



Conservation News

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Leaving a Legacy by Katie Hammond

Curt Weiss grew up on the North side of Burlington, Iowa. He spent his childhood hunting, trapping, fishing, and exploring the woodlands and fields along Flint Creek. The countless hours spent exploring the wilder places in Iowa sparked his interest in natural resources.

On November 3, 1980 Curt Weiss showed up at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area at 8:00 am to begin work as a Park Attendant for Muscatine County Conservation. Curt remembers his first day of work, "We were working in the wildlife area at Saulsbury, running a chainsaw all day!" A job he has performed countless times in the 43-years to follow.



Curt had recently graduated from Iowa State University, sporting a brand-new Bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. Although he hadn't planned on staying forever, Muscatine wasn't too far from where he grew up and it soon became home.

In 1982 the Board appointed Curt as a Peace Officer. He attended the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy

and moved into the house at Saulsbury. Just a year later, he became the Naturalist, as well as continuing the Peace Officer duties. Curt enjoyed providing environmental education and recreational opportunities to the people of Muscatine. He married his wife, Janna that same year. This year they are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary!

In 1988, Curt shifted job duties again and became the Director for Muscatine County Conservation. A title he has held for the past 35 years. "I love my job and enjoy coming to work every day. I'm really going to miss it when I retire!"

In this position he has been able to oversee the completion of many great projects. One of the projects Curt is most proud of is the creation of Discovery Park and the Environmental Learning Center (ELC). "The best day of my career was the day we opened the Environmental Learning Center." It is a state-of-the-art Nature Center with two 1,200-gallon aquariums featuring native fish, several live animals including raptors, over 100 wildlife mounts, and a great exhibit on natural history. The project took several years to complete, but it was worth it, "We built the first trail in 1995 and the Environmental Learning Center opened in 2005!"

The ELC is located in Discovery Park, a 100-acre park located on Cedar Street in Muscatine. The park has a hard-surfaced road and walking/biking trails, two stocked ponds, two picnic shelters (and another going up next

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month), a new playground, and the Muscatine Arboretum. Curt enjoys seeing people out enjoying the parks that he and the staff have worked so hard to provide. "The thing I have enjoyed the most is providing education and recreation opportunities and watching the people enjoy them!"

When Curt began his career at Muscatine County Conservation, the Board had six different parks that it managed, today there are 11! Although Saulsbury is a special place, the acquisition, development, and public use at Discovery Park and Deep Lakes Park has been incredible.

In November, Curt Weiss is retiring as the Director of Muscatine County Conservation. As the old saying goes, "If you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life." This couldn't be truer for Curt. He has spent the past 43-years pouring time, talent, and energy into improving habitat and recreation in Muscatine County. Retiring is a little bittersweet for Curt. He knows this will provide more time to chase large game, go camping, ride his bicycle, and cast a line. There will be more time for traveling the world, which will most likely include more hunting and fishing!

Curt leaves with many lifelong friendships forged in hard work. His work will live on through the current staff as they continue to share nature with children, create habitat, and improve recreation opportunities.

Conservation isn't a career people choose for the money. Sure, it helps, but the real reason people choose to work in conservation is because they love it. Because deep down, they know they are leaving the world a little better than they found it. Curt is doing just that. He is leaving a legacy in the parks and amenities he has helped to build that will be here for future generations to enjoy!



Hello nature enthusiasts!



My name is Katie Hammond, and I am excited to share with you that I am the new Director for Muscatine County Conservation, "Curt's replacement!"

I was born and raised in Davenport, but have visited family in Muscatine my entire life. I graduated from Iowa State University in May 1998 with a B.S. in Animal Ecology with an emphasis in Wildlife.

For the past 24-years I worked for Louisa County Conservation, first as a Naturalist and then as Director. I have a passion for environmental education, outdoor recreation, and wildlife habitat. I enjoy serving on committees that enhance resources, promote tourism, or better our community. My hobbies include hiking, paddling, hunting, fishing, boating, wilderness travel, camping, and cross-country skiing. I also enjoy nerding out with spreadsheets, creative or technical writing, and math.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone and continuing to build relationships within the community. I am so grateful to have the honor of serving as Director of Muscatine County Conservation.

