

# Conservation Matters

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mills County Conservation Board  
Fall 2012



## Busy As Bees at the MCCB

Although this has been the hottest summer on record across the United States the heat did not slow down MCCB Conservation Specialist, Zach Kohlhoff, and his crew of three seasonal employees. As you visit the county parks this fall take a moment to notice some of the great work they have accomplished. County wide they have removed large amounts of invasive and nuisance vegetation such as, thistles, poison ivy, tree of heaven, ironwood, autumn olive, thorny locust, cedars and sumac. Several new gates have been installed and some new signs have been hung. The shelters at George Lake and the Mineola trailhead got some new shingles put on and Indian Creek Greenbelt Area is the proud new home of a nice orchard of fruit trees. We can all look forward to enjoying a nice pear, apple, cherry, or peach sometime in the future. All of this happened alongside the daily routine maintenance of mowing and picking up trash which is a never ending job when you have 1700+ acres to look after.

A special thanks to Stan Davis, Collin White, and Grant Loeffelbein for all the hard work and sweat you put into helping Zach make the county parks look great this summer.

## Meet Your WILD Mills County Neighbors!



A bobolink is a medium-sized song bird that inhabits open grasslands. This beautiful bird is a one of a kind. The males are mostly black with white shoulders, lower back, and rump. The feature that really stands out on this prairie species is the yellow found on the back of its head. The female of this species is far less showy, as with most bird species. They are pale yellow or brownish with some streaking. Females are in charge of egg incubation so it is crucial that these ground nesting grassland mothers blend into their surroundings.

These little birds make an incredible journey every year. They spend the winter south of the Equator and spend the breeding season in the

Northeastern United States and Canada on the prairie. Their annual round trip migration is about 12,500 miles.

Bobolinks are considered Threatened in Iowa. The constant loss of prairie and the early mowing of hay fields are the biggest threat to this species. A local place to view this bird is on the Glenwood Archeological State Preserve south of Glenwood. The preserve totals more than 900 acres and is open to low impact use only. This means you need some good hiking shoes to get to the grassy hilltops to find one of these beautiful birds. During the breeding season which last from May to mid July male Bobolinks can easily be found perched atop a tall piece of grass, fence row, or small trees as they attract females and defend their territory.

## Effects of Drought on Wildlife

As we have all experienced over the summer, drought can cause some serious problems. However, for most of us, it is more of an inconvenience than it is life or death. We can go inside turn on the faucet and instantly we have a nice cold glass of water. How do wildlife cope with drought? Some animals have adapted some incredible techniques to survive a dry period.

Drought has caused many of our local ponds and creeks to go nearly dry, if not completely. Most animals deal with drought in two different ways, migrate or estivate. Estivation is a period of inactivity when an organism's metabolism slows down. It's much like hibernation but under different circumstances. Amphibians are super at this! Frogs and toads are capable of burying themselves in the soil and going into estivation for up to a year waiting for rain. Some species go above and beyond and actually shed layers of skin to form a cocoon which preserves even more moisture while they are buried. Many aquatic reptiles and mammals migrate to a deeper more stable area. You have probably seen painted turtles and snapping turtles out crossing roads more often this summer than usual. Beavers and muskrats can move long distances to find new water sources so they don't have it as tough as turtles do.

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However, overcrowding and competition in the deeper water source becomes a problem.

Often time drought causes disease and parasites to take a greater toll on already stressed animals. For example, deer are more susceptible to a disease called EHD or Blue Tongue Disease. These diseases are transmitted through biting midges such as flies and gnats that are infected. When they bite a deer it is transferred to it. Deer are more concentrated around water sources during drought periods so if insects in the area are infected they can transmit it to many more deer than during a regular year. These diseases are not transferrable to humans.

## Fall Snake Count

This probably looks familiar, as it should. The Center for Snake Conservation hosts a nationwide snake count twice a year and it is time for the Fall count. I encourage everyone to keep an eye out for local snakes and record what you see. The count will be from September 15-23. Everyone is invited to participate, if you would like more information please visit their website at [www.snakecount.org](http://www.snakecount.org) or call the MCCB office at 712.527.9685 and ask for Dessa, I would be happy to record people's observations and send them into the Center for Snake Conservation.

## Hunting Season is Around the Corner

\$228 million is spent in Iowa by hunters annually. That's ALOT of money that helps boost local economies and is especially beneficial to small, rural towns. Hunting is an irreplaceable past time that has been passed from generation to generation in families around the world. As the hunting seasons grow near I encourage everyone to get outside and practice safe, ethical hunting while making great memories. Good luck to all the Mills County hunters! The below hunting season dates are meant to be a quick reference guide. Please check your 2012-2013 Iowa Hunting and Trapping Regulations book provided by the Iowa DNR for more detailed information. If you witness anybody hunting illegally

please contact the DNR Conservation Officer, Brian Smith, at 712-520-0121.

