

# The Prairie Star

## Newsletter

Volume 40, Issue 3

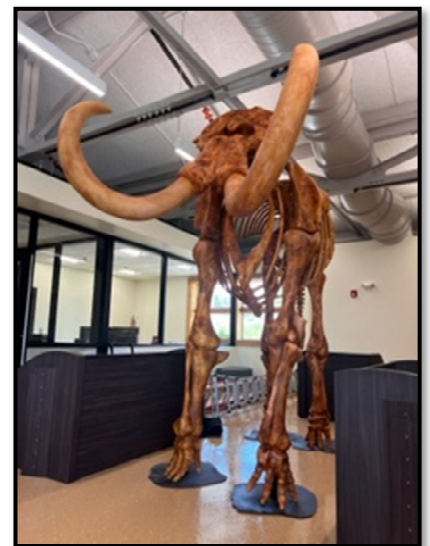
Fall 2023

## MCCB Takes On Exciting New Projects

**By Chris Clingan**  
MCCB Director

There are a lot of exciting things going on with Mahaska County Conservation. As you may know we now have a full body Woolly mammoth replica in the Environmental Learning Center! This display really adds to the experience when you come to the ELC. Many people are in awe when they look at the size of the mammoth and realize that these creatures once roamed Mahaska County.

Another very exciting project is taking place at the ELC as well. We are planning and beginning to raise funds for a new outdoor feature. We have a design concept and estimated cost to build a natural playscape and amphitheater on the west side of the ELC. (see design concept on p. 2) This playscape will be professionally designed and built to be extremely unique and beautiful. There will be climbing structures, tunnels, and other unique outdoor themed play opportunities. It will not only be for the children, but there will also be many different areas for anyone to sit under a shade structure surrounded by native plants. Local art sculptures also will be incorporated in the designs as much as possible. It will be a great place to bring the kids or grandchildren, let them play while you read a book, or birdwatch.



New life-sized Woolly Mammoth skeleton is a permanent display at the ELC.

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# Summer Work Crews in the County Parks

***Mahaska County Conservation Board would like to thank the Green Iowa AmeriCorps and Iowa STEM Teacher Externship Program for joining the MCCB team in our parks, Environmental Learning Center, and educational programs.***

by Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist

It has been a busy summer for Mahaska County Conservation with park maintenance, environmental education programs, extending the visiting hours at the Environmental Learning Center and an open house to welcome the Woolly mammoth skeleton exhibit. The extent of work accomplished could not have been done without the diligent help of two programs that joined up with our staff: the Green Iowa AmeriCorps and Iowa STEM Teacher Externship program.

The **Green Iowa AmeriCorps** crew joined us with the help of William Penn University's Career Services Coordinator, Debbie Stevens. Debbie is Green Iowa AmeriCorps Host Site Director in this area. We want to thank the college students that have helped us in the parks and at the Environmental Learning Center this summer: *Aubrey Brown, Kristine Jaennette, Rosemary Miller, Lawson Morris, Cheyenne Reak, Lindsay Reak, and Emma Stephens.*

The **Iowa Stem Teacher Externship** program helps teachers bring their curriculum to life by teaming up with businesses and organizations that relate to their field of teaching. MCCB has had two teacher externs join us this summer. *Nicole Craig*, the Vocational Agriculture teacher at Tri-County High School, has been working at the Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie on prairie restoration, an effort to improve habitat for endangered native plants and animals such as the Pale green orchid and Ornate box turtle. *Stephanie Visser*, an Oskaloosa High School science teacher, has been working with the naturalist, Laura DeCook, at day camps, public programs and caring for live animals at the Environmental Learning Center. She has also spent some time helping at the Eddyville Sand Dunes Prairie.



(L to R) Stephanie Visser and Nicole Craig

(continued from p. 1)

The Friends of Mahaska County Conservation are great supporters of the natural playscape and amphitheater project and are working extremely hard to find ways to raise funds to complete this project. On October 14<sup>th</sup> they are planning a Mammoth Run/Walk 5k. This event will start at the Oskaloosa High School and end at the ELC and there will be food, beverages and music to enjoy after the run. If you are interested in participating, please contact Randie Dixon via email at [randie.dixon25@gmail.com](mailto:randie.dixon25@gmail.com) and she can get you registered for the event. You can also stop by the ELC to pick up a registration form.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in helping raise funds for this project, please contact our office. All donations will go through the Friends of Mahaska County Conservation. If you cannot donate financially to the cause, please spread the word! This is going to be a unique and interesting addition to the ELC and it's going to make a huge impact on our community for years to come.



