



# SIoux COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Volume 33  
Issue 3 Fall 2023

4051 Cherry Ave Hawarden, IA 51023

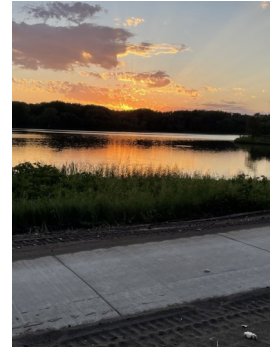
[www.siouxcountyparks.org](http://www.siouxcountyparks.org)

712-552-1047

## Sioux County Parks Update

By Robert Klocke, Director

As I sit here and write this newsletter we have so much to share. This has been one of the biggest project years we have ever had. Over the past year, we have completed several projects both big and small with the American Rescue Plan (ARP) grants we received. First off, we finished upgrading all the electric camping pedestals in Deer Run campground and updated the electric in the picnic area down by river at the Oak Grove Park. Next, we moved onto Sandy Hollow Recreation Area upgrading 37 sites with new power and started the process of adding 16 new campsite sites opening spring of 2024. These new sites will all offer full hookups (water, electric and sewer). Continuing at Sandy Hollow, we paved a new 3,500 feet of walking trail. The new trail wraps around the eastside of the pond towards county road B40 and goes over a the walking bridge over the pond. Big Sioux Recreation Area didn't get left out we kicked it off with a new renovated cabin. This cabin boasts 5 bedrooms, 2 baths, kitchen, laundry room, and 2 living rooms. It has a gas fireplace upstairs, WIFI, full stock



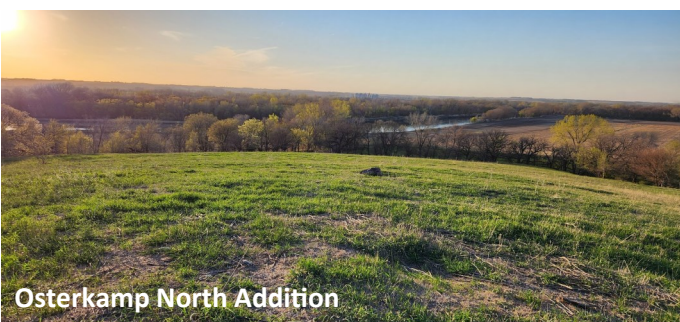
kitchen, nice outside covered porch and many other amenities. It is located next to the Rookery Cabin. We will have an open house October 21 from 3-7 pm . After the cabin we went to work on a new bridge going from Eagle View Campground towards boat ramp. All part of a 3,400 foot newly constructed trail addition to the mile we had done previously. The new trail wraps around the south side of Calliope Lake. Users have really enjoyed the new addition of

trail. More recently we returned back to Oak Grove Park finished paving overflow parking for buses and event at the Prairie Woods Nature Center. The nature center staff driveway also got paved to finish off the Nature Center project started in 2019. We also added a new outside exhibit Bird Mews with two new owls, Luna a Great Horned Owl, and Kahoot a Barred Owl.



The Duck Blind

Lastly, we added two new additions to Oak Grove Park. One on the north end of the park, 47.5 acres, and one on the south end of the park, 92.5 acres. The Conservation Board raised over \$895,000 towards these areas and is in the process of applying for a REAP Grant for \$350,000. Theses addition will add so much to the original Oak Grove Park they are located off Cherry Ave (K18) and 400th St (B46). Current plans for the areas are additional hiking trails, nature study, limited hunting, and growth for future park expansion. The north area is made up of mostly Oak Savanna habitat with natural springs and or possible phens. Rare native plant life as also been found on this addition making it all the more important to conservation. The south addition has a newly establish prairie we helped with over the past few years along with some older oak timber and some remnant prairie. This will bring Oak Grove Park to 573 acres!



Osterkamp North Addition

Connecting Oak Grove to Hawarden and to the Big Sioux Recreation Area has been the plan for the last 12 years. These new additions make that dream more of a reality the goal would be to create a bike path from Oak Grove to Hawarden. The path from Hawarden to the Big Sioux Recreation Area is already in place. A two-mile stretch is still need to finish it off. Thank you, Sioux County, for always supporting your parks we have a lot to be proud of.

## Cabin Open House

Join us Saturday October 21 from 3-7 pm at the Big Sioux Recreation Area Cabins. Both the Rookery and the newly remodeled Duck Blind Cabin will be available for viewing.



