



Seasons

Marshall County Conservation Quarterly Newsletter

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Summer 2020



COVID 19

by Mike Stegmann, MCCB Director

Time does not stop for anything. However, life may be paused and interrupted and this Spring proved that point when Corona Virus spread across the world. This has been a time for some to “stop and smell the roses” in so many words.

Throughout the time of social distancing, Marshall County Parks and Wildlife areas have remained open for public use. Some areas and trails have seen a usage increase of upwards of 200+%. Marshall County Conservation has been able to promote quality of life opportunities including exploring our parks for fresh air. So far this spring many have canoed or kayaked at Sand Lake, Green Castle and the Iowa River. People who have never set foot in a forest were inspired to pursue spring wild edible mushrooms including morels, chicken of the woods and yellow oysters among others. Also this April, the Iowa DNR stocked trout at Sand Lake and many anglers are enjoying the trout fishing opportunities.



We receive communications from the public about their outings and appreciation for the local parks available. Kim and Matt Schryver recently surveyed the Grimes Farm with their two year old granddaughter. They said, *“For a few minutes COVID-19 and the many pressing issues in today’s world melted away. Interaction with nature is such a great antidote to stress, adjusting our perspective and recharging our optimism. We are so grateful to have*

opportunities to expand our experience safely in these outdoor spaces, especially during this period of relative confinement, Catch the joy; visit a park, walk a trail and if you can do so with a youngster, count on catching unfiltered awe.”

Ken and Maureen Lyons have also had fun exploring areas like Green Castle, *“We were pleased to see other families fishing, hiking and picnicking. We appreciated Timmons Grove as a smaller park which made it easy to explore. At Grammer Grove we were delighted by the rolling hills and plethora of wildflowers as they reached the Iowa River*

alongside the trails in the park. Three Bridges was a short but steep hiking path with a ‘very cool suspended bridge’ that made a good workout. The lower part of the park is laden with layered rock walls.”

Pat Thompson, Marshall County Public Health Director, views these local public areas, as a way to support mental and physical wellbeing. They are an option to *“normal activities before COVID-19 social distancing restrictions.”* Some of the MCCB operations and programming were obviously affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Postponement of the Trees to Table Pancake Breakfast and other events have been canceled or modified as video programming. As we adapt to the instantly changing world, the MCCB has modified Environmental Education programming as best we can. The lingering effect is unknown but will certainly dictate what the MCCB can provide.

As of now the parks remain open and the natural lands ecosystems will continue to function as you explore them this summer.

Playgrounds

Per Governor Reynolds’ May 25th proclamation regarding outdoor playgrounds: all playgrounds, the observation tower at Grimes Farm, and the Nature Playscape at Grimes Farm will open June 1, 2020. The shelters remain closed until further notice.

Reopening the Nature Center at Grimes Farm

Marshall County Conservation will follow guidelines set by the Governor’s office and the County Board of Supervisors for reopening museums and public offices. Safety of visitors and staff is our number one concern and we will make sure safety procedures are in place before reopening. A date for initial reopening has not been set at this time. When the Nature Center initially re-opens, it will have limited access for general business by appointment only. As occupancy restrictions are lifted, we will allow the public back into the conservation center for self-guided tours. At this time the restrooms in the nature center will not be open for public use. Please be patient with us as we work our way through the safety procedures.

George H. W. Bush Vamos A Pescar Education Fund



In February, Marshall County Conservation received a grant from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation George H. W. Bush Vamos A Pescar Education Fund. The fundings' goal is to bring fishing and boating experiences to Hispanic families throughout Marshall County.

The grant awarded Marshall County Conservation with \$5,000 to purchase fishing and boating supplies including new fishing poles, fishing tackle, kayaks, personal flotation devices, and a kayak trailer. Additionally, Marshall County partnered with Pheasants Forever, Marshall County Isaak Walton League, Tri-County Bass Fishing Club, Theisen's, MICA and the Marshalltown High School Envirothon Team. These organizations have also made monetary and in-kind donations.

