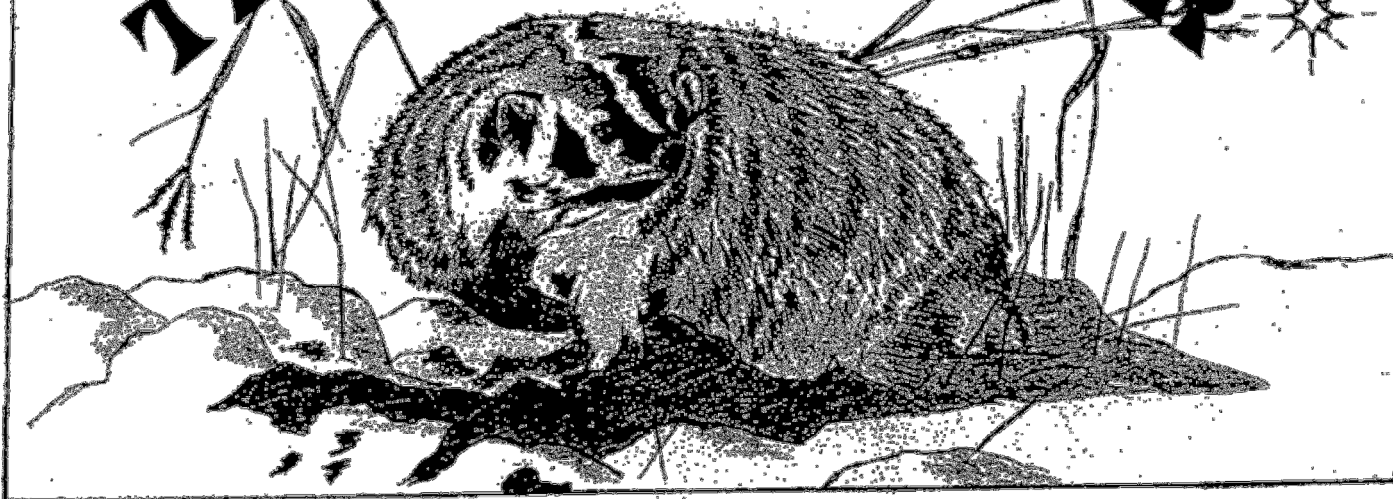


THE PRAIRIE STAR



Volume 31, Issue 1

Spring 2014

Woolly Mammoths Find Permanent Home in Mahaska County

By Laura DeCook
Naturalist

Rural Mahaska County, Iowa is the location of an ice age-old story that is beginning to unfold. The story began in 2010 on the day a landowner discovered a very large femur (upper leg bone) in the bank of a stream. With confirmation of the bone belonging to a large animal that lived during the last ice age, the story has drawn interest from a wide variety of people across the United States. Some of these people have backgrounds in geology, archeology, paleontology and biology. Others are simply local residents eager to learn more

this unique animal. Local and national media have also shared this story. The animal that has created the buzz and is teaching us about the history of our Earth is the Woolly Mammoth.

Recently, the Mahaska County Conservation Board acquired the mammoth bones. The Friends of Mahaska County Conservation received a grant from a local trust and purchased the rights to the bones from the landowner. They then gifted the bones to the MCCB. Bones found at the site will be used in education programs and placed on display at the Mahaska County Conservation Board's Environmental Learning Center that will be built at Caldwell Park, just east of Oskaloosa.



Woolly Mammoth femur held by MCCB Naturalist, Laura DeCook

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What is a Woolly Mammoth?

The Late Pleistocene Epoch (2.6 million to 10,000 years ago) was a time period of enormous animals such as Woolly Mammoths, Giant Sloths and Saber Toothed Tigers. Where Mahaska County is located today, the landscape would have likely been a mixture or patchwork of Boreal forests, hardwood forests, grasslands, streams and rivers. Seasonal temperatures were likely colder than they are now and the winter seasons lasted longer.

Woolly Mammoths were large, hairy, elephant-looking animals that weighed 6-8 tons and stood 10-12 feet at the shoulder. They must have been an impressive sight as they

(Continued on page 2)



A Woolly Mammoth

lumbered along searching for food in the snow. Their tusks grew as long as 16 feet in length and were likely used as giant shovels to clear the snow from the ground and expose edible vegetation. Their diet consisted of grasses that they pulled out of the ground and leaves pulled off trees and bushes with their elephant-like trunks.

They chewed their food with four giant molars found inside their mouths. These mammoths were covered with four inches of fat; as well as two layers of fur to keep them insulated and warm. The outer layer of fur grew to be nearly three feet long and ranged in color from blonde to dark brown.

