

The Prairie Star

Newsletter

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Fall & Winter 2020/21

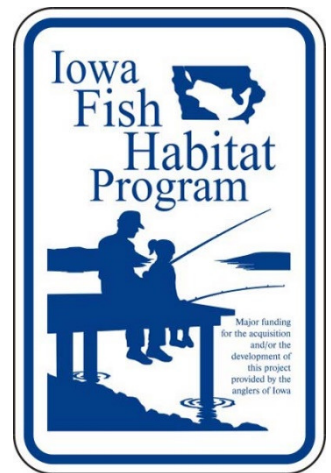
MCCB's Accomplishments in 2020 and Looking Forward to 2021

By Dorothy Wedgewood

Administrative Assistant

It is always nice to look back at the year to see where you have come from to help inspire where you want to go. Reflecting on 2020, even with the hardships encountered with Covid, MCCB was able to accomplish many good things at the ELC, in our programs and in the outlying areas we maintain.

- In early 2019, MCCB received a Fish Habitat Stamp Grant to restructure the pond on the EverTru Natural Wilderness Area. The pond was drained and the excavation work began. Work continued through the spring and summer of 2020, with work completing in fall of 2020. Although the pond is finished, it will not be stocked with fish until spring of 2021. Then, it will take two to three years for the fish to populate the pond enough for the public to fish this area.
- Musco Lighting, Inc. generously donated lighting for the back-parking area at the ELC. They are in the process of erecting a light pole to light the entire parking lot.
- MCCB saw an increase of the use of the campgrounds and the various MCCB areas this year. It is nice to see the public out enjoying the outdoors in many different areas and in many ways.



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- Maskunky Marsh has seen some changes. The parking area near the bird blind has been removed and relocated to the south end of the marsh. It may be farther to walk to enjoy the birds, but the new location away from the marsh should not scare the birds into taking flight when used.
- Programs ceased for a time to comply with the State of Iowa Guidelines for closures during the Covid incident, however; Naturalist DeCook was off and running when the green light was given to open the doors.
 - a. DeCook took programs outside introducing the public to several of MCCB's twenty-one (21) areas.
 - b. Although the Halloween Bash held at the campgrounds was not traditional this year, DeCook planned a Halloween drive-through. The public followed a pre-planned route through the campgrounds to view the decorated campsites. They were asked to vote on their favorite campsite. In addition, participants were given candy at the end of the drive-through instead of the annual trick-or-treating. Many partners were involved to help the Halloween Bash go forward without a hitch.
- A new Stewardship Display has been added at the ELC. There are many things that will be added to this display over time. The display was made possible by a generous donation from MidAmerican Energy.



Looking Ahead...

Looking back at this past year gives MCCB a sense of accomplishment and now looking ahead creates a sense of excitement! Here are a few of the things planned for MCCB's future:

- As mentioned above, there are many things that will be added to the Stewardship Display. Some will be hands-on activities, while others will show how to be a better environmental steward by conserving energy and natural resources.



Stewardship display funded by
MidAmerican Energy

- CRI of William Penn is working on a life-size replica of a mammoth skeleton that will be placed on the center display in the mammoth area of the ELC. William Penn is also working on creating a video highlighting the work at the dig site where the mammoth bones were found.
- Eagle Scout candidate, Will Campbell, is working on an outdoor classroom project. The outdoor classroom will be built within the Caldwell Park area. Campbell is completing this project to fulfill one of the requirements to earn his Eagle Scout badge.
- MCCB is working on improving the Eveland Access Campgrounds by shoring up the riverbank by adding riprap along the bank. This should help alleviate erosion of the riverbank.
- MCCB is planning on updating the bird blind at Maskunky Marsh.
- Naturalist DeCook continues to plan and organize new and creative programs for the public. Please note that due to the continued Covid restrictions, PRE-REGISTRATION is required for ALL programs. MCCB will no longer be able to take walk-ins for any program while these restrictions exist.

This is just a sampling of where MCCB has been and where MCCB is going. Looking back gives us a sense of accomplishment, even amid all the craziness of 2020. Looking ahead gives us a sense of excitement for all the future has to hold for us.



Explore Homeschool Programs

Pre-registrations Required: (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or decook@mahaskacounty.org

The number of participants for each program are limited to current CDC/State of Iowa Covid 19 group size regulations. Participants will be asked to use social distancing and to complete a short questionnaire relating to Covid-19 exposure prior to the start of each program. If you cancel your registration, please inform our office.

