

Earthtones

Autumn 2017

Viewing the Countryside

Winter provides a unique opportunity to view the outdoors visually unencumbered. While the wildflowers of spring and the colors of fall make for a lovely landscape, they do limit our visual perspective.

Come winter, most leaves have fallen. Our views of any given area stretch far and wide. If we are able to wander before snow depth hides ground features, we can see certain features much better and clearer than when vegetation hinders a detailed view.

The same applies to wildlife viewing. No more looking for that bird which just landed right behind that one leaf. Often, we can watch the same bird on its journey from one tree to another. Noisy squirrels on crunchy, dead leaves hint at a much larger animal in our vicinity. Quiet deer, fox, coyote and other animals may be spotted sooner and watched longer as they dodge between empty tree branches.



New shelter at the Clemons Creek Shooting Range

Visit our parks and recreational areas to discover hidden gems and updates. Frozen ground at Brinton Timber means horse riders need not fear erosion issues as they enjoy this 320-acre resource. The low winter level of the Skunk River allows one to take a nice hike along its border on the Wood Duck trail. Fascinating rock features near the creek bottoms can be seen in its entirety and provide nice resting areas for breaks and scenic views.

Sockum Ridge Recreation Area is a true upland oak timber gem, and the WCCB continues to strive toward balancing this forest resource for future generations' enjoyment as well as all of you. As you drive into the lower parking lot, you are bound to notice the new latrine with the modern "no foul odor" design. During the past year, our efforts have also been to make the upper drive more accessible by vehicle.

Most of the forest management efforts have occurred in proximity to the upper drive. To the south of the loop, the WCCB created a five-acre forest regeneration area in 2003, which now represents our only oak-hickory timber under 50 years old. To the north and east of the loop, we have increased management on approximately 23 acres. Prescribed burns have been conducted on the closest nine acres for several years now, which, along with intensive understory removal are resulting in the most open timber that we currently manage. Now is an excellent time to view these management strategies and compare them to other parts of the park as well as to other areas.

Currently, we plan to manage only with prescribed burns in an effort to mimic what the Native

Americans were doing before 1850. Intensive management of the 14 acres lying further north began this fall and included hiring a professional to kill all the trees larger than two inches in diameter that were not oak, shagbark hickory, and black walnut. Thereafter, we will conduct a prescribed burn there. The next management steps of these 14 acres will be contingent upon when the next major crop of white oak acorns occurs. Our goal is to maximize wildlife and forest regeneration.

Adjacent to the Kewash Nature Trail near the Washington end, Willow Pond continues to see significant improvements. The pond itself was rebuilt using a Fish Habitat Stamp grant in 2011, meaning the fish are now reaching harvestable size for the first time this year. Go ice fishing and check it out yourself once the ice is thick enough.

A second grant allowed for the armoring of the shoreline this year, adding some lovely large rocks to the pond's perimeter. Implementation for an ADA-compliant trail spur connecting to Kirkwood Community College and funded through REAP and TAP programs are now progressing (as well as paving a segment of the existing trail). In addition, tree plantings and other associated landscaping is in the works, partly as an Eagle Scout project.

A couple miles west on the Kewash lies what has historically been the worst place on it, a steep grade down to the mud road of Kiwi Ave. Thanks to the Washington County Riverboat Foundation for providing the majority of funding to fix this issue. Additional kudos to the Washington County Engineers office for a great design and the Washington RAGBRAI Committee for their commitment of additional funds.

Finally, at the west end of the trail, excitement abounds for the planned creation of a whole new access, including a parking lot, picnic area, and a host of other amenities. Whether hiking or cross-country skiing, the Kewash is assured to be a place to view many developments now and in the near future.

At Marr Park, always the busiest of our managed properties, likely the most obvious improvement is our new cold storage building. As its name implies, this building will store items necessary for maintenance of the 2,200 acres the WCCB currently manages. We have also added our first ADA-compliant camping pad and are upgrading the tables associated with the two enclosed rental facilities. Our Center remains so popular that we converted it all to LED lighting.