Due to Covid -19, some fishing programming has been postponed to the 2021 summer season. However, we still have three events planned in August that will stay on the calendar at this time. Like other programming, it will be contingent on health and safety standards. Stay up to date with programming information through our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/MarshallCountyConservationBoard).

We are also looking for volunteers to help with current and future fishing programs. If you have any interest in helping teach children and families to fish, please contact Emily Herring at eherring@marshallcountytia.gov or at 641-754-5490.



August 6 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Family Fishing at Sand Lake 2901 Main St. Rd.

Families can join us for the opportunity to learn the basics of casting and rod and reel set-up, and then go fishing at the lake. Come fish any time that works best for your family. Poles, fishing gear, and bait will all be provided **There is no fee for this program, We encourage you to preregister, so we can provide everyone safely with equipment and contact you with any programming changes. To register contact the Conservation Center by calling 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov or text only 641-758-9777.**



August 12 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Family Kayaking at Sand Lake

Join us as we explore Sand Lake with kayaks. This family friendly event will encourage participants to learn the basics of kayaking and how to be safe on Iowa's waters. **There is no fee for this program, We encourage you to preregister, so we can provide everyone safely with equipment and contact you with any programming changes. To register contact the Conservation Center by calling 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov or text only 641-758-9777.**

August 30 12:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Family Fishing and Kayaking at Sand Lake

As we wrap up the summer, we would like to offer families one more opportunity to go fishing and kayaking with us. Even if you have already participated in a previous event, we would love to get you back out by the water. Fishing and kayaking gear will be available for participants as well as education on how to fish, kayak and be safe around the water. We will also offer a free meal, if it can be done safely, to the first 100 people. **There is no fee for this program, We encourage you to preregister, so we can provide everyone safely with equipment and contact you with any programming changes. To register contact the Conservation Center by calling 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov or text only 641-758-9777.**



FREE FISHING DAYS

June 5, 6, & 7

The Iowa DNR is once again offering a free fishing weekend for Iowa residents on June 5 - 7. No fishing license is required, but all size and catch limits apply.

Maple Syrup Curbside Pickup

Maple syrup is now available for sale by curbside pickup. This service is available Monday - Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. **Please call 641-752-5490 to place your order.** Payments can be made by credit/debit card or check, no cash sales.

Sizes available:

50 ml. - \$3.00
12 oz bottle - \$12.00
500 ml. - \$16.00





Nature is Not Closed

The beginning of 2020 has affected everyone in many different ways and Marshall County Conservation have not avoided these challenges. We at Marshall County Conservation have chosen to become creative with our environmental education this summer to make sure that we keep you and the staff safe during this uncertain time, as well as providing some programming to our constituents. We know this is not the normal programming that you have come to expect, but we want to respect everyone's views of keeping safe during Covid-19 period and make sure that no one feels uncomfortable. The situation is changing on a daily basis and we may have to make last minute changes or cancellations. Our Facebook page is where you can find the most up to date information on these changes or cancellations.

Facebook is also a great place to find videos about nature and activities.

Below you will find some information about summer events. If you have any questions or concerns about the programming that is planned for this summer, please reach out to me at eherring@marshallcountytia.gov. Remember, nature is not closed! There are many things that you can do safely outside in our parks and we encourage your exploration and discovery of what the areas have to offer.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this disruptive time, and we will try our best to teach the love of nature anyway we possibly can!

I hope our paths cross safely soon,

Emily Herring, Naturalist

Nature Story Hour

Nature Story Hour is going Facebook Live! This summer story hour program will be held via Facebook Live, instead of at the Conservation Center at Grimes Farm. The program will include a book, education program from the naturalist, suggested activity or craft to do as a family, and will last about 20 to 30 minutes. Log into Facebook on the following days and times to learn about fun nature topics and listen to a great book!

