



# Raccoon River Greenbelt Newsletter



## SUMMER SOLSTICE EDITION 2020

### Woodland/Prairie Perspectives

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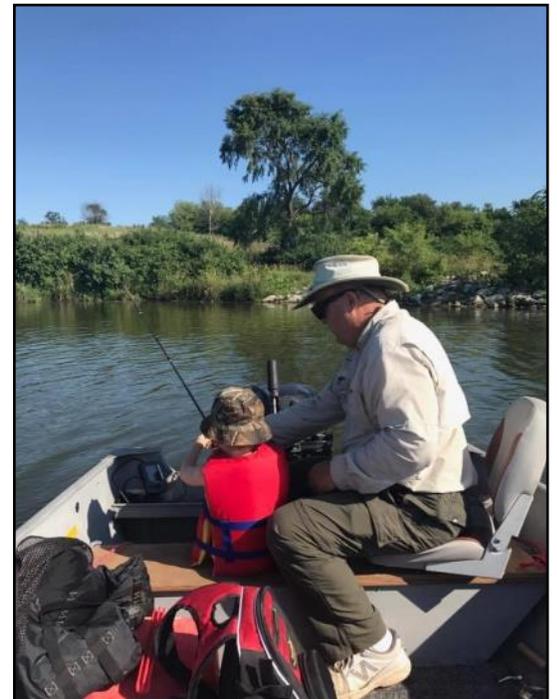
**It’s About Time**

#### Nature Impacts the Quality of Life

Mike Wallace, Director

As I am writing this article, it is a few days before Memorial Day weekend. Dallas County Conservation Board would normally be looking at fully booked reservations for cabins, lodges, camping sites, etc. but with the Covid-19 issues we are forced to operate a little differently. Slowly opening up our facilities is the current plan. This means that until we can safely maintain and manage our facilities with increased safety concerns in mind, there will be some facilities that we just will not be able to open in the same way as we have in the past.

At their May meeting the DCCB adopted a 3 Level approach for recommendations on how to re-open our facilities and campgrounds with Covid-19 concerns as the main issues prompting recommendations for protocols and procedures. These recommendations were put together from a statewide team approach that included representatives from other county conservation boards, Iowa DNR, and others. Each level provides recommendations on what could be opened up, how it is maintained at that level, and what procedures and protocols could be put in place (yet flexible) to adapt to our DCCB areas, facilities, staff, and activities. We are currently at Level 1 (although this could change by the time this newsletter is printed).



*continued on page 2*

**Published by Dallas County Conservation Board**

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# Woodland/Prairie Perspectives



*Nature Impacts the Quality of Life continued from page 1*

Basically Level 1 allows only self-contained camping units in a campground. This means under Level 1 that there are no restrooms, or shower buildings open in any of our areas. As we progress ahead in the days to come we will certainly have the opportunity to go to a Level 2 or Level 3. Level 2 would allow all types of camping in our campgrounds but with some restrictions. Level 3 is pretty much everything is open for public use, however with maybe some new guidelines established. Some of the decisions on re-opening facilities will have to deal with any Governor mandated restrictions as we currently are dealing with now. As the restrictions are adjusted and/or eliminated so will the opportunity for the DCCB to possibly open some additional facilities as well.

As the public has come to find out, it's not just getting used to limited facilities being opened that is different, but much of our other activities and programming is affected because of Covid-19. Our environmental education staff has had to totally switch gears in how they are presenting and interacting with the public. Online videos have been slowly developed, and we are seeing a great appreciation of this type of outreach. It is, at this time, too early to know what the impact will be regarding schools later this year, but our staff is working hard to make the adjustments needed.

One of the most positive things to have occurred during our society implementing new social distancing standards is the newly awakened sense of the public of how important our parks, trails, and natural resource areas are. Our Dallas County parks and trails have been busier than they have ever been. Our parking lots have never been as packed as they are now. We have been preaching for years the importance of "quality of life" positive opportunities that our department provides to the public. Some people really have understood this, and others just recently have finally figured it out. I wish it hadn't taken a Covid-19 virus to open the eyes of many to finally realize the value and importance of being outside, using our trails, hiking and discovering our prairies, wetlands, forests, hills and valleys, or enjoying the "wilderness" of Dallas County (as our Environmental Education Coordinator, Chris Adkins often talks about).

We certainly want to thank the essential workers throughout our area for what they have been dealing with during these frightening and scary days. EMS, first responders, doctors, nurses, law enforcement, public health officials, bank tellers, grocery store employees, truck drivers, and the list goes on and on of those that have actually risked their lives for the rest of us.

There is another type of "essential" piece to our lives that should also not be overlooked or taken for granted, as I think many of us have done for way to long of a time. That "essential" piece is the "quality of life" opportunities that still exist outside in our own little slice of wilderness, here in Dallas County. Yes, our natural resource areas have been re-discovered. We cannot get enough of those areas and opportunities. Even though our naturalists have adapted, to use as a tool, the use of videos, it is just not the same as being outside walking in a real wetland, or standing next to a 7-foot tall big bluestem prairie grass. Or seeing and hearing for the first time a migrating warbler called a Cape May Warbler (even I learn new things too)!

