



CONSERVATION NEWS

A Publication of the Muscatine County Conservation Board

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Animal Adaptations by Michelle Berns

Iowa has some amazing animals residing here! What makes them amazing you ask? The awesome adaptations that they have to help them survive. All animals have adaptations, some are more noticeable than others as some are physical and some are behavioral. Let's explore some of the AMAZING animals that call Iowa home.

The Bald Eagle

Talons: All birds of prey have talons; they are very sharp and are used to grab and kill prey.

Bald Feet: Featherless legs do not collect water when they are grabbing their favorite food, fish.

Sharp Beak: Much like you use a fork and knife to cut your food, an eagle uses its beak to tear food into smaller chunks.

Eagle Eyes: Eagles see at least four times (some sources say eight) better than humans do! Their eyes are about the same size as human eyes. A nictitating membrane (third eyelid) helps protect the eyes.

Wings: The wingspan of an eagle is six to seven feet wide! This helps the eagle to fly and soar through the sky but also gives it the power it needs to lift off carrying their favorite foods.

The White-tailed Deer

Camouflage: Fawns are born brown with white spots allowing them to hide in grasses while mother is away feeding. The adults shed summer hair for a winter grayish-brown coat and winter hair for a reddish-brown coat. This helps them to blend in with the forest around them.

Eyesight: Deer have eyes on the side of their heads giving them a wide field of vision that

allows them to keep a look out for predators.

Hearing: Large cup-shaped ears that move in the directions of sounds allow them to hear even a crackling of a twig in the forest.

Smell: Their excellent sense of smell of objects 150-200 yards away is why hunters often have to watch the wind direction and apply scent blockers to themselves.

Speed, Agility, and Warning: Ten-foot leaps and 30-foot bounds at top speeds around 30 miles per hour save deer from predators most of the time.

In addition, as a deer is sprinting away, it raises its tail or white flag to warn other deer of danger. Scents secreted from their hooves help them communicate with other deer.

Winter Survival: In the winter, large groups congregate and move to sheltered areas of trees. In addition, fat is built up in the fall and stored for times when there is not much to browse in the winter.

continued on page 6



Backyard Visitors

The 30th Annual Halloween Hike was held on October 13. Hikers learned about backyard visitors, some welcome and some not so much. Characters included a raccoon, bees, a cicada killer wasp, groundhog, yellow-bellied sapsucker, and a turkey.

Everyone was treated to refreshments after the hike and the kids received a treat bag and a mini pumpkin to paint.

Thank you to all the donors and volunteers who helped make the Halloween Hike a successful event.

DONORS

Linda Stoddard *Blooming Ideas*
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Taylor's Market *Walmart*
Young Professionals Network

CHARACTERS

Betty Collins *Britt Vickstrom*
Emma Steele *Creed Birkhofer*
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Dave Bakke

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Brian, Diana & Brendan Steele
Amie, Chuck & Chase McConnaha
Julie, Jack & Justin Miller
Muscatine High School Academy
Muscatine High School Key Club
Spangler Chapel Youth Group



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.



John Harris - mounted pronghorn antelope head.

Ed Lampe - arrowheads and a tomahawk head.

Muscatine Branching Out - trees.

Julie Herold - instructing the Polliwog Playtime classes.

Deep Lakes Park Trailhead

In early November, volunteers constructed the trailhead pavilion donated by the Melon City Bike Club. The pavilion, located next to the trail at Stewart Road and 41st Street, makes for a nice stopping point along the trail. A bench and information kiosk will go in the pavilion as well as an air/repair station donated by Harper's Cycling & Fitness.

Thanks to the following volunteers who spent a cold couple of days constructing the pavilion.

Carol Ward

Dave Cooney

Dan Olson

Keith Elliott

Mark Evans

Larry Osborn



New Playground

The Conservation Board received exciting news from the Roy J. Carver Trust that we were awarded a grant for a new playground. The site for the playground is in Discovery Park's new addition, and construction is scheduled for late next spring. The playground will have a nature-inspired theme.



Other new amenities also going in the new addition next year are restrooms and a picnic shelter.

Thank you Roy J. Carver Trust for your support!

Trout Release

October 27 was a beautiful morning for the 50 or so people who staked out a spot around Discovery Pond in anticipation of catching some of the 1,000 trout the Iowa DNR released into Discovery Pond.