The Duck Blind



Rookery

## Winter Cabin Rentals

We have had request in the past years to use cabins during the winter months along with comments about how cool it would be to be “snowed in” one of our cabins. The winter is a great time to visit the local parks and we have decided that we are now going to leave the Bluegill Bungalow Cabin and Foxes Den Cabins at Oak Grove Park along with the Rookery and the new cabin at the Big Sioux Recreation Area open year round. This means yes you can experience the parks and be “snowed in”. We will continue taking all reservations for most dates through our website just like one would book for summer months. Holiday weekends and weeks you will have to call and check availability. We are excited to offer this opportunity to stay “snowed in” at one of the cabins and experience the quietness of the snow falling. We do our best to maintain open roads but be forewarn you may get snowed in later than anticipated.



## Newsletter to Move Online

We are excited to announce we are looking at saving the planet again one tree at a time. We will be moving our newsletter publication to an online presence. It will be emailed to your inbox and available online. We are looking at making the move to this during the winter months and anticipate the Spring 2024 newsletter will only be available through this route. That being said we need your email if you would like to receive our newsletter in your email inbox, please email us at [conservation@siouxcounty.org](mailto:conservation@siouxcounty.org) so we have all the spelling correct and say Yes I want the newsletter.

Now we do understand that some are old school yet and wish to receive their newsletter via mail. We will still mail physical copies to those who put their name on our new list. If we do not hear from you, you will not receive our newsletter next year.



What we need from you:

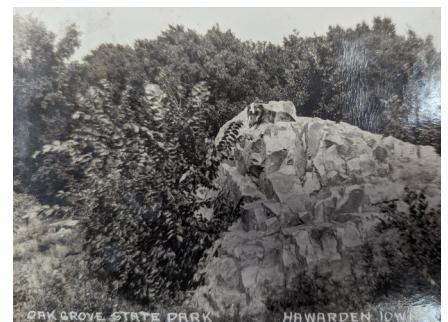
First/Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_


City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## Historic Photo Call

Did you know that Oak Grove turns 100 next year? To celebrate, we would like to put together and display a collage of photograph from those that loved it most! If you have any photographs of your family enjoying the park 1924-2023 we would love to see if they work for our project. Contacts us for more information.



# Environmental Education Opportunities

Pre-registration REQUIRED for most events but is appreciated for all events, please visit our website to learn more about the program and preregister at [siouxcountyparks.org/events](http://siouxcountyparks.org/events). Programs held at the Prairie Woods Nature Center are indicated by:  All other program location noted in description. Cancellation of programs will be posted on our Facebook page and on 93.9 FM. Call 712/552-3057 for more information.



## September 2- Monarch Tagging

9:30- 11 am

Join us for a morning with the family to learn about monarch migration to Mexico. This is a two-part morning, join us for one part or both! Part 1: Indoor monarch program for all ages. Part 2: Hiking, netting, and tagging monarchs at Oak Grove Park (canceled if raining). Nets are provided.

## September 5- Camper Registration for Trick or Treat Hike

8 am

Call 712/552-1047 starting at to claim a spot for the October 14 Trick or Treat Hike. Each camper can register themselves and one other camper. Will receive Friday and Saturday night free camping in exchange for enough candy/goodies for 800 children per campsite.



## September 9- A Path of Creation

10 am-noon

Sioux County Conservation has the pleasure to host a unique program with two guest presenters, Naturalist Andrea Porter, and Michael Wanbdi Gdeska (Spotted Eagle). They will connect the natural history of the Great Plains with cultural practices of Native Americans in this region. Michael, a member of the Ihanktonwan Oyate (Yankton-Sioux) tribe, will share his experience from a Native American perspective in developing a spiritual relationship with all of creation. It will include the sacred ceremony of Azilya (smudging). He will use members of their plant nations and drumming songs during the ceremony. Andrea will connect how plants, animals, and the landscape serve their very important purpose in nature. A Totem Bookmark (pick a totem animal and create a pressed flower laminated bookmark) will be created. \$20 per participant, registration required.

## September 9- Dutch Oven Gathering 2023— Date Change

Turkey Ridge Campground

6- 8 pm

Calling all area Dutch Oven Cookers! We will be hosting a gathering at Oak Grove Park. Dishes include: breads, appetizers, main dishes and desserts. Dishes will be judged with first place awarded in each category, potluck meal afterwards.

