



Conservation News



A Quarterly Publication of the Muscatine County Conservation Board

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Another Setback for Monarchs by Michelle Berns

It seems as if now days you can't turn the news on and not hear about an animal or plant species that is now extinct or in serious decline. We have been talking about Monarchs here at Muscatine County Conservation Board for a long time. We talk about pollinators and Monarchs come up. We talk about prairie and Monarchs come up. We talk about milkweeds and Monarchs come up. Because of the connection of everything in nature, Monarchs come up in many different conversations.

My heart dropped when I saw the annual count of Western Monarchs earlier this winter, and then again when I saw a recent chart showing the number of hectares that our Eastern Monarchs are occupying this winter in the Oyamel fir forests of Mexico. Our poor Monarchs have had another decline this year, experts are saying down 26% from last year! The area occupied by Monarchs this year is 2.1 hectares (about 5.18 acres). Scientists have estimated that to keep the Eastern Monarch population from going extinct, the magic number is six hectares in Mexico.



Monarchs are the iconic species of a pollinator that we can all get excited about. We know that pollinators are important for many aspects of nature, including the transfer of pollen for food crops. I think people get a little more stirred up about environmental issues when they find out that something is affecting their food supply. And when we don't have those pollinators to transfer the pollen for us, most people may start to think a little more.

We should first think about why we are losing our Monarchs and other pollinators. The number one reason for the decline is habitat loss. All species of animals and plants are competing with us for habitat. An important part of any animals' habitat includes its food source. Monarchs are very specific in that the larva eat only plants of the milkweed family. But other issues affect our pollinators, including Monarchs. Pesticide and herbicide use has skyrocketed! We are having more severe weather events due to climate change and that affects the Monarchs on their migration south or north as well as the population that overwinters in Mexico.

How can humans and animals and plants survive together? Are there things that we can be doing to help our environment, even if it is just a little piece of the puzzle? Most people don't realize that there are tons of things that we can be doing in our own backyards to help the Monarchs and ALL of the pollinators.

The best thing a homeowner can do is plant native plants in their landscape. This includes a variety of milkweed plants and other nectar sources. Many

plants that are found in prairie areas actually do quite well in a smaller scaled down area. If you like a neatly manicured yard, plant some native flowers in small clusters. Just remember to plant a variety of flowers and keep them native. Often gardeners want to help out the pollinators but they plant the wrong kind of plants. Another tidbit, many cultivars of native plants do not contain as much nectar as the native plants themselves.

Here is list of native plants that will do well in a backyard to attract pollinators.

- Butterfly Milkweed
- Bee Balm
- Purple Coneflower
- Black-eyed Susan
- New England Aster
- Showy Goldenrod
- Meadow Blazing Star
- Gray-headed Coneflower
- Spiderwort
- Swamp Milkweed (clay soils)



To help with all of the confusion, the Muscatine Pollinator Project started growing native plants for Monarchs and other pollinators. Last year was the first public sale and it was outstanding. They grew several varieties of milkweed, coneflowers, and even a few annuals that pollinators love. Look for more information on the Muscatine Pollinator Project Facebook page about when plants will be ready for this spring. Also, check the Muscatine Soil & Water Conservation District Facebook page for information about their native plant sale.

We will share more information as it becomes available on our Muscatine County Conservation Board Facebook page. You are always welcome to contact me at mberns@co.muscatine.ia.us if you have specific questions on what you can do to help out our pollinators. I would be happy to help!

1000 Hours Outside

This initiative is designed to encourage people to get their children outside! Research has shown that on average children log over 1000 hours per year of screen time. The idea is to at least match and/or replace some of that with time spent outside.

Research also shows that there are numerous benefits for kids and adults when spending extended time outside, and the time outside can be spent doing just about anything. Picnicking, walks, bike riding, fishing, playing in the yard, raking leaves, gardening, whatever you want-even if it's raining or cold and snowy!

If you are interested in this idea you can visit www.1000hoursoutside.com for inspiration, ideas for things to do outside, and even download tracker sheets or calendars.