A very good friend of mine, who I have a great deal of respect for, once said something like, "You can build a lake anywhere, but you cannot build a natural river." We have many significant natural areas in Dallas County and I am seeing a sincere awakening of the value that our society needs to be, and is, placing on these. Go wet a line on the Middle Raccoon River, the smallmouth bass are waiting for you. Kayak the North Raccoon River, the bald eagle is waiting for you. Hike along the South Raccoon River, the river otter is waiting for you. Discover the wilds of the Kuehn Conservation Area, the owls are waiting for you. Enjoy the Voas Nature Area west of Minburn, the salamanders are waiting for you. Listen carefully at Sportsman Park east of Dawson, the pileated woodpecker is waiting for you.

So, keep going outside, keep re-discovering our natural areas, keep exercising and utilizing our trails, prairies, wetlands, forests, and river systems. Keep supporting our "quality of life" efforts that the Dallas County Conservation Board works hard to provide to the public to help us all get through these tough times. Most importantly, stay safe and healthy!



# Natural Resources



## Hidden Gems of Dallas County Conservation Board Curt Cable, Deputy Director/Biologist

Based on park usage since the end of March, I would venture to guess that most of you have already been to at least one of the Dallas County Conservation Board parks or wildlife areas. I am also willing to bet that I would have a 1 in 5 chance of guessing which one that was. If you have not been to Kuehn Conservation Area, Voas Nature Area, Hanging Rock, Forest Park Museum, and Sportsman Park then its time you get in the car and expand your horizons.



Snyder Tract

degrees of success. There is also a large sandbar along the river that provides hours of entertainment for young kids as they search for shells and rocks or simply treasures as my daughter calls them. On the southwest end of the Snyder Tract is the Crellin Wildlife Refuge. This is an undeveloped area where the only trails you will find where not made by humans. These areas are located a few miles west of Minburn along F31.

While these are some of our most developed and heavily used areas, there are a number of hidden gems in the county if you are looking for more adventure. These might be closer to home, and they may have just what you're looking for in an outdoor escape. Most of the areas I am going to list are undeveloped wildlife areas, where you are free to explore off the beaten path.



Wagner Prairie

Next up, Big Bend Wildlife Area, which is located 2 miles north of Redfield. As one of our larger wildlife areas, coming in around 640 acres, you could spend all day and not see everything out there. There are a few mowed trails (firebreaks), around the edges of our various management zones. With a diverse prairie and healthy forest this a great place to go hiking, birding, and hunting.

First on the list is one of our biggest hidden gems that I can think of, the North Raccoon River Wildlife Area including Snyder Tract and Crellin Wildlife Refuge. Both parcels run parallel to the North Raccoon River. The Snyder Tract is 115-acres which includes several old borrow pits with the main pit located in the middle of the wildlife area. There are several mowed trails within the Snyder Tract that lead to the old pits. Over the years people have fished the old pits with varying

The areas listed are just a few of the many places that we have to offer. Visit our website for a full listing of DCCB properties including a number of maps and brochures.

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# Nature Notes



## Expanding Our Horizons

Mike Havlik, Naturalist

In this time of social distancing I believe we have been given two fortuitous gifts; isolation and time. Many of us are looking for something interesting to while away the time. I propose an activity that calls us back to the land and expands our horizons. A driving tour of the Beaver Creek watershed in Dallas, Boone and Greene County.

