



SIoux COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Volume 30
Issue 1 Winter 2021

4051 Cherry Ave Hawarden, IA 51023

www.siouxcountyparks.org

712-552-1047

Sioux County Park Overview

As we anticipate the change of the season to the winter months the parks have been closed down for the camping season. The staff has been busy prepping outdoor projects and wrapping up what they can, along with getting ready to move to inside projects. This fall we have completed projects at the Big Sioux Recreation Area including a new concrete walking path, spillway repairs allowing the reopening of our north entrance. Work has also continued on the School House Cabin. At Sandy Hollow Recreation Area, we have wrapped up working on the walking bridge back on the trail and the one connecting the swimming beach area to the campground. Road repairs have also been completed in the campground to aid in water flow. Oak Grove staff have been busy clearing trees from the prairie hill side behind the Prairie Woods Nature Center and other locations. Read on for more details on these projects.

Sandy Hollow Recreation Area

Taylor Deegan, Park Ranger

As we come to a close on another year at Sandy Hollow, we want to do a quick reflection on what the past few months looked like. We were able to finish up on the main walkway of the bridge that goes over the west branch in the southeast corner of the park. It is now open to walking and non-motorized recreational traffic. As the camping season closed out we were able to add concrete pads to the rest of our existing campsites on the west side. Also with the seasonal closure of the campground we were able to add another culvert on both of the campground waterway crossings to help control flash flooding we receive from heavy rains. Although conditions remain very dry, this fall gave us the perfect opportunity for dirt work because we were able to get to areas to excavate that normally are either wet or underwater.

A new event that occurred in the park this year, that really was well received, was a haunted hike put on by the Sioux Center High School FFA club and local businesses. It gave people a good opportunity to experience the outdoors during a season when a lot of things tend to start going inside. This event took place on the weekend of Halloween and ran two nights, bringing in about 1,100 visitors. It really was a great trial year and we look forward to having the FFA club and local businesses continue to host this event annually at Sandy Hollow. This time of the year also gives us the chance to catch up on repairs, equipment maintenance and projects that we otherwise cannot get to due to how busy the parks are during our warmer months. We hope you are able to get through the rest of 2020 and we wish you blessings in this holiday season.



Oak Grove Park

Myron Dekkers, Park Ranger

Wow, what a great fall we have had! Other than a short lived snow and a short burst of cold temps, it has been fabulous.

Because of the ideal fall conditions, we were able to work on a number of outdoors projects. In October, we had a great group of students from the Western Christian High School come out to Oak Grove. The students helped install some needed steps on our "Wood Pecker Lane" hiking trail, along with doing some trail cleanup.



This fall, we also were able to do some prairie restoration at both Oak Grove Park and adjacent CRP ground. All together, we cut down around 3,000 undesirable trees consisting of mainly Eastern Red Cedar trees and Siberian Elm trees.



De Koster Wildlife Refuge, originally donated back in 2008 by the De Koster family, got a new parking lot entrance this fall. This was made possible by the SCCB purchasing a small section of adjacent land. Now you can safely pull off Hwy 75 northeast of Rock Valley and enjoy the wildlife.

We ended up seeding around 60 acres of Iowa prairie mix. It is great seeing good habitat.



We also were able to transplant 6 Hackberry trees from a future bike path location in Hawarden to Oak Grove. The trees came from our property along 7th Street in Hawarden. We planted 2 of the trees in Turkey Ridge and the other 4 in the Deer Run Campground.

We took some time and did some bank stabilization by a foot bridge on our hiking trail at the Fairview Wildlife Complex. We hauled in some boulders and beefed up the ravine's bank so flooding won't take out our bridge so easily. We also hung some more signage near the road.



While doing all these things, we also accomplished our regular fall tasks including finishing our camping season and winterizing our facilities. What a busy and great fall it has been!

Big Sioux Recreation Area

Alex Lynott, Park Ranger

Things are slowly getting back to the intended working order around the park with the north entrance road open and spillway flood damages approximately 90% complete. One of the first new things you will notice when driving into the park is the start of a spectacular paved bike trail with the goal of connecting the city of Hawarden's existing bike trail to a paved trail around the Big Sioux Recreation Area. The paved portions of the trail will also be kept cleared of snow this winter by the park staff in order to offer you just one more activity within the park during the winter. If the summer fishing success is any indication of how ice fishing will go, there should be some nice sized crappies and bluegills pulled through the ice this winter!



On the nicer, calm days you are almost guaranteed to see at least one of the four resident Bald Eagles while in the park. The new to the neighborhood parents had two offspring for their second successful year at their nest site just on the outside of the park boundary. Their offspring build excellent fishing skills in the summer here at the lake and on the river. It is always a treat to have this family group stay throughout the winter months and then to see how many more family members emerge from the nest in the spring.