ATVs/UTVs in County Parks

With Muscatine County's new ordinance allowing ATV/UTV use on many of the rural roads, people may be looking for the ordinance to check on the rules. You can find them on the Muscatine County website. Go to the "Services" tab then to "Muscatine County Code of Ordinances."

As a reminder, ATVs and UTVs are not allowed on state highways and are prohibited on some county roads. Check the map included in this ordinance to see where riding on county roads is allowed.

In regards to Muscatine County Parks riders may use roads open to public use. As with any other vehicle you may not ride on the trails or park along the roads or on the grass.



Memorials

A Bur oak tree was adopted in Discovery Park *In Memory of Diane Wagler Engstrom.*



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.

Community Bank & Trust—monetary donation from their Blue Jean Fridays event.

Quad Cities Outdoor Women's Club—monetary donation.

V.H. Willis Company—countertops for the cabin bathrooms.

Amy Bakke Design Creative—designing outdoor exhibit panels.

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.

Diane Bunker

Else Paul

Jim Scott

Joni Axel

Sarah Lande

Ivan Lenz

Wesley & Barbara Walker

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.

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Thank you for your support!

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



Holiday Closings

The Conservation Board offices and Environmental Learning Center will be closed on Sunday, April 4 Monday, May 31, and Sunday & Monday July 4 & 5.

Programs and Special Events

Invasive Tree Removal - Volunteers Needed

Red cedars are good trees. They provide food and shelter for numerous wildlife species, and shade for people visiting Deep Lakes Park. But, left unchecked they can spread quickly filling in open areas making trails and portages more difficult to use.

We will be cutting small trees and stacking them in brush piles for wildlife shelter at various locations in the park. Participants should dress for the weather (rain will lead to a postponement) and bring a small brush saw or lopping shears and a water bottle.

Saturday, March 27 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Deep Lakes Park - meet at maintenance shed on corner of 41st Street and Stewart Road

Preregistration required at (563) 264-5922 or conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us



Beginner Birder Workshop #2

Join Birder Kelly McKay for a day of birding! Come for the bird hikes, the presentations, or both. You'll learn so much about birding! Watch our Facebook page for more information and an itinerary for the day.

Saturday, May 15 Time TBA

Location TBA

Free

Preregistration required at (563) 264-5922 or conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us

Canoe/Kayak Try-it

Paddle sports are loads of fun! Here is your chance to give it a try for the first time or to refresh your skills. We will have all the equipment you need, you just need to come expecting a fun time paddling around on Chicken Creek!

Participants will need to call our office to register for paddling at 1:00, 2:00, or 3:00. A limited number of people will be able to paddle at each time. Bring a mask to wear while launching and when you return from paddling. This event is free and open to adults and to children weighing at least 30 lbs. Children 8 years of age and younger must be accompanied by an adult on the water.

Sunday, May 23 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area-Chicken Creek

All ages, children must be accompanied by an adult

Free

Preregistration required at (563) 264-5922 or conservation@co.muscatine.ia.us



Summer Camps

Polliwog Playtime

ages 18 months through 3 years \$5.00/session maximum 8/session

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.

Fishing Fun	June 7	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Squirrels	June 21	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Snails	July 12	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Birds	August 2	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Creek Stomp	August 16	9:00-10:00 a.m.



Knee-high Naturalists

4-5 year olds \$5.00/session maximum 8/session

Join us at the Environmental Learning Center and Discovery Park for nature activities such as games, crafts, stories, and outdoor exploration. Children must be accompanied by an adult.



Fishing Fun	June 14	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Squirrels	June 28	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Snails	July 19	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Birds	August 9	9:00-10:00 a.m.
Creek Stomp	August 23	9:00-10:00 a.m.

Chipmunk Camp

kids who just completed kindergarten or 1st grade

\$10.00/session maximum 10/session

Fishing Basics **June 15** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll learn about the fish in the Discovery Park ponds, talk tackle and bait, practice casting, then fish!

Who Eats That? **June 22** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll read "Who Eats That?" and learn about the food chain. We'll talk predator/prey, herbivore/carnivore, and play some hunting games.

Lost in the Woods **June 29** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll take a hike into the woods along with the story "Lost in the Woods." We'll learn about forest animals as we follow a "new fawn" through the forest.