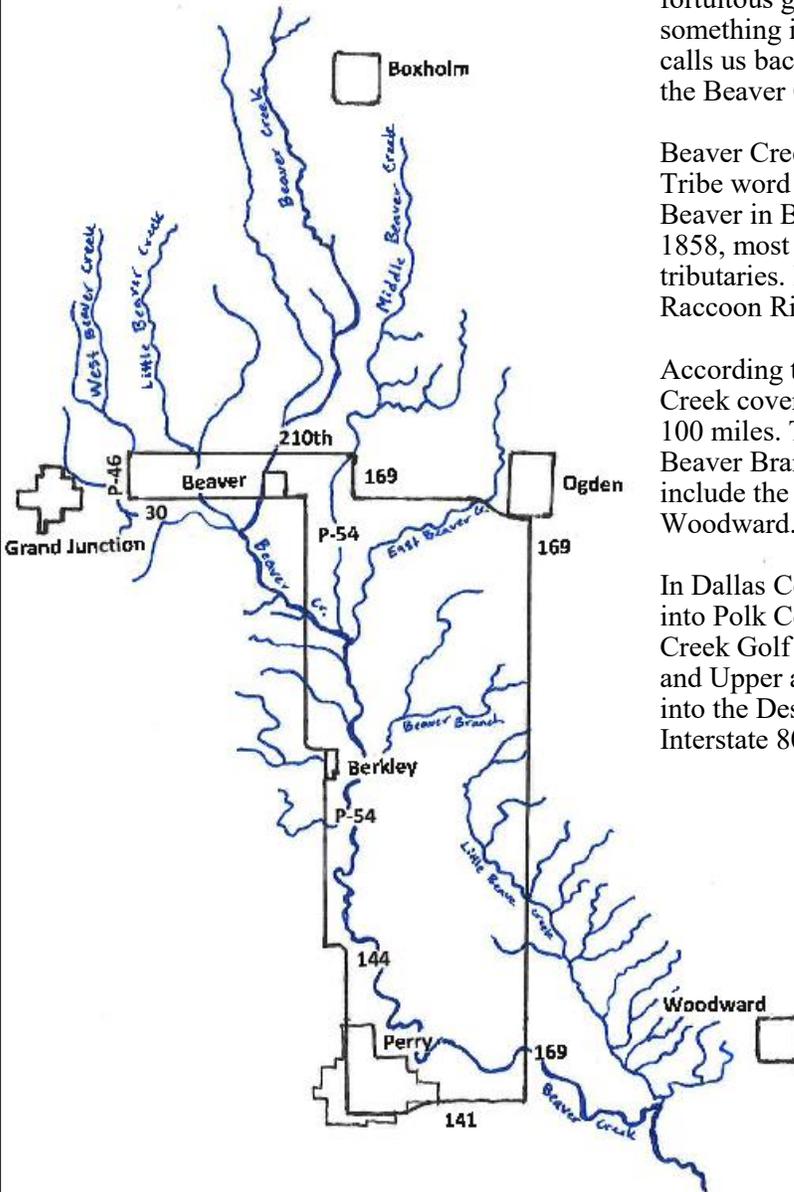
Beaver Creek was originally known as Amaqua, the indigenous Fox Tribe word for beaver. Amaqua is the Township name for the town of Beaver in Boone County. Beaver were found in this area as late as 1858, most likely because of its narrow width and numerous small tributaries. It is also much shallower than the larger Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers and would have been easier to dam.

According to the Iowa Watershed Management Authority, Beaver Creek covers 244,347 acres and its many tributaries spider out over 100 miles. These include East Beaver, West Beaver, Middle Beaver, Beaver Branch and two separate Little Beaver Creeks. The headwaters include the towns of Berkley, Ogden, Boxholm, Grand Junction, and Woodward.

In Dallas County these rivulets join the main channel and continue on into Polk County. The naming trickles on as well, including Beaver Creek Golf Club, Beaver Creek Elementary in Johnston, Beaverdale, and Upper and Lower Beaver Drives. The waterway finally dribbles into the Des Moines River to the north and west just as you cross the Interstate 80 Bridge.

If you would prefer not to drive or would like to pre-view your trip, you can take a virtual tour via your computer. Using Google Maps, type in Berkley, Iowa, and then click on "Satellite" view. Your map will turn from a dull gray to a lush green as you prepare for liftoff. Your virtual hot air balloon ride begins as your mouse takes you over the landscape and follows all of the diverging waterways as they radiate outward.

Let's use this gift of space and time to journey on this land and expand our horizons.



# STINE®



# Nature Notes



Our tour will originate in Perry. It is approximately 52 miles.

**Drive east on Highway 141 to Highway 169.** Beaver Creek will be on the left or north side of the road.

**Exit Highway 141 onto Highway 169 left or north.** In about 1 mile you will first cross Beaver Creek, then Little Beaver Creek four times, and finally Beaver Branch just before Ogden.

**At Ogden, head west which is a RIGHT turn onto Highway 30.** As you leave Ogden you will cross East Beaver Creek. 169 will turn right or north in about 1 1/2 miles.

**Turn right or north and continue on Highway 169. Cross the railroad tracks.**

**In 1 mile you will turn left or west onto 210<sup>th</sup> Street.** You are now on the historic Lincoln Highway. The next 5 miles will be on gravel. This is to prevent you from rubber-necking down busy Highway 30! Right away you will be crossing Middle Beaver Creek.

**Continue traveling west.** In about 2 miles you will be on Beaver Creek. Slow down or get out to look at the Marsh Rainbow Arch Bridge (North) built in 1919. There were two other Marsh Bridges on Beaver Creek that were replaced in the late 1970's. The town to your left or south is Beaver in Amaqua Township. In a little over a mile you will cross Little Beaver Creek, twice. Finally after W Avenue you will cross West Beaver Creek. W Avenue is also P-46.

**Turn south or left onto P-46 and drive to Highway 30. Turn east or left onto Highway 30.** West Beaver is to your right. You cross Little Beaver and Beaver Creek on 30. Drive 4 miles until you come to P-54.

