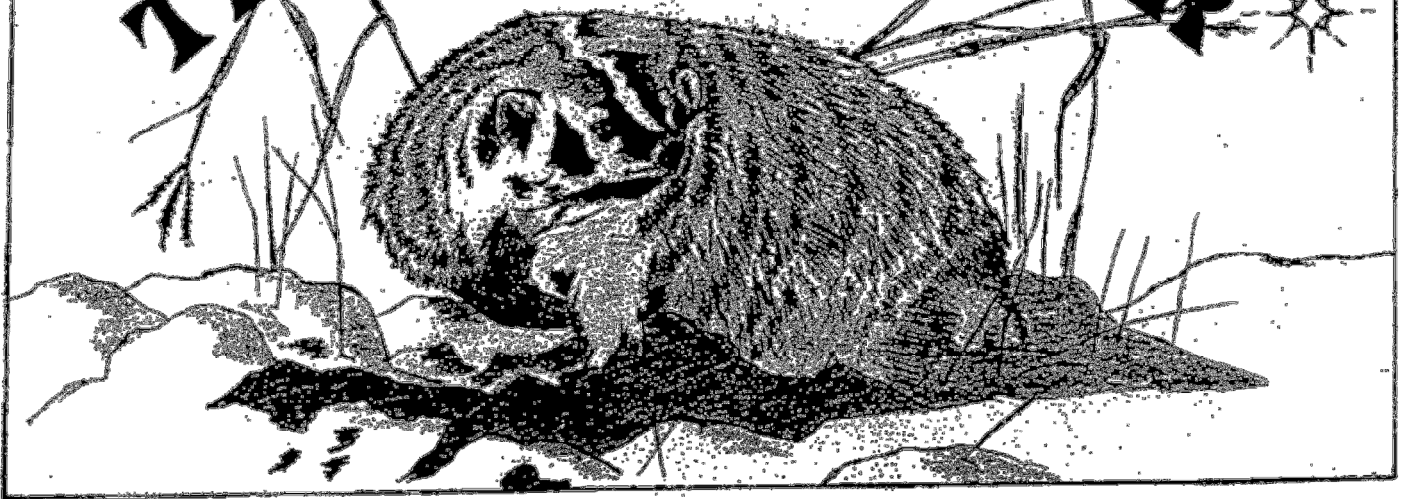


# THE PRAIRIE STAR



Volume 31, Issue 2

Summer 2014

## Fossils Provide a Fun Family Activity at Russell Wildlife Area

By Laura DeCook  
Naturalist

The Russell Wildlife Area was once a limestone gravel quarry and crushing operation. Large equipment dug through hundreds of feet of soil and rock to get to the limestone layers. The large chunks of limestone were then hauled out and crushed to various sizes for construction and to cover roads. Today, this area has been transformed into a nature area for the public with walking trails and five ponds that are great for fishing and canoeing. Another park feature found scattered throughout the area are dull, gray limestone mounds that contain fossils of plants, animals and insects that lived nearly 325 million years ago.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 MCCB's Staff Update
- 3 Nature Notes: Bobwhite Quail
- 4-5 Summer Public Programs & Events
- 6 Friends of Mahaska County Conservation, Spring & Summer Program Photos
- 7 Thank You's, Watercraft Rentals, MCCB Calendar
- 8 MCCB Conservation Board Members & Staff

What would this area have looked like before all these creatures were fossilized? You would have seen a warm, shallow sea full of coral reefs, clam beds and bryozoans swimming like waving seaweed. Trilobites would have scurried across the sea floor scavenging bits of food and marine snails crawled slowly across the floor. Flower-like crinoids would have swayed in the currents.

After these plants and animals died, their soft body parts decayed and their remains or impressions of their remains were turned to stone over millions of years.

Thousands of children and adults have scoured the fossil beds at the Russell Wildlife Area and have taken home some amazing fossils. Hiking the trails and finding fossils is a fun activity for the entire family. MCCB wants to make it easy and educational by providing fossil hunters an "Adventure Backpack" full fossil hunting tools, identification charts and a map to help you locate the fossil mounds. These backpacks can be checked out for free on a daily basis in the conservation center.

