



Volume 39, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2022

Disc Golf at Caldwell Park

By Laura DeCook
Naturalist

Winding through the woods and prairies behind the Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park is a new 18-hole disc golf course. This course was made possible by local disc golfers, TJ Brom and his family, along with the Oskaloosa Disc Golf Club. The club worked with the Mahaska County Conservation Board to fund and install the course. The Disc Golf Club is enthusiastic about playing on the course, hosting tournaments and educating the public about disc golf. Their hope is that people of all ages come to play disc golf on the course. This course is the third one in Oskaloosa. The others are located at Edmundson Park and University Park.



*TJ Brom at the disc golf course
in Caldwell Park.*

If you are interested in learning more about disc golf, join MCCB and the Oskaloosa Disc Golf Club at a public program on the evening of Friday, June 24th. There will also be a day camp session on disc golf for kids ages 11 and older during this summer's Challenge Camp. For more information, go to pages 6 and 8 of this newsletter.

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Did You Know?

Eveland Access Cabins

1681 – 290th 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
or call MCCB at (641)673-9327.



EVELAND ACCESS CAMPGROUND OPENS FOR THE SEASON

12:00 pm
Friday, April 22, 2022



\$15.00 per night
No reservations.

**Camping rules & regulations are
found online at www.mahaskaconservation.com.**

*To all the donors, volunteers, &
event participants...*

THANK YOU!

Jarvis Construction – display donation

Oskaloosa Glass – display donation

Kool Gutter – display donation

RP Lumber – display donation

Andy McGuire/George Daily Auditorium - Presenter

Mary Jane Sullivan – program volunteer

Judy Groenendyk – ELC housekeeping volunteer



TJ Brom and his family were
awarded the "Commitment to
Conservation Award" at this year's
Volunteer Appreciation Dinner for
all their work on the disc golf course.



Nature Notes

American Woodcock

Scolopax minor

by Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist



Spring is here and many birds are beginning their spring ceremonies to find a mate. The American Woodcock is one of these birds. Woodcocks, also known by other names such as Timberdoodles, Bog Snipes, and Labrador Twisters are members of the sandpiper family, which include the common snipe, plovers and killdeer. The woodcock is a rather odd-looking bird with its brown, black and buff-mottled plumage. Their large eyes are set far back on its head, and they have a long bill. The males and females are similar in appearance, with females being a little larger and having a slightly longer bill.

Woodcocks are migratory game birds. In Iowa, we generally do not see them often, but they are not as uncommon as you might think. Most woodcocks that we encounter here in Iowa are during the spring and fall seasons. They are either passing through to more southern wintering grounds in the fall or making their way back to more northerly nesting grounds in the spring. However, some nesting does occur in Iowa.

Woodcocks are often solitary, not forming into flocks or coveys like quail. They are active during the daylight and, periodically, in the nighttime hours. During the daytime, they are usually found in moist, young forests with thick understory. They use their long, flexible-tipped bill to probe for the earthworms which make up the bulk of their diet. They also consume various insect larvae, ants, crickets, and beetles. During the night, they use nearby fields and timber openings to roost, feed and mate.

The best month of the year to have an opportunity to get a glimpse of a Timberdoodle is in April. During this time of year, around dawn and dusk, and sometimes throughout the night, males will frequent the fields and openings near moist woodland habitat to perform courtship displays. During the display, the male begins making a "peent" sound on the ground for about a minute. This is followed by him spiraling 80 to several hundred feet above ground while creating a twittering sound with his wings. He then descends, making a chirping sound, and lands at the point of takeoff. The sequence is then repeated, and the entire display may last up to 45 minutes.

Most people have access to woodcock habitat on private or public grounds. If you are unfamiliar with this bird or have never witnessed its courtship display, it is worth the effort go out to the woods to watch and listen. The MCCB has a taxidermy woodcock on display in the ELC. Stop by if you would like to see it up close.



Experience

Programs for Adults



O.W.L.S.

Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls

Pre-registrations are needed.

Call MCCC at (641)673-9327 or
email decook@mahaskacountyia.gov.

BRING A LUNCH AND A FRIEND!

Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Friday, April 8, 2022

Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park

Come and learn about one of Mahaska County's natural treasures as Laura DeCook, MCCC Naturalist, shares information about the Eddyville Sand Dunes Prairie.

Picnic At A Park

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Friday, May 27, 2022

Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park

Bring your lunch and meet us for a picnic at Quercus Wilderness Area located south of Oskaloosa at 3139 Kent Ave. Picnic tables and restrooms are on site. If interested, we can take a short walk in the woods to look for spring flowers.

Fire Safety in Your Home

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Friday, June 17, 2022

Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park

The Oskaloosa Fire Department will come and share information on how to keep you safe in your home and prevent a house fire. They will also explain what to do if you do have a fire. Home safety is important, so let's hear from the experts!