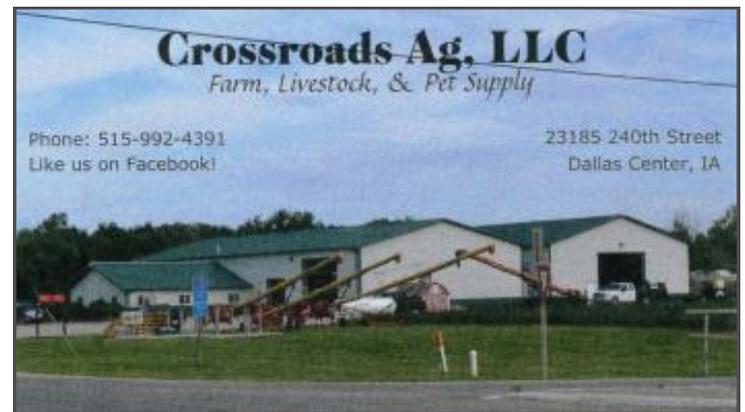
**Turn right or south on P-54.** In 3 miles you will cross Beaver Creek again. In 6 miles P-54 turns to the east. You have another opportunity to cross Beaver Creek and Beaver Branch if you head east on E-57.

**Otherwise, continue right or south into Berkley on P-54.** Beaver Creek will meander on your left or east side as you return to Perry. A second Marsh Rainbow Arch Bridge (Middle) used to cross on 305<sup>th</sup> Street about 2 1/2 miles south of Berkley. A third Marsh Bridge (South) is south of the Fairview Church on Deer Avenue, parallel to P-54. There is excellent signage for the church.

The Marsh Rainbow Arch Bridge (North) was built in 1919 as part of the Lincoln Highway. James Barney Marsh was an engineer who graduated from Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in Ames. He designed these bridges using reinforced concrete. You can see some of the exposed steel from ice and log jams.

**P-54 intersects Highway 144. Turn left or east, it quickly turns south and follow it back into Perry.**

## Beaver Creek Bridge




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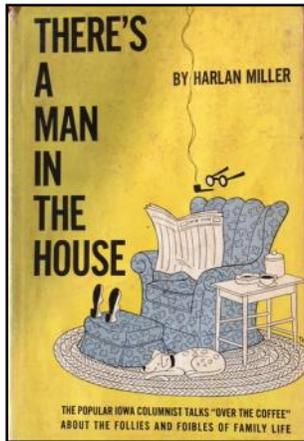
# Museum Musings



## Iowa Authors at Forest Park Museum Pete Malmberg, Curator

Bill Wagner, namesake of the Wagner Gallery at Forest Park Museum, was known for his love of books and of authors with Iowa roots. Over 1,000 books from his extensive collection are now housed at Forest Park Museum. Among them are many works by four highly regarded Iowa authors.

When people think about Iowa, one of the first things that comes to mind is our world famous state fair. Phil Stong's famous book *State Fair* was an instant success in 1932 and helped bring the fair international recognition. It also made Stong, a newspaperman turned creative writer, fame and economic security. The novel was so popular it was made into a movie featuring Will Rogers as one of the lead characters. Stong was able to repurchase his maternal grandfather's farm with the



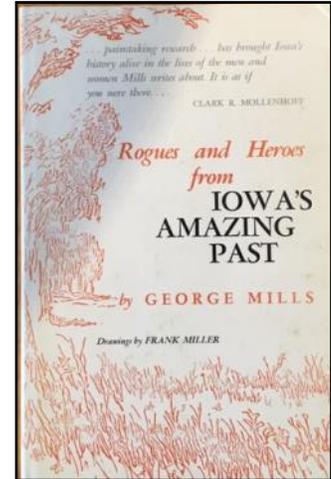
proceeds. He followed up his early success with more than 40 well written novels about people from the small towns and farms of Iowa, as well as some later works set in rural Minnesota and pioneer Iowa. These works were well received but none achieved the acclaim of *State Fair*. Stong also created an anthology of

science fiction and horror stories from pulp fiction magazines called *The Other Worlds* in 1941. By the time of his death in 1957, the Keosauqua native and Drake University graduate was regarded as one of the finest Iowa writers in state history.

Herb Quick was another noted Iowa writer collected by Wagner. Quick was born in Steamboat Rock, Iowa, in 1861 and had many different careers before starting to write at the age of 40 after serving a two year term as Sioux City mayor. His early adult careers included farm laborer, teacher, school administrator, lawyer and politician. He achieved all of this in spite of little formal education. His first book *In the Fairyland of America* came out in 1901. Other books such as *Yellowstone Nights* followed in a steady succession until his death in 1925. His fiction and nonfiction works reveal his great passion for Iowa's land and his interest in political reform.

Famous newspaper columnist Harlan Miller's works can also be found in Wagner Library. Miller was a household name in Iowa for forty years from 1925 to 1965 with his "Over the Coffee" column in the *Des Moines Register*. His columns were compiled into *There's a Man in the House* in 1955. The president of the Register described Miller as "the best-known and most controversial man in Iowa." By the time of his death at age 71 in 1968, his reputation as Iowa's most provocative writer was firmly established.

