

Earthtones

Summer 2019

Loss: Are We Paying Attention?

I try to imagine... what it must have meant to have space for as far as the eye can see. ...It is unthinkable now that anyone could have drunk out of our rivers and lakes. I don't have the power to imagine what it must have been like. I can't even visualize the endless prairie, the vast tracks of woodlands. I can't hold it in my mind long enough to know absolutely what we've lost. And so the lost is magnified, knowing, as I do, that my powers are poor, and that our world has become diminished beyond all measure.

-Jane Hamilton

The human race has become a little like Hansel, continuing on his way, but leaving bits and pieces behind him. However, in this case, it's not a trail to lead him back home, but rather what is left as he bulldozes his way into his future.

Iowa is the most altered state in the nation. Our rich soil has made us a top agricultural producer, and that importance cannot be denied. But we have lost 80% of our woodlands and 95% of our wetlands. Worst of all, we have lost so much prairie (99.9%) that most of us don't even recognize it as a valuable habitat to us, to our history.

Adding to this loss, proportion-wise, we have the least amount of public land in the United States, with the exception of Rhode Island. Can we honestly claim that *all* of this non-public land is highly valuable agricultural fields?

There are those who have claimed that public areas take viable land out of production. I ask you to visit our existing public properties. How much of them

are prime farm land? Not only can public entities not afford such properties, they aren't desirable for such public purposes. It's the wilder areas, the harder to tame, the unplowable, that provide the rich bird life to watch, the worthy hunt, the interesting hike, or even an adventure. Sure, there may be a few exceptions. However, most people, no doubt, would rather visit a lively woodland ravine than a re-established forest of trees in well-behaved straight lines and no other significant life.

The great tragedy is the loss often comes too slowly for us to notice. When did we need to stop drinking from streams, for example? When did we stop having to wipe our windshields in the summer from bug splatter? What we do to the land now may not be seen for decades, or more, from now. Then it will be too late to wish for clean streams, a healthy forest, or soil-building prairies.

These places are not mere spots to play. The emotional, social, mental, and physical health benefits have been proven repeatedly in recent years. The benefits to our economy with camping, travel, tourism, associated licenses, and more benefit us all.

Our land is who we are. It is all we have. It is all we will ever have. How much loss do we want to send into the future? How much quality of life are we willing to give up? Will we leave only bread crumbs and a hope to imagine a better time? Or do we want more?

By Pamela Holz, Naturalist

Meet the New Ranger/Technicians

Cody Smith

I grew up on a farm in Washington and graduated from Washington High School. After graduating, I enlisted in the United States Army, serving a tour in Kandahar, Afghanistan. In 2010, I was hired by the Washington County Sheriff's Office. While at the Sheriff's Office, I started in the jail. I then moved to patrol deputy and later became a member of SWAT. Recently, I was hired by the Conservation Board as a Ranger/Technician.

I currently live at the residence in Marr Park with my wife. I enjoy traveling and hiking new county, state, and national parks and I'm an avid outdoorsman. My goal is to protect wildlife and conservation efforts to ensure our county parks and public lands are well kept and maintained so we can continue to enjoy our natural resources for years to come.



Brett Johnson

A native of Washington, Brett graduated in 2009. While studying criminal justice at Ellsworth Community College, he worked nearly two summers for the WCCB. After graduating from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in 2012, he worked for the City of Washington Police Department.

Brett currently lives in Washington with his wife Mariah. He is an avid hunter. His goals with the WCCB are to make sure everyone has a safe and positive experience while enjoying our many beautiful county parks.



Be sure to say hello to these two new faces as they work hard to maintain and improve our parks and recreational areas. They wish you to have the best possible experience so feel free to let them know of any problem areas.

*Also Welcoming AmeriCorps Member
Kristin Burnstedt*

Upon completion of my first year at Iowa Wesleyan University, I knew one thing—I wanted to work in conservation. With a strong background in biology within my family, this move was almost inevitable for me. I'm not quite sure where I'll end up on this career path, but I have to start somewhere. My first step was to intern with a naturalist.

The AmeriCorps 4-H Environmental Education (EE) Program was brought to my attention in early May when I was informed there was an opening in neighboring Washington County. AmeriCorps 4-H EE is a federally funded program administered through the Iowa State Extension and Outreach. I never heard of AmeriCorps before, but quickly learned the opportunity and benefit was too great to pass up. Its purpose is to give members like myself an opportunity to seek potential career paths as well as build host site programs.

I am excited to see how this program helps me grow as an individual and ultimately shapes my future decisions.