The education program received a boost with the new makeover of the study pond to the southwest of the center. Ready for 2017 day camps, the current design should deter the formation of unpleasant algal mats while encouraging a wide variety of invertebrate (those without backbones) life. A few micro-islands of large rocks give small critters places to hide as well as some exciting perches for young explorers.

We hope you wander our parks and recreational areas this winter, appreciating the changes, and just... enjoying the view.

By Steve Anderson, Director



New crossing at Kiwi Avenue/Kewash Trail intersection

Bird Brained

How well do you know your birds in common culture? Fill in the blank for these common sayings, phrases, and sports teams. See page 5 for answers.



A crossword puzzle grid with 27 numbered starting points for clues. The grid consists of white squares for letters and black squares for empty space. The numbers are: 1 (Across), 2 (Down), 3 (Across), 4 (Across), 5 (Across), 6 (Down), 7 (Across), 8 (Across), 9 (Across), 10 (Across), 11 (Across), 12 (Across), 13 (Down), 14 (Across), 15 (Across), 16 (Across), 17 (Across), 18 (Across), 19 (Across), 20 (Across), 21 (Down), 22 (Across), 23 (Down), 24 (Down), 25 (Across), 26 (Across), 27 (Across).

Across

1. The early _____ gets the worm.
3. As the _____ flies
5. Crazy as a _____
8. _____ song
9. The kids are gone, I have an empty _____.
10. Old _____
14. Strut like a _____
15. Baltimore _____
17. Silly _____
18. Cartoon character who only says "beep, beep"
20. Proud as a _____
22. A symbol of peace
25. St. Louis _____
26. A little _____ told me.
27. Lawn decorations; pink _____

Down

2. The Ugly _____
4. I will take you under my _____.
6. Stool _____
7. Birds of a _____ flock together.
8. Mom told me babies are brought by the _____.
10. He's no spring _____.
11. Night _____
12. First _____ of spring
13. Smells like rotten _____
16. Has excellent eyesight: is _____ eyed
19. Edgar Allen Poe's poem, The _____
21. The cat that swallowed the _____
22. It's dangerous here; we're sitting _____.
23. Be careful, the _____ are circling.
24. Stop smoking cold _____

Autumn 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 holidays: November 11, 23, and 24 and December 23 and 30.

Sat., Oct. 21 6:45 p.m. Marr Park
Annual Halloween Hike: Babes in the Woods
Learn about animal families with your own family! Face challenges about the different types of parental care! See back page for more information.



Sat., Nov. 4 10:00 a.m. Marr Park
Little Dippers: Warm Fuzzies
Discover the wonders of furry critters with your toddler. This adult/child program will feature a story, fur exploration, fun activities, a brief hike, and a craft. Geared for children aged three and under and an adult relative or friend. Hike will be stroller-friendly, if necessary.

Sat., Jan. 13 1:00 p.m. Marr Park
Ice Fishing Fun
Explore ice fishing during this program that is open to all ages. We'll have pre-drilled holes and ice fishing poles for those that need them. Local experts will be available to assist. In addition, take your turn in a shelter to experience underwater cameras and Vexlars. Afterword, warm up in the Center with some hot cocoa.

Washington County Conservation Board

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Mark Even, Park Ranger
Jayse Horning, Ranger/Technician

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.



A Round of Applause

Much of our work depends upon support from you, the citizens of Washington County. Occasionally, that support is in the form of donating time or money and helps us accomplish more than we otherwise could have alone. Thanks to those below and to the right for their recent assistance:

YMCA of Washington: Half-marathon funds for improvements on the Kewash Trail

Scott Kiefer: Monetary donation for improvements on shooting range



Sam Fields: Eagle Scout project, landscaping around Willow Pond

Cy-Hawk Game and Potluck

Thanks to Archer Appliances, once again we broadcasted the U of I football game onto the big screen. Participants submitted 20 dishes to the potluck competition and raised nearly \$700 in the silent auction for showerhouse improvements. Between door prizes, goody bags, and free night camping for predicting the winners, no one went home empty handed. Keep an eye out for next year's big screen Hawkeye game/potluck extravaganza and you, too, can be a winner!

