



# CONSERVATION NEWS

A Publication of the Muscatine County Conservation Board

Volume 31 No. 3 Fall 2018

## Project Update

Muscatine County Parks have been very busy places this past summer, and now right into fall, especially Deep Lakes Park and Discovery Park.

### Deep Lakes Park Projects

Deep Lakes Park has a new restroom by the beach area. Yes, they are vault toilets, but much improved over the old type of smelly pit toilets and definitely better than porta-potties. Since there is no running water they can be open all year long. We plan to add more of these permanent restrooms in the future and say goodbye to porta-potties.



*A crane sets the restroom building into place.*

The cabin areas on Deer Lake and Haul Road Pond were cleaned up and leveled out in preparation for the construction coming next spring. There will be two two-bedroom rental cabins that sleep up to eight, and two one-bedroom rental cabins that sleep up to four. The final plans are currently in the works.

The Melon City Bike Club donated a trailhead pavilion that will go next to the trail at Stewart Road and 41st Street. It will have a bench, information kiosk, and an air/repair station. The Bike Club will help construct the shelter sometime this fall.

Last spring, the Iowa DNR and the Conservation Board stocked catfish in Ray's Pond and Haul Road Pond, and muskies in Lakes Chester, Ivy, Patricia, Jewel and Violet. Stocking fish will be an ongoing project at both Deep Lakes Park and Discovery Park.



*Fish being stocked in Lake Chester.*

Last summer, on select weekends, we had our canoes and kayaks at Lake Chester for hourly rental. The rentals went over well and we'll look at doing it again next summer.

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## Discovery Park Projects

Planning for the new addition to Discovery Park (where the old county home was) is in full swing. Next spring the roads and parking lots on the new area will be resurfaced. More parking spaces will be added and the road will be extended to connect into the road system already in Discovery Park.

A modern restroom will be constructed on the area as well as at least one picnic shelter, possibly two. We'll pour sidewalks to make the area handicap accessible.

Pending the approval of a grant, a nature-inspired playground is planned for the area as well. We hope that construction can take place late next spring.

By the end of 2019, the Kent-Stein Park to Discovery Park section of trail will be completed. Trail users will then be able to get from Discovery Park all the way to Deep Lakes Park on a trail!

It looks as though staff will be busy right through next year with all these wonderful additions to Muscatine County Parks.

## Saulsbury Campgrounds

The campgrounds at Saulsbury closed right around the Labor Day weekend because of flooding. Just as the river got back down and clean-up was starting so did the rain again-especially to the north of us. The Cedar River is back up and the campground is still closed. We don't know if we'll be open again this season or not. Check our website [www.MuscatineCountyConservation.com](http://www.MuscatineCountyConservation.com) for updates.

## RIP Ciqala

In the last issue of this newsletter we introduced you to Ciqala our Saw-whet owl. Unfortunately Ciqala passed away suddenly in late August.

When staff noticed he was struggling, we took him to the RARE group (Raptor Advocacy, Rehabilitation, and Education) where he passed away.

Ciqala came to us from RARE as a permanently injured bird. RARE staff said his death could have come from a complication from his injury or just old age since they did not know how old he was when brought to them.

We'll miss our live little "statue" perched in the office.



*Ciqala sits on his perch in the office.*



## Thank You

Thank you to all those who generously gave time, talent, funding and/or materials to help make our programs, projects, and areas better than ever.

**Marla Kurriger** - supplies for our environmental education program.

**Deb Kerr** - supplies for our environmental education program

**Jerry & Mary Jones** - snacks for nature camps and fishing reels for our environmental education program.

**Fred Mullen** - paw paw seeds.

**Mike & Sue Johanssen** - canoe, fishing poles & tackle boxes for our environmental education program.

**Alexis McCann** - trail camera.

**Pam Buster** - monetary donation for our environmental education program.

**Brian Steel & Family** - monarch caterpillars.

## Thanks Volunteers

**Julie Herold** - instructing our Polliwog Playtime classes.

Thanks to the following for lending a hand with summer nature camps.

