream-lined birds of prey with pointed wings and longish tails. "Falco sparverius," the American Kestrel, is small-jay-sized and extremely colorful. No other small raptor has the reddish-brown back and tail, nor the mustached black and white face pattern so apparent on the Kestrel. Unlike many raptors, the male and female Kestrel can easily be distinguished. Females have a rufous

body, tail and wings. Male Kestrels have the same reddish body and tail, but their wings are blue-gray.

Kestrels are quite common in Bremer County and throughout Iowa. The characteristic Iowa landscape-fields, scattered woodlots, pastures and highway rights of way, offer ideal Kestrel habitat. They can often be seen perched on powerlines, or hovering above roadway ditches or fields in search of their prey. Although the Kestrel may take an occasional songbird, their diet primarily consists of rodents and insects.

Kestrels nest in abandoned building, old woodpecker holes, and man-made nest boxes. Watch for Kestrels using the nest boxes recently put out by the Bremer County Conservation Board. Nesting activity should take place from the end of March through the end of May. If you see signs of nesting, or would like more information on Kestrels, call the Bremer County Conservation Board office at 882-4742.

WOW. Many of the boxes and their locations have existed for 34 years. Obviously, some boxes have been replaced. Other boxes have been removed since power poles have also been replaced. Bremer County Conservation staff used to band Kestrels up until 2012 when we lost permission from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources due to a lack of funding. The boxes continue to serve as a home for Kestrels as well as the occasional mouse, squirrel or other bird species. There are still 27 nest boxes up in Bremer County in 2023. Fifteen of those were used by Kestrels. Eight were used by squirrels, mice or other birds. Four boxes were not used at all. Overall, we are pleased that our staff was able to give 15 Kestrel parents a place to nest with their young.



Bremer Bulletin

Bremer County Conservation Board
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BREMER BULLETIN

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Bremer County Conservation Board

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