



THE PRAIRIE STAR

NEWSLETTER

Volume 36, Issue 1

Winter & Spring 2019

The Anticipation is Now Over. Welcome to the Environmental Learning Center!

By Dave Sedivec

MCCB Director

Many of the more seasoned citizens reading this newsletter may remember the old ketchup television commercial with the song "Anticipation" by Carly Simon playing in the background. That is the way this winter has made me feel. I love winter. It's one of my favorite times of the year, but I have to admit that it seems to be dragging on this year. I am anxious to get out boating, canoeing and fishing, as well as turkey and mushroom hunting.

My biggest sense of anticipation, however, is reserved for the Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park. The majority of the construction has been completed and the first phase of displays has been installed. The Mahaska County Conservation Board officially accepted the building by signing a Certificate of Substantial Completion at our January MCCB meeting. We hope to be operational by the time this newsletter is published! We are in the process of moving office furniture and equipment in, and are getting all of the IT bugs worked out.

Our office hours for now will be the same as they were at our old building; 12:30 - 4:30 pm, Monday - Friday. We plan to monitor usage and reassess our hours of operation as needed. We have not set a grand opening date yet, but stay tuned! We will publicize it via social, print and radio media as soon as a decision has been made.

I would like to thank everyone for your support, and look forward to seeing you at the ELC.

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**Welcome to the
Mahaska County Conservation Board**

Willie Van Weelden

Volunteer Board Member



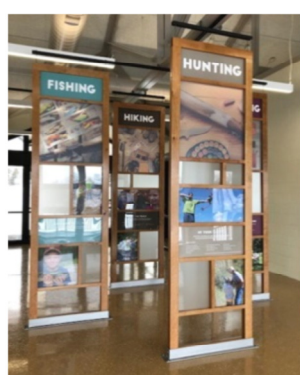
Then... at Russell Wildlife Area



Conservation Center



**...and NOW. We are proud to present the Mahaska
County Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park!**



Environmental Learning Center

EXPLORE MAHASKA COUNTY



Mahaska County has over 1,500 acres of forests, wetlands, prairies and parks to explore. The Mahaska County Conservation Board manages 21 separate parks, river accesses and wildlife areas with over six miles of maintained trails.

Check out this issue's featured area!

Quercus Wilderness Area

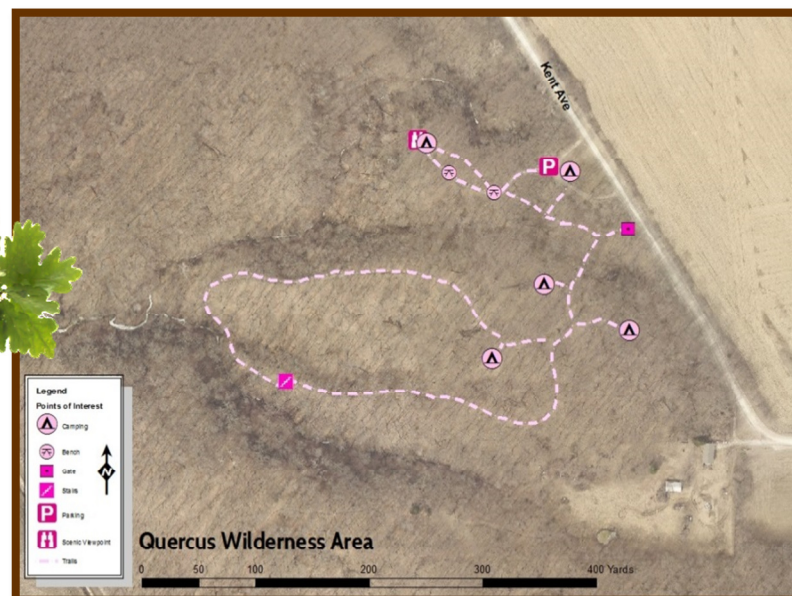
By Dorothy Wedgewood, Administrative Assistant

The Quercus (Latin for Oak) Wilderness Area is a unique area that offers a variety of features for any outdoor enthusiast. Quercus has 111 acres of wilderness located seven (7) miles south of Oskaloosa off G71. This area is dominated by oak, hickory and many other hardwood trees, which are managed by controlled burning, thinning and crop tree release. The high quality and quantity of timber in this area makes it a turkey hunter's paradise. Along with turkey hunting, this area is great place to hunt for mushrooms.

The soil that comprises the area is unique. The soil is sandy silt loam that was formed while the glaciers retreated from Iowa. This soil is similar to the soil found in the Loess Hills in Western Iowa.

There are various activities that would appeal to anyone from the novice to the enthusiast. Quercus offers a place to hunt, cross-country ski, hike, picnic and primitive (tent) camping. There are five (5) primitive campsites adjacent to the trail that winds through the area. Each campsite has a fire ring and picnic table. The camping fee for this area is ten dollars (\$10.00) per night with a camping limit of fourteen (14) consecutive nights. A map of the trails has been included with this article.