June 18 – 10:00 a.m. Beetles
July 2 – 10:00 a.m. Turtles
July 16 – 10:00 a.m. Hummingbirds
August 6 – 10:00 a.m. Rocks
August 20 – 10:00 a.m. Snakes



Live and Local

Whether or not the summer concerts are safe and able to be held will be decided upon at the beginning of each month. The June event has already been postponed to 2021 at this time. Watch the MCCB Facebook or the Friends Facebook page at the beginning of each month for future announcements.



Concerts will be held in the Leonard Grimes Amphitheater from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Central Iowa food trucks will also be on hand for supper options. In case of inclement weather the concerts will be held at the county fairgrounds.

Current Summer Concert Line-Up

Neil Hewitt - July 16
Cedar County Cobras - August 20
Des Moines Dueling Fiddlers - September 17
Bob Dorr - October 7

Brown Bag Bunch

Enjoy everything you love about brown bags from the comfort and safety of your own home. This summer most of our Brown Bags will be available in video form through YouTube. Summer Brown Bag videos will be available the third Tuesday of each month June and July, and will be approximately 30 minutes long. **Call 641-752-5490 or email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov to sign up to receive an emailed link to the video, that you can watch at anytime!** This is a great option for assisted living and senior living facilities as well.

June - Backpacking the Wilderness

"Nothing is more liberating than carrying everything you need to survive in the wilderness on your back. That is why I backpack, along with about 500 other reasons!" From my first backpacking adventure in Glacier National Park, to my most recent escapade with six other women to the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area in Colorado, each adventure has taught me a lesson and has left me wanting more. So join me via computer, to enjoy funny stories, beautiful pictures, and learn the basics behind backpacking. Maybe this program will inspire you to try a backpacking adventure.

July - Marshall County Parks

Join director Mike Stegmann for a tour of some of our less visited Marshall County Conservation Parks. MCCB manages 30 parks for public use and these parks offer a wide range of habitats, wildlife and beauty that can be found in your backyard. So, sit back and relax as we do the exploration for you throughout our county parks.

August - Lunch Kayaking at Sand Lake

August 19 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Take an extra long lunch break and head out to Sand Lake for some fresh air! Staying a safe social distance from each other, participants will learn the basic of paddling kayaks and water safety, before taking to the water. Each participant will have their own paddle, kayak and PFD and will be able to explore Sand Lake on their own. **This program has no fee, however pre-registration is required to secure limited spots by August 12 before 4:00 p.m. by calling the Conservation Center at 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov, or text only 641-758-9777.**

Beeswax Food Wrap



This past year I made the resolution to use less plastic. I already have my cloth grocery bags, cloth produce sacks, reusable water bottles and glass food storage containers, but I really wanted to focus on reducing my dependence on plastic storage bags and plastic wrap. My goal supporting husband picked me up a Beeswax Food Wrap and I instantly fell in

love! They are fairly easy to create on your own with minimal supplies. An added bonus is that they are easier for you to create in your own home, than at the nature center. So this program will be in a learning from a distance format, which will result in a yard of reusable beeswax food wrap. Once you have registered and paid the \$30 registration fee for the class (via mailed in check or credit card over the phone) participants will select a time for curbside pick up the week of August 10 through the 14 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to receive your Beeswax Wraps supplies at the Grimes Farm Nature Center. This will include most of the materials needed and a link to a YouTube video that will give you step-by-step directions. You will need a few basic items from home including: access to the internet, parchment paper, an iron, scissors, older pot, and baking sheets. Take a step to help reduce your waste and register today! **Pre-registration and payment is required to secure limited spots by July 24 before 4:00 p.m. by calling the Conservation Center at 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov, or text only 641-758-9777. Pick up of supplies will need to be scheduled the week of August 10 through the 14 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This class is intended for participants over the age of 16.**

