

Sioux County Conservation Newsletter



Volume 27, Issue 1

Spring 2018

Sioux County Park Updates:

With Spring fast approaching we are looking forward to another busy season. We are busy watching the weather and determining when the snow will be gone and the ground will be dry enough to start our spring controlled burns. This can start as early as late March and go until mid May depending on the weather conditions, staffing and other projects on deck for the upcoming week. These controlled burns help set back invasive species and really help the natives thrive.

At Sandy Hollow Recreation Area we are continuing to look forward, and plan this summer, to finish the pond renovations that have been done. We will be removing the drive that is currently between the ponds and placing a pedestrian bridge in its place for easier access to the swimming area for our campers. We plan to get the buoy's and rope set in time for those hot summer days for everyone to enjoy the sun and sand. Early this spring we also have plans to concrete some of the camping pads.

Oak Grove will see some renovations done in the Deer Run Campground including electrical upgrades on campsites, along with some changes to playground equipment in the area. Plans are to break ground for the Nature Center by late fall as well.

At the Big Sioux Recreation Area, we will be digging a basement for the one room school house and start the construction of making that into a cabin. The school house is being moved from North of Hawarden on Hwy 12. We are also looking to pave additional campsites and roadways in the park.

As a reminder to everyone, please update your vehicle passes if you have them. We look forward to seeing you utilizing your many Sioux County Parks.



Big Sioux Recreation Area

Alex Lynott, Park Ranger

Amidst all the summer chaos, I can never wait for winter to come so things slow down and projects can be caught up on. Every February, I then get way too anxious for spring and summer months to have people coming out and utilizing the park. It's a never ending cycle of chasing the next season! I am very much ready for spring at the Big Sioux Rec Area. The snow is melting, the Big Sioux River is starting to open up in spots and trees are starting to bud. Come March, I hope the large number of Bald Eagles will return to pick off the fish that did not survive the winter freeze just as they did last year and the year before.

Many of the signs out here came into the shop for a few touch ups and a few needed to be replaced with the change in camping rates. As simple as they may seem, signs take quite a bit of time routing, staining and painting.

Another project that kept me busy this winter in the shop was creating artificial fish habitats out of recycled materials. There are lots of habitat structures you can order online, but they can be quite expensive. I tried to take a more cost effective route. I used vinyl siding that had recently been taken off of a 2,000 square foot



house, cinder blocks from a building that was tore down, sacks of concrete mix and rope. The vinyl siding piece were cut with a table saw and tin snips to the desired size and then formed with a heat gun to give them a realistic plant look. The idea behind these is to create shelter for crappies and blue gills from predators such as walleye. In theory, they will also provide a food source for our fish. Algae will start to grow on the vinyl siding strips and attract invertebrates. These invertebrates will provide a nice food source for our fish. These will be strategically placed in colonies of 15 or so when the ice disappears. We hope to utilize the Sioux County Dive and Rescue Team to help place these structures underwater. It makes for great dive training and that way we know they are upright and provide a realistic looking habitat on the lake bed.



The Sportsmen's Club also helped add two large sources of fish structure out here as well. A very large rock pile was sunk with hopes of becoming an attractive walleye spawning area. Five crappie cribs were also assembled from recycled wood pallets and currently sit on top of the ice with cinder block weights and will fall through once the ice becomes thin enough.

I am also anxious to see how the pollinator garden comes back! There are a few areas of native grasses we will burn out here and it is always an impatient wait to see what native grasses and flowers come back looking twice as healthy.

Bring on the warmer weather!

Sandy Hollow Recreation Area

Zach Weyer, Park Ranger

Winter maintenance is coming to an end. Things are being cleaned up for the opening of the park again. Soon prairie burns will begin across the county and new prairie plots will be planted.

Sandy Hollow Campground will be open by April 15th to the public. This year will be the first year where we are offering five (5) seasonal sites which are all currently booked. If you would have interest in a seasonal site for 2019 we will be taking applications come late fall, please watch our newsletter, websites and local papers for details. We will also have four (4) sites available by online reservations.

These sites can be found through www.mycountyparks.com.

Our entrance building is ready to go for this season. This building will be staffed throughout the day and evenings to help handle your vehicle passes, canoe and kayak rentals, answer questions and purchase small snack items.



We will also have the swimming beach ready for those looking to cool off come those hot July days.

We are looking forward to the busy season again!

Online Reservation Updates:

We are very optimistic that we will be live with the site by the end of March. We have a few tests to run to make sure all the moneys and transactions are going to the proper place. Along with a few more minor details to complete. We will have a selection of campsites available for online reservations, weekends will require a 4 night minimum rental. Our cabins will continue to have 2 night minimum rental for weekends and 3 night minimum for holidays. Rentals for both the campsites and cabins will be effective April 15- October 15. With the exception of Oak Grove Campsites we will stop taking reservations the second Thursday of October. Please note that our campgrounds will be open on a first come first served basis around these dates weather depending. The remainder of our campsites will be available year round as they have been in the past. Our day rental facility will continue to be available year round.