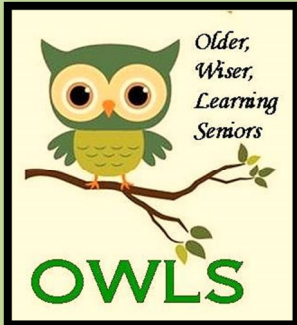
Quercus Wilderness Area Map





EXPLORE

Group Program Opportunities



*Hey seniors,
do you enjoy nature?*
**Then the OWLS
program is for
YOU!**

The OWLS - Older, Wiser, Learning Seniors, is a new group program with MCCB and is designed for senior learners with an interest in environmental science and conservation topics. Programs are presented monthly by the MCCB Naturalist and guest speakers. The programs will be held on the lower level of the Environmental Learning Center.

Wednesday, March 27th
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

“Sweet Facts about Maple Syruping”

Presenter: Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist

Making homemade maple syrup is a fun, historical tradition. Join us for an overview of how to tap trees and make maple syrup. Bring a lunch, but save room for some maple syrup on ice cream!

Wednesday, April 24th
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

“Springtime Monarchs – the Wild Turkey”

Presenter: Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist

Wild turkeys make their presence known in the woods this time of year. Their calls echo over hills and through valleys. Turkeys have amazing senses of hearing and seeing, which are just a few interesting things about them. This program will be informative and entertaining!

Wednesday, May 29th
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

“The Mahaska Mammoths”

Presenter: Laura DeCook, MCCB Naturalist

Are you curious about the Woolly Mammoths that once wandered around our county? Bring a lunch (and a friend) and learn all about these giant mammals and what the Ice Age could have been like.

Join us at the **Coffee Break!**

9:00 am

**Environmental
Learning Center**

2nd & 4th Friday of the month



March 22

April 12

April 26

May 10

May 24

June 14

June 28

Stop by and visit the ELC, fill up a cup of coffee and indulge in something tasty! This special time is set aside for adults that would like to visit the ELC and talk to others that enjoy nature. It's a perfect time to learn more about the conservation board, its parks and programs, and how you can volunteer. We will even set out some games to play!

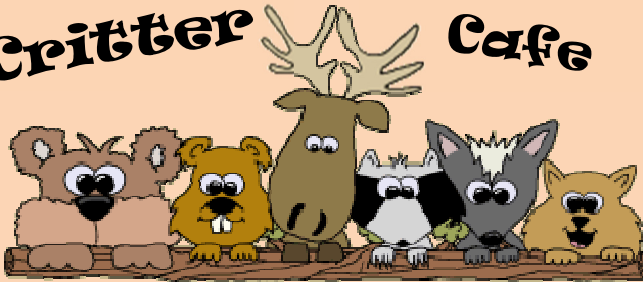




EXPLORE

Group Program Opportunities

Critter Cafe



12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Bring your lunch to the Environmental Learning Center to dine with the naturalist and a featured live animal that lives at the ELC. Following lunch, you will be able to take part in a nature lesson that relates to the current season.

Friday, March 22 "Camouflage Animals"

Friday, April 12 "Eggs"

Friday, May 10 "Animal Mothers & Babies"

Friday, June 14 "Fantastic Fish"

Perfect for **Parents & Young Kids,**
Homeschool Families, Day Care Kids



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 remain with them during the program.

10:00 – 11:30 am on the following dates:

March 13 **Nature Stories** (10:00 – 11:30 am)

– bring a book to share & a stuffed animal

March 20 **Nature Craft** (10:00 – 11:30 am)

April 3 **Nature Stories** (10:00 – 11:30 am)

– bring a book to share & a stuffed animal

April 10 **Nature Craft** (10:00 – 11:30 am)

May 1 **Nature Stories** (10:00 – 11:30 am)

– bring a book to share & a stuffed animal

May 15 **Nature Show & Tell** (10:00 – 11:30 am)

– bring a small item found in nature (no eggs, feathers, or any parts of birds not hunted)



IOWA JUNIOR NATURALIST

These wonderful outdoor learning opportunities are for kids 6-18 years old. Participants will receive a colorful Iowa Junior Naturalist Patch and Certificate of Achievement upon completion.

Earn a patch!

Program Attendance

- Participants must attend 3 different programs. Check out this newsletter to find out about all of our programs!

Independent Activities

- 6-12 years old – complete 2 independent activities
- 13-18 years old – one independent activity; must be a formal volunteer commitment totaling 1 or more hours

Awards

- All the above requirements must be completed in a 12-month period. (Jan. 1, 2019 – Dec. 31, 2019). An award celebration will be held at the end of the calendar year.

