

Fall 2015



Conservation Matters

Upcoming Event Highlights

Monarch Mania

9-13-15

Prairie Prowl

10-11-15

Den Building

11-7-15

More program details and contact information located in newsletter.



Mills County Conservation Board

Park News

Exciting news for residents of Mills County and the MCCB! Pony Creek Park has expanded by 30 acres, with the purchase of the Hahn property along the south border of the park. The park now totals 80 acres! The new property consists of about 12 acres of prairie and 18 acres of woodland. On the property is a yoga lodge that will continue to be utilized by the Pony Creek Yoga Association.

We greatly appreciate Margaret and Allen Hahn and their efforts to work with the MCCB to ensure this lovely Loess Hills property will be protected. This addition was made possible in part through a generous donation from Marilyn Shroer. We are extremely thankful for her generosity. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation also assisted with the purchase.

More good news, the Nature Center construction is well underway. If you are in the Pony Creek area, swing by the park and take a look. We are still seeking donations for the Nature Center and also for the new land addition to Pony Creek Park. Donating to these projects is a great way to support environmental

Conservation Tip

Raise your hand if you enjoy raking leaves in your yard. Spending hours every fall raking and raking and raking, while more leaves just keep falling and falling and falling!

I have good news for you, this year DONT do it. It is actually healthier for your lawn to mulch the leaves with your mower and "leave" them. Dead leaves contain carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus which means free natural fertilizer for your lawn. Many people bag them up for the trash removal companies to deal with. Treating leaves as trash is environmentally and financially foolish. Instead of wasting space in a landfill, make a change to your routine this fall and help your lawn and the environment one good decision at a time.

Another great reason to "leave your leaves" is it provides habitat for little critters that are important for a healthy ecosystem to function. Many of Iowa insects overwinter under the cover of fallen leaves. Maybe you are not extremely fond of bugs, but you do like birds? Come spring the insects that have used the leaf cover to survive provide an excellent source of protein for birds returning from their winter ranges.

Mills County Neighbor

Eastern hognose snakes put on quite the show when bothered by people or other wildlife. These short, fat snakes inflate themselves with air and flatten out their neck like a cobra and pretend to strike (typically with their mouth closed). They are also commonly called puff adders because of this behavior. If that doesn't work to scare something away they feign death. Their acting skills are one of a kind! They roll over, open their mouth and everything goes limp. The best part is when it's tongue hangs out like a cartoon character and even if you pick it up they continue to "play dead". Hognose snakes are the drama queens of the reptile world.



Eastern hognose

The Eastern hognose is easily identified by its upturned nose and bold pattern. An adult only reaches a length of 20-23 inches and they are found across most of Iowa. They are active during the day and are most commonly seen in the spring and fall. Hognose snakes eat a variety of small mammals, salamanders and frogs but their favorite meal is a toad. They have large fangs in the back of their mouth that are used to puncture inflated toads for easier swallowing and this snake is immune to the poison produced by toads. In some areas their entire diet consists of toads.



Eastern hognose, death feigning

Get outside and explore the county this fall and hopefully you will come across one of these unusual neighbors!

Classroom Connection

The lucky kids that participated in the summer school program at East Mills got a good dose of environmental education in June. We went on nature hikes around the school campus, planted prairie seeds in the reconstructed prairie that is located east of the school building, learned about owls, made animal tracks and combined math with live, native wildlife. Everyone had a great time and learned some important facts about our local resources! The MCCB appreciates the East Mills School District for allowing the reconstructed prairie to be on the school campus and easily utilized for some many learning topics.

Mills County Conservation provides FREE environmental education programs to public schools and home school groups throughout Mills County. Encourage the educators that you may know to take advantage of these fun programs by contacting us for more information. Connecting today's youth with nature and the environment is very important to ensure the protection and conservation of our amazing natural resources.

" 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

Summer Park Maintenance

If you have visited one of the 10 county parks this summer you probably noticed the wonderful condition they are in. Full time staff members ,Zach Kohlhoff and Jesse Ayers, with the help of summer employees, Ross VanSlyke and Brett Maxwell, tackled dozens of projects throughout the parks this summer. Over 200 hours are spent mowing the trails and open areas of the parks during the growing season! With a mountain of weekly duties, the guys also worked on restoring habit, timber stand improvements, and kept invasive weeds such as thistle in check. All their hard work keeping YOUR Mills County Parks in great shape is appreciated!

Grant

The Mills County Community Foundation awarded the MCCB a generous grant of \$15,000 toward the construction of the new Nature Center. The Mills County Community Foundation is an important part of the many projects the MCCB accomplishes and we are always grateful for the financial contributions.

Upcoming Public Programs

Monarch Mania

September 13th @ 9:00 am

Join us at Pony Creek Park for an exciting program about monarch butterflies! We will learn about their life cycle and the incredible migration they make. There will also be monarch tagging and information about Monarch Watch and how you can help. Sturdy shoes and long pants are recommended if you plan to help tag butterflies. Give us a call at 712-527-9685 or email millsccbia@hotmail.com, if you plan to attend.



Prairie Prowl and Seed Harvest

October 11th @ 1:00pm

Take a walk through a reconstructed prairie at Foothills Park on the Glenwood Archeological Preserve (59069 Levi Rd). Learn about native prairie plants, their benefits to the environment and harvest some seeds! Wearing long pants and sturdy shoes is recommended.

Check out our Facebook page for updates and changes to upcoming programs!

Den Building

November 7th @ 11:00 am

Come build a den with us! We will be learning about the dens local wildlife make and then use our imaginations to create dens of our own. Dress appropriately to be exploring the woodland! Pre-registration is greatly appreciated for planning purposes. Call 712-527-9685 or email millsccbia@hotmail.com! Program will be at Pony Creek Park, 56235 Deacon Road.



Mills County Conservation Board:

Contact information

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The Mills County Conservation Board is committed to providing the citizens of Mills County with quality outdoor recreation areas and opportunities for environmental education experiences. Please take advantage of these services and visit the nearly 1,800 acres of public land available!

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MILLS COUNTY CONSERVATION
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