Crawdad Creek **July 6** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll read "Crawdad Creek" and explore the Discovery Park creek, as well as make some nature art.

Amphibians & Reptiles **July 20** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Learn the difference between amphibians and reptiles and meet some live ones. We'll also do a nature craft.

Trees **August 10** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Meet some giant living organisms and learn how they are important parts of our lives!



Summer Camps

Kestrel Camp

kids who just completed 2nd or 3rd grade
\$10.00/session maximum 10/session



Fishing Basics **June 16** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll learn about the fish in the Discovery Park ponds, talk tackle and bait, practice casting, then fish!

Patterns in Nature **June 30** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Have you ever really looked closely at a leaf or a flower? Did you ever notice any patterns? Get up close and magnified as we look deeper into the patterns of nature.

Diary of a Worm **July 7** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll read "Diary of a Worm" and study how real live worms live. No worms will be hurt in this camp.

Amphibians & Reptiles **July 14** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Learn the difference between amphibians and reptiles and meet some live ones. We'll also do a nature craft.

Trees **August 4** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Meet some giant living organisms and learn how they are important parts of our lives!

Otter Camp

kids who just completed 4th or 5th grade
\$10.00/session maximum 10/session



Fishing Basics **June 10** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

We'll learn about the fish in the Discovery Park ponds, talk tackle and bait, practice casting, then fish!

Energy in Ecosystems **June 24** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Food chains, food webs, the sun-OH MY! We'll learn where energy comes from in an ecosystem and how it is passed along in each level of the trophic system.

Paddling Basics **July 8** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Learn all about canoes and kayaks then try ours out on Discovery Pond.

Nature Did It First **July 22** **9:00-11:00 a.m.**

What have we learned from nature? Amazingly, many of the cool inventions we have today came from nature.

Summer Camps

Outdoor Recreation Camp

kids who just completed 6th - 8th grade

\$15.00/session maximum 12/session



Archery & Creek Stomping **June 11** **9:00-12:00 a.m.**

We'll do archery, and explore the creek at Discovery Park.

Survival **July 16** **9:00-12:00 a.m.**

We'll meet at Saulsbury for some survival fun! Try building a fire with only one match, and build a shelter before time runs out. S'mores are on the menu if we can manage to build a fire.

Paddling **August 6** **9:00-12:00 a.m.**

Meet us at Deep Lakes Park at the Lake Chester Boat Ramp for a morning of paddling fun. We'll explore the lakes in canoes and kayaks.

General Summer Camp Info

- * The registration form is available at the Environmental Learning Center or on our website www.MuscatineCountyConservation.com
- * All camps meet at the Environmental Learning Center unless otherwise noted.
- * All campers must bring a water bottle and mask.
- * Snacks are provided for any camps over one hour in length.
- * Campers should wear clothes that can get wet and dirty. No flip-flops.
- * No refunds unless camp is cancelled.

Shelter Rentals

The Conservation Board has picnic shelters at Discovery Park, Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area, and Jack Shuger Memorial Park that may be reserved. 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.

Discovery Park

Discovery Pond Shelter (#1) \$15 (no electricity)

Learning Center Shelter (#2) \$35

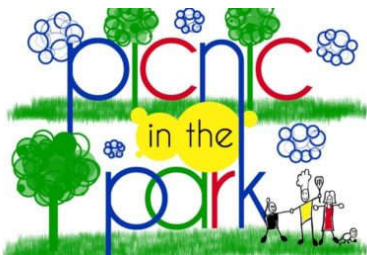
Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area

Chicken Creek Shelter (#1) \$20

Boat Ramp Shelter (#2) \$20

Jack Shuger Memorial Park

Shelter \$20



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.

Free Fishing Days

The Iowa DNR's free fishing days this year are June 4, 5, 6. Iowa residents may fish on these days without a fishing license. All other fishing regulations must be obeyed.



Camping at Saulsbury

The Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area campgrounds will open in mid April (weather permitting).

Camping fees will be as follows.