You must preregister by calling 712/552-3057 to sign up as a cooker. First 10 cookers will receive a free campsite at Turkey Ridge for Saturday night September 9th. Public is welcome to come and observe and ask questions in Turkey Ridge Campground, starting at 3:30 pm. Join us for meal at the Oak Grove Lodge at 6 pm, bring a dish along to share (doesn't have to be a Dutch Oven for potluck).

## September 16- Ringneck Rendezvous— Date Change

Rock Valley Gun Club

4- 8 pm

Archery, live animals, outdoor obstacle races, tossing games, water guns, bb guns, trapping, dog training, LOTS OF PRIZES and more can be found at this annual event. We are welcoming trick shooter, Steve Gould from Target Focused Live. If you haven't seen his show, you MUST COME! A one-handed push up while shooting a clay? That's small stuff! A \$10 registration fee for all youth (ages 5-16) and adults attending. Must register by September 10 through the link on our website. Pre-registration includes merchandise and chances at door prizes. Event cosponsored with Sioux Prairie Pheasants Forever and Rock Valley Gun Club and prizes sponsored by many local businesses.



## September 19- Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)

10 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:30 pm

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats, fellowship and a short presentation. Topic: Paleontology- the study of fossils



## September 20- Wild Child Nature Series

10 am or 1 pm

Attention animal and nature lovers ages 2 - 5! Our Wild Child Nature Series is a one-hour nature-based experience that will get your child exploring, moving, playing and using their senses. An adult is required to join, limited space. A new topic each month.

**September 23- Painting with Nature****9am- noon**

Join us for a morning of relaxing painting! Our guest instructor, Jodi Brown, has been teaching classes for the past 10 years around the area. She is excellent at teaching how to incorporate nature into artwork on canvas. Bring a sack lunch if you would like to take advantage of the parks many picnic areas after you finish. Snacks and refreshments will be available. Jodi is donating/hosting this class as a fundraiser for the Sioux County Conservation Foundation. Minimum donation is \$20 per person to the Sioux County Conservation Foundation to be paid at door. Ages 10 and up. Adult must attend with child. Limited spots available.

**October 14- Trick or Treat Hike****Oak Grove Park, Deer Run Campground****5:30-8:00 pm**

Join us for a fun evening of Trick or Treating. Ages 12 and under are invited to trick or treat in costume. The campground is full of campers with friendly faces at each campsite and of course candy/goodies too. Prairie Woods Nature Center will be open! Listen to KSOU 93.9 FM for weather cancellations.

If you would like to be a camper you may register via phone starting September 5 at 8 am by calling 712/552-1047. Will need to provide candy for 800 kids in exchange for free camping October 13 and 14.

**October 17- Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)****10 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:30 pm**

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats, fellowship and a short presentation.

Topic: Leaf Morphology the study of leaves changing

**October 21- Youth Mentor Hunt****Rock Valley Gun Club****7:30 am- 12:30 pm**

We partner with Sioux Prairie Pheasants Forever and Rock Valley Gun Club on this day to give 12-15-year-old Iowa residents, who have passed their hunter education course, a great pheasant hunt experience! The day starts with breakfast and a quick review of hunter safety and trap shooting. We pair youth with a mentor and hunting dog. Youth and mentor travel in groups to local hunting areas, both public and private, for the morning. Following the hunt, return to the Rock Valley Gun Club for lunch. Only a limited number will be taken must pre-register.

**October 25- Wild Child Nature Series****10 am or 1 pm**

Attention animal and nature lovers ages 2 - 5! Our Wild Child Nature Series is a one-hour nature-based experience that will get your child exploring, moving, playing and using their senses. An adult is required to join, limited space. A new topic each month.

**November 21- Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)****10 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:30 pm**

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats, fellowship and a short presentation.

Topic: Snowflake Morphology- the study of snowflake formation

**December 6- Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)****10 am or 12:30 pm Only**

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats, fellowship and a short presentation.