Another well regarded Iowa writer Wagner enjoyed was the noted Iowa reporter, author and historian George S. "Lefty" Mills Sr. Mills worked for many different



newspapers including the *Des Moines Register* for many years and reported from WHO-TV in Des Moines in his 70s. A Chicago native, he earned his nickname as a baseball pitcher at Northwestern University. He was known for always getting his story and even snuck into a closed Eisenhower event to write an exclusive story. His seven books included works on industrialist F.M. Hubbell, Iowa history, and the *Des Moines Register*. He also wrote about the less savory side of Des Moines in the 1920s and 30s. The legendary newspaperman passed away peacefully at the age of 97 in 2003.

The entire book library collection, including these titles, is available for browsing in our Forest Park Museum reading nook. We look forward to your visit.





# Nature Notes



## Dead Trees Bring New Life

**Matt Merrick, Natural Resources Manager (Trails)**

Spring is here with summer not too far behind. The songs of birds chirping, the call of the ring-necked pheasant, and even the gobble of a wild turkey are all commonplace along the Raccoon River Valley Trail. It is easy to be at peace on the trail only to be startled by the sound of falling trees and limbs in the forest. To most people the song of a bluebird or the cackle of a pheasant brings joy and a feeling of solitude to their lives. But for me, the death of a tree in the forest is what brings the most happiness along the trail.

Storms and wind that we all have grown accustomed to are prolific this time of year. With that brings the crashing sounds of trees and limbs. After the dust has settled and the leaves have fallen, what comes next is the most magical part of the life cycle of trees. A clearing in the forest from the death of a tree brings life from the ground and from the sky, as seedlings race to make the most of it. The death of a solitary tree shouldn't be mourned but should be relished. With newly created sunlight beaming from the forest canopy, tree seeds, shrubs, and wildflowers are all poised to make the most of the newly created environment to grow in. Some mammals and birds also thrive in these newly created opportunities provided by the storms, in particular the mysterious and lonesome American woodcock.

Riding the trail, you may encounter this fairly shy and odd looking bird. Tipping the scales at meager half a pound, the woodcock can be seen hopping around at ground level by newly created openings in the timber or along woodland margins. Also known as timberdoodles, they prefer young forest cover to make their ground nests. The nests consist of dead leafy material tucked safely away under brush. They sport very unusual

prehensile bills that can be up to three inches long. Using these thin bills they probe the forest soil searching for the earthworms and bugs that are on the menu for dinner. The way woodcocks walk will properly catch your eye. Rocking back and forth with every stride, the dance-like walk is thought to cause earthworms to come to the surface.



**American Woodcock**  
AKA Timberdoodle, Bog Sucker, Labrador Twister, and Mud Batt  
Photo: Mark Olivier, Macaulay Library

The American woodcock is one of the first birds to start nesting in our region. After the elaborate courtship of the spring sky dance, females will sit on the nest while the males forage for food. Flight almost exclusively occurs during night time. Because of this, it's rare to see the woodcocks flying during the daytime. Your best bet to encounter one on the Raccoon River Valley Trail is the section starting at the City of Redfield and heading north toward the City of Linden. This section of trail has some very old timber with pockets of open newly created forest growth favored by the fabled timberdoodle.

Next time you're on the trail and see what appears to be a bulbous shaped feather ball strutting across the pavement, stop about twenty yards short of it. Take in the unique behavior and peculiar features that make the American woodcock worth looking for.

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## “Home” Schooling

*Chris Adkins*

Much has changed since I penned my last newsletter article. The pandemic has placed DCCB’s Year of the Volunteer on pause. Our *Mni Akicita* invitation, to join us as water warriors, still stands, waiting for social distancing to be in our collective rear view mirrors. There is much good work to be done together and we look forward to sharing it with you.

I will begin this article with a love letter of sorts to all of you students out there. Be you young or old. A schoolchild participants in one of our paused spring Field Day programs with local school districts, or a life long learners awaiting our usual menu of spring public programs. The old adage, you don’t know what you have until it is gone, rings true. I have been engaged in environmental education over the past 40 springs. Time shared in the wilds with you has become part of the fabric of the calendar of my being. This spring’s teaching vacancies delivered me a real sense of being untethered. I have experienced a true sense of loss, missing your company in the wilds of Dallas County. Learning, finding new connections to our place together, is addictive to me. I look forward to the day we can again share a trail at Kuehn, Voas, Hanging Rock or a float down the one of three Raccoon Rivers.

Another change brought on by the pandemic is that many of you may be wearing the hat of teacher, or educator, in your family for the first time as you experiment with home schooling. The media is full of testimonials by Mothers, Fathers, Grandparents and Elders wrestling with this new role for the first time. I thought I might offer you some sage advice from an old white whiskered Elder on the topic of teaching. Take it or leave it, but I hope it provides you

with some useful direction as you embrace doffing this new hat in your family’s home schooling.