Summer Camps

Join Sioux County Naturalists and interns this summer for outdoor adventures. All summer camps are free of charge. **Pre-registration is required and will start April 2, 2018 starting at 8 am.** Space is limited. All registration must be done online at www.mycountyparks.com/county/sioux.aspx for questions about registration call 712-552-1047. For questions about the summer camps call the education office at 712-552-3057.

Ages 3-4: Budding Naturalist- (different activities from last year)

Little naturalists will have a hands-on introduction to nature. Parents/adult must attend with child. Camp includes games, crafts, and trail hikes. This camp is from 8:30 am– noon.

Choose from: June 5 June 15 July 27



Ages 5-6: Frogs, Snails, Salamander Tails

Discover which animals use slime, and explore the wonderful world of natural slime. This camp includes trail hikes, games and crafts.

Choose from: June 12 & 13 9am- noon OR 1pm- 4pm June 19 & 20 9am-noon



Ages 7-9: Bug Scouts

Campers will explore the world of insects by making insect traps, using nets, experiments and collections that they will be able to take home with them. This two (2) day camp is offered four different dates from 9 am-2 pm, camper must attend full two (2) days of camp.

Choose from: June 26 & 27 June 28 & 29 July 11 & 12 July 24 & 25



Ages 10-12: Water Works

Get ready to get wet! We will discover and learn about the Iowa's wetlands hands-on! We will explore the pond, put together bird boxes, explore the river sandbars, floodplain and go swimming. Camp is held at the Big Sioux Recreation Area, southwest of Hawarden. Two camps are offered over two (2) days, from 9 am-3 pm, camper must attend both days of camp.

Choose from: July 17 & 18 July 19 & 20



Ages 13-15: Hunter Education Overnight Camp

This overnight camp will give participants the opportunity to pass the Iowa Hunter Education course (which is required for an Iowa Hunting license), as well as participate in a fun overnight camp experience. Participants will learn firearm safety; shoot/don't shoot scenarios, hunting laws and more. Also go on night hike, catfish the river, try out archery and make s'mores. Child must attend full length of camp. Camp will start at 9:30 am on July 31 and dismiss at 1:30 pm August 1. We will meet at the Whitetail and Eagles Nest Cabins at Oak Grove, meals will be potluck.

July 31 & August 1



Upcoming Programs....

Must register online for all programs, go to www.mycountyparks.com/county/sioux.aspx to register. No telephone registrations will be taken. Questions on programs please call 712-552-3057, to cancel your registration or for help with online registrations please call 712-552-1047. Weather related cancellations will be aired on 93.9 FM.

June 7- Outdoor Skills Day– Oak Grove Park: 8:30 am– 4 pm

All ages (8 years and under must have an adult present)

This fun filled Thursday will start at 8:30 am and end at 4 pm. Participants will register at the picnic shelter near the river at Oak Grove Park. Sessions for the day may include: shotgun shooting, air rifles, archery, outdoor cooking, canoeing, improving outdoor skills and much more! This even is cosponsored with 4-H Extension and Sioux County Sportsmen's Club. Participants will be provided lunch, no cost for event. You must preregister for this event; first 270 kids will be accepted.



June 9- Family Fishing Clinic– Sandy Hollow Recreation Area: 9 am– 12:30 pm

All Ages are welcomed! (8 years and under must have an adult present)

Join us at the shade shelter near the Sandy Hollow Recreation Area pond. This fun filled morning will include fishing instruction, fishing, casting contest, ending with lunch and giveaways. Fishing poles and bait provided, or bring your own. No cost, entry fee to park waved for participants during event hours. Event is cosponsored with Sioux County Sportsmen's Club. Those 16 years of age and older must have a valid fishing license to actively fish.



June 23- Do You Want To Be An Insect– Oak Grove Park: 2:30 pm

All Ages are welcomed!

Do you want to be an insect? What would your gigantic world be like? Where would you live, hide, eat, lay eggs? Lets explore the trails at Oak Grove Park with entomologist and Dordt professor, Jeremy Hummel, on Saturday June 23rd at 2:30pm. We will be armed with nets and Ziploc bags for a catch and release hike. Meet at the parking area near the cabins in Deer Run Campground (last roadway in campground). The trail is not stroller friendly, you will need bug spray, sunscreen and water bottle. Cancelled if raining.