Anyone catching one of the 100 tagged trout that day received a \$10 gift card from Blain's Farm & Fleet. Twenty-three tagged trout were turned in and those people were then entered into a drawing for a \$100 Blain's Farm & Fleet gift card. Winner of the \$100 gift card was Dan Wingerter of Muscatine.

Thanks to the Muscatine County Conservation Foundation and Blain's Farm & Fleet for the gift cards.



Programs & Special Events



The Environmental Learning Center will be closed on December 24-25 and December 31-January 1.

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.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 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.



- | | |
|------------|----------|
| January 12 | Reptiles |
| February 9 | Birds |
| March 9 | Insects |
| April 13 | Eggs |

BALD EAGLE WATCH

The Muscatine Bald Eagle Watch will feature outdoor viewing of bald eagles at the Muscatine Riverfront, as well as booths hosted by conservation groups and agencies, coffee and hot chocolate, and LIVE raptor programs at 9:30 am and 11:00 am at the Pearl City Station.



Saturday, January 26

9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Pearl City Station

All ages

Free

Live Raptor Programs at 9:30 & 11:00 am

Programs & Special Events

HUNTER EDUCATION

Anyone born after January 1, 1972 who wants to purchase a hunting license in Iowa must have successfully completed a Hunter Education course. The minimum age for certification is twelve. Each class is limited to 50 students.

Classes are free but you must register on-line at www.iowadnr.gov. After registering, you must pick up a handbook at the Environmental Learning Center. The chapter review questions at the end of the handbook must be completed prior to coming to class. Students who show up with a blank book will not be allowed to attend the class. Students should bring a sack lunch to class, as well as their completed handbook.

Saturday, February 16

9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Environmental Learning Center

Ages 12 and older

Free, but preregistration is required



RIVER CITY OUTDOOR SHOW

The River City Outdoor Show will offer a wide variety of booths featuring outdoor related products and information. Numerous conservation agencies, including the Conservation Board, will have booths at this event. For more information visit www.rivercityoutdoorshow.com.

Saturday, March 9 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Sunday, March 10 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Muscatine Mall

All ages

Free



ATTENTION TEACHERS

It's not too early to set up your spring fieldtrip. Reservations are already coming in, so call us at (563) 264-5922 or email conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us to get your choice of dates.

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.

*In Memory of Betty Sauer
Gary & Mary Whitacre
Tim & Debbie Nelson
Else Paul*

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
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- Guardian \$250—\$499
- Steward \$500—\$999
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- I would like to donate my time.

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Thank you for your support!

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

continued from page 1

The American Beaver

Feet: Beavers have webbed hind feet that are great for swimming through the water and front feet that are great for grabbing items.

Fur and Fat Layer: Two layers of fur, a thick underfur and long guard hairs along with a layer of fat help to insulate the beaver as it swims under the icy cold water of Iowa’s ponds in the winter.

Oil Gland: Castor oil keeps beavers waterproof and they apply it to their fur regularly. This gland is located at the base of their tail.

Circulatory System: Beavers can stay underwater up to 15 minutes because of their oxygen conservation system. Big lungs and a large liver store oxidized blood.

Nictitating Membrane: This third eyelid acts like goggles, which protect the beavers eyes underwater and help it to see more clearly.

Valves: For an animal who spends a lot of time underwater, having special skin flaps for their nose and ears to keep water out is highly beneficial.

Tail: Beavers have a flat wide tail they use to communicate with other beavers by slapping it on the water, store fat for the winter, as a kickstand while eating, and as a rudder to steer them around while they swim.



These are just three of the common animals that we have in Iowa and their amazing adaptations. Whether a physical or a behavioral adaptation, every animal has adaptations to help it survive. How many adaptations for some of our other common Iowa animals can you come up with?

Happy Birthday Peter!

Peter who? you're probably thinking. Peter Thayer, President of Thayer Birding Software, that's who.

To celebrate his 70th birthday Peter is offering young birders or students interested in birds and nature the option to download the new version 7.7 of Thayer's Birds of North America – **Absolutely Free!** Those interested in birds can use this **Special Code: MuscatineConservationYoungBirder**. This amazing birding software, for Windows or Mac computers, features the 1,007 birds that have been seen in the continental United States and Canada. The software includes more than 6,600 color photos, 1,500 songs and calls, 550 video clips of birds in action, 700 quizzes and much more.