My first direction would be to relax. As the teacher, it is not your role to have all of the answers. Consider this quote, “The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.” ~Kahlil Gibran.

I must confess. I was terrified as I ventured into my first wearing of the teacher hat. My undergraduate training was steeped in the old school notion that the teacher was the fountain of all knowledge and that students were thus empty vessels to be filled. I, humbly, was pretty sure I was no fountain. To my great good fortune, early on in my teaching career, I came across an even older school notion, shared by a Native Elder, Jewel Crying Wolf. I took his words to heart, and am sure because of this, I have gotten out of the way for many of my students’ learning. Sitting on of a log, in an old growth forest in the northwest, Jewel Crying Wolf laid out this lesson, “If you can ask the question, YOU already have the answer.” No worries! You as the teacher do not need to know all the answers. Better, all you need to do is to help your learners to ask their questions. What a liberating step for both teacher and learner.

My second epiphany as an educator, that I think will serve you well also, came as the result of my love of etymology, the study of a word’s history. This sage direction for you helps you to define where the learning takes place. So much is hidden in the ancestry, evolution of a word. Take the word EDUCATE as an example. If I asked you now to pause and write your definition of EDUCATE, what would we get. A teacher, a classroom, chairs arranged in straight rows, empty vessels to be filled, recitation of someone else’s answers to someone

else’s questions? Taking EDUCATE back to its Latin roots finds this lineage. EDUCATE evolves from the term *educare*. This Latin phrase means “to lead”. But here is where it got interesting for me, and I hope, helpful for you. Not only does EDUCATE mean “to lead”, that makes sense – but lead where? The full Latin translation is “to lead OUT”. Others may choose an abstract interpretation of OUT, as in the teacher leading one out, expanding their mind. Not me. I am a literal old German, and OUT means OUT. So I encourage you to take you new found students, with their questions to the OUT of Dallas County. OUT to the Kuehn prairies. OUT to the Voas wetlands. OUT to the stone clock at Hanging Rock.

Once I recognized that an Educator’s role was to indeed lead their students OUT. As in, out of the building and into the wilds, teaching got much easier. The best classroom for you newly ordained pandemic homeschool Educators is outside. Take my word on this based on 40-plus years of experience. I can not tell you how many learners I have seen blossom once they were invited OUT. Take this self test– where would you do you learn best as a student? Lucky for you and me, Dallas County Conservation has literally thousands of acres of OUT for you to utilize as your classroom, home schooling.

Once OUT, my next direction to you new teachers would be to attend to the lessons from two of the heads on my Mount Rushmore of teaching– Aldo Leopold and Orville Little Owl. Let’s start with what Orville shared with me in the prairies at Kuehn on day at the end of a field day. He counseled me to embrace the fact that teaching was really very simple. In fact, we don’t need to be tasked with teaching our students anything at all.



A family of anglers enjoying an afternoon of fishing below Redfield Dam.

learn so much with them. Enjoy homeschooling, oh the things you two will learn together.

Finally, I have saved the most important educational directive for last. If you attend to this notion, you can not fail. This lesson came to me at a drumming by the Anishinaabe drum visiting Dallas County for our Prairie Awakening Celebration. The drum was sharing its songs, stories and lessons at river's edge across from the sandstone outcroppings at Hanging Rock, when a member of the audience asked one of the Anishinaabe women, what they felt was the most important thing they could share concerning their traditional approaches to education. Her answer has guided my teaching from that moment forward. Her answer came in these words– The most important thing you can teach your learners, is that you love them. If this lesson is shared, all others will take care of themselves.

The curriculum is extremely simple. Orville's lesson to me, shared here with you, "You are not teaching them anything, you are only helping them to remember something they have forgotten." Heck, that's not hard, except where do you find what has been forgotten? Orville had an answer for this also. He shared this second direction– Invite your learners to "Come stand inside the stories, and experience the memory of the land." Learning, the asking of questions in the out of doors, is now not the accumulation of endless factoids, filling an empty head, but the experiencing and remembering the stories of our place.

Leopold tweaks this just slightly, by adding a surprising prize at the end of the process. Aldo's quote here is, "The objective is to teach the student to see the land, to understand what he sees, and to enjoy what he understands." So teacher, no small task awaits you. You only have to give sight to the blind, to

see things they have never seen before, and to understand / remember something that they don't even know they have forgotten. And if you can pull this off, the prize is JOY! That's right, schooling, leading out, should result in joy by the learner. And, all you have to do is to go out into the wilds, ask questions, experience, see for the first time and remember. Joy awaits. I know you can do it.

