

Conservation Matters

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mills County Conservation Board
Fall 2006

Welcome New MCCB Naturalist!

Hello, my name is James Gates, and I would like to take a moment to introduce myself as the new Mills County Conservation Board's Naturalist. As some of you know the previous Naturalist, Jerad Getter, was promoted to Director of MCCB.

I come from a small community (300 people) in Buchanan County, which is in northeastern Iowa. I traveled to North Dakota after high school, where I attended college and received my A.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Management. In 2004, I received my Bachelor's of Science in Conservation Management from Upper Iowa University, located in Fayette, Iowa.

I come to Mills County with a history of working in the Conservation field. In high school, I worked at a fur buying business outside my hometown. While I was in North Dakota, I was able to work as a Seasonal State Park Ranger at Fort Stevenson State Park on Lake Sakakawea, a part of the Missouri River System. I was also able to work along Lake Audubon and Lake Sakakawea as a Creel Surveyor, which means I interviewed fishermen.

I worked for Buchanan County as a Roadside Technician, as well as Interim Manager, with the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) program, where we were responsible for ditch burns and seeding roadside areas with native grasses and forbs.

Most recently, I worked for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as a Natural Resources Aide, where I assisted with many things, most memorably trapping and banding Canada geese, Mourning doves and wood ducks.

Some people ask me why I chose to work in the field of conservation. I would have to say that I was inspired to do so through the lives of two men, my grandfather and my great uncle. My grandfather would tell me stories of trapping, and take me fishing on occasion. My great uncle had a backyard full of bird feeders, and a few acres of trees where he'd hunt deer, pheasant and turkey. Across the road, he had a pond where he'd take us fishing as boys. These two deceased men played major roles in my development as a young man, and allowed me to take my first steps into the field of conservation.

In memoriam to these men, I would like to request that you take time to take a kid fishing. The memories of a fishing trip will last, the excitement is contagious, and there is no way to tell how far they will take it in life.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the future. Thank you.

Mailings and Website

We are attempting to get things on track once again for the quarterly newsletter (as you see) and with updating the MCCB website. We are contemplating putting the newsletter on the website. We have 3 main goals in this effort:

- reach more people
- cut down on use of paper
- cut general costs

In light of this, we need to know how many people have access to the Internet and would be able to view the newsletter there, rather than having a newsletter issued to them via USPS. We understand not everyone has Internet access and that those people would like to continue to receive the mailings. When you have a moment, and want to be removed from the paper trail, please call the MCCB office and ask for James. (712) 527 9685

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Oak Savanna Prairie Restoration

As the new Naturalist for Mills County Conservation Board, I want to become more familiar with the parks within the county. As we were trekking through the hills of West Oak Forest, located 2 miles North of Hwy 34 on L31, we happened to come upon a plant that stumped us, so we had to dig out the books. The plant had a leaf structure like that of the crown vetch, yet the “flower” appeared to be more similar to that of a prairie clover. The plant was found in what was once a mighty meadow of...brome grass. With some effort, the area underwent a native prairie makeover, and is now showing many native grasses and forbs. The area is fraught with big bluestem, switchgrass, yucca, leadplant and blazing star! The plant we found is Silky Prairie Clover. The plant is found in sparsely vegetated areas such as sandy prairies and pastures within the region.

New Marsh Loop at Mile Hill Lake!

In other MCCB news, we are nearing completion of the new Marsh Loop hiking path at Mile Hill Lake, located 2 miles NW of Glenwood on Hwy 34. This path will lead visitors across the dike allowing a view of the lake, down hills and both along and through cattails with the aid of a newly constructed bridge way. This will enable visitors to see the activity that one might find in a wetland area.

10 Ways You Can Help the Earth

Here are some hints on various issues concerning heating & cooling costs, litter removal and environmental education.

1. Ask your utility company for an energy audit to assess energy waste in your home.
2. Strategically plant trees. Trees can reduce both heating and cooling bills, help prevent soil erosion and reduce air pollution.
3. Capture free solar heat in the winter by opening curtains on south windows on sunny days.
4. Insulate your basement to save up to 1/3 on your heat bill.
5. Install storm windows.
6. Compost your leaves and yard waste. You'll improve your garden's soil and avoid sending yard waste to the landfill.
7. Cans are a major litter problem. Return your recyclable cans and bottles for the deposit, and to keep roadside and recreation areas clean. “Bring it in, take it out.”
8. Use a trash bag in your car instead of throwing trash out the window.
9. Don't litter. Pick up any you see and dispose of it properly. Some litter items can injure wildlife and fish.
10. Educate your children about the environment.