July 7- Family Fishing Clinic– Rivers Bend Campground, Rock Valley: 9 am– 1:30 pm

All ages are welcomed! (8 years and under must have an adult present)

Join us at the Rivers Bend Campground for a fun morning of fishing. Pre-registration required, must call the City of Rock Valley at 712-476-6065 after April 28. Those 16 and over must have valid fishing license to fish. Fishing poles and bait are available or bring your own. No cost, entrance fee waived to park during program time. Event is cosponsored with City of Rock Valley.



August 4- Ringneck Rendezvous– Rock Valley Gun Club: 4– 8:30 pm

Ages 5-16 (5-8 years must have an adult present. All adults welcome with preregistration.)

Join us for a fun evening of outdoor experiences including: trap shooting, bb guns, archery, sling shots, outdoor related games, meal, special program by Royal Gauntlet, and door prizes. \$10 registration fee for all youth and adults attending event. **Registration required by August 1, 2018**, follow link at www.mycountyparks.com to register and for updated information. Pre-registration includes water bottle, bag, optional Ringneck Memberships and entry to door prizes. First 400 kids will be accepted. Event cosponsored with Sioux Prairie Pheasants Forever and Iowa DNR.

Upcoming Programs Continued...

August 14- Hunter Education– Oak Grove Lodge: 9 am– 7 pm

All ages 11 and over are invited to join us for our annual Hunter Safety Education Course, August 14, at the Oak Grove Lodge from 9 am-7pm. Participants must attend full length of class. Must register for course online following link at www.mycountyparks.com/County/Sioux.aspx. After you are registered for class, you will need to pick up a Hunter Education Manual from a Public Library in Hawarden, Orange City, Sioux Center, or Rock Valley. Prior to class you will need to complete the review questions in the manual and bring the manual and questions with you to class. Class will cover firearm safety, hunting ethics, fist aid, hunting laws and much more. Students will need a sack lunch and snacks for the day, supper is provided.



Mark your Calendars for our annual fall programs, registration will open approximately 2 months prior to event.

Trick or Treat Camper Reg.: Sept. 4 Women in the Outdoor: September 8 Dutch Oven Gathering: September 22

Trick or Treat Hike: October 13 Youth Mentor Hunt: October 20

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you enjoy teaching the youth about the outdoors, going on hikes, and helping with craft projects? Then this opportunity is for you! We are looking for volunteers to assist our Environmental Education staff with our 2018 summer camps. Choose how many days you want to help, and what age group works best for you. For more information or to sign up please contact Sunday Ford at 712-552-3057. Background checks required. Visit our volunteer page online at www.siouxcountyparks.org for additional information.



Nature Center Project Updates

Sunday Ford, Assistant Director, EE Coordinator

The news is...\$3.1 million has been fundraised!!!! Please be excited with us to see the project fundraising at this level! Also, we have been awarded a \$300,000 USDA REDLG loan. This is a revolving loan through North-West REC. Thanks to Lyle Korver and his team for this opportunity. By the time you are reading this, the Sioux County Conservation Foundation (SCCF) will have been informed about an award amount by the Enhance Iowa Committee formerly Vision Iowa. The SCCF has asked for a gift of \$600,000. This will significantly lessen our fundraising gap towards our \$4.8 million goal.

“We would like to thank everyone for their outstanding support of the project and ask for continued help with fundraising the last few hundred thousand dollars, so that we can break ground this fall.” Gordon Pottebaum, Capital Campaign and SCCF member.

Please visit our website www.siouxcountyparks.org for continued updates on this project and to donate.

2018 Rates and Fees

Camping

Big Sioux Rec. Area

Electric/Water- \$20

Online Reservation- \$25

Full hook up- \$22

Online Reservation- \$27

Bruce Schomaker Rec. Area

Electric/Water- \$18

Oak Grove

Electric- \$18

Online Reservation- \$23

Tent Site- \$13

Sandy Hollow Rec. Area

Electric- \$18

Online Reservation- \$23

Electric/water- \$20

Online Reservation- \$25

Full hook up- \$22

Online Reservation- \$27

Vehicle Passes (Big Sioux Rec. Area/Sandy Hollow Rec. Area)

Day pass- \$5

Annual pass- \$20, second vehicle registered same day/same family \$10 per additional pass.

Water Crafts (Big Sioux Rec. Area/Sandy Hollow Rec. Area)

2 canoes and 2 kayaks available- hourly \$5 first hour, \$1 per hour after

2 paddleboards- Big Sioux Rec. Area only- \$10 first hour, \$1 per hour after

Off Site Watercraft Rental, must make reservation prior to use, and able to transport.

6 canoes & 4 kayaks- \$18 a day (5+ hrs.), \$10 half day use off site

*Off site use restricted to local areas only.

Shelters

Open shelters located throughout the county no charge, first come first served.