The undercoat was a soft "wool" texture.

So far, three Woolly Mammoths have been found at the Mahaska County site. This has been confirmed by Chris Widga, Assistant Curator of Geology and mammoth expert at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Widga was able to distinguish the species of mammoth by looking at the teeth found at the dig site.

What are we learning from digging up mammoth bones?

Finding Woolly Mammoth bones is the icing on top of the cake for the people involved at the dig site. So what is the cake? It is learning what Mahaska County would have looked like over 10,000 years ago. By looking at the layers of clay, sand, silt, large rocks and water seeping from the ground, geologists can see where a glacial spring had likely erupted from the ground. The spring would have drawn mammoths, as well as other animals, to the area to drink water. The soil tests have shown evidence of fir, spruce and larch trees, all found in a boreal forest. A boreal forest in Iowa? Many discoveries have fascinated diggers at the site.

There are many questions still unanswered. How did the mammoths die? Is there evidence of more plants and animals yet to be discovered? Did humans live in this area?

In order to find answers, volunteers and scientists will continue digging. For more information, contact the Mahaska County Conservation Board at (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacounty.org.

Welcome to the Mahaska County Conservation Board

Dorothy Wedgewood
Administrative Assistant

Dorothy Wedgewood was recently hired as the Mahaska County Conservation Board's new Administrative Assistant. She lives in Deep River, Iowa and grew up on a farm seven miles west of Montezuma. Dorothy graduated from Indian Hills with dual A.A. and A.A.S. degrees in the field of Digital Forensics.

Dorothy was asked to share her thoughts on a few questions:

What do you like to do in your free time?

"My favorite things to do in my free time are to read, ride horses, star gaze and go on walks. And I can't pass up hunting for mushrooms in the spring! There is something mind-clearing about being outdoors, walking and listening to the sounds of nature."

Who is/was your greatest inspiration for nature, outdoors and the environment?

"It would have to be my parents. It was challenging for my mom and dad to provide for a family of eight children, but they taught us how to utilize the things we had available. They taught us the basic cycle of living. We tended our acres to provide food for the chickens, milk cows, pigs, etc. In turn, those animals provided milk, eggs and meat for us. We had a huge garden. We tended the garden daily and canned, froze or stored everything in the garden to sustain us."

In your opinion, why should people care about the environment?

"I think my answer to this is similar to why my parents were an inspiration to me. My parents instilled in me the logic that if we take care of our environment, it will in turn take care of us. You can't keep taking from the land, wildlife, trees, etc. and never give back to them because these resources will eventually not be able to sustain you anymore. It will be used up and then where will we be?"



Nature Notes

Eastern Wild Turkey

(*Meleagris gallopavo*)

By Laura DeCook, Naturalist



The gobble of the Eastern Wild Turkey can be thought of as an early morning wake up call to get us up and around to enjoy a spring day. Out in the timber just before the sun peaks over the horizon, whippoorwills make the first quiet, soothing calls. Then, while perched high in a big tree, male turkeys erupt with loud gobbles that echo throughout the timber and across valleys. At this point, wildlife really begins to stir and start their daily activities when this happens. As the sun begins to rise higher and shine through the trees, the turkeys fly to the ground and take charge of their daily needs...feeding and breeding.

The opportunity to see, hear and hunt wild turkeys in Iowa today is due to the efforts of conservationists. Because of uncontrolled hunting and habitat loss by Iowa's early settlers, the wild turkey population dramatically declined by the early 1900's. The last verified sighting of a wild turkey was in Lucas County in 1910. Initially, releasing pen-raised turkeys between 1920-1938 was tried, but that proved unsuccessful. The Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 helped turned things around for the wild turkey in Iowa. An excise tax was placed on firearms and ammunition and thus provided money for wildlife agencies and the National Wild Turkey Federation to use rocket nets to trap, transfer and release wild turkeys in suitable habitats. The releasing in Iowa was initially done with the Rio Grande and Merriam subspecies. Both subspecies failed to establish thriving populations. Then in 1966, the Eastern subspecies was released into the Shame State Forest in southeast Iowa. The reproduction and survival rate of these turkeys was excellent and the flock size reached 400-500 turkeys by 1974. From only 30,000 wild turkeys in the early 1900s to nearly 6.4 million today, the wild turkey has made an awesome comeback.

If you hike or hunt in the woods this spring, set your alarm to go out and listen for the gobble of the wild turkey. It will surely set your spring morning off to a good start!