Homeschool Science Labs

Monthly programs for your children that will provide hands-on learning experiences and excite them about science and nature!



December 3 & 4 *"Nocturnal Animals & Night Vision"*

January 7 & 8 *"Move Like Animals"*

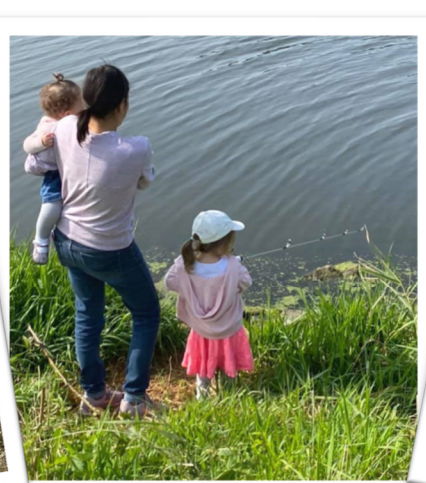
February 4 & 5 *"Inventions from Nature"*

March 4 & 5 *"Amazing Metamorphosis"*

April 1 & 2 *"Become A Weather Wizard"*

May 6 & 7 *"Fishing at White Oak Conservation Area"*

***Choose a day and time to participate:
10:00 – 11:00 am (or) 1:00 – 2:00 pm***



"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn".

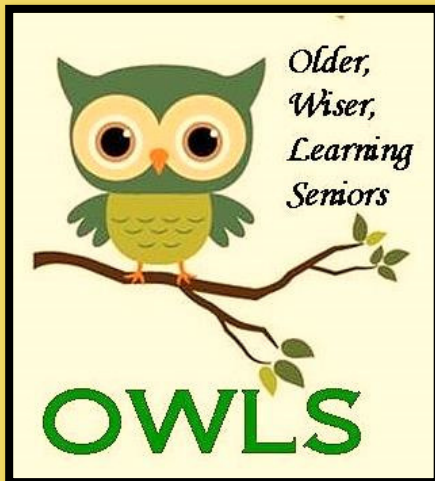
~ Benjamin Franklin ~



Experience Programs for Adults

Pre-registrations Required: (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or decook@mahaskacounty.org

The number of participants for each program are limited to current CDC/State of Iowa Covid 19 group size regulations. Participants will be asked to use social distancing and to complete a short questionnaire relating to Covid-19 exposure prior to the start of each program. If you cancel your registration, please inform our office.



O.W.L.S. (Older, Wiser, Learning Seniors) is a monthly group program. The programs are designed for any age adults with an interest in science, nature, conservation, and historical topics. The programs listed below will be held in the lower level of the Environmental Learning Center.

Pre-registrations are required.

Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or email decook@mahaskacounty.org.



Bison of the Prairie

10:00 – 11:30 am
Friday, December 11, 2020

Join the naturalist, Laura DeCook, as she shares fascinating information about North America's largest land mammal alive today, the American Bison.

Building A Mammoth

10:00 – 11:30 am
Friday, January 15, 2021

In 2021, the Environmental Learning Center will become the home of a life-sized Woolly Mammoth skeleton replica. Presenters Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist, and Marcus Haala, Asst. Professor of Visual Arts & Communication/Communication Chair of CRI at William Penn University, will share information about this extinct ice age animal and how the skeleton will be made at the William Penn University campus.

Science of Weather

10:00 – 11:30 am
Friday, February 12, 2021

The MCCB Naturalist, Laura DeCook, will demonstrate science experiments to explain how weather is formed in Iowa.

Drones

10:00 – 11:30 am
Friday, March 12, 2021
Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park
2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa

Have you ever wondered how drones are flown and why they are used? Join us as Jeffrey Caplan, CRI Video Producer at William Penn University, explains and demonstrates how the local university is using drones.



Investigate

Programs for Kids

Pre-registrations Required: (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or decook@mahaskacounty.org

The number of participants for each program are limited to current CDC/State of Iowa Covid 19 group size regulations. Participants will be asked to use social distancing and to complete a short questionnaire relating to Covid-19 exposure prior to the start of each program. If you cancel your registration, please inform our office.



