



Conservation News



A Quarterly Publication of the Muscatine County Conservation Board

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Deep Lakes Park Cabin Update

The cabins at Deep Lakes Park are continuing to progress. As of this writing, all of the mechanicals such as sewer/septic systems, electricity, gas, heating/cooling, and plumbing are all up and running. Painting the cabin interiors has begun. Some of the furniture has been ordered and should arrive soon. Staff still needs to purchase the remainder of the furniture. Then there are lots of little things like window coverings, towel bars, rugs, etc. to purchase and install.

The road to the cabins is complete, although it won't open until the cabins open. With the road construction for the cabins there are now three places where the hiking/biking trail will intersect with the road. Off-set gates and signage will be used for safety at these intersections. The gates will remind trail users to check for traffic and will keep vehicles off of the trail.

Staff is also working on setting rules and regulations for the cabin rentals. Rental rates have been set. The two bedroom cabins can accommodate up to eight people and will rent for \$125/night, and the one bedroom cabins can accommodate up to four people will rent for \$110/night. There is a two night minimum.

We plan to have the cabins open by next spring, and will begin taking reservations closer to that time. Keep checking our Facebook page-Muscatine County Conservation Board-for the most up to date information.



From hills of sand to a cabin on a lake. The cabins are coming along, with an opening anticipated this coming spring.



Halloween Magic in Motion

Halloween Magic in Motion was held at Saulsbury on October 30 as an alternative to our Annual Halloween Hike that we couldn't hold because of Covid. It was a beautiful fall evening complete with a full moon. Staff wasn't sure how the event would turn out, but it was a huge success.

We asked campers to pick a campsite and decorate it for Halloween. Then we asked the public to come out between 6:30 and 8:00 and drive through the decorated campground. We didn't charge anything, but asked that those who drove through bring a donation for the Muscatine Food Pantry or Muscatine Humane Society.

Not knowing what to expect, we made up treat bags for the first 300 kids who came through. Wow, did we ever underestimate how many people would come. Almost 400 cars with approximately 1,700 people came through. Needless to say the treat bags didn't last long. But, boy did the public ever come through with the donations. We collected a van load of food for the Food Pantry, a pickup truck full of pet food and other items for the Humane Society, and over \$800 in cash donations that was split between the two organizations.

A big THANKS to all the campers who dressed up and decorated their campsites and the public who brought all the donations.

Thank you to the following donors for providing candy and coupons for the treat bags and pumpkins.

Blains Farm & Fleet

Walmart

Papa Murphy's

Hy-Vee

Fareway

Taylor's Market

Thank you to the following volunteers who dressed up in costume, handed out treat bags, carved pumpkins, collected and loaded the donations, and directed traffic.

Andy, Marla, Drew & Eva Kurriger

Cindy Martinez, Haylie Echevarria, & Aliana Enriquez

Melissa & Clarissa McNally

Nancy Schuler

Heather Maxwell & Family

Betty Burch

Amy Bakke

Shawn Lamb

Craig & Lisa Lamb

Mike & Karen Hartman & Scout Troop #1127

Shepherd of the Cross Church

We hope that next year we will be able to hold the Halloween Hike again as it is always one of our most popular family events. But we'll also plan on the drive through event again. It drew a lot of people who normally wouldn't attend the Halloween Hike. Plus the campers are already making plans for decorating their sites next year, so how can we say no.





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.

Keystone AOK Chapter of GFWC Iowa - supplies for our environmental education program

Dave Cooney - fishing poles



A Redbud tree in Discovery Park was adopted **In Memory of Michael Johnson.**

Holiday Closings



The Muscatine County Conservation Board offices will be closed on Thursday & Friday, December 24 & 25 and Friday, January 1.

Saulsbury Lodge Rental

The Saulsbury Lodge is available for rent. This enclosed building is air conditioned and has the capacity to seat around 75 people. It's a great setting for a family reunion, small wedding reception, graduation or birthday party. Prices vary depending on the day of the week and type of event. Contact the Conservation Board office at (563) 264-5922 or conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us for more information. Reservations may be made no earlier than one year in advance.