Spring Public Programs



Looking for a healthy outdoor activity?
Look for this symbol throughout the
list of upcoming public programs.

Online Hunter Ed Field Day Class

Wednesday, April 9
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area



Participants must pre-register and complete the online course prior to the start of the field day class. The field day is free of charge, but space is limited. Anyone born after January 1st, 1972 must attend a Hunter Education course before they are allowed to purchase an Iowa hunting license. Any person who is 11 years old or older is eligible to attend the class. *To pre-register and take the course, go online to www.iowadnr.gov.*

Night Prairie Burn

Friday, April 11
7:30 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area



If you think a prairie fire is impressive, then you should see one at night! Come out and see a prescribed burn on the Russell Wildlife Area property. You will learn about prairie management techniques and how to safely conduct a burn on your own prairie or CRP acres. *All ages are welcome. NOTE: This program may be cancelled if conditions are too wet or too windy to burn. Call (641)673-9327 if the weather is questionable.*

**Campgrounds at Eveland Access
will open for camping on April 25th!
Gates will open at 12:00 p.m.**

Environmental Learning Center Public Information Meeting

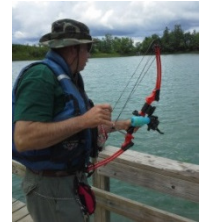
Monday, April 28
7:00 p.m.
ISU Extension Office, Oskaloosa



The public is invited to attend an informational meeting about the Environmental Center that MCCB will build at Caldwell Park. MCCB and the Friends of Mahaska County Conservation will provide a presentation about this building project and answer questions.

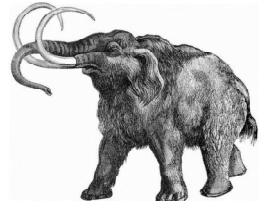
Basics of Bowfishing

Saturday, May 10
10:00 a.m.
Russell Wildlife Area
(Pond 1 – on 200th St.)



Bowfishing is becoming a very popular sport and it's a good way to help rid Iowa's waters of invasive fish species. If you would like to shoot a bowfishing bow and learn more about this sport, then come to this event. Participants will also be able to shoot at targets on the water. Equipment will be provided. *Please pre-register by calling MCCB at (641)673-9327.*

Mammoths of Mahaska County



Friday, May 23
6:30 p.m.
Eveland Access Campground Shelter

Come out to the shelter at Eveland Access Campground to learn about the mammoths that roamed Mahaska County around 13,000 years ago. Naturalist, Laura DeCook will explain the fascinating story of what has been discovered at the dig site and show some of the bones that have been found. The story is not just about mammoths, but of what Mahaska County's landscape would have looked like long ago. *The public and campground visitors are welcome to attend this program!*

Campground Movie Night

Saturday, May 24
9:00 p.m. (begins at dark)
Eveland Access Campground



Want something fun and relaxing to do on Memorial Day weekend? Campers, campground visitors and the public are welcome to come out and watch a *free* movie at the Eveland Access Campground. A family-oriented movie will begin at dark. Bring a lawn chair and blanket and your family to enjoy the show. Eveland Access is located 4 miles south of Beacon, IA on Highway T39.

Spring Public Programs

Kids' Adventure Day - A New Summer Break Kick-off Event!

Friday, May 30
Noon – 4:00 p.m.
Russell Wildlife Area



Hey kids, summer break has just begun! Come out to the Russell Wildlife Area and spend the afternoon and have some fun! We will go fishing, hiking, play games and more. What a great way to start your summer break! *Pre-register by calling MCCB at (641)673-9327.*

Catfish Camp

Tuesday, June 10
9:00 a.m. - Noon
Russell Wildlife Area



Come out and spend the morning learning about Iowa's catfish. You will learn about the different catfish species and how they live in the rivers, lakes and ponds. We will make our own catfish bait and go fishing on this morning, too! *All ages are welcome.*

Kids' Fishing Day

Saturday, June 14
9:00 a.m. - Noon
Russell Wildlife Area



Just for kids! Come out to the Russell Wildlife Area ponds for a Kids' Fishing Day. Start the morning event by taking your kids through the activity stations. These stations will help kids to learn about fish and fishing. Then, we will hike to a pond to go fishing. Trophies will be given to the largest and smallest fish caught at this event. Bring your own pole or borrow one from MCCB. Bait will be provided. Please register at the conservation center when you arrive.

Keep a list of upcoming spring programs on your cell phone by scanning this QR code!

Simply select a QR app (free online) and scan your phone over the QR code. You will immediately see a complete list of upcoming programs with MCCB! Save this list and you will have the dates and times at your fingertips.



