

Conservation Matters

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mills County Conservation Board
Fall 2009

Welcome Fall!

OK, so fall isn't quite here...yet. This year, fall officially arrives at 5:18 pm on September 22nd. To welcome the season, we will be holding our annual Evening Canoe Float on Mile Hill Lake on September 19 starting at 7pm.

We've had all sorts of comments from attendees in the past, from "It's eerie out there in a canoe at night!" to "That was so cool seeing that heron fly over in the moonlight!" and various comments in between. It is definitely a unique experience. If you would like to attend, please call James at (712) 527-9685 to register. This program is dependent upon cooperative weather.

Mile Hill Lake is located 2 miles west of Glenwood on Hwy 34, with access on eastbound Hwy 34.

What a Summer!

The summer was a busy time with the MCCB. We had projects ranging from tree clearing and repairing parts of the Wabash Trace to the regular mowing and picking up litter found in the parks. We also had programs ranging from fishing and canoeing to topics on the Bats of Iowa and setting up the tipi (teepee) and displaying furs during Keg Creek Days.

The summer also brought staff members from the Office of the State Archaeologist. They were visiting known archaeological sites and documenting new sites found within the Glenwood area.

Thank You!

The Mills County Conservation Board would like to say "Thank you" to our two seasonal Summer Aides. This summer, the 2nd season veteran Eric Rasmussen and new hire Scott Gregory did a great job when they took on their roles in maintaining the Mills County Conservation Board parks and properties. Both left the MCCB in August. Scott goes on to continue his education and Eric is now teaching at the Glenwood High School. Thank you both for your hard work throughout the summer!

Meet Your WILD Mills County Neighbors!

From the 1960s to the 1990s, several south and eastern states had aphids that were harming their apple and pecan crops. To help control the aphids, they introduced a biological agent to feed on the aphids: *Harmonia axyridi*, the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle, also known as the Asian ladybird beetle and various other common names. The beetle was introduced to the orchards, and did what it was intended for, but no **known** populations became established from these releases.

In 1988 a population of beetles was found in Louisiana. This population is thought to be an accidental

introduction from a freighter ship docked in New Orleans. Realistically, either could be the source. Since 1988, the beetle has become established in much of the United States and parts of Canada.



(Marlin Rice, ISU Entomology)

The body color is red, tan or orange, to varying degrees. The females have several black spots on their bodies, whereas the males generally have very few, or no spots. When looking at them head on, you will notice the black W behind their head.

These beetles seem to be attracted to light as well as contrasting background colors (white on black, etc), unlike other beetles. This is perhaps why you find them soaking up the afternoon sun on the window, or on the southwest side of your home. When day time temps reach 60 degrees F after a cold snap, the beetles take this as a hint and try to find an overwinter site. This explains the volume of beetles flying around in late fall and again in the early spring.

The Asian Ladybird Beetle can be considered both beneficial and a nuisance, depending on the time of the year. During the spring and summer months, they play a major role by eating the aphids that can harm plants. After the first frost of the season they become an irritation, clinging to window screens and sills and filling up cracks and crevices in your home and elsewhere to hibernate. If you're worried about them laying eggs in your home, it is not necessary. The females lay their eggs (300 to 500 of them) outside on the underside of leaves. They do this several times a year, producing multiple generations of Asian Ladybird Beetles. Each beetle is capable of living up to 3 years.

Some people apply an insecticide outside the home in the fall to prevent these beetles and box elder bugs from entering the home. Tempo (cyfluthrin) is one of the brands professionals prefer to use, but other insecticides like Ortho Home Defense Max can be found at Menards or similar places and may work just as well. If possible and within reason, buy concentrated forms (dilute with water according to instructions) to allow larger volumes to be applied with a spraying device. Some insecticides call for multiple applications and can get

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costly. Always remember to wear personal protective equipment, and realize that the spray may also stain the siding or paint of your house.

There are also some 'home remedies' that may work for controlling the beetles as well. Borax seems to be the main ingredient in many of these, but I have never used it, so I do not know if it works.

Interior insecticides rarely work and can leave a residue on your belongings. Many people (myself included) simply vacuum them up when there are high active numbers. I use a small handheld Dust Buster without a bag, which allows me to release the survivors outside.

The overall best approach would be to make sure your house is properly sealed. Caulk your windows and any other points where pests would enter your home. This may become a heavy task and possibly expensive, but it is one that not only prevents pest entry; it may also help improve your homes overall energy efficiency.

These beetles were a common site when I was growing up. They'd buzz around the dining room light fixture during supper, landing gracefully upon the light shade. Upon landing, they scurry about hastily, searching for something, casting shadows down upon the table. Occasionally I'd find one running amok darting between the salt and pepper shakers. When in danger the Asian ladybird beetle releases a yellow fluid from their leg joints, which creates a terrible smell. It is the one defense they have, although they have very few natural predators.

I recall one fall evening many years ago, dad found one of these creatures crawling along the table during supper, and gave it a flick with his finger. It landed in my GO BOTS (Transformers like) glass that was full of milk.

After fishing the bug out with my spoon, I squished it. The smell was horrendous. I had never smelled anything so foul. I got up and went to the sink to dump my glass and wash my hands again.

Now, when I'm at my folks' during the fall or winter, I use my hand or a napkin to cover my glass, due to my dad's apparent skills.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 19 & 20 – Thurman, IA

Hills & Heritage Festival

Saturday 9am:

Thurman will be hosting a festival celebrating the heritage of the city with pioneer games and activities,

history presentations by locals as well as a presentation by the Pottawatomie Nation, featuring a descendant of Chief Wabaunsee.

Sunday 1pm -5:30pm

1291 Cemetery Road (NE of Thurman, IA)

This event will have guest speakers covering topics such as Prairies, Archaeology, Wildlife, Geology and history of the host property.

October 16 7:30 PM Pony Creek Park

Owl Prowl II

We will review familiar owls & their calls before going out on the trails. Please dress accordingly and bring your own flashlight.

November 7 10 AM Pony Creek Park

Fire!

We will be covering multiple topics relating to fire. There will also be demonstrations as well. Please dress appropriately for the weather.

To register for MCCB Programs or to ask questions, please call James at (712) 527-9685. Thank you.

Volunteer Opportunities

Contact the Mills County Naturalist if you have any questions regarding volunteering.

Phone: (712) 527-9685,

Email: millsccbia@hotmail.com