CALDWELL PARK ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER NATURE PLAYSCAPE  
MAY 2023

SHIVEHATTERY  
ARCHITECTURE-ENGINEERING





# NATURE NOTES

## Monarch Butterflies

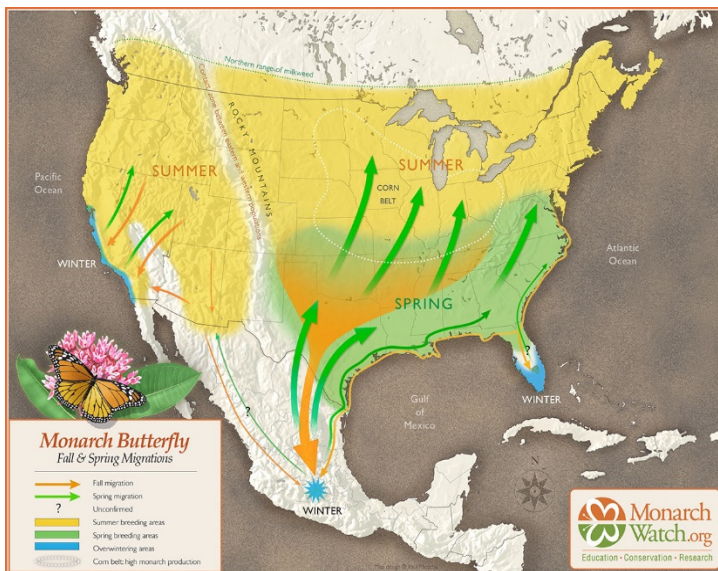
by Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist



Summer will soon wind down and the fall season will take its place. Nature events in the fall can be enjoyable after a hot summer – such as the tree leaves turning colors, cooler temperatures, and the migration of monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus plexippus*).

Unlike most other insects in temperate climates, monarch butterflies cannot survive a long, cold winter. Instead, they spend the winter in southern roosting areas. Driven by seasonal changes, monarchs west of the Rocky Mountains travel to the southwest California coast. Monarchs from Iowa and the rest of those found east of the Rocky Mountains fly farther south to the highlands in central Mexico. They are the only butterflies to make such a long, two-way migration every year. Amazingly, they fly in masses to the same winter roosts and often return to the exact same trees. However, instead of the same butterfly returning to Mexico year after year, it's their children's grandchildren that return south the following fall.

Monarch migration is fascinating! They travel much farther than all other tropical butterflies. One individual monarch's migration trip placed it into the Guinness' Book of World's Records. This monarch was tagged in Ontario, Canada and then recaptured in the over-wintering grounds of Mexico. It had traveled a straight-lined distance of 2,880 miles! Butterflies do not travel in a straight line, so its actual distance was probably twice the number of miles. Another interesting monarch fact is that some hang gliders and balloonists have reported seeing monarchs flying as high as 7,000 feet. If monarchs catch the right wind currents and thermals during migration, they can fly as fast as 50 miles per hour!



Given the great numbers of monarchs (up to 300 million) that gather to migrate each fall, it is hard to imagine them facing any threat of extinction. But monarchs are seriously threatened by weather and human activities in both their summer and over-wintering sites. In the United States and Canada, monarch habitat is threatened by the loss of their host plants. Milkweed is a plant that monarch caterpillars feed on exclusively. Milkweeds are vulnerable to herbicides used by many landscapers, farmers, and gardeners. Weather, such as the drought recently experienced in the southern United States also has a huge impact on monarch numbers.

Monarch populations are also vulnerable in their over-wintering sites in Mexico and California. Timber harvesting of Oyamel trees that monarchs overwinter on, and unseasonable rain and devastating mudslides can greatly affect butterflies.

To keep up to date with monarch butterfly populations, visit the website [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org).



**More fascinating information  
about Monarch butterflies can  
be found at the website  
[www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org)!**



# INVESTIGATE

## Programs for Kids

**Saturday,  
Sept. 30, 2023**

## 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Outdoor Field Day

*"Connecting Kids with the Outdoors"*

### Pre-register by September 15!

**\$5.00 per person (children & adults) if registered by noon on Sept. 15**

- Early registrations include a t-shirt for each child signed up. T-shirts for adults are an additional \$10 each.

**\$10.00 per person (children & adults) if registration is received after 12 pm on Sept. 15 through the day of event**

- Late registrations do not include a t-shirt.
- Walk-up registrations will be taken at the event.