Volunteers: Thomas Salazar

Tandy family: Gomer, Kathy, Hunter, Lexi, Levi, Carey, & Hannah

Donors: Ace N More

Archer Appliances

Arnolds Motor Supply

Batterson Photography

Brighton Meat Locker

Boyd's Sausage Co.

Bud's Custom Meats

Browns Shoes

CBI Of Kalona

Dairy Mart

Family Video

Farmers and Merchants Bank, Lone Tree

Fin and Feather, Iowa City

Fareway

Greiner Discount Tire

Hy-Vee

Kalona Brewery

Orcheln Farm & Home

Las Palmas, Columbus Junction

Pizza Ranch

Pizza Hut

Riverside Casino and Golf Resort

The Shack

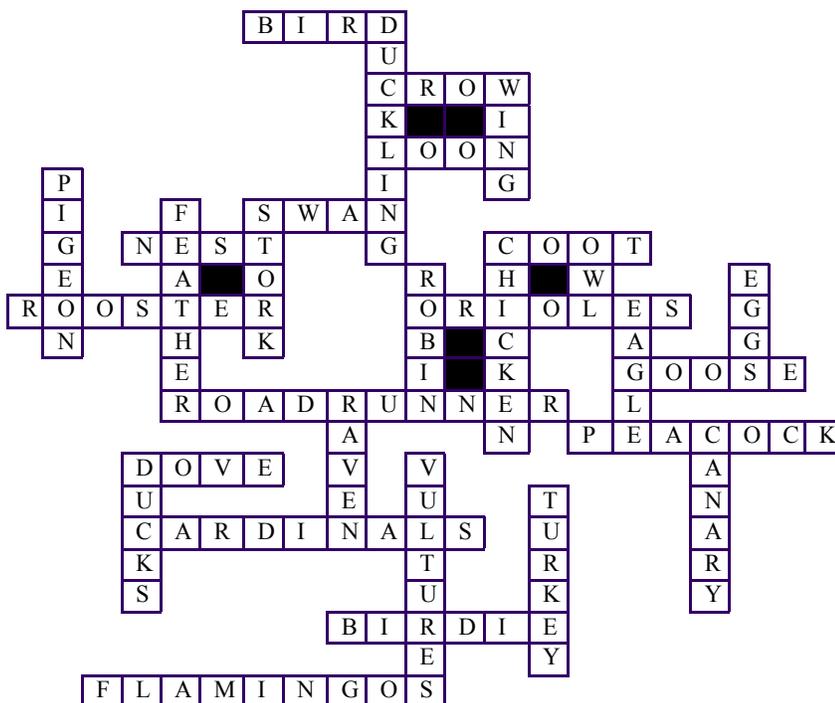
Simply Spa

Thirsty Camel, Conesville

Washington State Bank

Walmart

Answers to page 3



WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
2943 HIGHWAY 92
AINSWORTH, IA 52201

Electronic Service Requested

Winter Center Hours

Tuesday—Saturday
8:00—4:30

Sunday and Monday
Closed

Halloween Hike: Babes in the Woods

Saturday, October 21

6:45 p.m.— 8:30 p.m.

Marr Park

This year's Halloween Hike will run from the Lodge, around the mini-lake, to the Center under a new moon. We'll focus on animal babies and their care. This event is a not-so-scary edutainment alternative to traditional Halloween activities.

At the lodge, you'll learn about different types of offspring and their parents, different strategies for raising up young, and keeping the babies safe. Down the trail, you will have to try to bring your "turtle hatchlings" to the safety of "water," and attempt to feed a nest full of hungry baby chicks. Lastly, you'll discover the parental secrets of colonial nesters in trying to raise their own young.

The trail will be lit with luminaries and trail guides.

Finish at the center for more activities, crafts, and refreshments.

*Enter the trail anytime between
6:45 - 8:00 p.m.
Center activities
will continue till 8:30.*



For more information, contact
319/657-2400 or wccbnaturalist@iowatelecom.net.