Become a Friend

Thank you 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.

Sheryl Payne

Jean Scott

David & Barbara Chown



The names of all donors go into our donor book and those who donate \$250 or more receive a plaque on our donor wall located in the Environmental Learning Center. 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

Creature Feature

River Otter

Playful and inquisitive, river otters are found throughout North America from northern Mexico up into Canada and Alaska. They live in riparian zones—the areas that border streams, rivers, marshes, and lakes.

River otters weigh 11-31 pounds. They have thick brown fur with a lighter underside. The short dense underfur covered by coarse hairs help to repel water. They are long muscular animals with short legs, webbed feet, and a long flattened muscular tail that accounts for nearly a third of its body length.

The webbed feet and strong tail make them excellent swimmers and divers. They can close their ears and nostrils and stay underwater for up to eight minutes. They can also run on land very quickly. Another way of getting from one place to another is by sliding. Snow, ice, and mud make for some great sliding as well as playtime.

River otters live alone or sometimes in pairs (at times you may see a group of river otters which are usually a female and her young or a group of males socializing). They make a burrow home, usually belonging to a beaver or muskrat, near the water's edge with tunnels—some that let them come and go from the water.

They can have home ranges of up to 30 square miles, and mark their ranges by peeing, pooping and rubbing their scent on trees and rocks. Otter poop contains a musky scent called spraint. Spraint is unique to an otter just like a fingerprint is to a human. Otters spend a lot of time exploring others spraint because it tells them a lot about the other otter like age, sex, and breeding condition.

River otters hunt for food at night for mostly aquatic creatures like frogs, fish, turtles, crayfish and insects, but may also hunt on land for small mammals. They are active animals that need to eat 20-30% of their body weight everyday.

River otters mate in late winter or early spring. The female experiences a delayed embryo implantation of 10-12 months after mating so she doesn't have to

raise young in the winter. One to six pups are born about 60 days after embryo implantation. The pups are born with fur but like many newborn mammals are blind and helpless. Fathers have no role in raising the pups, it is all up to the mothers. At around two months old mom decides it's time to learn to swim and pushes the pups out of the den into the water. They learn quickly to swim. Pups are dependent on mom for six months and stay with her for a year until the next litter is born.

River otters are prey for bobcats, alligators, coyotes, raptors and other large predators. Habitat loss and pollution are the biggest threats to river otters. Life span is 8-10 years in the wild and 20 years or more in captivity.

River otters were hunted in Iowa by Native Americans and early trappers for their pelts and by the early 1900's had disappeared from the state. In 1985, river otters were reintroduced in Iowa and have done so well that there is now a trapping season.



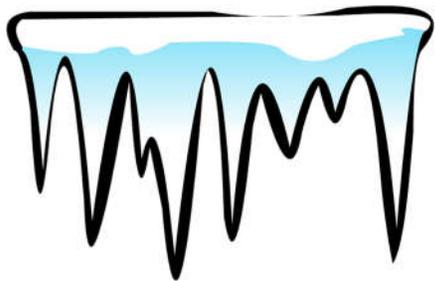
Fun Facts

- ◆ River otters have hundreds of thousands of hairs per square inch to keep them warm and water repellent.
- ◆ A group of river otters on land is called a romp. In the water a group is called a raft.
- ◆ In many Native American cultures, otters were considered lucky animals.

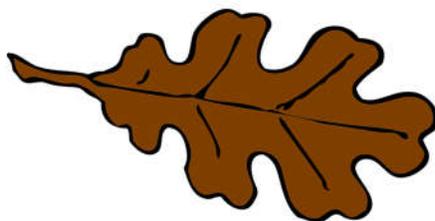


Go on an outdoor winter scavenger hunt and find everything below!

icicle



dry, crunchy leaf



Stuff that shouldn't
be left in nature.



Be sure to take a trash
bag and gloves with you!



bird's nest



cardinal

dead tree



**evergreen
tree**



animal
tracks in
the snow

squirrel



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Mark Petersen	Member
Sue O'Donnell	Member

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, gender, 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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