Progress is still being made on the repurposed school house cabin out here. If you saw it in its old condition, you will be in complete shock what the work has done to it. It is a beautiful family sized cabin that will offer larger families the option to have a longer stay getaway in the woods. It will offer a full kitchen, three bedrooms, two full bathrooms, washing machine and dryer, two lofts, a half-wrap covered porch, and a backyard firepit. There is no definite end date for the project as of yet. I am very excited for it to be rented out and believe it will be one of the most popular cabins in this region. It is secluded in the woods and off the main road. There is bound to be many many memories made in this repurposed piece of local history!



Annual vehicle passes expire December 31, 2020.

Stop by the entrance booths to self register for new passes or visit the Prairie Woods Nature Center.

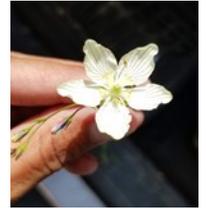
A look back at Fall 2020...

Sunday Ford- Assistant Director/Environmental Education Coordinator

Your educators enjoyed two continuing education opportunities in northwest Iowa, with neighboring northwest Iowa County Naturalists. The first was in Dickinson County, and included a lesson from Iowa DNR Fisheries Biologist, Mike Hawkins, who explained the history and efforts of improvement of Diamond Lake. We were up to our knees in wetland! We also visited a fen and enjoyed identifying amphibians and plants in this unique habitat. The second naturalist outing was hosted at our very own Prairie Woods Nature Center in Sioux County. It was great to invite Naturalists from our District to learn about the nature center and attend classes.

We were able to host and teach many public programs and events in Sioux County.

- ◇ Ladies' Nature Escape was at the Big Sioux Recreation Area
- ◇ Dutch Oven Gathering at Oak Grove
- ◇ Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF) at Prairie Woods Nature Center
- ◇ Guest speakers such as Duane Jundt with his Teddy Roosevelt presentation, and Kelly McKay with his Build a Better Birder Workshop Series thanks to a REAP-CEP grant.



Field trips and outings to the Prairie Woods Nature Center have been a highlight. We had a few classes come this fall, as well as GEMS, Hope Haven, and Red Hats Society.

Although we are not going into the schools for programs, we have offered some after school library programs, outdoor programs on school grounds and outings to wildlife areas.

We are also trying our hand at virtual programs that we send to the teachers once a month. The last virtual topic was habitat. Can you tell which habitat this fox belongs in?



Volunteers for Prairie Woods Nature Center

If you love nature, teaching kids, getting out on the land, or simply lending a helping hand we have a place for you! We are seeking dynamic volunteers to fulfill a much-needed niche at the Prairie Woods Nature Center located at Oak Grove Park overlooking a spectacular vista. Inside is filled with interactive displays with information regarding our local habitats, history and culture for visitors to explore. Volunteers will greet guests as they visit, answer basic questions and assist in small nature center related tasks. Morning, afternoon and evening shifts available during week days, evenings, weekends and summer holidays.

We are looking for assistance with the following areas:

Animal Care

Building & Grounds

Front Desk

Interpretive Trail

Program Development

Teaching Naturalist

Event Volunteer

Summer Camp

Other: baking/sewing/research/etc.

If interested in volunteering at the Prairie Woods Nature Center please visit us at our website for further descriptions. Fill out the volunteer application online or one can be picked up at the center. We will be happy to answer any of your questions please call us at 712-552-3057.

Environmental Education Opportunities

Pre-registration REQUIRED for most events but is appreciated for all events, please visit our website at siouxcountyparks.org/events to learn more about the programs and how to register. Programs held at the Prairie Woods Nature Center are indicated by:  All other program location noted in description. Day of cancellation of programs will be posted on our Facebook page and on 93.9 FM.

January 16- Ice Fishing Clinic- Big Sioux Recreation Area

10 am- noon

Whether you love ice fishing or interested in learning more about it, join us on the ice at the Big Sioux Rec Area, just west of Hawarden. Bring a sack lunch or snacks and a bucket to sit on and we will provide the rest! We will pre-drill the holes, provide bait, poles and discuss the types of fish you may catch and equipment being used. There is no cost for this event, entry fee to the park is waved during the time of the program. Those age 16 and over actively fishing must have a valid Iowa fishing license.

January 19– Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)

9:30 am and 2 pm

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats and fellowship and a short presentation. Each month we will take the time to explore how the specific design of our chosen topic is essential to its owner. We promise you will enjoy your- SELF!
Topic: By Design– Series Kick Off

February 5- Owl Prowl with special guest, Kelly McKay, Expert Birder

6- 8 pm

February is a great time for hearing owls during their courtship and egg-laying season. We will meet at the Prairie Woods Nature Center for an introduction on owls. Then we will spend time hiking and calling for owls including barred, great horned and screech owls. Dress warmly and feel free to bring a flashlight covered with a red cloth or cellophane. A live owl will make its appearance! This program is part of the “Build a Better Birder” series of programs brought to us through Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP-CEP) grant.