**Washington County
Conservation Board**

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Cody Smith, Ranger/Technician
Brett Johnson, 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.

While there may be no "right" way to value a forest or a river, there is a wrong way, which is to give it no value at all. How do we decide the value of a 700-year-old tree? We need only ask how much it would cost to make a new one, or a new river, or even a new atmosphere.

- Paul Hawken

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 Center will be closed for the following holiday: Labor Day September 2.

Sat., Aug. 24 11:00 a.m. Marr Park

Picnic in the Park

Bring a blanket, a picnic lunch, and the whole family for an enjoyable nature-immersed lunch. We'll meet at the Center and take a short hike to a quiet location in the park (place dependent upon weather and interest). We will at least follow part of Walt Whitman's advice on making the best persons — "to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth."

Sat., Oct. 5 7:00 p.m. Marr Park

Annual Halloween Hike: Let's Rock!

See back page for more information.

Coming Soon

Grand Opening of Completed Exhibit Hall Renovations

Keep your eyes peeled to local media and our website and Facebook page to learn when our exhibit updates will be completed. We will host a small reception and invite all of you to come and check out these wonderful interactive displays. Thanks to the Washington Riverboat Foundation for help with the funding of this project.



Answers to Page 5:
1. D 2. C 3. B 4. C
5. B 6. A 7. A 8. B

The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between the way nature works and the way man thinks.
- Gregory Bateson

4th Grade Poems

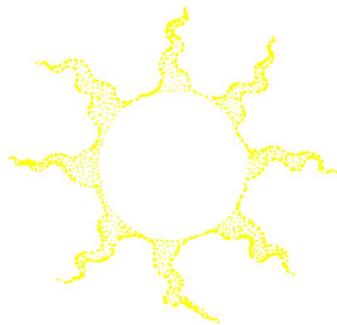
These poems were written by Mid-Prairie 4th graders during a lesson on Nature Poetry at the end of the school year.

Would eat all meat
On task
Loves sleep
Forever a wolf
- Leah



I dreamed
I was a leaf
And some kids
Came and ate me up
AAAAAAHHHHH!!!
- Draven

I was a wolf
And I saw the stars
And the moon
And is hunting, howling
And wishing I was more
- Mason



I dreamed
I was a leaf
Swaying on a tree
Soaking in all the sun
Happily
- Sophia

I dreamt
I was a rainbow
In the sky
Making people smile
By being colorful
- Emma

Geology Quiz

Prepare yourself for this year's Halloween Hike and see if you can answer these rock questions. Answers are at the bottom of page 4.

1. Our state rock is
A. Diamond
B. Pumice
C. Quartz
D. Geode
2. Which of these is not a type of rock?
A. Igneous
B. Sedimentary
C. Deciduous
D. Metamorphic
3. Someone who studies rocks is called a
A. Paleontologist
B. Geologist
C. Anthropologist
D. Rock Geek
4. Plant or animal parts which have been slowly replaced by minerals over time are called
A. Skeletons
B. Stone
C. Fossils
D. Knick knacks
5. Which of these comes from rocks?
A. Paper
B. Paper clips
C. Rubber
D. Cotton
6. Iowa's land was formed mostly by
A. Glaciers
B. Volcanoes
C. Earthquakes
D. Rampaging elephants
7. A commonly used rock by Native Americans for arrowheads was
A. Flint
B. Sandstone
C. Chalk
D. Iron
8. She was a famous scientist who proved the Earth had an inner and outer core.
A. Marie Curie
B. Inge Lehmann
C. Alberta Einstein
D. Brittany Spears

WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
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Electronic Service Requested

Summer Center Hours

Thurs.—Sat., Mon.

10:00—6:30

Sun.

1:00—5:00

Closed Tuesday-Wednesday

Halloween Hike: Let's Rock!

Saturday, October 5

6:45 p.m.— 8:30 p.m.

Marr Park

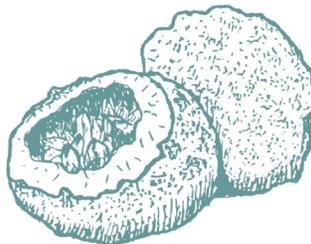
Rocks—boring? No way! Explore how exciting rocks can be at our annual Halloween Hike. The Hike will begin at the Lodge and then will pass around the mini-lake and end at the Conservation Center. This event is a not-so-scary edutainment alternative to traditional Halloween activities.

Introduce yourself to basic rocks and minerals at the Lodge before heading along the trail to investigate the three types of rock: igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic. You may find their formation can sometimes be an explosive experience.

The trail will be lit with luminaries to help you along your way.

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@gmail.com