Brochures to record your participation are available at each public program and at the Environmental Learning Center.

Winter & Spring Programs

for all ages



Animal Tracking

Monday, March 11
1:00 – 3:00 pm
Discovery Lab - Environmental Learning Center,
Caldwell Park

This is a great time of year to search for animal tracks outdoors. Bring your friends to the ELC and learn about the basics of tracking animals. We will take a close look at tracks, make a track out of plaster and investigate some scat. Please dress for the weather! *Please sign up by calling (641)673-9327 ext. 2 by March 8th.*



Calls of the Wild

Tuesday, March 12
1:00 – 2:00 pm
Discovery Lab - Environmental Learning Center,
Caldwell Park

Owls, coyotes, ducks and rabbits....all animals make sounds to communicate. Would you like to learn about these sounds and what they mean? Join us for a fun, noise-making session. *Please sign up by calling (641)673-9327 ext. 2 by March 11th.*



Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Workshop

Saturday, March 16
1:00 – 4:30 pm
Discovery Lab - Environmental Learning Center,
Caldwell Park

Registrations are closed! Session has been filled. Thank you!

If you are an adult who is interested in helping the Iowa DNR monitor local bald eagle nests, registration is now open for the 2019 workshop in Mahaska County. Pre-registration is required and there is a fee of \$5.00 to attend. For more information and to download a registration form visit:

<http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteerwildlifemonitoring/>
or e-mail ywmp@dnr.iowa.gov.

Sign up today! Space is available for the first 15 adults that send in their registration form.



Volunteer Open House

Monday, March 25
Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park

*Visit any time between the hours of
12:00 – 3:00 pm & 6:00 – 7:00 pm*

Volunteers are needed to help in many ways at the Environmental Learning Center. You are invited to an open house to learn how you and your skills can help us. Stop in for a visit and check us out! All ages are welcome to volunteer. Refreshments will be provided.



Maple Syrup Festival

Saturday, March 30
9:00 am – Noon
Eveland Access

Throughout the morning, MCCB staff and volunteers will demonstrate how to tap trees and boil it to make maple syrup. You can also explore the black maple sugar bush, the old barn, a Native American sugaring camp and enjoy some old-fashioned games. Bring your appetites for fresh maple syrup on ice cream! *This event is for all ages. Come on out for the fun – no reservations are needed. If the weather is poor for an outdoor event, it will be held indoors at the Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park. Watch Mahaska County Conservation on Facebook for updates.*



4th Annual Night Crawler Hunt

Friday, April 26
8:00 pm
Discovery Lab – Environmental Learning Center
Caldwell Park

This was so much fun last spring so we have to do it again! Come out to the ELC and hunt for night crawlers on the ground. What will we do with them? You can take them home to use as fishing bait or donate them to the worm-eating critters in the ELC. It will be fun! Wear shoes that can get wet/dirty and bring a flashlight. *This is a great activity for all ages. Let us know you are coming by calling MCCB at (641)673-9327 ext. 2 by April 25th.*



Eveland Access Campgrounds

Will open for the season at noon
on Friday, April 26, 2019.

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

Ross Nilson – Thank you for volunteering your time and service as a board member for Mahaska County Conservation!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Featured in the next newsletter...

June 1	Dutch Oven Gathering (DOG) at Eveland Access
June 4	Discovery Day Camp I
June 5	Discovery Day Camp II
June 6	Discovery Day Camp III
June 8	Family Fishing Day & Kids' Fishing Derby
June 11	Jr. Naturalist Day Camp I
June 12	Jr. Naturalist Day Camp II
June 13	Jr. Naturalist Day Camp III
June 18	Challenge Camp I
June 19	Challenge Camp II



Eveland Access Cabins

Cabin Rental Prices:

Sunday-Thursday \$60/night

Friday-Saturday \$75/night

Week stay \$420

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

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



WISH LIST

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

- Custom-built wooden bookshelf for Discovery Lab (call for details)
- Custom-built wall coat hooks for Discovery Lab (call for details)
- Construction paper
- Glue sticks
- Volunteers!

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 our newsletter by email.

MCCB CALENDAR NOTES:

March 7	Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park
March 18	Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park
April 4	Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park
April 15	Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park
May 2	Mahaska County Conservation Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park
May 20	Friends of Mahaska County Conservation 6:30 p.m. @ Environmental Learning Center, Caldwell Park

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

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.



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.

**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



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

STAFF

Dave Sedivec	Director
Laura DeCook	Naturalist
Tommy VanRenterghem	Park Ranger
Jason Ryan	Conservation Technician
Dorothy Wedgewood	Administrative Assistant

Winter/Spring 2019



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Website: www.mahaskaconsevation.com

Email: mccb@mahaskacounty.org

Phone: (641) 673-9327

Oskaloosa, IA 52577

2342 Hwy. 92 East

Mahaska County Conservation Board



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