**Marnee Acker**  
**Marla Kurriger**  
**Mary Jones**  
**Kathi Eichelberger**

**Ria Meyer**  
**Steve Greene**  
**Kathy Jones**  
**Linda Stoddard**



## Memorials

A tree planted in Discovery Park **In Memory of Phil Sherbondy.**

A tree planted in Discovery Park **In Memory of Wayne R. French.**

Monetary donation **In Memory of Marlene Sturms.**

A tree planted in Discovery Park **In Memory of Debbie Behnke.**

A tree planted in Discovery Park **In Memory of Rocky Casini.**

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# Programs & Special Events

## POLLIWOG PLAYTIME

ages 18 months through 3 years    \$5.00/class

maximum 12/class

must have at least 5 signed up to hold class

Join us at the Environmental Learning Center and Discovery Park for activities designed to help toddlers explore nature. Children must be accompanied by an adult. All classes meet on the second Thursday of the month from 9:00-10:00 a.m.

October 11	Apples & The Harvest
November 8	Bats & Owls
December 13	Tails
January 10	Animal Tracks
February 14	Winter Animals
March 14	Winter to Spring Weather
April 11	Earth Day & Recycling



## KNEE-HIGH NATURALISTS

4-6 year olds    \$5.00/class    maximum 12/class

must have at least 5 signed up to hold class

Join us at the Environmental Learning Center and Discovery Park for nature activities such as games, crafts, stories, and exploration. Children must be accompanied by an adult. All classes meet on the second Saturday of the month from 10:00-11:00 a.m.



October 13	Spiders
November 10	Owls
December 8	Animals in Winter
January 12	Reptiles
February 9	Birds
March 9	Insects
April 13	Eggs

## TROUT RELEASE

The Iowa DNR will release 1000 trout in Discovery Pond. Fishing can begin immediately after the release. 100 will be tagged and any tagged trout caught before 4:00 p.m. on October 27 may be turned in at the Environmental Learning Center for a prize. All state fishing regulations apply including requirement of a trout stamp.

**Discovery Pond in Discovery Park**  
**Saturday, October 27    10:00 a.m.**



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# Programs & Special Events

## 30TH ANNUAL HALLOWEEN HIKE

Come join our cast of crazy characters for one of our most popular family events, the 30th Annual Halloween Hike. The theme this year is “Backyard Visitors”.

**Saturday, October 13**

**6:30 p.m. with a new hike starting every 10 minutes until 8:30 p.m.**

**Discovery Park**

**\$5.00 per person, under 5 years of age free**

**Tickets are required and may be purchased beginning October 1 at the Environmental Learning Center.**



Lots of volunteers are needed for a big event like the Halloween Hike on Saturday, October 13. If you love the spotlight we can give you a part as one of the crazy characters, or we have jobs for trail guides, trail maintenance, pumpkin carving, and other behind-the-scenes duties. We'd love to have you help. Contact Michelle, (563) 264-5922, if you are interested in volunteering.

## ATTENTION TEACHERS

It's not too early to set up your spring fieldtrip. We're getting reservations already, so call us at (563) 264-5922 or email [conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us](mailto:conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us) to get your choice of dates.



## HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

The Environmental Learning Center will be closed on November 12 and November 22-23.

## Become a Friend

Thanks to all our “Friends” whose donations to the Muscatine County Conservation Foundation support the development and enhancement of environmental education and conservation projects in Muscatine County.

*Judy Maxwell*  
*Helen Atkinson*

The names of all donors go into our donor book and those who donate \$250 or more receive a plaque on our donor wall. Please include the form below with your donation and become a “Friend” today.

### A Gift For the Conservation Foundation

I would like to become a Friend,  
please accept my donation.

- Sponsor \$10—\$49
- Partner \$50—\$99
- Patron \$100—\$249
- Guardian \$250—\$499
- Steward \$500—\$999
- Benefactor \$1000 +
- I would like to donate my time.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your support!**

Please make checks payable to:  
Muscatine County Conservation Foundation  
PO Box 109, Muscatine, IA 52761

## Shelter Rentals

The Conservation Board has picnic shelters at Discovery Park, Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area, and Jack Shuger Memorial Park that may be reserved. Call the Conservation Board office, (563) 264-5922, for more information. Reservations may be made no sooner than one year in advance.

