

Earthtones

Summer 2017

New Equipment Takes Load Off Staff

As a public agency, we have always strived to balance efficiency, land management, cost effectiveness, and user needs as we maintained and enhanced all our properties. This has always included weighing equipment cost and need before any major purchases. Thanks to the County Supervisors support and funding, we were able to purchase a skid loader and several attachments.

Luckily, we were able to have the machine delivered in late May. This machine is already proving an excellent tool in staff efficiency, and has and will allow us to accomplish many things we could not have done without it. We have already utilized it to accomplish the following:

Brinton Timber: Working with the local equestrian users, we used the front mounted diamond mower to clean up the trails. The net effect was a hugely efficient increase in safety and usability. We are currently entering a master trails planning project, with inputs invited from private persons and professionals for all the trails we manage.

Willow Pond Shelter & Landscaping Project: As most are aware, the WCCB has received huge funding assistance from the Washington County Riverboat Foundation and the Washington Betterment Foundation to make this project possible. The skid loader auger was used to set posts as well as the landscaping trees. We also used the bucket to shape the area for the new shelter & benches. This project is now complete except the table and bench installation, coming soon.

Kiwi Avenue Crossing: This project is all done and open, thanks to funding from the Washington County Riverboat & the RAGBRAI Washington groups. We used the skid loader to clean out the ditch below the east culvert. We would have had to hire this done without this tool.

Kewash Nature Trail through Washington: Using the mower, we were able to open up the sight distances in several areas through Washington, something we deemed a safety hazard for the multitude of users. We did some additional encroaching trees removal— most of this type of operation will happen during the winter months. This tool accomplished in a few hours what would have taken weeks of hand labor. This winter, we especially anticipate the need to get the trail ready for the pending paving project heading west out of Washington.

Marr Park: Nearly everyone knows that this is a very busy park. So far, the skid loader has helped us do some landscaping as well as cut out some encroaching Autumn Olive trees.

Clemons Creek Shooting Range: The diamond mower was used to remove trees in the fence line south of this facility.

Schmitter Heritage Area: Some will be aware there is a fairly narrow access to this property from the south. The mower was used to prune the encroaching brush through this access, opening up the trail.

Over the coming months and years, we have a multitude of additional plans for this great new tool and all of its attachments.

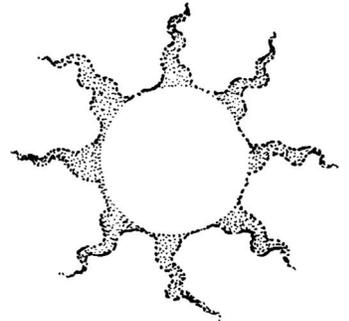
Summer Calendar

The Washington County Conservation Board meets the second Thursday of each month. Meetings are held at the Conservation Education Center in Marr Park at 4:30 p.m. The Conservation Education Center will be closed for the following holiday: September 4.

Sat., August 12 10:00 a.m. Conservation Education Center

Eclipse Excitement and More

The August 21st Total Solar Eclipse has raised a lot of excitement across the U.S. Unfortunately, Iowa will only see roughly 95% coverage, or a partial eclipse. Discover all you ever wanted to know about the different types of eclipses, the different stages, how the Earth and moon's movements cause them, eye safety, and much more. We'll also touch on other movements in the sky, including the Perseid meteor shower which will be peaking overnight between the 12th and 13th.



Other local eclipse events: the Washington Library is planning several fun-filled activities in celebration of the eclipse. This includes a program by an astronomy professor at noon on August 17 as well as crafts, stories, haiku writing, live streaming images from NASA, and viewing on the 21st. Participants will even receive eclipse-viewing glasses! Contact the library for more information.

Sat., Sept. 9 10:00 a.m. for pregame Conservation Education Center

Hawkeye-Cyclone Tailgate Party

Come watch the game on the big screen! Feast during the potluck and enter your best dish. Participants will vote on their favorites and winners will receive prizes. More activities and giveaways to be announced for this family friendly event. Watch local media and our website for more information. Thanks to Archers Appliance for providing the broadcast of the game.



Sat., September 23 9:00 a.m. Marr Park

Marr Park Bird Exploration

Love to watch the flutter of wings? Enjoy the fall (and spring) migrations and the potential of spotting something new? Whether you are just starting out as an active birder, want to brush up on your identification, or just enjoy the company of others also interested in our feathered friends, this program will have something for you. We'll briefly touch upon migration, Marr Park birds, and any participants' questions before spending most of the time stalking the bird life within the park. Some binoculars available. For all ages.

Sat., Oct. 21 6:45 p.m. Marr Park

Annual Halloween Hike: Babes in the Woods

They say it's not easy being a parent these days, but imagine how much more stressful parenthood is for wild animals. The constant search for food and water. Always wary of hungry predators. Exposed to all types of weather. And still needing to keep the little ones safe and healthy. Learn more about parenthood and their young in this interactive family event. More information will be in the next newsletter.

The Wonders of Willow Pond

Many of us wish we could spend more time outside. We gaze out the window at work, wishing for the sun on our faces, or dawdle a little on the walk from the house to the car in the mornings. Especially now that it's summer, the siren song of the outdoors calls us all a little louder.

But you needn't plan a weeklong trip to a state park, or spend a day canoeing down the river--though both of those activities would be fantastic--to enjoy nature. On the days you're crunched for time, you should check out Willow Pond.

Situated about a mile and a half down the KeWash (from the Washington side of the trail), Willow has undergone some dramatic changes. The area, which, until recently has consisted only of its namesake pond and a stray bench or two, is now landscaped and has a picnic shelter.

The Conservation Board has also resurfaced the KeWash-Kiwi crossing, so bikers, walkers, and runners can stop worrying about treacherous ruts and washout on Kiwi Avenue.

In the near future, the Board plans to pave a trail from the Kirkwood Regional Center to Willow, which will merge with the KeWash.

So next time you need a breath of fresh air, or a new picnic place, head over to Willow Pond.

By Addie Pacha, summer worker

New Shelter at Willow Pond



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Washington County Conservation Board meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. at the Conservation Education Center. Visitors are welcome.

The WCCB is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter in larger print, please contact our office.

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

Thanks for Donations

Thanks to both the Washington Sheriff's Department and John Hand for funds to improve the Clemons's Creek Shooting Range.

Thanks to Loretta B. Mealy for fishing lures.

WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
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AINSWORTH, IA 52201

Electronic Service Requested

Summer Center Hours

Thurs.—Sat., Mon.
10:30—6:30

Sun.
1:00—5:00

Improvements to Access of Schmitter Heritage Area



The diamond mower on the skid loader works incredibly hard with ease. Note how much brush was cleared in comparing the “before” photo on the left with the “after” on the right. We hope all enjoy the improved clearance and visibility on all our trails; we certainly like the lighter work load on trails in order to focus more in depth on other projects!