Alton Roadside Park

Enclosed Shelter- \$40

Oak Grove

Big Sioux Shelter- \$30

Oak Grove Lodge- \$150 (\$200 damage deposit)

Sandy Hollow Rec. Area

Clubhouse- \$250 (\$250 damage deposit and group entrance fee)

Cabins

All located at Oak Grove, 2 night minimum stays during the summer months, closed during off season.

Eagles Nest & Whitetail- \$65 a night

Bluegill Bungalow & Foxes Den- \$75 a night

More details on facilities and rentals available online at www.siouxcountyparks.org.

Seasonal Job Openings

Do you enjoy working outdoors, painting, mowing, interacting with youth, cleaning? We have openings for seasonal summer help at various parks managed by the Sioux County Conservation Board. We have opening for the following positions: gate attendants at the Big Sioux Rec. Area and Sandy Hollow Rec. Area, seasonal maintenance positions at Big Sioux Rec Area, Oak Grove and Sandy Hollow Rec. Area.

- Seasonal maintenance positions will be responsible for janitorial work in rental facilities and general parks, painting/staining, string trimming, cutting firewood, mowing and other jobs as assigned. Knowledge on running various equipment helpful. Typical hours are 8am- 4:30pm and may include some weekends.
- Gate Attendants at Big Sioux Rec. Area and Sandy Hollow Rec. Area will be responsible for monitoring the entrance and exit of the park, assuring guest have vehicle passes, answering any questions on park, janitorial cares, sales of candy/snack items, watercraft rentals and other tasks as assigned. Typical hours are 10 am- 8pm times are flexible, hours will include weekends, holidays, and evenings.

Please see online at www.mycountyparks.com for further details on employment opportunities. Applications for seasonal maintenance and gate attendants available online.

Saying goodbye to our winter visitors...

Sarah Davelaar, Naturalist

As the weather begins to warm up it is time once again to say goodbye to our winter visitors! We have seen some unique visitors, specifically owls, this winter, even making history with one feathered friend!

In late November many people around the county got to see Snowy Owls. Though a treat for us to see, the presence of this bird here mean condition are worse up north. This year was what they call an irruption, typically related to higher competition for food. The snowy owls typically only come down to northern Minnesota to winter before heading back to the Tundra to breed. Their white feathers help them blend into the landscape as they hunt by either day or night. These guys stand out when you see a 23 inch all white bird sitting on a telephone pole or in the field. Most have probably left this area by now but it's a good bird to put on your bucket list for next year!

Every winter we seem to have a couple long eared owls that call Oak Grove home for a few months. They prefer sheltered areas and coniferous trees. These long eared owls breed up in northern Minnesota and lower parts of Canada. They hunt in open fields at night and spend most of their day hiding close to a tree trunk. They measure about 15 inches tall and have beautiful feathers that help them camouflage. You can identify a long eared owl by their slender body and close set of ear tufts above their rusty face. Chances are if you see one in Oak Grove, there may be another close by as they often form roosting groups! So keep your eyes open for them!

Just a couple weeks ago, Oak Grove added another species to the list of birds seen here- a northern saw-whet owl! This little bird, only 8 inches tall, has never, as far as we know, been spotted in the park before. The little owl travels as far down as Missouri to winter before heading back up to northern Minnesota and lower provinces of Canada to breed in the spring. Due to their size they are often preyed upon by larger birds such as Great Horned Owls and Cooper's Hawks. They spend most of their day motionless in a coniferous trees roosting. The owl spotted in the park was an adult as noted by its coloration; reddish brown above and white below with white streaks and a distinct facial pattern. The little owl stayed in the same spot all day, it has since moved somewhere else but could still be in the park. The best way to find a northern saw-whet it to look for what looks like a pop can sitting in a tree! Or listen for song-birds, as they often give away their hiding spots.

All three of these species only visit us a short time. The only way to see them is to get out, hike a trail and give yourself plenty of opportunities to spot one of our very specials visitors!



Snowy Owl

Photo: Robert DeHaan



Long Eared Owl

Photo: Nathaniel DeJong



Northern Saw-whet Owl

Photo: Sarah Davelaar

Thank you

Les Hansen- Birdhouse building boards

West Sioux Sportsmen's Club- placing fishing habitat at Big Sioux Rec. Area

Sioux County Conservation Board



If you would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list please send a postcard with your name and address to:

Sioux County Conservation Board
Oak Grove Park
4051 Cherry Ave.
Hawarden, IA 51023

Sioux County Conservation Board
712/552-1047
conservation@siouxcounty.org
www.mycountyparks.com
www.siouxcountyparks.org

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Zach Weyer- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech- Sandy Hollow
Alex Lynott- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech- Big Sioux Rec. Area
Damon Anderson- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech- Oak Grove
Sarah Davelaar- Naturalist

Meetings

Held the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Administration Office in Oak Grove.

Sioux County Conservation Board
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Hawarden, IA 51023
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