### Discovery Park

small shelter \$15.00 (no electricity)  
large shelter \$35.00

### Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area

shelter #1 \$20.00  
shelter #2 \$20.00

### Jack Shuger Memorial Park

large shelter \$20.00



## Saulsbury Lodge Rental

The Saulsbury Lodge is available for rent if you prefer air conditioning or a weatherproof venue. The building has the capacity to seat around 75 people. It’s a great setting for a family reunion, small wedding reception, graduation party or birthday party. Prices vary depending on the day of the week and type of event. Call the Conservation Board office, (563) 264-5922, for more information. Reservations may be made no sooner than one year in advance.

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## Creature Feature

### *Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel*

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels, sometimes referred to as “thirteen-liners, squinnies or striped gophers,” are members of the squirrel family. They are small slender creatures often mistaken for chipmunks. They are about 11 inches long including the 3-4 inch tail. And, true to their name, have thirteen alternating light tan and dark brown stripes, some with light colored spots, running from the head to the rump.

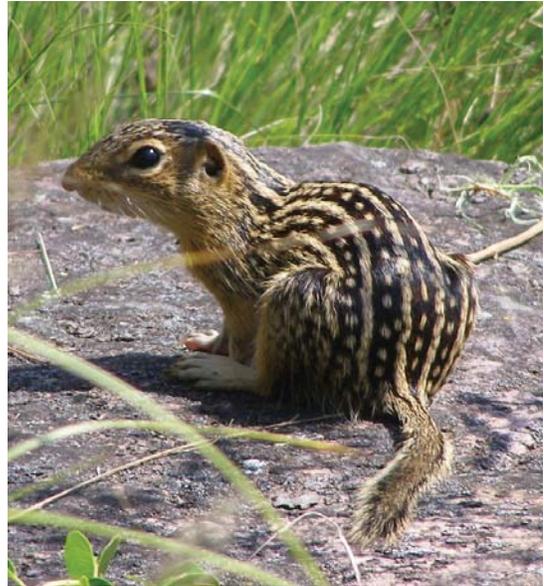
Thirteen-lined ground squirrels are native to the central U.S. and south-central Canada. Their preferred habitat is short grass areas with well drained soils; including yards, pastures, cemeteries, and golf courses. They live in a series of deep underground burrows where they hibernate and nest. At night they plug the entrance holes with sod or grass. They will also have many shallow burrows leading nowhere that they use for emergencies. They are active on warm sunny days, often seen sitting up on their haunches to survey their surroundings. They prefer to spend overcast or wet days in their burrows.

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels are omnivores, feeding on seeds, grass, flowers, leaves, nuts, and sometimes insects, lizards, and small birds. They eat a lot in the fall to fatten up before hibernation which takes place from about September to April. They also cache plant materials to eat upon waking from hibernation.

Mating takes place soon after hibernation. Females give birth about 28 days after mating to 3-14 young. The young get their stripes in about 12 days, have their eyes open in 28-30 days, are weaned at 6-12 weeks and sexually mature at 9-10 months. Life span is just a few years.

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels communicate with each other using sharp whistle-like alarm calls, other chirping sounds, and scented secretions. They also greet each other with what looks like a kiss by touching noses.

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels can become problems in certain areas like golf courses, but for the most part are beneficial for the ecosystem helping to aerate the soil and disperse seeds. They sometimes damage crops, but also eat weed seeds and harmful insects. They are an important prey species, feeding snakes, foxes, badgers, hawks, weasels, and many others.



