

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

Winter 2023 Edition

A 2022 Year in Review
By Andrew Hockenson

It's hard to believe it, but January 2023 is here. It's a nice time of year to look back and reflect on 2022 accomplishments and begin setting new goals for the upcoming year. For 3 out of the 4 parks, the 2022 camping season was as good as it has ever been. Part of the camping increase may be contributed to higher gas prices and people wanting to stay a little closer to home. Weather can also be a determining factor as to how many favorable camping days are available, and last summer the parks remained open with no flooding or major storm damage. I would also like to believe that park improvements also play a role in the increase. The Bremer County Conservation Board continues to work on upgrades to the parks to make them more suitable for today's larger campers. Cedar Bend, Alcock, and North Woods Parks all have upgraded electrical service now available.

2022 marked the first full year the new sites in the upper portion of North Woods Park were opened. These 11 sites have gravel camping pads, new fire rings, 50 amp electrical service, and water hookups to each site. They are also conveniently located close to the shower building. With these new sites, if flooding does occur in the park forcing closures to the bottom sites, these will remain open and available for use. We have high hopes that as more people become aware of these sites, they will rise in popularity. Also, at North Woods, we added some really neat features to the outdoor natural playscape that replaced the original playground equipment. There are large rocks and logs to climb on, musical instruments to play, a large net spiderweb climber and hammock, a plexiglass board to draw on, antlers and bones to touch, and a little outdoor library with books to read on the log benches. Although the nature scape offers several activities, it is not considered done. Features can always be added or changed to keep it fresh. This fall we were also able to get our hands on a huge hollow cottonwood log from a tree in Waterloo. (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

Board Members

Chairperson - Larry Pavelec

Vice Chair - Mandie Sanderman

Richard Harms, Stacey Snyder, Kevin Korman

A 2022 Year in Review continued

By Andrew Hockenson



The tree is so large, our grapple attachment on the skid loader couldn't open wide enough to grab it. Look forward to crawling through that next spring.

Out of the 4 parks, Alcock was the only one that did not have the highest camping numbers. One of the main reasons for this was because of the ash tree devastation caused by the emerald ash borer. Nearly 150 trees were removed in late August. Although most of the logs were sold and hauled away, the tangled mess of tops and stumps is still left to deal with. Clean up of what was left was a major task for staff members. Countless days were spent cutting, piling, and chipping debris, trying to get the park back to a suitable condition. By Labor Day, very good progress was made and the park was available for camping. Young seedlings have been planted that will someday be utilized to replenish what was lost. Other larger trees have already been planted on site to speed the process up, however, many more are needed.

Sticking with Alcock Park, very good progress was been made on the pedestrian cable walk bridge over the Wapsipinicon River. The cables have been stretched and the lumber decking is close to three quarters of the way across. A metal stairway is in the process of being built and is planned to be put up in the spring. If all goes as planned, the bridge, which will connect the east and west sides of the park, will be open for next season.

Another bridge project was completed at Alcock Park during the summer of 2022. The east entrance flume bridge was partially damaged during previous flooding events. The original bridge structure was removed and replaced with large concrete box culvert sections. The stop logs that help control how much water is going through the flume were also replaced. Thanks to the help of the Bremer County Bridge Crew and conservation staff members, we were able to get this done in a timely manner. We also put up new guard and rails to finish out the project before the end of September.



Staff members worked with the Iowa DNR, and received funding through the Prairie Rapids Audubon Society to put up a MOTUS tower at the headquarters in Tripoli. The new tower is used to track tagged birds that come within 9 miles of the tower. Information gathered from these towers is used to track migrations. More information on this can be found by checking out the MOTUS website. You can specifically click on our tower site to see the flight paths of birds picked up by our antenna, however right now most of the birds have already migrated through. We'll have to look forward to what gets picked up by the tower in the spring when everything is on its way back. It's very interesting to see the flight paths of certain birds and be amazed at how fast and for how many miles they can go without stopping.