Some of the most common fossils found at the Russell Wildlife Area are brachiopods, crinoid stems, solitary horn corals and various species of bryozoans. Come on out and find some fossils!



A young fossil explorer shows off her brachiopod fossil.

## Cole Nilson – Recovery Pursuit



Keep on hunting and fishing, Cole!

Cole Nilson, MCCB's former Operations Supervisor, broke his C6 vertebrae doing a polar plunge to raise money for a young boy with cancer. Cole has been recovering at the Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln, NE. The **Cole Nilson - Recovery Pursuit** Facebook page has been dedicated to Cole. Check this site for information and updates on Cole and his road to recovery.

## Eveland Access Luxury Cabins

An affordable and relaxing place to stay!



\$65/night (Friday-Saturday)  
\$50/night (Sunday-Thursday)  
\$350 per week

Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 to make your reservations!

## Welcome to the Mahaska County Conservation Board



(Left to right) Kyle Soderblom, Amber Bates, Jason Ryan and Tommy Van Renterghem



James Upton works part-time with MCCB through the Iowa Workforce Development program.

A few new faces will be seen at the Mahaska County parks this summer. Jason Ryan and Tommy Van Renterghem are MCCB's new Conservation Technicians. Kyle Soderblom returns as the Summer Park Ranger and Amber Bates returns as a Musco Intern.

# Nature Notes

## Bobwhite Quail

(*Colinus virginianus*)

By Laura DeCook, Naturalist



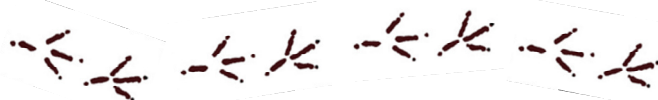
The bobwhite quail is a ground-nesting bird found throughout southern Iowa that weighs from five to seven, and occasionally nine ounces. During the spring and summer seasons, these birds can be seen as a single bird by itself, in pairs and in family groups. With the arrival of fall, frost and reduced summer vegetation, the quail enter their fall shuffle. At this time, they intermingle in large groups, mixing and reorganizing into coveys of from eight to twenty birds that shift to areas of heavier winter cover. The coveys remain fairly intact during the winter.

As the weather becomes warmer during March and April, the quail covey bonds weaken and the birds pair up in preparation for nesting. The nesting season is from April through September, normally becoming widespread in May. The clutch, averaging 15 small white eggs, is laid in a bowl-shaped, grass-roofed nest. Quail prefer nesting cover such as dead grass, and nests are seldom far from an opening or the edge of cover.

Clutch losses from predation and from nest desertion (often caused by heavy rain or severe drought) run high: nesting failures are common. But quail are prolific egg layers, and if the clutch is repeatedly destroyed or if the hens are forced to leave the nest, many will often rebuild their nest several times. Second broods may sometimes be produced by successful early-nesting hens.

Normal egg incubation takes 23 days; then the chicks hatch and are ready to leave the nest. Incubation is commonly done by the hens, but the males may assist. Young quail are brooded and cared for by both parents until well grown. Chick mortality is high. Often half or more of the brood is lost. Both sexes look alike until the age of ten weeks, when they assume the distinguishing head and throat coloring of adult bird – white for males, orange for females.

Few quail live beyond 14 months, and many hens fail to survive long enough to reproduce. With over 80% of the annual population failing to carry over to the next year, an annual quail crop cannot be stock-piled: good production and survival of the young must occur annually if high quail numbers are to result each fall. This depends on a combination of favorable weather *and* favorable habitat.