**8:00 am – 12:00 pm**

Join MCCB, local organizations, and conservation groups at the Russell Wildlife Area for a day of hands-on outdoor activities for kids and their families! Visit a variety of activities at your own pace. Also, kids can earn a participation prize!

Registration forms are found at [www.mahaskaconservation.com](http://www.mahaskaconservation.com) or pick one up at the Environmental Learning Center.

- DISC GOLF • TREE IDENTIFICATION • FISHING • OSKALOOSA FIRE DEPT. WATER SAFETY
- MAKE & TAKE SEED BALLS • MAHASKA COUNTY SHERIFF K-9 DOG "ROCCO" • FOSSIL DIGGING
- DUTCH OVEN COOKING • .22 SHOOTING ... & MORE!

Check back on Facebook (Mahaska County Conservation) for more additional activities & updates!

Questions? Call MCCB at (641)673-9327

Russell Wildlife Area is located at 2254 – 200<sup>th</sup> St., New Sharon, IA.

## Youth Outdoor Field Day Registration Form

RETURN THIS FORM WITH THE REGISTRATION FEES TO:

Mahaska County Conservation  
2342 Hwy. 92  
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

Names of children/age:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

(More names can be added to the back of this form.)

Names of adults attending:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Registrations received by noon on Sept. 15 are **\$5.00 per person** (children and adults) and includes a t-shirt for each child. T-shirts for adults are an additional \$10 each.

➤ Registrations for children and adults received after 12 pm on Sept. 15 will be **\$10.00 each** and will not include a t-shirt.

### Consent for Photographs

**(Circle one)** I GIVE / I DO NOT GIVE permission and consent to allow photographs to be taken of the participants registered on this form during the Youth Outdoor Field Day activities. I further give permission and consent that any such photographs may be published and used by the Mahaska County Conservation Board to illustrate and promote the event experience for future educational programs.

Indicate the size of each registered person's t-shirt:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Small
- \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Medium
- \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Large
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adult Small
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adult Medium
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adult Large
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adult X Large
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adult XX Large

Total Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Checks may be written to MCCB.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_  
Method of Payment: Cash / Check # \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount Paid: \$ \_\_\_\_\_





# INVESTIGATE

## Programs for Kids



*Knee-High Naturalist programs are free activities for kids ages 5 and younger. The program activities are designed to help foster learning about nature and exploring the outdoors. Adults that bring the children to the program need to remain with them during the program.*

*Pre-registration is required to participate.  
Call (641)673-9327 or  
email [decook@mahaskacountyia.gov](mailto:decook@mahaskacountyia.gov).*

**9:30-10:30 am**  
**Environmental Learning Center**

**September 12<sup>th</sup> "Pollinators"**

**October 17<sup>th</sup> "Creepy Crawlies"**

**November 14<sup>th</sup> "Fall Hike"**



## Homeschool Science Labs



Free monthly programs for your children that will provide hands-on learning experiences and excite them about science and nature.  
*Registrations are needed!*

Call (641)673-9327 or email  
[decook@mahaskacountyia.gov](mailto:decook@mahaskacountyia.gov) to sign up.

**September 8<sup>th</sup> "Monarch Butterflies"**

1:00-2:00 pm @ Environmental Learning Center

**October 6<sup>th</sup> "Spiders"**

1:00-2:00 pm @ Environmental Learning Center

**November 2<sup>nd</sup> "Animal Adaptations"**

1:00-2:00 pm @ Environmental Learning Center



**So much to see & do at the**  
*ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER!*



**Monday-Tuesday 12:30-4:30 pm**  
**Wednesday-Friday 12:30-8:00 pm**  
**Saturday 10:00 am-6:00 pm**

**LIVE ANIMALS**

**GAMES**

**PUZZLES**

**COLORING**

**CRAFTS**

**SCAVENGER HUNTS**

**WOOLLY MAMMOTH BONES**

**HIKING TRAILS**





# EXPERIENCE

## Programs for Adults



### Coffee Club at the ELC

**9:00-10:00 am**

**Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Friday, September 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Anyone is welcome to come out and enjoy the coffee, home-baked snacks and company! We have a fun time visiting and learning about fascinating things in nature and with MCCB. Bring a cup and a friend! Donations are appreciated to help purchase supplies for future Coffee Clubs.

We meet in the Environmental Learning Center's Discovery Lab (upper level). Feel free to tour the exhibits after having coffee and refreshments. There are many great displays to see in the ELC! Reservations are not needed to participate.