February 6- Eagle Day- with Kelly McKay, Expert Birder

These four fabulous activities are a part of the “Building a Better Birder” Series with Kelly McKay brought to us by a Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP-CEP) grant.

Morning outdoor activity: Eagle Watch

8- 10 am

Join us for a morning lesson and hike to view local eagles coming off their night roost (indoors if dangerous wind chill). Kelly McKay will provide his leadership and expertise.

Morning indoor activity: Presentation Topic- Summary and Results of the 2005-2008 Milan Bottoms Bald Eagle Night Roost Survey Project

10- 11:30 am

Kelly McKay, will define and describe what a Bald Eagle communal night roost is, as well as discussing Bald Eagle winter ecology. Additionally, he will summarize the background and preliminary results of this 6 year project.

Lunch indoor/outdoor activity: Eagle watch and bring your own sack lunch

11 am- 1 pm

Bring your binoculars and sack lunch and join fellow eagle lovers as we view eagle migration from the nature center. Bring outdoor clothes just in case we get the itch to watch outdoors.

Afternoon indoor activity: Topic-Assessment of Human Activity Impacts on Bald Eagle Reproductive Success Along the Upper Mississippi

1- 2:30 pm

During this presentation; by Kelly McKay, we examine and assess the impacts of various types and frequency of human activities on Bald Eagle reproductive success within the McGregor District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

February 16– Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)

9:30 am and 2 pm

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats and fellowship and a short presentation. Each month we will take the time to explore how the specific design of our chosen topic is essential to its owner. We promise you will enjoy your- SELF!
Topic: By Design- Feet

 **March 16– Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)**

9:30 am and 2 pm

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats and fellowship and a short presentation. Each month we will take the time to explore how the specific design of our chosen topic is essential to its owner. We promise you will enjoy your- SELF!
Topic: By Design- Beaks

 **March 27- Hunter Safety Field Day**

9 am- 3 pm

Those ages 11 and over are invited to join us for a hunter safety field day. Online registration required at the www.register-ed.com website along with online class work completed prior to class at hunter-ed.com. The Saturday class will cover fire-arm safety, hunting ethics, hunting laws and much more; final exam will be given at end of the day. Students will need to bring a sack lunch and snacks for the day. We will be shooting outdoors, please dress accordingly. Must attend full day.

April 1- Summer Camp Registration– Online only

8 am

This is the day to sign your kids up for this year’s summer camp season! Topics, dates and times will be posted prior to this date. Registration will open at 8 am on mycountyparks.com April 1.

 **April 20– Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)**

9:30 am and 2 pm

Seniors! Looking for a great place to gather with friends? Enjoy coffee, treats and fellowship and a short presentation. Each month we will take the time to explore how the specific design of our chosen topic is essential to its owner. We promise you will enjoy your- SELF!
Topic: By Design- Eggs

 **May 6-Introduction to Warblers of Iowa Instruction and Slides**

6- 8 pm

This program is with guest expert birder, Kelly McKay as part of the “Building a Better Birder” Series brought to us by a Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP-CEP) grant.

Winter Pop-up Program

It is our intention to host public snowshoe outings starting at the Prairie Woods Nature Center this winter. It will be dependent on the amount of snowfall and windchill. Please watch our Facebook page for these announcements.

Senior Environmental Learning and Fellowship (SELF)

Whether you are new to SELF or a committed participant, we encourage you to give it a try. We promise you will enjoy your-SELF! The theme for 2021 will be all “By Design”. Each month we will take the time to explore how the specific design of our chosen topic is essential to its owner. Join us the third Tuesday of the month at 9:30 am or 2 pm. Preregistration is requested either online or by calling 712-552-3057.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| January: By Design-Kick off | July: Skeleton & Teeth |
| February: Feet | August: Wings & Feathers |
| March: Beaks | September: Seeds |
| April: Eggs | October: Animal Homes |
| May: Animal Coverings | November: Ears |
| June: Eyes | December: By Design Team Jeopardy! |

Mark your calendar for our upcoming events:

- June 4- Birding Hike
- June 4- Iowa Bird ID
- June 10- Outdoor Skills Day
- June 12- Family Fishing Clinic
- August 7- Ringneck Rendezvous
- August 10- Hunter Safety
- September 11- Ladies’ Nature Escape
- September 18- Dutch Oven Gathering
- October 9- Trick or Treat Hike
- October 23- Youth Hunt

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.- Oak Grove
Sarah Davelaar- Naturalist
Taylor Deegan- Park Ranger/Maint. Tech.- Sandy Hollow

.....
: 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.
:

Sioux County Conservation Board Members

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



Sioux County Conservation Foundation Members

Brian VanEngen- Chairperson
Stan Hoekstra- Treasurer
Dawn DeWit- Secretary
Gordon Pottebaum- Member
Greg Hansen- Member



Standard Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Orange City, IA
Permit No. 100

Sioux County Conservation Board
Oak Grove Park
4051 Cherry Ave
Hawarden, IA 51023
Return Service Requested