Fishing Basics

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Friday, July 15, 2022

Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park

Would you like to learn how to cast a fishing pole or tie a knot on a hook? Have you ever wondered what kind of fish was caught or what you should bring to go fishing? Join us to learn new skills about fishing or brush up on some old skills. No worms will be present during this program - all casting will be done on land!

Coffee Club at the ELC



9:00-10:00 am

Note the time change!

Friday, April 1st

Friday, May 13th

Friday, June 3rd

Friday, July 1st

Friday, August 12th

Join us at the "Coffee Club" for coffee, refreshments and fellowship!

Enjoy the coffee, home-baked snacks and company. We have a great time visiting and learning about fascinating things in nature and with MCCC. Bring a cup and a friend!

Donations will be 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. There are many great displays to see in the ELC!





Investigate

Programs for Kids

Pre-registrations Required: (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacountyia.gov



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.

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

at the Environmental Learning Center

April 5 **I-Spy Hike**
June 7, 8, 9 **Day Camps** (see pg. 5)
July 12 **Frogs & Toads**



Homeschool Science Labs



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

April 7, 2022

“Animal Adaptations”
Environmental Learning Center
10:00-11:00 am or 1:00-2:00 pm
Registrations are needed.

May 4, 2022

“Fishing”
Russell Wildlife Area
10:00 am – Noon

Registrations are needed.

*Last one of
the school
year!*

- We will meet at the shelter house
- Fishing poles and bait provided (you may bring your own)
- Adults that bring the children need to remain with them during the program
- Idea: Bring a picnic lunch and take a hike on the paths around the park before or after the program!

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn”.

~ Benjamin Franklin ~



Summer Day Camps

To sign up for any day camp, contact the Mahaska County Conservation Board by calling (641)673-9327 or email decook@mahaskacountyia.gov.

- Children attending any camp must have an adult remain with them.
- Cost is \$10.00 per day/per child. Pay by cash or check to MCCB. (adult is free)
- Payment is due by the day of camp.
- Select one or more days of camp – it's up to you!
- Bring a snack and water bottle to camp each day.
- Camp details will be sent to all families that sign up.

Knee-High Naturalist Camp "Let's Go Outdoors!"

June 7-9, 2022

10:00 am – 12:00 pm (each day) at Environmental Learning Center or Russell Wildlife Area

\$10.00 per day/per child (adult is free)

Ages: 5 & younger



Tuesday, June 7:

"Let's Go Camping" - campsite at ELC

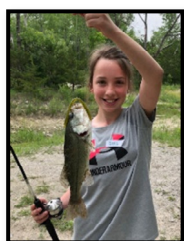
Wednesday, June 8:

"Let's Go Fishing" - fishing at Russell Wildlife Area, equipment provided

Thursday, June 9:

"Let's Go On A Bug Hunt" - insect activities and hike at ELC

Jr. Naturalist Camp "Explore Mahaska County"



June 21-23, 2022

9:00 am – 12:00 pm (each day) at various county parks

\$10.00 per day/per child (adult is free)

Ages: 6-10

Tuesday, June 21:

"Fishing Adventures" at Russell Wildlife Area

Wednesday, June 22:

"Great Fossil Hunt" at Russell Wildlife Area

Thursday, June 23:

"Hiking Adventures" at Cedar Bluffs State Preserve

Challenge Camp "Ultimate Outdoor Adventures"



June 28-30, 2022

9:00 am – 12:00 pm (each day) at various county parks

\$10.00 per day/per child (adult is free)

Ages: 11 & older

Tuesday, June 28:

"Disc Golf" at Environmental Learning Center

Wednesday, June 29:

"Canoeing" at Russell Wildlife Area

Thursday, June 30:

"Camping Basics" at Eveland Access Campground



Discover

Programs for All Ages

Fossil Dig

1:00 -2:00 pm

Friday, April 15, 2022

Russell Wildlife Area

2254 – 200th St., New Sharon, IA



Bring the family out to the Russell Wildlife Area and take a hike with the naturalist to search for fossils of plants and animals that lived in a shallow sea across Iowa nearly 300 million years ago. You will find fossils such as crinoids, brachiopods and even trilobites. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes and clothes that can get dirty! This event is for all ages.

Please sign up by contacting MCCB at (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacountyia.gov. Registration deadline is April 14th.

Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie Clean Up Day

4:00 -7:00 pm

Saturday, April 23, 2022

Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie

901 N. Merino, Eddyville, IA



The Mahaska County Conservation Board and Mahaska County Pheasants Forever are hosting a clean-up day at the Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie as part of a habitat improvement project. This clean-up will include picking up litter, clearing out invasive species, and tree removal.

If you would like to help, contact MCCB at (641)673-9327. More details will be provided when you sign up.