Knee-High Naturalist programs are for kids ages 5 and younger. The program activities are designed to help foster learning about nature and exploring the outdoors. We ask that adults bringing the children and remain with them during the program. **Pre-registration is required to participate.**

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

at the Environmental Learning Center

December 8	<i>Backbone Bonanza</i>
December 22	<i>Snowflakes</i>
January 5	<i>Weather Wonders</i>
January 19	<i>Move Like Animals</i>
February 2	<i>Big & Little Animals</i>
February 16	<i>Bald Eagles</i>
March 9	<i>Fizzy Experiment</i>
March 23	<i>Animal Adaptations</i>

Nature Story Bracelets

10:00 – 11:00 am

Thursday, December 17

Environmental Learning Center, Lower Level

2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa



Kids (and adults) - dress up as your favorite storybook character and bring some books to read (or read one of ours) at the Environmental Learning Center. Read aloud or to yourselves. Kids will receive a beaded bracelet in a baggie to make as their own storytelling bracelet. (After reading a story together, ask your child to retell the story and after each comment, slide a bracelet bead to the other side of the wrist). It's a new twist to storytelling! **Pre-registration is required, and an adult must accompany children.**

Do Snakes Slither Backwards?

10:00 - 11:00 am

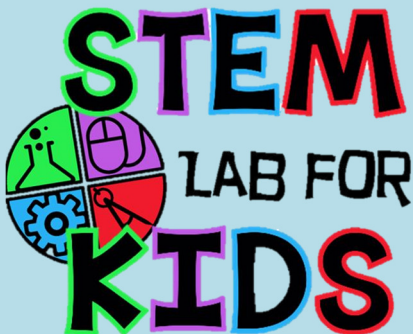
Friday, February 26

Environmental Learning Center, Lower Level

2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa



Inquiring minds want to know...can snakes slither backwards and do they shed their skin inside-out? Come to this program to find out the answers to these questions and more! You will also be able to meet a friendly educational snake that lives at the ELC. **Pre-registration is required, and an adult must accompany children.**



WINTER BREAK FUN & educational science activities for kids ages 8 and older!

"Newton's Laws of Motion"

Tuesday, December 29 (10-11:00 am or 1-2:00 pm)

"Mammoth Investigations"

Wednesday, December 30 (10-11:00 am or 1-2:00 pm)

Pre-registrations are required, and an adult must accompany children.



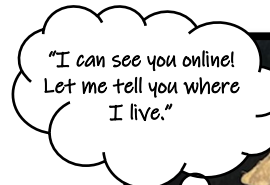
Discover Ideas for Classrooms

2020 has brought some changes to the environmental education programming in Mahaska County. What kind of changes? CREATIVE changes!
Check out how MCCB can help your children and/or students get a little extra in their learning.

Ask the Naturalist!

If your child or student would like to ask the naturalist a question in person about the subject areas of science, social studies, or history, it can be easily done!

If an in-person visit does not work for you, schedule a one-on-one visit with Ranger Laura on Zoom or by phone. Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or email decook@mahaskacounty.org to set up a time. Creative questions will be shared on Facebook to help other people learn!

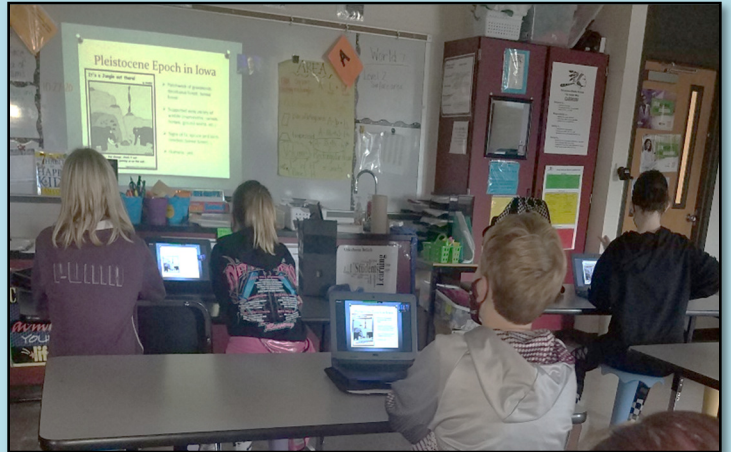


Online Classroom Programs Designed to Align with Curriculum!

If an in-person visit does not work for you and your students, schedule a Zoom visit with the naturalist! Lesson topics will be aligned with your curriculum and even support the guidelines in the Iowa core. Simply schedule sessions and provide the naturalist information to help make the best learning opportunity possible.

Did you know?