For 2023, the conservation board is getting excited about the possibility of adding a full-service cabin overlooking the Cedar River at Cedar Bend Park. A disc golf course at North Woods Park is also being discussed. With any large project, if there is any interest in a donation, we would be more than happy in starting up that discussion.

Additional information can be found on our MyCountyParks.com website, our Bremer County Conservation Facebook page, or the Bremer County Nature Alliance Facebook page.

Thank You for Your Years of Service

The Bremer County Board of Supervisors recognized employees for their years of service and for their continued contribution to the workings of county government. Bremer County Conservation had big milestones reached in the past two years. In the 20-year category,



Dave Steere



Mike Weidemann, Nick Franzen, Pat Hyde, Andy Hockenson, Heather Gamm

Heather Gamm, naturalist, along with Patrick Hyde, a natural resource tech received their certificates in 2021. This year, Dave Steere and Mike Weidemann, both natural resource techs, received their 15 year certificates. Andy Hockenson, director, received his 5 year certificate this year too. Their dedication to conservation and our natural resources is greatly appreciated.

Wreath Making Class By Heather Gamm

Bremer County Conservation hosted two wreath making classes at Eagle Lodge on December 1st. Participants received a wire ring or they brought a wreath ring from home. They could even reuse a ring from a past year! Then they added a variety of evergreens that were collected by Bremer County Conservation staff member, Dave Steere. He brought white pine, arborvitae, balsam fir and frazer fir.



Participants used floral wire to wrap the evergreen sprigs around the wreath ring. Once they completed the entire circle, Then the fun of decorating began. Several Bremer County Nature Alliance members volunteered to make bows, provide drinks/ snacks/music and helped participants design their wreaths. They also helped cut a few extra greens like Scotch Pine and Red Cedar. At the end, volunteers helped clean up the lodge. So much fun was had by all! Next year's class is being planned for November 30, 2023.



Winter Picnic at Ingawanis Woodland



Come join BCNA members for a Winter Picnic on **February 5** from 1:00-3:00 at Ingawanis Woodland. Snowshoes will be available if snow conditions are right. There will be a campfire to warm up and there will be hot cocoa and s'mores. Families can take a short winter hike and learn more about the outdoor world. There will also be time to make snowmen and enjoy the winter wonderland at Eagle Lodge. The address is 2588 Hawthorne Avenue, Janesville. No pre-registration is required.

Bremer County Nature Alliance Banquet

The Bremer County Nature Alliance (BCNA) is a local nonprofit organization whose mission is to help raise funds, coordinate local volunteer efforts, support and advocate for environmental education programs, and work closely on Bremer County Conservation projects. Each year the BCNA plans a banquet as a time to thank our existing BCNA members and provide an opportunity for interested individuals to learn more about the BCNA and begin their membership. This year the banquet will be held at the Denver Legion in Denver, Iowa on **March 25th, 2023**. Doors open at 5:00 pm with social time, followed by a welcome and dinner at 5:30 pm.

The evening will include a catered meal, raffle and prize drawings, and guest speaker Erika Billerbeck. Billerbeck is a wife, mother, conservation officer with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and author of *Wildland Sentinel: Field Notes from an Iowa Conservation Officer*. In *Wildland Sentinel*, Billerbeck shares stories of poaching investigations, searching for fugitives in wildlife areas, hauling drunk boaters to jail, performing body recoveries, and facing the chaos that comes with disaster response.

Raffle tickets for an Old Town Heron 11-foot XT kayak will be sold prior to and the night of the banquet for \$10 each or 3 for \$25 and can be purchased beginning March 1st at CrawDaddy Outdoors in Waverly or from any BCNA board member. You do not need to be present to win. Tickets to the banquet are \$18/adult and \$12/child 12 and under. These tickets can also be purchased at CrawDaddy Outdoors or from any BCNA board member. Your ticket includes the meal, dessert, and drink. All meal tickets must be purchased in advance by March 23.