Eveland Access Summerfest



Saturday, June 4, 2022
1:00 – 8:00 pm

The Mahaska County Conservation Board and Muse Music Store is hosting the 3rd annual summertime festival called Eveland Access Summerfest to celebrate the summer! This will be a fun day packed with FREE LIVE MUSIC, yard games, Dutch oven cooking demonstrations and food vendors right next to the Des Moines River. For more details, go to MCCB's Facebook page or website www.mahaskaconservation.com.

Here are a few highlights:

- All activities will be located by the campground shelter house.
- Live music bands play all day long – including karaoke!
- Yard games for the whole family.
- Bring your lawn chairs.
- Afternoon Dutch oven cooking Demos and sampling.
- Food on site: kettle corn, free SnoBiz samples, and more.
- Camping available \$15/night (no reservations).



The Eveland Access Campground is located at 2890 Galeston, Ave., Oskaloosa, which is 4 miles south of Beacon on T39 adjacent to the Des Moines River. For more information, call the MCCB at (641)673-9327.



Discover

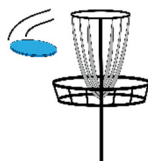
Programs for All Ages



Information is found on Page 6!

Disc Golf

6:00 – 7:00 pm
Friday, June 24, 2022
Environmental Learning Center
2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, IA



Disc golf is a quickly growing outdoor sport for all ages. Bring your family and friends to the ELC to learn how to play disc golf from the Oskaloosa Disc Golf Club. We will meet in the back parking lot of the ELC and utilize the new disc golf course at Caldwell Park.

Please sign up by contacting MCCB at (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacountyia.gov. Registration deadline is June 23rd.

Bowfishing Basics

6:30-7:30 pm
Thursday, July 14, 2022
Environmental Learning Center
2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, IA



Bowfishing is a popular sport right now. It allows you to combine your love for archery and fishing. Participants of all ages can learn how to shoot a bow, reel in fish, what kinds of fish to shoot and how to identify them at this program. Participants will be able to practice shooting on land at targets and see a bowfishing boat up close. All bowfishing equipment will be provided.

Please sign up by contacting MCCB at (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacountyia.gov. Registration deadline is July 13th.

Teachers' Back to School Nature Retreat



9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Wednesday, August 10, 2022
Environmental Learning Center
2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa

Teachers in Mahaska County and surrounding areas are invited to come to the ELC to have fun and get energized at a FREE nature retreat before the 2022-23 school year begins. We will spend the day doing activities in nature at the ELC and at Russell Wildlife Area. All supplies for activities will be provided! This day will also include a friendly competition between schools and grade levels for a trophy prize worth sporting in your classroom! Bring a teacher or paraeducator that works with you in your school and grade level to compete as a pair against others and score the most points to win the award. All teachers will be able to have fun!

Event Activities:

Fishing
Archery
Fossil Digging
Nature Hike
Canoeing
ELC Tour and more!

Please sign up by contacting MCCB at (641)673-9327 or decook@mahaskacountyia.gov. Registration deadline is August 5th.



What's New

At the ELC

The Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park offers many exhibits, live animals (including a 1,000-gallon fish aquarium with native Iowa fish), and activities for you and your family to experience while you visit. The ELC is open weekday afternoons from 12:30 – 4:30 pm. New displays and activities are added periodically. Here is a look at some new things to see and some things that are in the works!



This handmade Bald Eagle nest will soon be on display outside the ELC between the building and the bike trail. It has been donated in memory of former Eagle Scout, John Aaron Mertz.



William Penn University Student, Nolan Krouch, created a video about the Woolly mammoth dig and it is now available to view. It is located on the south wall near the mammoth bone dig table.



Stop by and welcome two new educational box turtles. They are 3-Toed box turtles that survived the recent tornado by Chariton, IA that destroyed the nature center they had lived in. They will live at the ELC until their new home is rebuilt.



MidAmerican Energy helped purchase this Stewardship Display located in the center of the upper-level exhibit area. The display is currently in the final phase of construction. We thank these businesses for their donations to help make this display: MidAmerican Energy, Jarvis Construction, Oskaloosa Glass, Kool Gutter, and RP Lumber.



This 10 ft. long Big Bluestem prairie grass root will soon be on display in the stairwell of the ELC. You can now see it hanging in the Discovery Lab.

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.



MAHASKA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER HOURS

12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Friday or by appointment.

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.



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

April 7, 2022

May 5, 2022

June 2, 2022

July 7, 2022

August 4, 2022

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

Mahaska County Conservation Board

Peggy Wright , New Sharon	Chairperson
Willie Van Weelden , Oskaloosa	Vice-Chairperson
Steve Dixon , Oskaloosa	Secretary
Curt Jager , Eddyville	Member
Linda Fox , Rose Hill	Member

STAFF

Dave Sedivec	Director
Laura DeCook	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.