### O.W.L.S.

*Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls*

#### **LUNCH & LEARN DAYS**

**Bring a lunch and a friend!**

*Adults of any age are welcome!  
Pre-registrations are appreciated for  
supplies and seating.*

*Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 or  
email [decCook@mahaskacountyia.gov](mailto:decCook@mahaskacountyia.gov).*

#### **The Leakproof Bag**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

**Friday, August 25, 2023**

**Environmental Learning Center**

Eat lunch and learn about solids, liquids and gases in a fun way with some hands-on science experiments!

#### **Cherokee Leaf Pounding**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

**Friday, September 22, 2023**

**Environmental Learning Center**

Come and learn about a long-time craft of using plants to dye fabric. Bring a lunch and a hammer (if you have one).

#### **“Prepare to Scare” with Linda Fox**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

**October 27, 2023**

**Environmental Learning Center**

Bring a lunch and a friend to hold onto as we listen to spooky stories told by Linda Fox. What makes a good scary story

#### **Music with the Muse**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

**November 17, 2023**

**Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park**

While you eat lunch, Ashley Schultz, owner of the Muse Music Store will share about all the great music opportunities Mahaska County has with her store. There will also be an opportunity to try out a few instruments!



# DISCOVER

## Events for All Ages

### Mahaska County Conservation Board's



# HALLOWEEN

## Bash

AT EVELAND ACCESS  
CAMPGROUND

Saturday, October 21, 2023

1:00- 9:00 pm

1-3 pm

**Carnival Games**

*Purchase tickets from Friends of Mahaska County Conservation to play and help raise money for future campground updates!*

**CARNIVAL TICKETS**  
\$.50 each  
12 for \$5  
25 for \$10

2:00 pm

**Worm Pie Eating Contest &  
Witch Cackle Contest  
Decorated Pumpkin Contest**

3:00 pm

**Costume Parade for all ages**

3:30 pm

**Spooky Stories with Linda Fox**

4-5:30 pm

**Trick-or-Treating**

7-9 pm

**Decorated Campsite Auto Tour**  
*(free-will donation at entrance)*

9:15 pm

**Decorated Campsite Awards  
in shelter house**



Campers are asked to decorate their campsite with a lighted Halloween theme and provide candy to trick-or-treaters. Campsites will be judged for the "Best Decorated Campsite" by anyone in a vehicle driving through the evening auto tour. Great prizes will be awarded! Sites are \$20/night first-come, first-served. Call (641)673-9327 for more information.

**EVELAND ACCESS CAMPGROUND 2890 GALESTON AVE., OSKALOOSA IA 52577**





# VOLUNTEER

## Information & News

# Volunteer Training

SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

6:00-7:00 PM

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

### THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS TO VOLUNTEER!

- Environmental Learning Center Host
- Event & educational program volunteer
- County park stewards
- New Youth Outdoor Field Day volunteers
- ELC live animal care
- Flower bed maintenance
- Bird feeding



ARE YOU WANTING TO  
VOLUNTEER WITH US?  
SIGN UP TO ATTEND!

(641)673-9327

[DECOOK@MAHASKACOUNTYIA.GOV](mailto:DECOOK@MAHASKACOUNTYIA.GOV)

VOLUNTEER TRAINING IS ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS.

Volunteers help in so many ways!



**Eveland Access  
Campground  
CLOSED  
for the season**



**at 12:00 pm on  
Monday, October 30, 2023**

## *Eveland Access Cabins*

1681 – 290<sup>th</sup> St., Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577



Apple and Birch Cabins are available for rent  
year-round. To view pictures of the cabins and to find  
rental information, visit the MCCB website:

[www.mahaskaconservation.com](http://www.mahaskaconservation.com)

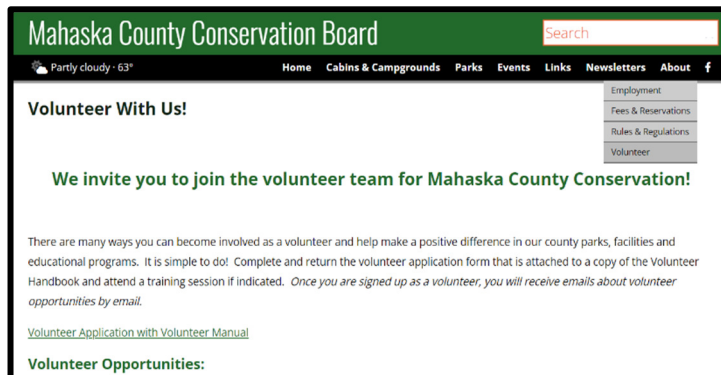
or call MCCB at (641)673-9327.