All are welcome to attend and learn more about the natural resources right here in Bremer County! Thank you in advance for your support of the Bremer County Nature Alliance and Bremer County Conservation.

Come support all things outdoors in Bremer County. Last year, this fundraiser helped purchase an iPad for Bremer County Naturalists to use with a SWIVL.

Bremer County Sandhill Crane Count



April 15 is this year's annual crane count date. Bremer County volunteers will explore natural areas around the county to listen for the distinct unison or guard calls of the Sandhill Crane. Each person can walk, kayak, or listen from a car/chair. The goal is to get a "picture" of how many cranes are in our county. Check out the details and let us know if you want to participate by calling 319-882-4742.

<http://www.savingcranes.org/education/annual-midwest-crane-count/>

Bremer County Conservation Board opens new GPS course through Ingawanis Woodland Published by the Waverly Newspaper

The Bremer County Conservation Board has a new activity available at Ingawanis Woodland, the 142-acre recreation area located at 2588 Hawthorne Avenue between Janesville and Denver. The area has been a popular location for those utilizing the seven miles of mountain bike trails and Eagle Lodge rental facility since the conservation board purchased it in 2016.

Scout member, Joey Schmidt of Troop 90 in Waverly recently completed his Eagle Scout project of creating an orienteering and GPS course through the woods at Ingawanis Woodland. The purpose of this project is to help educate people new to orienteering and GPS. Orienteering is a sport primarily focusing on enhancing your navigational skills through use of a map and compass. If using a compass is unfamiliar to you, the option of using a GPS unit or an app on your phone is available.

Information on the three courses, which consist of a beginner at 1.2 miles, a moderate at 3.2 miles, and an advanced at 5.1 miles can be found at the Ingawanis Woodland page of the Bremer County Conservation Board website <https://www.mycountyparks.com/county/bremer/park/ingawanis-woodland.aspx>. There you will find an instruction guide and detailed maps of all three courses.

Joey and some other scout members started the project by collecting data points using GPS units. He then worked with another scout leader out of Cedar Rapids to begin creating the maps using the data he had gathered. He was then able to raise around \$1,300 for the project, which was used to purchase 32 eight by eight signs and two 18 by 24 signs. The posts needed for sign installation were donated, saving him around \$400, which he then donated to the Bremer County Nature Alliance.

Bremer County Conservation Board Director Andy Hockenson stated, “It was really great working with Joey throughout this project. I believe he took all the right steps to accomplishing his goal. He came to several conservation board meetings during his work, and raised all the money needed. This is another great physical activity now available at Ingawanis Woodland.”

The Bremer County Conservation Board enjoys working with youth seeking Eagle Scout status, and have ideas for other projects for those approaching this age. For additional information on this project or other questions related to Bremer County parks or wildlife areas, please call the office at 319-882-4742.



Eagle Scout Joey Schmidt of Troop 90 stands next to a sign he created for an orienteering course at Ingawanis Woodland.

Chickadee Check-off

The Chickadee Check-off was established by the Iowa Legislature in 1981. Donations to the check-off (referred to on the tax form as the Fish/Wildlife Fund) are tax deductible on the next year's tax form. NEW this year, you can also donate online to Wildlife Diversity at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/donations>. Additionally, every penny of your donation goes directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program - there are no administrative or processing fees. At its height, Iowans donated more than \$200,000 annually to the fund. The revenue from the Chickadee Check-off has exhibited an overall downward trend since 2001, although it has stabilized in recent years around \$130,000.

All the money contributed through the chickadee check-off helps support the Wildlife Diversity Program at the Iowa DNR. The funding assists thousands of vulnerable species such as songbirds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and more.

Please consider donating to the Chickadee Check-off this tax season and supporting wildlife conservation in Iowa!