Bird House Garden Totems

Held over from our spring cancelled programs we have decided to offer the Bird House Garden Totems, social distancing style. Once you have registered and paid for the class (via mailed in check or credit card over the phone) participants will select a time for curbside pick up of your totem supplies at the Grimes Farm Nature Center. This will include: the pre-cut lumber, hardware, and lumber to install your bird house into your garden. It will not include paint or sealer for your project. Once you get home you will need a computer with internet access, an electric drill (preferred, however a screwdriver and elbow grease will work), acrylic paint and spar urethane sealer to complete the project. Included in your supplies will be a link to a YouTube video that will show you step by step directions on how to assemble, tips on how to decorate, and installation of your Bird House Garden Totem. The added bonus is you can create your totem any time that works best for you. **Pre-registration and payment of \$30.00 is required to secure limited spots by June 26 before 4:00 p.m. Register by calling the Conservation Center at 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov, or text only 641-758-9777. Pick up of supplies will need to be scheduled the week of July 6 through the 10 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**



Nocturnal Scavenger Hunt

Thursday, August 20

Grimes Farm, 2349 233rd St.

Registration: Fee - FREE

Deadline -August 14 by 4:00 p.m.



Grab your flashlight and family and head out to the Grimes Farm and Conservation Center for a nocturnal scavenger hunt. On August 20, participants will sign up for a staggered start at the nature center beginning at 8:30 p.m.. Families will begin the search using flashlights and observation skills while hiking the trails. Reflectors will lead participants on a hunt for prizes. This will be a great way to celebrate the final days of summer break and explore nature at night. **Groups can register by calling 641-752-5490. Participants must pre-register before August 14 at 4:00 p.m. to reserve limited spots. There is no charge for this event.** Please bring your own flashlight(s) and wear sturdy shoes.

Ask Your County Conservation

Wednesday, July 22 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

ZOOM meeting



On July 22 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m., Marshall County Conservation will host a Zoom meeting in which participants can log in to ask staff questions about nature. So join us via computer if you have any wildlife questions, questions about our parks, or anything else nature related! We will try our best to answer your burning questions. The Zoom Meeting link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83260458281?pwd=Ty9HL3BxcVhwVTlqSGdVK3VrdW1vZz09>

Meeting ID: 832 6045 8281

Password: 751162

One tap mobile

+13126266799

Marshall County Conservation Hiking Club

Looking for a fun activity to get outside and explore Marshall County Conservation Parks? Over the summer months, you can head out to one of our five parks with hiking trails: Grimes Farm, Green Castle, Timmons South (start at Shelter House), Three Bridges, and Grammer Grove. Somewhere on the trail you will find a small sign with a password. Please do not touch the sign, so others can safely find it. Write down the words and once you find the passwords on all five trails email eherring@marshallcountytia.gov and you will receive a certificate and be entered in a drawing to win one of five bottles of delicious Trees to Table Maple Syrup at the end of August! Lace up those hiking boots and head outside!



New Summer Camp Format

Summer Camp in a Box

Marshall County Conservation has chosen to change the format of summer camps this year. This was not a decision we made lightly, however we felt six foot distancing, small class sizes and making sure everyone was healthy was too difficult to accomplish with our regular summer camp format.

We are filling this programming gap by providing Summer Camp Boxes. The boxes will be filled with all the normal summer camp activities, science equipment, crafts, games, and links to nature videos that campers can watch to learn more from the Marshall County Naturalist.

Thanks to the support of the Friends of Marshall County Conservation we are able to offer these boxes at the same cost as camp. Participants will need to pre-register and pay camp box fees before the deadline, to receive one of the limited Summer Camp Boxes. When registering, participants will select a curbside pick-up date and time during the week of July 13 through 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. **Pre-registration and payment is required to secure limited spots by June 26 before 4:00 p.m. by calling the Conservation Center at 641-752-5490, email mccb@marshallcountytia.gov, or text only 641-758-9777.**

Crickets Camp – Habitat Exploration Fee \$20
Youth 4 to 5 years old will learn about woodland, wetland and prairie habitats and creatures. A few activities will include: match game cards, wetland study supplies including tubs, jar and net, identification sheets, turtle craft, camouflage game, sense of sound game, story book, bird feeder kit, woodland scavenger hunt and more. Over six hours of activities and links YouTube Videos linked combine to encourage the hands-on learning.

