

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

**Winter 2020 Edition**

***A 2019 Year in Review***  
***By Andrew Hockenson***

January 2020 is now upon us, what a nice time to take a moment and think back on the accomplishments made by the Bremer County Conservation Board throughout the past year. This is also a good time to begin planning and setting goals for 2020.

As I think back one year to the winter of 2019, one project comes to mind. This is a project that will be ongoing for many years to come. During the winters of 2018 and 2019 we worked through a grant provided by the US Fish & Wildlife Service to remove overgrown brush from our wetland and prairie areas in the Wapsie River Greenbelt. Late last winter proved to be very challenging on our staff and equipment as we pushed through one of the harshest winters on record. If anybody happened to drive past the area we were working and saw a moving white cloud of snow in the distance, it was the brush mulcher slowly making its way through the brush covered with several inches of snow. The images below show how the area has changed within the past few years. Continued on page 2.



2016 aerial image (before)



2019 aerial image (after)

***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 - Jim Peters*

*Vice Chair - Mandie Sanderman*

*Richard Harms, Stacey Snyder, Kevin Korman*

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## *Director Notes, continued*

*By Andrew Hockenson*

We plan to continue this work and strive to reclaim the native grasses that fight to survive amongst the relentless invasion of volunteer woody vegetation. As a follow up after mowing and mulching, portions are being grazed to keep what's been cut from re-sprouting so quickly.

Also in 2019, our first phase of the Wapsie Island Access Forest Stewardship Plan was completed. For this project 28 acres of timber were selected for a crop tree release. For a crop tree release, select numbers of trees were harvested to open up the forest canopy, which allows more sunlight to reach the crowns of the better mast producing trees. This also allows for sunlight to reach the forest floor where the young seedlings are awaiting their chance to flourish. In 2020/21 another harvest will be completed in different sections of timber to continue on with the overall plan. As part of the upcoming harvest, 4,100 oak and walnut seedlings were planted to help jumpstart the regeneration process. One main objective of the plan is to improve the overall health of the forest.

As winter began to wind down and spring approached, our daily activities drifted from working in the wildlife areas to working in the parks. Early on we had set a goal of installing a new playground at Cedar Bend before the parks opened on May 1st. The way the winter had been going, our confidence level of having unfrozen ground in early April to auger the holes for the playground was not too high, but luck was on our side, and Mother Nature provided us with a few wonderful April days to get the project completed. We were very pleased to have the playground in place and the mulch safety surface leveled before the gates swung open. A new swing set was added part way through the summer.



New open shelter at North Cedar Park

Currently work is taking place in the upper portions of North Woods Park for the addition of 10 campsites. Many red pine trees have been removed to make way for the campsites, which will be up near the shower building and consist of gravel camping pads, 50 amp electrical service, and most likely water. Once complete, campers will not have to worry about being stranded or evacuated out of the park due to high water. Also in North Woods, Chase Redfern of Sumner constructed and placed 6 new picnic tables in the north open shelter, as well as replaced many boards on other tables in the campground for his Eagle Scout Project. The Bremer County Conservation Board has a list of potential Eagle Scout Projects if others are pursuing that milestone.

When the camping season opens in May, campers will find new electric service on the west side of Alcock Park. In total, 17 campsites were upgraded with all new wire and pedestals. The 50 amp service in each pedestal will accommodate the bigger campers using our parks. With any luck, the river will stay in its banks next summer, and folks will be able to come out to enjoy a relaxing weekend.

Park users will also notice a new open picnic shelter at North Cedar Park. Concrete will be poured as temperatures warm in the spring. Reservations for this shelter or any of the other shelters in our parks can be made by calling the park office at 319-882-4742. Each shelter rents for \$25/day.

On top of these projects, our two Naturalists continued to strengthen our Environmental Education program by conducting 687 programs, interacting with 11,650 people.

The Bremer County Conservation Board is proud of the projects completed in 2019, as well as the ones that are just beginning. We look forward to what lies ahead in 2020.