## Hunting Season Dates

2012-13 Iowa Hunting Seasons

**Mourning Dove** (including Eurasian Collared Dove), Sept. 1 - Nov. 9, 2012

**Cottontail Rabbit**, Sept. 1 - Feb. 28, 2013

**Squirrel (fox and gray)**, Sept. 1 - Jan. 31, 2013

**Ruffed Grouse**, Oct. 6 - Jan. 31, 2013

**Pigeon**, Oct. 1 - March 31, 2013

**Gray Partridge**, Oct. 13 - Jan. 31, 2013

**Crow**, Oct. 15 - Nov. 30, 2012 and Jan. 14 - March 31, 2013

**Youth Rooster Pheasant**, Oct. 20-21, 2013

**Rooster Pheasant**, Oct. 27 - Jan. 10, 2013

**Bobwhite Quail**, Oct. 27 - Jan. 31, 2013

**Raccoon and Opossum**, Nov. 3 - Jan.31, 2013

**Fox (red and gray)**, Nov. 3 - Jan. 31, 2013

**Bobcat**, Nov. 3 until the quota of 450 fills [includes total from trapping]

**Turkey Archery-only**, Oct. 1 - Nov 30, 2012 and Dec. 17 - Jan. 10, 2013

**Turkey Gun/Bow**, Oct. 15 - Nov. 30, 2012

**Groundhog**, continuous open season

**Coyote**, continuous open season

## Deer hunting dates

**Youth, Residents Only** Sept 15 - 30

**Disabled**, Sept 15 - 30

**Archery, Early Split** Oct 1 - Nov 30

**Archery, Late Split** Dec 17 - Jan 10, 2013

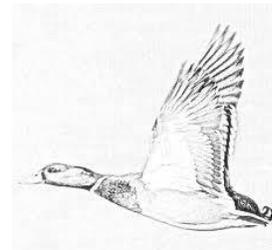
**Early Muzzleloader, Residents Only** Oct 13 - 21

**Late Muzzleloader** Dec 17 - Jan 10, 2013

**Shotgun, Season 1** Dec 1 - 5

**Shotgun, Season 2** Dec 8 - 16

**January Antlerless<sup>3</sup>, Residents Only** Jan 11 - Jan 20, 2013



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### September 9th @ 1:00 pm- "Bike Ride on the Trace"

Bring your bike and meet at the Wabash Trace Nature Trail trailhead in Malvern, IA. Anyone that can ride a bike is welcome. Pre-registration is appreciated.

### September 12th @ 9:00 am- "Birding at Foothills Park"

Join the MCCB Naturalist at Foothills Park for some late summer birding. This park offers a nice creek and timber for birding.

**October 17th @ 9:00am- "Birding at Ray Thomas Wildlife Preserve"** Join the MCCB Naturalist for birding at this restored prairie which is bordered by a nice timber stand.

### October 20th @ 6:00 pm- "Going Batty"

Come out to Pony Creek Park for an evening full of education, crafts and activities focused on the only flying mammal in the world. Pre-registration is **required!**

### November 3rd @ 6:00 pm- "Owl Prowl I"

It's that time of year again. Denise Lewis from Raptor Recovery will be on hand to share her amazing feathered friends with us, followed by a Prowl around Pony Creek Park to look and listen for wild owls. Pre-registration is required, we have limited space and this program fills up quickly so call and reserve your spot ASAP. Please dress appropriately for the weather.

**November 14th @ 9:00 am- "Birding at Pony Creek Park"** Join the MCCB Naturalist in this unique area in the Loess Hills to do some Fall birding.

**To pre-register for these events or to ask questions, please call Dessa at (712) 527-9685 or send us an email at [millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com)**

**GO GREEN!** If you would like to receive your Conservation Matter's newsletter straight to your email inbox please send your request to

**[millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com)**

It is also available on the MCCB website:

<http://mccb.millscoia.us>

This will also put you on the email list to receive event reminders.

## FIND US ON FACEBOOK

### Mills County Conservation Board



The Mills County Conservation Board is able to accept, in the name of Mills County, any gifts, bequests, contributions and appropriations of money or other personal property for conservation purposes. Your tax-deductible donations, and our grant writing, promote the growth and betterment of our facilities for the enjoyment of the citizens of Mills County and its many visitors.

*MCCB provides FREE environmental education programs for all citizens of Mills County. If you are interested in one for your group or class please call or email for more information.*

*"In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."*

*Baba Dioum*



## LITTLE CRITTERS FUN PAGE



### Autumn Word Search



Can you find the Autumn words in the puzzle below?

h	t	b	x	t	n	y	e	l	l	o	w
b	r	o	w	n	s	e	j	j	s	l	s
g	b	h	v	t	t	p	y	u	q	i	c
c	q	q	z	f	x	a	e	j	u	c	a
m	l	e	a	v	e	s	c	a	i	w	r
c	j	s	y	i	l	g	b	o	r	k	e
h	a	r	v	e	s	t	o	d	r	i	c
f	s	e	u	o	r	a	n	g	e	n	r
w	a	d	k	l	a	p	f	q	l	r	o
s	s	l	d	q	f	x	i	g	x	a	w
k	b	m	l	y	l	h	r	c	x	k	p
a	p	p	l	e	b	h	e	y	c	e	h

Science Investigation :

What makes leaves turn colors in the Fall?

rake

scarecrow

brown

yellow

squirrel

leaves

apple

red

bonfire

harvest

fall

pear

orange

acom



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