# Summer Public Programs



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

## Iowa Bowfishing Association's Southern Iowa Carpfest

Saturday, July 26  
8:00 am – 6:00 pm  
Registration begins at 6:30 am  
Mandatory meeting for participants at 7:30 am  
Eveland Access Campground



Bowfishing at its greatest – come participate in or watch a bowfishing tournament taking place on Lake Red Rock and on the Des Moines River from the Ottumwa Hydro Dam to Lake Red Rock. Proceeds from this event will go to the Veterans Airlift Command for wounded soldiers. Fish weigh-ins will be held at 6:00 pm at Eveland Access. For more information, go to Iowa Bowfishing Association on Facebook or [www.bowfishiowa.com](http://www.bowfishiowa.com).

## Pheasants Forever Young Guns

Saturday, July 26  
9:00 am - Noon  
Russell Wildlife Area Shooting Range



Mahaska County's Pheasants Forever chapter is hosting a special event for youth and families which have an interest in learning more about conservation, shooting sports and outdoor skills. There will be a variety of outdoor activities such as air rifles, .22 rifles and shotgun shooting set up for children ranging from 6 and up, but this is a family event, where all are welcome! *This event will be held rain or shine. For questions, contact Wyndell Campbell at (641)673-4462.*

**Young Guns will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of every month. Mark these dates on your calendar!**

**July 26  
August 23  
September 27**

## Dog Hollow Rendezvous 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual

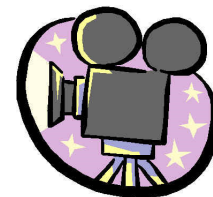
August 1-3  
Caldwell Park, just east of  
Oskaloosa on Hwy. 92



Take a walk back in time to when Oskaloosa was just being formed as a town. This 1840's encampment will feature period dress, activities and hospitality. There will be vendors, games, demonstrations and fun for the whole family! This free event is hosted by the Timberwolves Rendezvousers and MCCB. *For more information, contact Jim Walker (641)295-0612 or Jane Mathes (319)270-3948.*

## Movie on the Barn

Saturday, August 2  
9:00 p.m. (begins at dark)  
Caldwell Park



Bring your family and friends to view another outdoor movie at Caldwell Park! The Friends of Mahaska County Conservation and MCCB are hosting this event at the future location of the Environmental Learning Center in Caldwell Park. Bring a blanket or lawn chair then sit back and enjoy the show. Popcorn and beverages will be available for purchase. *Attending this event is free and is for all ages. Donations are appreciated.*

## Adventure Backpacks

MCCB wants to help provide you and your family a fun and educational hiking experience on the trails at the Russell Wildlife Area. We offer two backpacks with maps, activities and other information.



- **HIKING**
- **FOSSIL HUNTING**

The backpacks are free to use, but donations are appreciated.  
Stop in during open office hours to check these out!

# Summer Public Programs

## Canoe & Kayak River Float



Saturday, August 16  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm  
Eveland Access to  
Hardfish Access



Join MCCB, Mahaska Wellness Coalition, Mahaska County YMCA and Wapello CCB on a canoe and kayak float down the Des Moines River. We will launch from Eveland Access at 9:00 am and arrive at Hardfish Access by 3:00 pm. If you wish to leave your vehicle at Hardfish, the YMCA bus will transport you to Eveland Access in time for the launch. There is no cost for this event and MCCB has a limited number of canoes and kayaks available. Participants may bring their own lunch and canoe or kayak. *Pre-registration is required! Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 to register.*

## Eveland Access Campground's Labor Day Weekend Movie Night

Saturday, August 30  
9:00 p.m. (begins at dark)  
Eveland Access Campground



Want something fun and relaxing to do on Labor 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.