Acorns and Aster Camp – Watery World Fee \$25
Youth out of kindergarten and 1st grade camp box will learn about the water cycle, oceans, and plants and animals that call water home. Their box will include cloud and electricity experiments, rain stick supplies, ocean life game, shark mad libs, shell windchime craft, wetland study gear and more. This camp box contains over nine hours of activities, videos, and fun.

Muskrat Camp – Time Travel Fee \$35
Youth out of 2nd and 3rd grade will travel back in time and learn about Iowa when it was once a shallow sea, when mammoths were hunted by Paleo-Indians, and when pioneers crossed the prairie. In their box they will find fossil creation crafts, fossil identification activities, an evolution board game, homemade atlatl supplies, pinch pot craft, pioneer survival games, Dutch oven recipe, pioneer games and more. This camp box contains close to 12 hours of hands on activities and educational videos.

Praying Mantis Camp – Exploring the Night Fee \$40
Youth out of 5th and 6th grade will learn about things that go bump in the night. Their boxes will include: star charts, night hike tricks, owl pellet dissection, a reflective scavenger hunt game, campfire cooking recipes, glow in the dark rock painting, fire-starting kit and instructions (no matches needed), and more! This camp box contains over 12 hours of activities and videos.

Thank You for the Grammer Grove Facelift

by Emily Herring, Naturalist

Over the last few years, Steve Mraz and his wife Sue Blaisdell have been giving Grammer Grove a much needed facelift by removing massive amounts of the invasive honeysuckle. Every Saturday or Sunday they can be found caring for the park, sometimes both days. Since they began, they have cleared close to ten acres of the invasive species using only hand tools and dedication. It is something that Grammer Grove has needed, and is a monumental feat they are trying to accomplish. They have methodically moved from the south boarder of the park, pulling and stacking honeysuckle to prevent the aggressive plant from returning to the area.



Honeysuckle was introduced into the United States as a landscaping shrub and later as a plant to help with soil erosion, which it does poorly. Soon this plant started to spread and began its journey to dominate the forest understory. There is not a single property that is managed by Marshall County Conservation that does not have invasive honeysuckle growing. Once it begins to take over the timber it alters the entire landscape of the timber from the soil to the birds that live in the trees.

Honeysuckle releases chemicals into soil that prevent natural woodland flowers from growing. It also can grow over 8 feet tall and has dense foliage that blocks out important light for the plants and tree seedlings that are needed to regenerate and replace the dying trees of the forest. Additionally, the berries it produces are attractive to birds, but actually have poor nutrient value and have been known to weaken birds and make them more vulnerable to predation. Thus the need to eradicate the invader from our woods.

Many times when people battle the dense stands of honeysuckle, they cut and treat with chemicals. This prevents the regrowth of the plant, which will regenerate if not treated. Steve and Sue have gone above and beyond removing this plant, completely, so no chemicals are used in the delicate timber ecosystem of Grammer Grove.

This labor of back breaking love, is something they have dedicated themselves to and would love for anyone to join them in the fight to win Grammer Grove back. If you are looking for a good work out, a way to blow off a little steam, or just to feel like you have done something good for our environment, you can reach out to them about joining the good fight. Sue's email is seblaisd@mschi.com and her cell phone is 641-691-6633.

It is truly astonishing what they have accomplished and the staff from Marshall County Conservation would like to thank them for their hard work and passion in helping with invasive species management at Grammer Grove.

SEASONS

Marshall County Conservation Board
2349 - 233rd Street
Marshalltown, IA 50158

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If we inadvertently missed someone, our thanks to you also.



Help us keep costs down and save resources. If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically rather than having it mailed, please send an email to mccb@marshallcountya.gov. Also the electronic version is in color!

MARSHALL COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

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Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturdays 9:00 a.m. - Noon

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