- Lessons can be bundled with other subjects such as math, reading, writing, art, etc.
- Lessons can provide a **local connection** to what the students are learning!
- Mahaska County has unique phenomena. Let's learn about them!



Call (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or email decook@mahaskacounty.org.

Schedule a lesson at the Environmental Learning Center!

Appointments can be made to have a science, social studies, history, or bundled lesson with the naturalist in the ELC. Group size must be a minimum of 5 kids and no more than what the Covid-19 guidelines of the CDC/State of Iowa and participants must follow. Each group/family will be asked to social distance from other groups. The ELC has a Discovery Lab with tables and a larger classroom area if more space is needed.

Lessons at the ELC will also align with your curriculum. Just contact the naturalist to inquire about details and schedule the class. There is NO cost to have a program or field trip designed for you!

Call (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or email decook@mahaskacounty.org.





Did You Know?

To all the donors, volunteers, and event participants...THANK YOU!



Jeri Lyn Bares - milkweed seeds

Rathbun Fish Hatchery – fish for the ELC's 1,000-gallon aquarium

We had a fantastic Halloween Bash at Eveland Access! We thank these businesses, organizations, and individuals for their donations:

Mahaska Drug

Whet Your Pallet

Oskaloosa Walmart

Oskaloosa Hy-Vee

Oskaloosa True Value

Oskaloosa Chamber of Commerce

Eddyville Volunteer Fire Department

Public that donated money to purchase candy

Friends of Mahaska Co. Conservation

Mahaska Co. Secondary Roads

Mahaska Co. Sheriff's Department

Mary Jane Sullivan

Peggy Wright

Jennifer Snyder

Adam Anderson

A BIG THANK YOU to all the people that participated in the Halloween Bash event. We enjoyed the decorations and your willingness to adjust with our plans this year due to Covid-19. This event would not have been possible without YOU!

Eveland Access Cabins

1681 – 290th St., Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577

Cabin Rental Prices:

Sunday-Thursday \$60/night

Friday-Saturday & Holidays \$75/night

One week stay \$420

2 night minimum/3 nights on holidays

**For reservations call MCCB at
(641)673-9327 Ext 1.**

The Apple and Birch Cabins are available for rent year-round. To view pictures of the cabins and to find more information on renting:
www.mahaskaconservation.com.





Did You Know?

SHOW OFF YOUR SELFIE SKILLS!

1. Set your phone on this ledge
2. Open your camera app
3. Set your timer
4. Hurry to your spot and say "Cheese!"
5. Share your pics using #THISISIOWA and #MyCountyParks

#THISISIOWA mycountyparks.com Iowa's County Conservation System ICCS



Selfie Station at the Environmental Learning Center

STEP 1 - Set Up



STEP 2 - Pose



STEP 3 - Repeat



Come and take a selfie in front of the ELC's 1,000-gallon freshwater fish aquarium!



WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP US AT THE ELC?

We would greatly appreciate these donations!

- Frozen minnows for fish feeding
- Frozen mice for snake feeding
- Nightcrawlers for salamander and turtle feeding
- Craft supplies
- Archery and bowfishing rests
- Archery arrows with practice tips
- Archery arrow fletching
- Bow rack to hang archery equipment



MCCB Volunteer Training 2021

MCCB policy states that all volunteers must go through an annual volunteer training session each year prior to volunteering.

If you are interested in volunteering in 2021, contact our office for an online or in-person training scheduled for:

Monday, January 11, 2021

10:00 – 11:00 am

1:00 – 2:00 pm

6:00 – 7:00 pm

Call (641)673-9327 ext. 2 or email decook@mahaskacounty.org

Pick a time that works for you!



The Prairie Star

The Prairie Star is the quarterly 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.

MCCB Meeting Dates:

Mahaska County Conservation Board Monthly Meetings

Begins at 7:30 p.m. – Public is welcome to attend
Environmental Learning Center (lower level),
Caldwell Park

December 3, 2020

January 7, 2021

February 4, 2021

March 4, 2021

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



MAHASKA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER HOURS

12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Friday or by appointment.

The Mahaska County Conservation Board meetings are open to the public. Visitors are always welcome and encouraged to attend. The board meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the Environmental Learning Center. Please note: these dates are subject to change.

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.

Mahaska County Conservation Board



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Naturalist

Tommy VanRenterghem

Park Ranger

Jason Ryan

Park Ranger

Dorothy Wedgewood

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.