To review the free software, see <http://www.thayerbirding.com/v7-Features>. Peter would like to have one million children download this birding program, use it and get excited about nature and conservation. Learning about birds is a great place to start!

Peter Thayer, President of Thayer Birding Software, decided that this would be the perfect way to celebrate his 70th birthday: "During the past 24 years I have heard from thousands of folks who told me how much this birding program meant to them. I have been overwhelmed by the kind words and feedback we have received from people who are now birders, professional birding guides, ornithologists, college professors and wildlife managers. They told me they used our program when they were growing up to learn more about the birds around them – and they still use it today."

"My philosophy has always been that I just wanted to create a truly great birding program for me (the nine-year-old me as well as the seventy-year-old me of today). If anyone else wanted a copy - well, that was just a nice bonus! Thanks to hundreds of suggestions from users over the past 24 years, I think we did it," explained Peter. "Now

it's time to give back something to the birding community and to the millions of young birders (and potential young birders) who just need a spark to get them started on a life-long quest for knowledge about our natural world and the importance of preserving the habitat we still have. What better way than this to celebrate The Year of the Bird?"

Peter would LOVE to hear back from the kids! They can email Pete@ThayerBirding.com.

Chickadee Check-off

Since 1982, when the Iowa legislature created the Fish and Wildlife Fund Tax Check-off, Iowans have been able to bring a little wildness into the tax season. The Fish and Wildlife Tax Check-off, affectionately called the Chickadee Check-off was created to allow people to make a charitable donation to wildlife conservation in Iowa out of their tax refunds or by tacking a few dollars on to any taxes owed. When filling out the state income tax form, just look for the contribution line (usually somewhere between lines 55-60) and write in any dollar amount next to Fish/Wildlife.

All the money contributed through the Chickadee Check-off helps support the Wildlife Diversity Program at the Iowa DNR. This program has statewide responsibility for all the wildlife that can't be hunted, fished or trapped from Peregrine Falcons to Poweshiek Skipperling butterflies. You can learn more about the program on their website: www.iowadnr.gov/wildlifediversity.

Please consider donating to the Chickadee Check-off this tax season and supporting wildlife conservation in Iowa!



Topper's Page



Animal Adaptations

Physical adaptations are body features that help an animal survive. Behavioral adaptations are things that an animal does to survive. Help Topper decide if a physical or behavioral adaptation best describes the animal(s) in the photos.



Weasels have brown fur in the summer and white fur in the winter.

4. _____



Viceroy butterflies mimic the look of bad-tasting monarch butterflies.

1. _____



Skunks have a scent gland loaded with a foul smelling liquid that they spray when threatened.

2. _____



Penguins spend much of their time in large groups and help each other with care of young chicks. This also helps keep them warm.

3. _____



Chipmunks have stretchy cheek pouches to help them carry more food to store for the winter.

5. _____



Wolves travel and hunt in packs making it easier to bring down large prey.

6. _____



Opossums play dead if they feel threatened.

7. _____



Birds migrate in large flocks to a warmer climate.

8. _____



Bats hibernate in large groups.

9. _____



Toads secrete a bad tasting poison from the bumps on their back if they are picked up by a predator.

10. _____



Walking sticks look like twigs camouflaging them from predators.

11. _____



Catfish have whiskers to help them find food and their way around in murky water.

12. _____

MUSCATINE COUNTY
CONSERVATION BOARD
3300 CEDAR STREET
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MUSCATINE, IA 52761

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3300 Cedar Street, PO Box 109

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.

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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Help Topper color Polly Penguin. Happy Winter!



1. Mimicry is a physical adaptation.
2. Foul odor from a scent gland is a physical adaptation.
3. Forming large social groups is a behavioral adaptation.
4. Changing fur color is a physical adaptation.
5. Stretchy cheek pouches are a physical adaptation, but storing food for winter is a behavioral adaptation.
6. Traveling and hunting in groups is a behavioral adaptation.
7. Playing dead is a behavioral adaptation.
8. Migrating is a behavioral adaptation.
9. Hibernating is a behavioral adaptation.
10. Poison is a physical adaptation.
11. Camouflaging is a physical adaptation.
12. Whiskers are a physical adaptation.