- Main Campground \$20/night
- River Campground \$17/night
- Primitive Campground \$10/night
- Permanently Handicapped \$15/night

You can save on camping in the main campground with a coupon book for \$100 - that's six nights for the price of five. Available at the Environmental Learning Center or from the park ranger or campground host.

We will also continue with the "Free Wednesdays" and the "Two-for-One" camping specials.

TWO-FOR-ONE Camping Weekends

Camp the first night (Friday) in any of the campgrounds at Saulsbury and stay for the next night (Saturday) FREE on the weekends listed below.

April 16-17

May 7-8 & May 21-22

June 4-5 & June 18-19

July 2-3 & July 16-17

August 6-7 & August 20-21

September 3-4 & September 17-18

October 1-2 & October 15-16



FREE Wednesdays

Camp in any of the campgrounds at Saulsbury on any Wednesday in April-October for free.

Creature Feature by Michelle Berns

Wood Duck

Wood ducks are one of Iowa's most beautiful ducks and reside in our wetland and marshy areas. You can find them year-round in the eastern U.S. including all of Iowa. There is also a western coastal population of wood ducks.

Males are brightly colored with a green head and bronze speckled chest. They have tan, black, and white colored feathers and red eyes. Females are brownish and tan colored overall with blue and white on their wings and a white tear dropped shape around their eyes. Wood ducks are smaller ducks that have a square shaped body that sits high in the water. They have a wingspan of 26-29 inches and weigh up to a pound and a half. They are 18-22 inches long.

Wood duck habitat includes wet areas that are heavily forested or covered in a lot of vegetation. They utilize trees for their cavity nest and are quite comfortable flying in the forest. The cavities are made by other animals such as woodpeckers, but wood ducks have also adapted to using artificial nest boxes. Hens prefer nest sites over water but will nest over a mile from water.

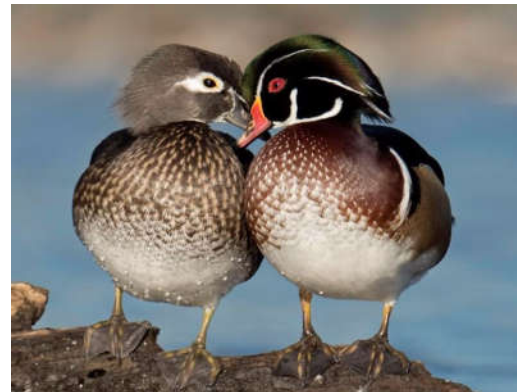
Each season wood ducks choose new mates. The female lays 8-15 eggs in a cavity nest. They have one to two broods per year. The chicks are incubated for 28-37 days. The ducklings are born precocial which means that they are covered fully in down with eyes open. After hatching the young stay in the nest for about 24 hours, then mom calls the babies from below. They take the leap out of the nest to the water or ground sometimes 60 feet below and can immediately swim and find food on their own. They will continue to follow mom around for the next few months. By eight to nine weeks of age the young start to fly.



Wood ducks are omnivores. This means that they eat both plant and animal materials. Some studies show that 80% of their diet is composed of plant materials including; duckweed, blackberries, acorns, smart weed, mulberries, millet, tree seeds, and wild grapes. Sometimes field crops such as soybeans, corn, and wheat are eaten. The ducklings eat mostly insects then transition to mostly plants as they mature.

In the early 19th century the population crashed due to unregulated hunting and habitat loss. The protection of wood ducks by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and the placement of artificial nest boxes have helped the population to recover to healthy levels. There is now a hunting season on wood ducks.

Predators of wood ducks include, owls, raccoons, red foxes, and snakes. Most ducklings do not survive to adulthood. In the wild wood ducks usually live three to four years, but can live up to 15 years in captivity.



Wood Duck Fun Facts

- ◆ Their scientific name, *Aix sponsa*, loosely translates to ready for a wedding because of their beautiful plumage.
- ◆ They got the name wood duck because they perch in trees and even have claws to help them climb trees.
- ◆ Sometimes a female will lay her eggs in the nest of another wood duck leaving that mother to care for those eggs as well as her own.
- ◆ They are sometimes called squealers, woodies, acorn ducks or swamp ducks.

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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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