## *Goodbye Sarah Beckman* *By Heather Gamm*

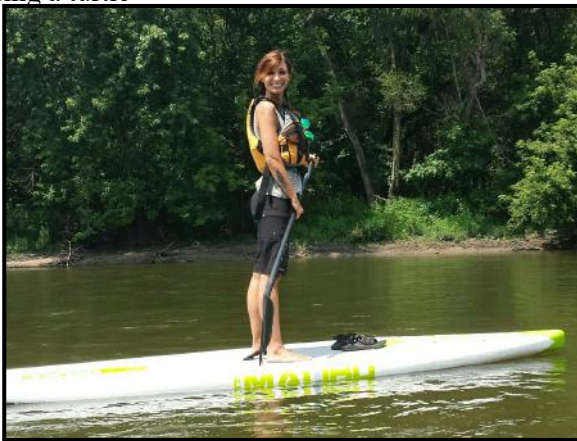


Rescuing a turtle

Sarah Beckman has left Bremer County Conservation to better accommodate her family's schedule. We will miss her incredible kindness to animals and her willingness to teach preschoolers along with her planning, decorating and costume creation skills at the Halloween Hike! Thank you Sarah for 7 years of dedication to the citizens of Bremer County!



Slacklining



Paddle Board



Ragbrai

## *New Recycling Educator / Naturalist* *By Angie Auel*

Hello Bremer County! I am, Angie Auel, the new naturalist with Bremer County Conservation. I have lived in rural Fairbank for the past nine years with my family. I enjoy sharing the outdoors with my husband, Jason and our three kids Freddie age 12, Ava age 11, and Stella age 7. We enjoy archery, kayaking, and hiking, basically anything that gets us outdoors!

I am originally from rural Jesup, graduating High School from Don Bosco. I received my BA in Animal Ecology with a Fisheries option in 2005 from Iowa State University. After graduating, I have worked in Dallas and Ringgold Counties. I spent the past nine years working in Buchanan County as a naturalist and a watershed coordinator for the Upper Wapsipinicon Watershed. My passion is educating youth along with adults about our natural resources and protecting our water in Iowa.

One of the many things I love about environmental education is the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). Jason and I began an archery team in 2008 in Diagonal, Iowa. In 2012, we began the Wapsie Valley Archery Team. If you would like to learn more about the NASP program please contact me about archery in the P.E. program or getting a team started in your community.



## Winter Picnic at Ingawanis Woodland



Come join Bremer County Conservation Naturalists and BCNA Members for a Winter Picnic on February 9 from 1:30-3:00 at the Ingawanis Woodland. We will have snowshoes available if snow conditions are right. Along with a Dutch Oven treat to try. We will provide coffee/hot cocoa. We are inviting families to take a short winter hike and learn more about the outdoor world.

## 21st Annual Bremer County Sandhill Crane Count



April 18 is the 21st annual crane count in Bremer County. Area 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 Bremer County. Check out the details and let us know if you want to participate by calling 319-231-9640.

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

## Bremer County Nature Alliance Banquet

The Bremer County Nature Alliance will be hosting professor and founder of the Tallgrass Prairie Center, Daryl Smith, on Saturday, March 28 at the Sumner American Legion. Dr. Smith is an Emeritus Professor in Biology and Science at University of Northern Iowa. He is the founder and former director of the Tallgrass Prairie Center. Dr. Smith has been involved in prairie preservation, management, and restoration for more than forty-five years. He was the executive director and producer of the documentary film *America's Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie*, which received the Pare Lorentz Award from the International Documentary Association.

Dr. Smith will begin speaking after a dinner and silent auction that begins at 5:00pm March 28. The cost of a ticket and annual membership is \$25 for adults and \$5 for children under 12 years old. Tickets must be purchased in advance. For tickets with membership, contact Heather Gamm, Bremer County Conservation, 319-882-4742. The Bremer County Nature Alliance helps to raise funds, coordinate local volunteer efforts, support and advocate for environmental education programs, and works closely on Bremer County Conservation projects. All are welcome to attend and learn more about the natural resources we have right here in Bremer County.



**Come support all things outdoors in Bremer County. Last year, this fundraiser helped purchase kayaks and paddle boards for Bremer County Naturalists to use with area youth.**

### Activity Calendar

Feb. 9, 1:30 p.m.  
Winter Picnic  
at Ingawanis  
Woodlands

Feb. 23, 1:00 p.m.  
Ice Fishing  
at Duck Pond

Mar. 28, 5:00 p.m.  
BCNA Banquet  
at Sumner Legion

Apr. 16, 6:30 p.m.  
Wildflower Hike  
at Babcock Woods

Apr. 18, 5:30 a.m.  
Sandhill Crane  
Count  
Various locations in  
Bremer County

**Register for all  
activities by  
calling  
319-882-4742  
to sign up!**

Mark your  
calendars for 2020  
Outdoor Explorers

Beginners  
Tuesdays and  
Thursdays  
July 7-July 30  
10:30-11:30

Intermediate  
Tuesdays and  
Thursdays  
July 7-July 30  
1:00-3:00

Advanced  
Dates TBD

## Angry Birds Halloween Hike 2019

Thanks to the following for donations to BCCB.