Let's talk Latin again. Adjust that newfound teachers' hat, because there is something in this for you also. Consider this Latin phrase– Docendo Discimus. This explains why teaching is so addictive to me, and why I think you will love it also. This phrase translates out to " In teaching, we learn." You see, the relationship here with your child is what biologists call, symbiotic. Meaning it is a relationship defined by the rules that both parties in the partnership will benefit from their interaction. Thank you to all of my students who have allowed me to

So, enjoy your new role as a homeschool teacher. Embrace the opportunity to inhabit the position of Elder in your clan. You do not need to know the answers, just encourage the questions. Provide your learners with the best possible classroom by venturing out. Strive to assist memories, experiences, vision, understanding and share the joy. I hope that in our past shared lessons in the wilds of Dallas County I have followed my own advise and helped you to learn. It is also my wish, that I attended to that most important of shared lessons and that I conveyed love as part of the lesson. Stay well, and we will learn together in the wilds again soon.

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# Natural Resources



## Kid Friendly Summer Activities

Greg Sieck, Natural Resource Manager



I want to personally thank you for reading this article and following along as we enjoy bewildling you with our outdoor knowledge and recreational opportunities. I encourage you to make a trip to one of our parks or wildlife areas and enjoy all we have to offer. If you see us in our green pants and Dallas County Conservation apparel, please stop and say hi, from a Covid-19 encouraged distance of course.

Being quarantined at home with our families for months on end has us all a little edgy. Reconnecting with Mother Nature's sights, sounds, and relaxing atmosphere might be just what we all need right now. My summer activities are becoming more kid-friendly as my little sidekick wants to be outside from sunup to sunset. I know my family has always enjoyed the outdoor activities Dallas County has to offer, so I wanted to give you a few ideas what you can do with your family in our parks and wildlife areas as the days get warmer.

### Family Friendly Activities

- Hike one of our nature trails and go exploring. Trail maps are stationed on the exterior building at Kuehn Conservation Area and at Voas Nature Center.
- Pack a picnic and utilize one of our picnic tables at Sportsman Park, Trindle Park, Kuehn Conservation Area, or Glissman Conservation Area.
- Have a cookout using one of our charcoal permanent stationary grills. Locations include, Kuehn Conservation Area, Sportsman Park, Trindle Park.

- Roast marshmallows over a campfire and make s'mores using one of our designated fire rings. Locations include, Kuehn Conservations Area tent campground and Sportsman Park campground.
- Plan a long weekend and go camping at Sportsman Park cabins, tent sites, or RV sites.
- Go for a family bike ride along the Raccoon River Valley Trail. Keep in mind a permit is required for all trail users 18 years old and over who are using the trail. You can purchase daily permits for \$2.00 or a yearly permits is only \$10.00. Permits can be obtained at trailheads, online, or over the phone (515-465-3577).
- Plan a nature scavenger hunt (wildlife, pinecones, native flowers, hidden waterfalls, invertebrates, etc.).
- Pack your water shoes and go for a stroll in a creek at Kuehn Conservation Area.
- Float the Raccoon River in a kayak or canoe. If you don't have your own canoe or kayak you can contact local outfitters for rentals.
- Wake up before dawn to watch the sunrise over the prairies at Voas Nature Area.
- Search the sandbar or build a sand castle on the North Raccoon River Wildlife Area-Snyder Tract (Always be cautious of river levels.)
- Go fishing at Raccoon River, Glissman Pond, Snyder Tract Area Pond, Redfield Dam.

Let these ideas give everyone in your family a break from all the screen time. Come visit our parks and wildlife areas here in Dallas County, and enjoy the great outdoors, smell the flowers, listen to the water flowing through our creeks and rivers but just get outside. We look forward to seeing you!



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# Natural Resources



## DCCB Hires New Staff

Welcome to Matt Merrick (left), new Natural Resources Manager and to Jamie Zika (right), new Natural Resources Technician. Both positions are based out of Perry.



Matt Merrick, a Johnston native, earned a Bachelor's Degree from Iowa State University in Forestry. His experience includes working on grounds maintenance for the State of Iowa at the State Capitol Complex, and most recently, as the City Forester for the City of Albert Lea, Minnesota. For Merrick accepting the position is an "opportunity to return to my roots in natural resources and be closer to my family." In his down time, Matt is an enthusiastic waterfowl hunter and angler.

Jamie Zika previously worked for the Dallas County Secondary Roads Department for 10 years. He was born and raised in Adel and attended ADM High School. He has experience in general construction work, water and tile installation, and is a hobbyist mechanic. In his free time Jamie enjoys being with his family, including wife Ashley and daughters Jaylee and Jentry. The Zika family likes traveling to Minnesota, as well as camping, snowmobiling, and having a few animals on their acreage outside of Adel.