# VOLUNTEER

## Information & News



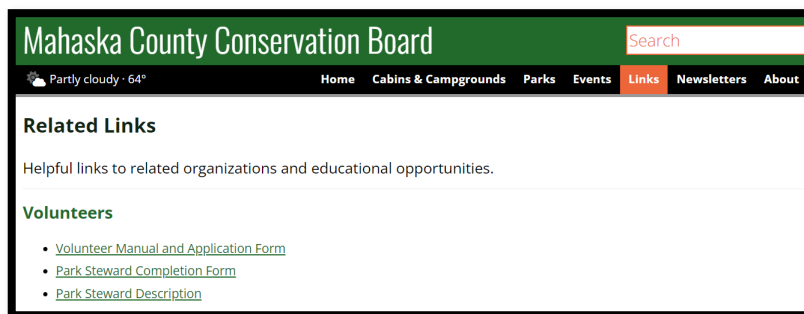
**Finding volunteer information is now easier to do!**

1. Go to the MCCB website [www.mahaskaconservation.com](http://www.mahaskaconservation.com).
2. Hover over the "About" tab and select "Volunteer".
3. You will find information about volunteering!

### Volunteer Opportunities:

*Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 or email [decook@mahaskacountyia.gov](mailto:decook@mahaskacountyia.gov) to learn more.*

- **Environmental Learning Center Hosts** - This volunteer position helps greet visitors at the ELC. We will plan a schedule around your available hours and our open hours of operation. You will need to complete a volunteer training session and background check to be an ELC Host.
- **Park Stewards** - This volunteer position allows you to "adopt" one or more Mahaska County Conservation areas and become stewards of those natural areas. This program allows the freedom to work according to your own schedule and interests with the guidance of MCCB staff. All training, tools, equipment, and expertise necessary for volunteers to carry out stewardship duties are provided by MCCB. You will need to complete a volunteer training session to become a Park Steward. **Park Stewards are asked to complete a Park Steward Completion Form after a volunteer activity in one of our county parks.**



**Find the Park Steward Completion Form Here!**

1. Go to the MCCB website [www.mahaskaconservation.com](http://www.mahaskaconservation.com).
2. Select the "Links" tab.
3. You will find the link for "Park Steward Completion Form".

- **Environmental Education Volunteer** - This volunteer position helps the naturalist with educational programs, field trips and public events. There are endless opportunities all year long! You will need to complete a volunteer training session and background check to be an Environmental Education Volunteer.
- Help feed educational animals at the ELC
- Photograph/video event activities
- Feed birds at ELC bird feeder
- Clean up pollinator garden at ELC
- School field trip volunteers in late April through May
- Summerfest at Eveland Access event on June 3 (help with family games/activities, set up/take down, parking vehicles)



## MAHASKA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

### OPEN HOURS:

**Monday-Tuesday** 12:30-4:30 pm  
**Wednesday-Friday** 12:30-8:00 pm  
**Saturday** 10:00 am-6:00 pm

Mahaska County's programs and facilities are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Mahaska County Conservation Board or the office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 29240.

### The Prairie Star

The Prairie Star is the newsletter of the Mahaska County Conservation Board and is emailed to those persons on our mailing list. There is no charge for the newsletter, although contributions to help defray costs are greatly appreciated. Please help us by keeping us informed of any change of email address or if you no longer wish to receive our newsletter.

## Mahaska County Conservation Board MEETING DATES

MCCB's monthly board meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. Public is welcome to attend.

**August 3, 2023**  
**September 7, 2023**  
**October 12, 2023**  
**November 2, 2023**

Lower level of the Mahaska County  
 Environmental Learning Center  
 2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, IA 52577

*Dates and times are subject to change.  
 Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 for more information.*

## Mahaska County Conservation Board

<b>Vacancy</b>	Chairperson
<b>Steve Dixon</b> , Oskaloosa	Vice-Chairperson
<b>Curt Jager</b> , Eddyville	Secretary
<b>Linda Fox</b> , Rose Hill	Member
<b>Jennifer Peterson</b> , Oskaloosa	Member

### STAFF

<b>Chris Clingan</b>	Director
<b>Laura DeCook</b>	Naturalist
<b>Tommy VanRenterghem</b>	Park Ranger
<b>Jason Ryan</b>	Park Ranger
<b>Dorothy Wedgewood</b>	Administrative Assistant

### Mission Statement

*The primary mission of this organization shall be to create an awareness of our natural environment, encourage a state of harmony between people and their natural communities, develop and implement public conservation policy, maintain the public's investment in our natural resources, and strive diligently within the budget restraints to provide adequate services for the environmental education and enjoyment of the citizens of Mahaska County.*