**Jim Peters**

Memorials for  
Burton Boevers  
John Thompson  
Dennis Peters  
Lawrence Judisch  
Betty Scharnhorst

**Stacey Snyder**

Memorials for  
Marilyn Schult  
Bonnie Zars  
LaVerne Lobeck

**Roger & Linda**

**Hagedorn**

Field rock for bank stabilization

**Chase Redfern**

North Woods Park  
Eagle Scout Project

**Joel Meyer**

Cedar Bend playground;  
plaque and stone

**Tom Meyer**

Cedar Bend  
plaque and stone

**William Meyer**

Cedar Bend  
plaque and stone

**Thomas Scott & Sarah**

**Rada-Scott**

Donation toward county parks

This year's hike involved a few "angry" animals. Red-winged Black Bird, Bald-faced Hornet, Badger, Blue Jay, & Red Squirrel



Thanks to Lisa Weidemann & Morgan Hockenson who made cookies. Thanks to Jason Auel, Andy Hockenson, Nick Franzen, and Blake Gamm for leading hikes. Thanks to Mike Weidemann for checking in groups and Laura Chapin for serving cocoa and cookies.

We are grateful for Stacey Snyder, Matt Crayne, and Steve Martin for acting.

## Chickadee Check-off

Since 1982, when the Iowa legislature created the Fish and Wildlife Fund Tax Check-off, Iowans have been able to bring a little wildness into the tax season. The Fish and Wildlife Tax Check-off, affectionately called the Chickadee Check-off was created to allow people to make a charitable donation to wildlife conservation in Iowa out of their tax refunds or by tacking a few dollars on to any taxes owed. When filling out the state income tax form, just look for the contribution line (line 57 on Form 1040) and write in any dollar amount next to Fish/Wildlife.

All the money contributed through the chickadee check-off helps support the Wildlife Diversity Program at the Iowa DNR. This program has statewide responsibility for all the wildlife that can't be hunted, fished or trapped from Peregrine Falcons to Poweshiek Skipperling butterflies. You can learn more about the program on their website: [www.iowadnr.gov/wildlifediversity](http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlifediversity).

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



photo by: Doug Harr

## *Kayaks, Paddles, and Life Jackets with Audubon grant*



Bremer County Conservation would like to thank Prairie Rapids Audubon Society for a \$750 grant to purchase a Solara 120 kayak, paddle and life jacket for public programs. Their grant money was matched with other funds raised at the Bremer County Nature Alliance banquet. Therefore, we were able to purchase 4 kayaks, 4 paddles, 2 stand up paddleboards with paddles and 6 life jackets.

We will use these kayaks and paddle boards for numerous years since we purchased high quality ones from CrawDaddy Outdoors in June. We have used the kayaks during the 2019 summer. This coming summer, we will use them even more since we will no longer need to rely on CrawDaddy Outdoors to take us down the river in kayaks! We also plan to add an adult float. The possibilities are exciting!



## *Monarch Tagging Report By Heather Gamm*

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. Bremer County Conservation has participated in the tagging program for nearly 20 years. The migration typically starts in mid-August and runs through the end of September. Naturalists have hosted tagging programs in our areas, schools, nursing homes, churches and libraries with people of all ages. In the 2019 tagging year, participants tagged 99 Monarchs, 47 males and 51 females (one flew away before it could be determined). 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 Fees for 2020*

## **Camping**

Cedar Bend Park      \$12.00 per night per camping unit without electricity  
                             \$17.00 per night per camping unit with electricity  
                             \$20.00 per night charge for sites A-G (gravel pads & 50 amp outlets available)

Alcock Park, North Cedar Park and North Woods Park  
                             \$10.00 per night per camping unit  
                             \$15.00 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  
1104 South Main Street  
Tripoli, IA 50676

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## BREMER BULLETIN

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### *Bremer County Conservation Board*

*(319) 882-4742*

*conservation@butler-  
bremer.com*

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

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