## Squinney Fun Facts

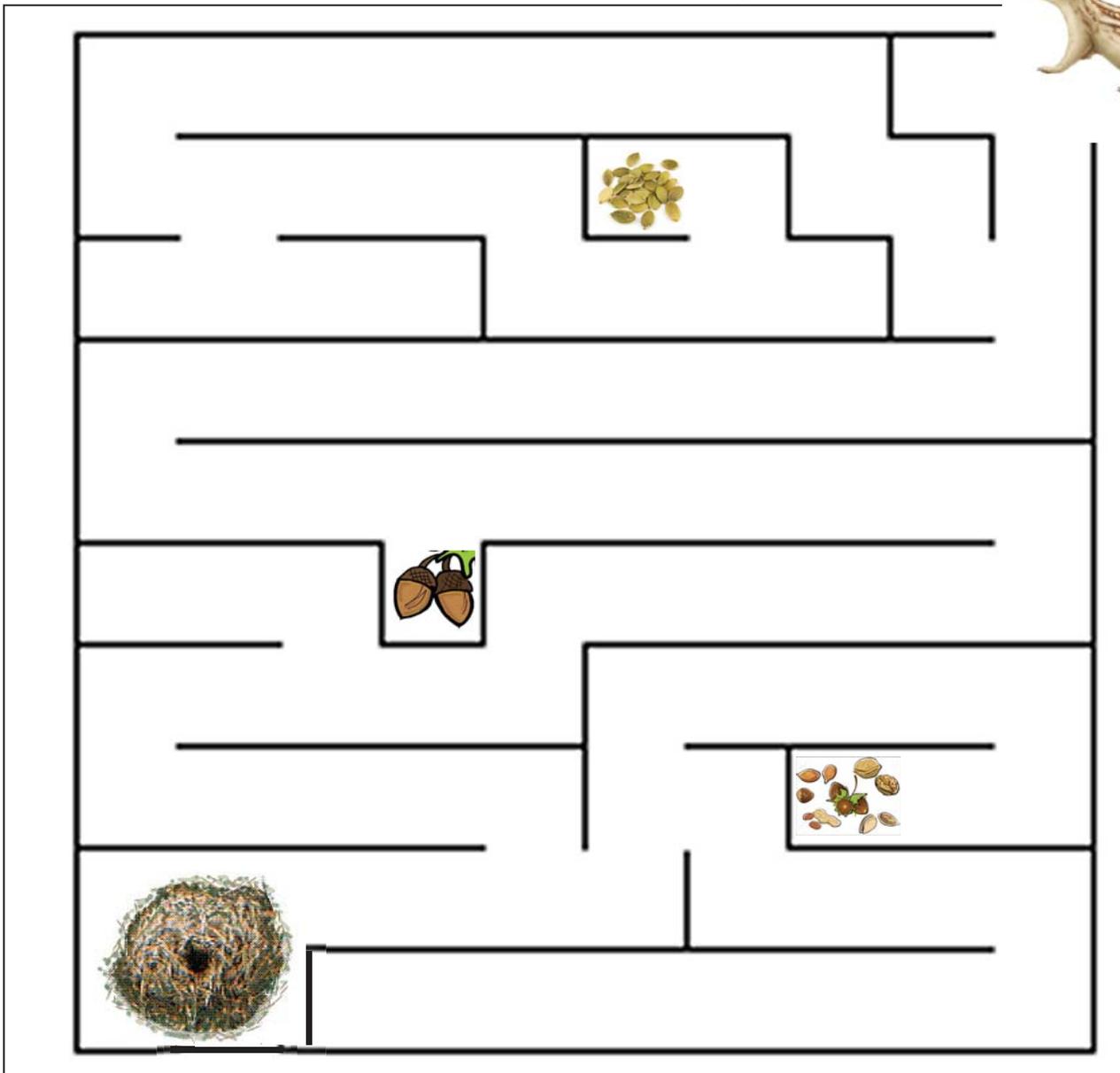
- Burrows may be 200 feet long with many chambers.
- They can run up to eight miles per hour and change direction very quickly.
- During hibernation their heart rate slows to 20 beats per minute down from the 200 beats per minute when they're active.
- As many as 90% of all young are eaten before they've ever had a chance to hibernate.

# Topper's Page



## IT'S FALL!

Leaves are starting to change color and animals are getting ready for cold weather. Help Gordy the ground squirrel find his way through his burrow to his warm nest where he'll hibernate for the winter. Gordy's already stashed some seeds and acorns to eat when he wakes up next spring.



# FALL



MUSCATINE COUNTY  
CONSERVATION BOARD  
3300 CEDAR STREET  
PO BOX 109  
MUSCATINE, IA 52761

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Ryne Brimeyer	Park Officer
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Dave Schuler	Learning Center Assistant

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**Muscatine, IA 52761**

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**conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us**

**www.MuscatineCountyConservation.com**

The Muscatine County Conservation Board meets the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Meetings are held at the Environmental Learning Center, 3300 Cedar Street in Muscatine. The public is welcome to attend.

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If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Muscatine County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240



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