## Paddleboarding



Tuesday, September 9  
6:00 p.m.  
Pond 1 at the  
Russell Wildlife Area



Come out to the Russell Wildlife Area to learn about one of the newest and most popular water recreation activities for people of all ages! You will receive instruction on how to paddleboard and then given an opportunity to try it on the pond. All equipment will be provided. If you desire, you may bring your own life jacket. *Sign up for this event by calling MCCB at (641)673-9327.*

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



Saturday, September 20  
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Russell Wildlife Area



Join MCCB and local conservation groups for a whole day of hands-on outdoor activities! The events held this year will include archery, bowfishing, .22 rifle and BB gun shooting, fishing, waterfowling, and trapping. The cost is just \$5.00 and includes a kid's t-shirt and lunch. Dress appropriately for the weather. Parents are encouraged to stay for the day. One parent's meal is provided with each child's registration. **Registration ends on September 15** and is limited to the first 225 participants. For a printable registration form email a request to [mccb@mahaskacounty.org](mailto:mccb@mahaskacounty.org). *Children under 7 years old must be accompanied by an adult.*

### Big Fish and Small Fish Trophy Winners 2014 Kids' Fishing Day



Shane Haage, age 6  
Smallest fish at @ 6 inches



Riley Witt, age 11  
Largest fish @ 10 1/2 inches



The MCCB website is currently under construction...check back for the new and improved site in August 2014!

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

## 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 and other environmental education projects 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/](http://www.friendsofmccb.weebly.com/)!*

Photo courtesy of Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist

## Spring & Summer Snapshots with MCCB



## Statement

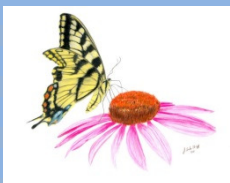
The primary mission of this organization shall be to create an awareness of our natural environment, encourage a state of harmony between people and their natural communities, develop and implement public conservation policy, maintain the public's investment in our natural resources, and strive diligently 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.

"Ah, summer,  
what power  
you have to  
make us suffer  
and like it."

~ Russel Baker



# A Big Thank You!

The Mahaska County Conservation Board wishes to extend our deepest thanks to the following people and businesses for their donations and volunteer time.

### Donations:

**Swim's Sports** – Kids' Fishing Day trophies

**John Crumley** - Kids' Fishing Day trophies

### Program & Event Volunteers:

**Allen Chilcote** – Kids' Fishing Day

**Mary Jane Sullivan** – Kids' Fishing Day, Day Camps, Leighton Parade Booth

**Mark Sullivan** – Leighton Parade Booth

**Ryan McPherren** – Day Camps

**Mike Boender** – Bowfishing Clinic

**Billie Summers** – Bowfishing Clinic

## 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:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| July 21      | <b>Youth Outdoor Field Day Planning Meeting</b><br>6:00 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area<br><b>Friends of Mahaska County Conservation</b><br>6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area |
| August 7     | <b>Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting</b><br>7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area   |
| August 18    | <b>Youth Outdoor Field Day Planning Meeting</b><br>6:00 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area<br><b>Friends of Mahaska County Conservation</b><br>6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area |
| September 4  | <b>Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting</b><br>7:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area   |
| September 15 | <b>Youth Outdoor Field Day Planning Meeting</b><br>6:00 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area<br><b>Friends of Mahaska County Conservation</b><br>6:30 p.m. @ Conservation Center, Russell Wildlife Area |
| September 15 | <b>Youth Outdoor Field Day Event</b>   |



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

<b>Peggy Wright</b> , New Sharon	Chairperson
<b>Curt Jager</b> , Eddyville	Vice Chairperson
<b>Linda Fox</b> , Rose Hill	Member
<b>Leroy Nugteren</b> , Leighton	Member
<b>Open Position - TBA</b>	

### STAFF

Dave Sedivec	Director
Laura DeCook	Naturalist
Tommy Van Renterghem	Conservation Technician
Jason Ryan	Conservation Technician
Dorothy Wedgewood	Administrative Assistant
Kyle Soderblom	Summer Park Ranger
Amber Bates	Musco Intern
James Upton	IA Workforce Development

Summer 2014



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Email: [mcbb@mahaskacounty.org](mailto:mcbb@mahaskacounty.org)

Phone: (641) 673-9327

New Sharon, IA 50207

2254 - 200<sup>th</sup> Street

Mahaska County Conservation Board



**BULK RATE**  
US POSTAGE PAID  
NON-PROFIT ORG.  
OSKALOOSA, IA 52577  
Permit No. 641