

Fall 2018

Conservation Matters

Mills County Conservation Board

Upcoming Event Highlights

*Digital Scavenger
Hunt*

October 20th

Leaf Art

November 18th

*Tiny Nature
Adventures-*

*First Wednesday of
each Month*

*More program
details and
contact
information
located in
newsletter.*

Conservation Corps of Iowa

Conservation Corps of Iowa is a group of hard working young adults that provide hands on environmental stewardship through natural resource management and emergency response work. Mills County Conservation has been lucky to have CCI crews doing work on YOUR county parks several times in the past four years. The crew is made up of 3-6 people between the ages of 18-25 that come from diverse backgrounds around the United States. They work 4 days a week, 10-hour days and often camp near their work site. The work they do is very labor intensive, and they face the constant challenges of working in the rugged Loess Hills.

The 2018 CCI Crew has been busy just like the previous crews we have been fortunate to have. Their first week in Mills County with a 3-person crew they sprayed 12 acres of invasive Tree of Heaven, cleared ½ mile of trail edges and opened a new clearing, all at West Oak Forest. Week two they were back with a 5-person crew and set to work at Glenwood Archaeological State Preserve and knocked out 30 acres of Timber Stand Improvement by removing invasive and less desirable species to allow beneficial trees to thrive. During times of rainy weather, they worked on removing 3,000 feet of old fencing. The posts and wire will be re-used on other MCCB projects. During their final stop in Mills County a 3-person crew cleared ridge tops and slopes at West Oak Forest in the never-ending battle to restore the Loess Hills to its original condition.

During previous years the CCI crew is responsible for improving 36 acres of steep slopes, ridge tops and clearings at West Oak Forest and opening trails at Foothills Park on the Glenwood Archaeological State Preserve.

The history of Conservation Corps traces its roots to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided natural-resource jobs to unemployed young men so they could support their families during the Great Depression. Later, in the 1970s, the federal government launched the summer Youth Conservation Corps and the year-round Young Adult Conservation Corps, continuing the employment of young people in productive conservation work. When federal support for conservation corps ended in 1981, the Minnesota Conservation Corps was created by the Minnesota Legislature to offer youth and young adult programs through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Conservation Corps of Iowa was launched in 2009 and is continuing the mission of restoring resources and changing lives. If you know a young person that would benefit from this type of work please encourage them to visit www.conservationcorps.org to find out more information.

Mills County Neighbor

Snakes, love them or hate them, are a common neighbor here in Mills County. Educating yourself about these interesting reptiles is the key to living peacefully with them. Snakes worldwide have the tendency to make people shudder. In the United States you are 9 times more likely to be die from being struck by lightning than being bitten by a venomous snake. There are four venomous snakes found in Iowa; Timber Rattlesnake, Prairie Rattlesnake, Massasauga Rattlesnake and the Copperhead. In Mills County only one of these, the Massasauga, has been recorded. Unfortunately, they are now an endangered species and the last one was found over a decade ago. Many people that encounter our local snakes are tricked into thinking they are a rattlesnake because of the common defensive behavior of vibrating their tail on surrounding vegetation.

So, what kind of snakes do we have here and what do you need to know about them? Bull snakes were once a common site on the Iowa prairie, today they are listed as a Species of Special Concern because of habitat loss and unwarranted persecution by people. These large snakes run a close race of being the largest in the state with the Black Rat snake. Both snakes can grow up to 6+ feet! Bull snakes prefer open grasslands and black rat snakes enjoy our timber areas where they can cruise the tree tops looking for their next meal. The Western Fox snake is another of our larger species that can be quite common in some locations and resembles a Bull Snake in looks, habitat and behaviors. Without a doubt the most common snake that people encounter is the Garter snake. These adaptable little snakes live in urban and rural areas. A few of our smaller neighbors include the Little Brown and Prairie Ring neck snake, these pencil sized reptiles enjoy eating worms, very small rodents and soft bodied invertebrates. The most colorful reptile found in Iowa is the Milk snake. It's bright colors often scare people into thinking it could be venomous. Milk snakes are harmless, it's the coral snake (which is not found in Iowa) that packs a very dangerous bite and can be confused with other brightly colored snakes. A popular saying, "Red and Yellow can kill a fellow; Red and Black, friend of Jack" helps to remember which snake which is. It is always important to be aware of your surroundings and keep in mind that as you visit new areas you might encounter other snake species that we do not have here.

After getting to know some of the local snakes now it's time to find out why they are important. Snakes serve a role in ecosystems acting as a special piece of food chains. All snakes are carnivores that have a huge impact on keeping rodent populations in check. They are able to prowl around in areas looking from their prey that most other predators cannot get to. Next time you have the privilege of running into one of these great neighbors remember it's illegal to kill snakes in Iowa and they are doing more good than you might realize.

Grants and Donations

During the summer several generous people made donations to Pony Creek Nature Center. Monetary donations are always appreciated as they help feed the live animals and add new displays. A large collection of artifacts was loaned to the Nature Center by Joyce and Natalie Howrey. The artifacts were found locally by Lois Deitchler and are being temporarily displayed in the classroom area of the Nature Center while a plan for permanent display is finalized. A variety of waterfowl were donated in memory of Craig Severin.

Digital Scavenger Hunt-

October 20th @ 1:00 pm

Let the adventure begin at Pony Creek Park! Bring your choice of photography equipment (phone, tablet, camera, etc.). A list of natural objects and landmarks will be available at Pony Creek Nature Center. You will have 90 minutes to find and photograph as many items as possible and everything you are looking for will be within the park boundaries. You are welcome to participate as a group or alone. More details will be given during the program. Pony Creek Park and Nature Center are located at 56235 Deacon Road, Pacific Junction. Fun for all ages! Call 712-527-9685 if you have questions.



Leaf Art-

November 18th @ 1:00 pm

Let your imagination take over as you create a piece of art out of dried, pressed leaves that will be available at Pony Creek Nature Center. Fun for people of all ages, and you will have a piece of the Fall season that will last year-round. Pre-registration is **REQUIRED**, please call 712-527-9685.



Pre-registration contact information:

Phone: 712-527-9685

Email: millsccbia@hotmail.com

Pre-registering helps us plan accordingly for programs.

Mills County Conservation

Tiny Nature Adventures-

The first Wednesday of each month, 10:00-11:00 am. Nature themed activities for children 3-5 years old. Adult must stay with child and pre-registration is **REQUIRED**, call 712-527-9685. We will be outdoors when weather allows so dress accordingly! Pony Creek Nature Center, 56235 Deacon Road.

October 3rd

November 7th



Pony Creek Nature Center

56235 Deacon Road
Pacific Junction, IA

712-527-9685

Hours: Monday thru Friday
9:00am to 3:00 pm

Contact information

Mills County
Conservation
Pony Creek Park
56235 Deacon Rd
Pacific Junction, IA
51561

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E-MAIL:
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Website:
www.millscoia.us/index.php/depts/conservation



Mills County Conservation Board:

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MCCB Board Members:

George Marshall, Malvern
Lana White, Hastings
Kreg Kinzle, Glenwood
Ted Golka, Glenwood
Debra Swirmiky, Glenwood



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
56235 DEACON RD
PACIFIC JUNCTION, IA 51561



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