Topic: SELF-Ology Team Jeopardy

## Thank You from the Education Department

**Nature Center front desk volunteers-** Darlene Westra, Julie Wegner, Lena Vollink, Evan DeGroot, Richard Dykstra, Julie Anderson, Jean Brandes

**Summer Camp Volunteers-** Katie VanderZwaag, Darlene Westra, Rochelle Oordt, Stan Oordt, Renae Brown, Dan Swier, Rachelle Oordt, Gail Dacken, Stan Visser, Mallory Pick, Phil Landman

**Program Volunteers-** Outdoor Skills Day, Sandy Hollow and Rivers Bend Fishing Clinic, Ringneck Rendezvous

**Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship-** program volunteers and treat donors Dave Opegard and Megan Vander Kooi for Nature Center Artwork

**Presenters-** Dave Opegard, Adam Adams, Don Mulder, One Book One Sioux County, Hawarden Public Library

**THANK YOU**

# Environmental Education Interns Take on the Summer

By: Aubie Hartman, Levi Landman and Megan Vander Kooi

The Prairie Woods Nature Center has been a common spot for families to visit this summer - whether that's for summer camp, live animal programs, or to enjoy the day away. Another common attraction at our nature center has been our new additions to our education animals. Kids enjoyed seeing and learning about our new fox snake as well as our new owls housed in their bird muse. As naturalist interns, we have had the opportunity to work with these new animals and learn more about them.

## SUMMER CAMPS

The nature center was filled with excited kids as they joined us in learning about different animals, plants, and outdoor skills at summer camp. We had another great turnout with around 250 kids total, ranging from age 3 to 15. We hosted five different summer camp topics this year: Budding Naturalists, Animal Detectives, How Nature Works, Time Travelers, and Outdoor Skills Camp. In Budding Naturalists camp (ages 3-4), kids were pushed to use their five senses to learn more about nature. They also explored the different uses for water. Animal Detectives (ages 5-6) were busy following tracks and scat while learning how to identify animals based off them. Our 7-9-year-olds learned how to perform an experiment with water sheds, turtle traps, and model rain clouds in our How Nature Works camp. They even got to watch how a snake sheds its skin! In our Time Travelers camp, 10-12-year-olds traveled back in time to make butter, baskets, and ice cream like the pioneers did! Our final camp this summer was the Outdoor Skills Camp (ages 13-15) where kids could hike, canoe, and learn how to make their own flies for fly fishing.



## LIBRARY PROGRAMS



This year we rotated through three different library programs, which were used all throughout Sioux County. The different themes included Find Your Voice, Feed Your Mind and Splash, Read. We reached 7 different libraries and 232 kids! Depending on the program we brought live animals including one of our turtles, snakes, frog, or salamander. The children were overjoyed to see the animals and asked many questions about each one. We taught them about different sounds animals make, the unique diets of every animal, and how ecosystems influence animals day to day activity. We had a very successful Library Program Season and can't wait till next year!

## OUTDOOR SKILLS DAY

Outdoor Skills Day, hosted at Sandy Hollow, allowed kids to explore and try new things. They had seven tracks to choose from, each containing 6 out of the 9 possible activities/skills to learn. These 9 included archery, canoeing, outdoor cooking, guns/wrist rockets, bicycling, bird watching, deer hunting, duck hunting, and hike/GaGa Ball. 210 kids, 40 adults, and 20 volunteers participated in this annual event!



## Featured Artist at the Prairie Woods Nature Center

Dave Oppgard has been painting and drawing since high school. His preferred medium is watercolor, although recent winters in Arizona have sparked a deep appreciation for, and enjoyment of “gourd art” which utilizes acrylic, woodburning, and pen-and-ink techniques.

He is largely self-taught, having gleaned inspiration from YouTube videos and the work of other artists. He had the privilege of attending a watercolor workshop at the Madeline Island (WI) School of the Arts several years ago, and recently took gourd art classes including carving from Arizona artist Bonnie Gibson.

Dave enjoys sharing his love of art with others. Each winter he leads a group of fellow “snowbirds” through watercolor painting classes and gourd projects; he also teaches an annual gourd class at the Prairie Woods Nature Center during the summer.

A resident of Sioux Falls, Dave enjoys RVing; hiking the trails of local and state parks, and - when the season arrives - cheering for the Green Bay Packers (much to the consternation of the Vikings fan he is married to).

Dave’s work will be displayed through September.



## Thank you to all of our Part Time and Seasonal Workers

We want to thank all of our seasonal and part time staff through out the county parks system. Who have joined us for the summer months or longer term basis to assist in park upkeep, and running our facilities smoothly. Staff have been located throughout the county at various parks and rolls including: Alton Roadside Park, Big Sioux Recreation Area (BSRA), Oak Grove/Big Sioux Park (OG), Prairie Woods Nature Center (PWNC) and Sandy Hollow Recreation Area (SH). Hats off to you!