My predecessor, Curt Weiss is retiring at the end of November. Please join us in a retirement open house for him on Friday, November 17, 2023 from 1:00 - 6:00 pm at the Environmental Learning Center. Curt has served the community for the past 43 years!

I hope to see you all at the retirement celebration or out there in the parks and on the trail!

Book Nook in Honor of Dave Bakke

When Dave Bakke retired as Naturalist / Park Officer in June of this year after 35 years as an admired staff member and educator for the Muscatine County Conservation Board, several fans of Dave's had a great idea! Create a Book Nook at the Environmental Learning Center, complete with a large area rug and book shelves in his honor. Books have been donated for the area and it is utilized on a regular basis by visitors. If you would like to donate books, send or bring them to the Learning Center and we will put a book plate on them noting your donation.



Newsletter Contact Information



To help save on Newsletter expenses, we would like to update our mail and e-mail information. If you have moved or changed your email address, please contact us or email us with new information.

Thank you!

Muscatine County Conservation Board
P.O. Box 109, Muscatine, IA 52761
Email:
conservation@muscatinecountyiowa.gov

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.



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.

Mike & Phyllis Avesing
Norma Lewis
Sheryl Payne

A Gift For the Conservation Foundation

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

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$10—\$49 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to donate my time. | |

Name _____

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Thank you for your support!

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

Programs and Special Events

Winter Wingbeats Program



Come be a bird nerd and see why winter is a great time to view our winged friends. We'll spy on backyard bird species from our Wildlife Viewing Blind and take a short hike through Discovery Park to find more of them in action. The program will conclude with a live owl presentation indoors.



Saturday, December 16 10:00-12:00p.m. Environmental Learning Center-Discovery Park
Free

Bald Eagle Watch & Raptor Program

Activities include live raptor programs with our friends from RARE (Raptor Advocacy Rehabilitation and Education), eagle crafts for the kids, eagle viewing from the deck overlooking the river (binoculars and spotting scopes will be available), and area Conservation / Environmental group booths sharing information about their activities.

Saturday, January 20 9:00-1:00p.m. Pearl City Station
Live Bird Programs at 9:30 and 11:00a.m.



Please dress for the weather.
Live Birds. Free, Family-friendly event.
Children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult.

Full Moon Owl Prowl

Join Naturalist Michelle for a full moon owl prowl. We will walk out into the woods under a full moon and call for owls. Dress warm, wear good hiking shoes or boots and bring a flashlight.

Saturday, February 24 6:30p.m. Saulsbury Lodge

FREE - Meet at the Saulsbury Lodge
All kids must be accompanied by an adult.



Programs and Special Events

Polliwog Playtime

Ages 18 months through 3 years \$5.00/session Maximum 12/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. Registration form available at the Environmental Learning Center or www.muscatinecountyconservation.com

December 2	9:00-10:00 a.m.	Animals in the Winter
January 13	9:00-10:00 a.m.	Animal Tracks
February 10	9:00-10:00 a.m.	Lights & Shadows
March 9	9:00-10:00 a.m.	Worms



Knee-high Naturalists

4-5 year olds \$5.00/session Maximum 12/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. Registration form available at the Environmental Learning Center or www.muscatinecountyconservation.com

December 2	10:30-11:30 a.m.	Animals in the Winter
January 13	10:30-11:30 a.m.	Animal Tracks
February 10	10:30-11:30 a.m.	Lights & Shadows
March 9	10:30-11:30 a.m.	Worms



Learning Center Before Hours

Free, for families with a member needing a low sensory experience

For a low sensory experience come visit the Environmental Learning Center before the doors open to the public. Spaces are limited. Email michelle.berns@muscatinecountyiowa.gov to signup.

December 2	11:30 a.m.-12:00 noon
January 13	11:30 a.m.-12:00 noon
February 10	11:30 a.m.-12:00 noon

World Wildlife Day Event

Discover Iowa's cool critters and explore the places they call home—right here in Discovery Park. We'll have plenty of live animals to see up close, and weather permitting, we'll take a hike around the park to discuss the important habitats we rely upon for survival.