Summer Day Camps for Kids!

Pre-register by calling MCCB at (641)673-9327.



June 17-19 Discovery Day Camp

Ages 5 and younger

10:00 a.m. – Noon

\$10.00 per camper

Parents are encouraged to attend.

Kids will participate in indoor and outdoor activities to explore dirt and the critters that live underground.

June 24 - 26 Jr. Naturalist Day Camp

Ages 6-12

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

\$20.00 per camper

Campers will learn about Iowa's history from the Devonian, Pennsylvanian and Quarternary Periods. We will have lots of fun activities with fossils, mammoths, and much more!

June 30 – July 1 Conservation Camp

Must have completed 3rd – 8th grade

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

\$20.00 per camper

Camp size is limited to 24 kids.

*This camp will be coordinated with the Mahaska County Extension Office. Take in the world around you at this fun, 2-day camp. Day one will be at the Extension office and day two will be at the Russell Wildlife Area. Day one will include teambuilding and water conservation activities and day two will include hiking, fishing, canoeing, and lots more! Participants will need to bring their own lunches and snacks will be provided each day. **Pre-register with the Extension office by calling (641)673-5841.***

July 9-11 Challenge Camp

Ages 10 and older

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

\$20.00 per camper

Camp size is limited to 15 kids.

Campers will experience many outdoor activities: canoeing, fishing, hiking, archery and campfire cooking.

August 5 Explore the Outdoors

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

For more information and to sign up, contact the YMCA at (641)673-8411.

This camp will be coordinated with the Mahaska County YMCA's week-long day "Explore the Outdoors" day camps. On this day, campers will experience many outdoor activities: animal tracking, hiking, bowfishing, orienteering and more!

Friends of Mahaska County Conservation



FMCC is a non-profit organization created in 2011 with the purpose of raising money for a new Environmental Learning Center in Mahaska County. The Friends board consists of 10 board members who are committed to the betterment of outdoor education in our community. The Environmental Learning Center will be located at Caldwell Park, just East of Oskaloosa, on Highway 92.



Look for more information about the Friends of Mahaska County Conservation on their Facebook page and at their website www.friendsofmccb.weebly.com!

Winter Snapshots with MCCB



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.

The Prairie Star

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

"Spring is work
going on with
joyful
enthusiasm."

~ John Muir, *The
Wilderness World
of John Muir*



Cabins at Eveland Access

Anytime of the year can be camping season in MCCB's cabins! The Apple and Birch Cabins at the Eveland Access are available for rent year-round. They are a great place for a family get-together, to rest up after a day of fishing on the river or to relax after a busy week. The cabins feature 952 square feet of living space and can sleep up to 10 people.

Rental rates are \$65/night (Fri-Sat), \$50/night (Sun—Thurs), and \$350 per week. To view pictures of the cabins go to:

www.mahaskaconservation.com

For reservations call the MCCB at (641)673-9327.

Or Eveland Access Cabins on Facebook

Canoe & Kayak Rentals!

Weekday use is \$15 (per day)

Weekend use is \$25 (Friday pm to Monday am)

Three-day Holiday use is \$35 (per weekend)

Weekly use is \$50 (Friday pm to Friday am)



Canoe and kayak rentals include life vests and paddles. Trailers are also available for use. Call (641)673-9372 for reservations.

MCCB CALENDAR NOTES:

April 3	Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
April 21	Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
May 1	Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
May 19	Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
June 12	Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area
June 23	Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area

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





COUNTY CONSERVATION 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 Conservation Center. Please note: these dates are subject to change.

A large-type version of this newsletter is available on request.

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

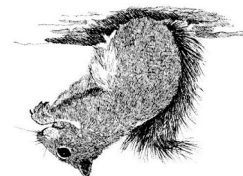
Peggy Wright , New Sharon	Chairperson
Curt Jager , Eddyville	Vice Chairperson
Barry Versteegh , Cedar	Secretary
Linda Fox , Rose Hill	Member
Leroy Nugteren , Leighton	Member

STAFF

Dave Sedivec	Director
Laura DeCook	Naturalist
Cole Nilson	Operations Coordinator
Dorothy Wedgewood	Administrative Assistant
Kyle Soderblom	Summer Park Ranger

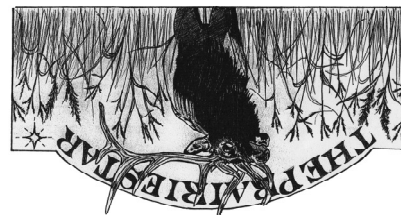


SPRING 2014



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Mahaska County Conservation Board



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