Aaden Schwiesow (OG)

Ernan Garcia Topete (BSRA)

Mario Duenas (SH)

Alyssa Peterson (BSRA/PWNC)

Ethan DeBoer (OG)

Megan Dekkers (BSRA)

Ashley Yoerger (BSRA/PWNC)

Francisco Garcia (SH)

Megan Vander Kooi (PWNC)

Aubie Hartman (PWNC)

Hannah Van Den Berg (SH)

Mike Schurman (BSRA)

Breanna Klocke (BSRA)

Heather Schurman (BSRA)

Molly Hicks (PWNC)

Brian Schmit (SH)

Hunter Gloden (SH)

Robert Upton (BSRA)

Cody Byl (SH)

Jaclyn Van Den Berg (SH)

Tyler Kennedy (BSRA)

Cole Schiefen (OG)

Jim Jonker (Alton)

Elizabeth Yoerger (PWNC)

Kim Meerdink (PWNC)

Elisabeth Martinsen (BSRA)

Levi Landman (PWNC)

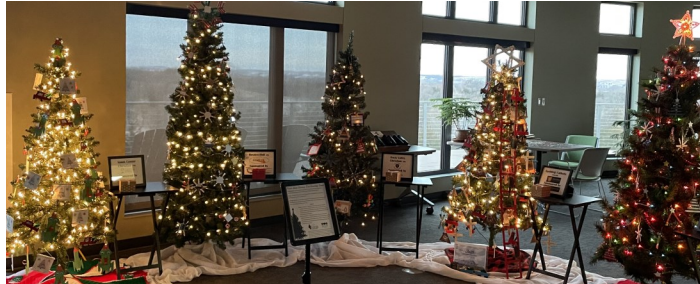
Emily Small (BSRA)

Luke Jenness (OG)

**Thank  
You!**

# 3rd Annual Prairie Woods Nature Center Christmas Tree Contest

We are once again encouraging local business to sponsor their local school classes in grades 3rd, 4th and 5th to partner together to decorate trees at the nature center. This annual contest will seek votes from general visitors to the nature center, each visit earns a vote. Come out on Christmas Break and vote for your class, school or tree of your choice. Christmas Trees will be on display starting the Saturday following Thanksgiving and be available until the Saturday after New Years. More information on how to sponsor a class available on our website.



## Wolf Exhibit on Display in November

The Sioux County Conservation Foundation is excited to announce they will be bringing the Wolves and Wild Lands Exhibit from the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota to the Prairie Woods Nature Center in November!

This exhibit is comprised of six full body mounts of Artic Wolf, Mexican Wolf, Coyote, Red Wolf, Rocky Mountain Wolf and Great Plains Wolf. Will be on display during regular nature center hours.



## Friends of Foundation Membership

Want to help support conservation projects in Sioux County, including the Prairie Woods Nature Center? Become a Friends of Sioux County Conservation Foundation today! There are level options to choose from.

For more information and to join, go online at [siouxcountyparks.org](http://siouxcountyparks.org), email [conservation@siouxcounty.org](mailto:conservation@siouxcounty.org), or stop in at the Prairie Woods Nature Center.

### Distinguished Conservationists:

Anonymous  
Den Hartog Industries  
Harlan & Karen Van Voorst  
Harold and Darlene Westra  
Julia Hummel  
Lorna's Light

### Memorials given in honor of:

Anonymous Memorials  
Arlyn Kleinwolterink  
Carl Reinking  
John & Grada Van Ballegooyen  
Lyle & Jan Thompson



### Foundation Members:

Brian VanEngen- Chairperson  
Dawn DeWit- Secretary  
Stan Hoekstra- Treasurer  
Cal De Ruyter- Member  
Gordon Pottebaum- Member  
Greg Hansen- Member  
Lena Vollink- Member  
Stan Visser- Member  
Mike Wiggins- Member

**Staff**

Robert Klocke- Executive Director  
Sunday Ford- Assistant Director/EE Coordinator  
Jessica Van Oort- Office Assistant  
Myron Dekkers- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech.- Oak Grove  
Zach Weyer- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech.- Sandy Hollow  
Alex Lynott- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech.- Big Sioux Rec. Area  
Damon Anderson- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech.- Sandy Hollow  
Sarah Davelaar- Naturalist  
Ryan List- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech.- Oak Grove

**Sioux County Conservation Board Members**

Gordon Pottebaum- Chairperson  
Dave Meylink- Vice Chairperson  
Jerry Jensen- Secretary  
Josh Boersma- Member  
Jason Smith- Member



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: Conservation Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm in the Conservation Corner :  
: at the Prairie Woods Nature Center. :  
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