Saturday, March 2 10:00-12:00p.m.

Sunday, March 3 10:00-12:00p.m.

Children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult. Please dress for the weather.



Discovery Park News

Stop by Discovery Park to check out the fall colors and new asphalt on the road! We recently had the blacktop road redone and striped. The road looks fantastic and the new paint with reflective beads makes it visible even in low-light conditions.

Fall is a beautiful time to get out and hike the parks. Discovery Park has about 1.5-miles of paved trail. The diversity of trees, and native prairie in the park provide an array of fall colors. Snap a few photos while you are here and make sure to use the hashtags #DiscoveryParkMuscatine and #MuscatineCountyConservation.



Environmental Education Supplies

From time to time there are specific supplies that are needed and providing these supplies would greatly help the education team.

Some examples could be craft supplies, bird seed for our wildlife viewing blind, or even more costly items to supplement our Environmental Education programs that we take into the classrooms.

If you are interested in supporting our education programs please call Michelle at 563-264-5922.



Saulsbury Lodge Rental

The Saulsbury Lodge is available for rent. This enclosed building is heated 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@muscatinecountyiowa.gov for more information. Reservations may be made no earlier than one year in advance.



Deep Lakes Park Cabin Rentals

Visit www.muscatinecountyconservation.com to find out more about cabin rental at Deep Lakes Park. The cabins are open year-round. Reservations may be made up to one year in advance.

Halloween Drive-Thru

The Halloween Drive-Thru at Saulsbury was held on October 14. With the help of many generous donors, staff put together 500 treat bags for the kids. Around 275 cars brought an estimated 1,000 people through the decorated campground. The campers did a great job of decorating their campsites. Pumpkins donated by Taylor's Market were carved and displayed. A suggested donation of \$10 per car brought in over \$2,650 that was split between the MCSA Food Pantry and the Muscatine Humane Society.

Thank you to all of the campers, businesses, organizations, donors, and volunteers who made this event a success.

Bayer
Bunn Family
Colon Family
Dummer Family
Gandia Family
Hilger Family
Hull Families
Kelting Family
Lutheran Homes
Miller Family
Nott Family
Skip Hitchcock
Stanton Family
Taylor's Market
Trucks Unlimited
Walmart

Bosch
Carter Family
Community Bank & Trust
Fareway
Hammaker Family
Hitchcock Family
HyVee
Ledger Family
Martinez Family
Mills Family
Reynolds Family
Skipton Family
Streger Family
Thompson Family
Walker Family



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.

Anne Collier, Patty Foor, and Lori Hutmacher - Ice cream buckets for the Environmental Education Program

Josh & Michelle Helscher - Life Jackets for the Environmental Education Program

Scott Sample - Butterfly Net & Butterfly Life Cycle Poster for the Environmental Education Program



Memorials

A White Oak tree was adopted in Discovery Park ***In Memory of Jim Crowder.***

A Crabapple tree was adopted in Discovery Park ***In Memory of Brian Scott McCracken.***

A Crabapple tree was adopted in Discovery Park ***In Memory of Ainsley & Connor Anderson.***

An Ash tree was adopted in Discovery Park ***In Memory of Dutch Curry.***

Holiday Closings



The Conservation Board offices and Environmental Learning Center will be closed on Friday, November 10, Thursday, November 23 and Friday, November 24. Sunday, December 24, Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1.

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

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Sherry Seright	Vice-chairperson
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Mark Petersen	Member
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Katie Hammond	Director
Michelle Berns	Naturalist II
Luke Hart	Naturalist
Kent Kaufman	Operations Supervisor
Ryne Brimeyer	Park Officer
Kristin Krumm	Maint. Tech./Park Officer
Trevor Ebeling	Maint. Tech./Park Officer
Lori Dietrich	Office Manager
Dave Schuler	Learning Center Assistant

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

Contact us at:

3300 Cedar Street, PO Box 109

Muscatine, IA 52761

P(563) 264-5922

conservation@muscatinecountyia.gov

www.MuscatineCountyConservation.com