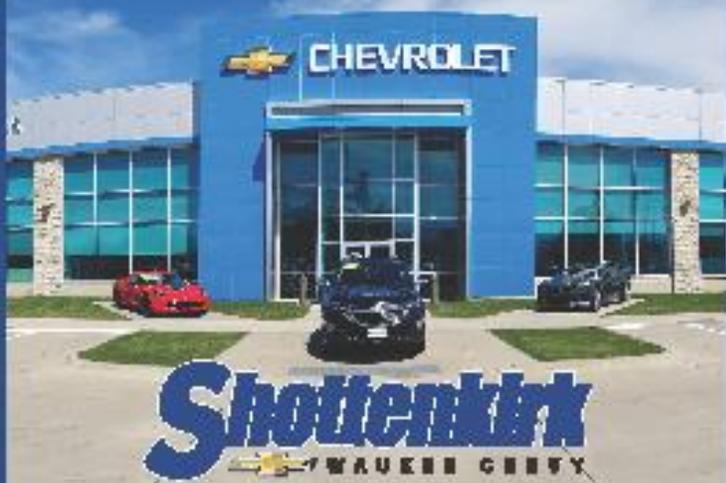


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## It's About Time Cindy Blobaum, Naturalist

Time keeping is basically a human construct. Yes, plants and animals are affected by various natural events (sunrise, sunset, changing of seasons, etc.) that we as humans associate with time, but when someone asks, "What time is it?" the concepts of hours, minutes and seconds are human-made. I have fun with this when I am leading a class on an outdoor program and I hear a voice say, "What time is it?" My reply? "What does it matter? We don't go by clocks, or bells, or announcements on a field day. We will continue until it is time to do something else." That idea is so foreign to most school kids and their accompanying parents!

Time keeping has evolved through the ages. The rock clock on top of the hill at Hanging Rock is a reconstruction based on ancient historical arrangements of rocks. They are set in alignment with the sun's (and much more distant stars) rising and setting on certain key dates – notably solstices and equinoxes - the start of new seasons. These were times of celebration and a nod to what general type of weather to expect in the near future.

When each of my kids were born, I made a birthday banner out of a bed sheet to announce their arrival. Every year, they were to write or draw something on the banner to mark their birthday, their changing interests, their goals. While I didn't think about it at the time, we are in effect, recreating an adaptation of a Lakota tradition, the winter count. Every year, the keeper of the count would draw a picture of the most important events of the year on an animal hide maintained for that purpose. The hide was used as a

reminder and storytelling device for recording the tribe's history. In a related vein, the Wagner Gallery at Forest Park Museum includes numerous calendars that feature line drawings of historical Iowa buildings, drawn by Bill Wagner.

A search for time pieces in our museums brings up quite the assortment, and a peek at how much our world has changed. When European immigrants first settled in what would become the United States, personal clocks and watches were owned mostly by the wealthy. Clocks were hand-crafted works of art (often the most expensive item in a household) and not necessarily very accurate. The ringing of church bells to mark the hours was often the time piece for most citizens.



It wasn't until the mid-1800s that clocks became more common and affordable, as clockmakers in Connecticut began to mass produce them with identical interchangeable parts. The oldest clock in our

On a sunny day go outside, lift your arms up straight over your head and look at your shadow. Mark where you stood, and where your fingertip shadow ended. Return to the same place a few minutes (or hours) later, and repeat. You should notice that your shadow has moved. Around 1500 BCE, people used this phenomena to develop the first sundials, a way to keep track of regular intervals of time, with noon always being when the sun was highest in the sky (shortest shadow). Plans to make an accurate human sundial, available at [www.analematic.sourceforge.net/cgi-bin/sundial.pl](http://www.analematic.sourceforge.net/cgi-bin/sundial.pl)

collection is from this period – a Seth Thomas clock that predates the Civil War (see photo). This can provide a great discussion and learning opportunity for younger visitors, who are less skilled in reading both analog clocks and Roman numerals. On the much smaller side, there are several antique pocket watches on display, used by those keeping a stricter schedule.

Speaking of a stricter schedule, it was the arrival of the railroads that sparked the standardization of time zones. At that time, each city determined its time by looking for when the sun was at its highest point overhead – noon. Cities separated by a hundred miles or more were minutes off from each other. It simply wasn't possible for people to understand or follow train schedules that listed arrival and departure times for the same train based on a dozen or more local time zones. So in 1883, the railroads changed over to their new time standard – Railroad and Telegraph time – and time zones were developed across the land.



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 Follow an ant	 Look at a chewed nut	 How far you can jump? (deer can jump 30 feet!)	 Spot a spider
 Find some seeds	 Look for an insect	 Hold a worm	 Flap your wings like a bird for 1 minute (over 3000 times if you're a hummingbird!)
 Find animal tracks	 Listen for a singing bird	 Smell a flower	 See something red
 Bask in the sun	 Search for a bird nest	 Listen for an insect buzz, chirp or click.	 Sit (or lay) still for 10 seconds.

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# Raccoon River Greenbelt Newsletter

Published by Dallas County Conservation Board

Phone: (515) 465-3577 Fax: (515) 465-3579  
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