Monarch Tagging Report *By Angie Auel*

Monarch Watch is a program through the University of Kansas that provides resources to citizen scientists, naturalists and teachers. Through educational programming and an online learning site, the public can learn about the biology of the Monarch Butterfly, their decrease in numbers due to habitat loss/milkweed supply as well as participate in a volunteer based Monarch tagging program. Monarch Watch utilizes the data recovered from the tagging program to better understand the annual mass migration of Monarchs to Mexico. The migration typically starts in mid-August and runs through the end of September. Each butterfly will fly for approximately 2-3 months to reach Mexico. The distance is over 1,000 miles! What an amazing insect!

Bremer County Conservation has participated in the tagging program for over 20 years. Naturalists have hosted tagging programs in our areas, schools, and libraries with people of all ages. In the 2022 tagging year, participants tagged 24 Monarchs, 6 females and 18 males. The numbers are considerably down from 2019 when 99 Monarchs, 47 males and 51 females were tagged.

You can help by planting milkweed and flowers!



Bremer County Conservation Fees for 2023

Camping

Cedar Bend Park \$12.00 per night per camping unit without electricity
 \$20.00 per night per camping unit with electricity
 \$22.00 per night charge for sites A-G (gravel pads & 50 amp outlets available)

North Woods Park \$12.00 per night per camping unit without electricity
 \$18.00 per night per camping unit with electricity (30 amp lower sites)
 \$20.00 per night charge for upper gravel sites (water & 50 amp)

Alcock Park and North Cedar Park
 \$12.00 per night per camping unit
 \$18.00 per night per camping unit with electric (30 amp outlets available)

Wednesday night will continue to be a free camping night unless the Wednesday falls on a holiday (whereby there will be regular fees).

Camping fees will be collected on a self-registration basis, whereby campers fill out an envelope upon arriving at the campgrounds, and deposits the envelope and fees in a vandal-proof collection box at the campground entrance. **No reservations, all sites are first come/serve.**

Showers

Shower facilities are located in all parks. These facilities are free to those camping in one of these parks. For anyone wanting to use the showers and not camping in the park, there is a **\$2.00** charge each time this facility is used. The fee can be placed in a camper self-registration envelope and marked "shower" and placed in the camper collection receptacle.

Dumpstations

Cedar Bend Park, North Cedar Park and Alcock Park all have dumpstations. This dumpstation is included in the camping fee for those camping in the park. For anyone wanting to use the dumpstation and not camping in the park, there is a **\$5.00** charge for each time the facility is used. The fee can be placed in a self-registration envelope and marked "dumpstation" and placed in the collection receptacle in the campgrounds.

Firewood

All parks cost **\$5.00** each time a defined amount of firewood is obtained from the firewood pile. Fees for firewood can be placed in a separate vandal proof collection box located near the firewood pile.

Shelters

Shelters are located in each of the four county parks and an amphitheater is located at Cedar Bend Park. These shelters have electricity as well as nearby water and a grill. They can be used free on a first-come, first-serve basis, but can be held for you by reservation. The charges are **\$25.00 per day** for shelters or the amphitheater. Contact the BCCB office at 319-882-4742 for more information or to reserve.

Ingawanis Woodland Lodge

This facility is located at 2588 Hawthorne Avenue, Janesville. It is an enclosed facility with restrooms, heat, air conditioning and a kitchenette. It can be rented for **\$75.00 per day** and reservations can be made by calling the BCCB office at 319-882-4742.

**Bremer County Conservation Board park gates are scheduled to be open
May 1 - October 31. For additional information, call Andy Hockenson at the BCCB
office at 319-882-4742.**

Bremer Bulletin

Bremer County Conservation Board
P.O. Box 412
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Tripoli, IA 50676

BREMER BULLETIN

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Bremer County Conservation Board

(319) 882-4742

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*www.mycountyparks
.com/county/
bremer.aspx*

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