

“Looking OUT THE BACK DOOR...”

The Sac County Conservation Board's Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2009

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Our Mission: “To initiate an awareness and foster stewardship of nature’s rewards.”

Have an Adventure!

This summer your friends and/or family and have an adventure. There are many places to visit here in Sac County. Going canoeing is almost a right of summer. Sac County has been designated as the head of the North Raccoon River Water



Trail. The northern most point to put in is at Vogel Access located north of Nemaha. This trail has signs on the bridges designating how far it is until the next access. This trail can take you all of the way to Des Moines. From Vogel Access to Hagge Park it's a 19 mile trip. This would be a good weekend for fairly experienced canoeists. If you don't want something quite that adventurous, a good trip would be a 3 mile trip from White Horse Access to Grant Park. This would allow a lot of stopping on sandbars as well as an overnight adventure at Grant Park. After setting up

your campsite, take the trails and let the kids play at the playground. Later on enjoy an evening by the fireside while you spend time with your family. Before going on a canoe trip it is always a good idea to practice. Using your own or a rented canoe from the Sac County Conservation Board. Another fun day would be to canoe on Lake Arrowhead which is a good “first timers place” to practice. Then change gears and bike the Sauk Rail Trail. This trail runs all of the way to Carroll but you can turn around at any point you like. There are two nearby campgrounds that are close to these features, as well as, being right on Black Hawk Lake. Why not make it an overnight trip and bring fishing poles & bait? You just may be able to catch your dinner. If hiking sounds more like it, then enjoy Hagge Park. The park has 15 camping spots and 2 miles of trail.

Stay overnight and make it a weekend to remember. If you would like to get a bit more adventurous and do not care to have a trail to follow McDonald Greenbelt is a great woodland to hike up and down the hills. The back side of Reiff Park near Early provides you with an opportunity to experience a pine woodland. It is hushed and a very cool experience. A brand new prairie has come within walking distance to Sac City. The East Sac Wetland project is a prairie wetland complex that is over 100 acres. In August– September this prairie is a nectaring spot for Monarchs and a very neat place to visit. No matter where you go or what activity you participate in, an adventure in nature is always a great and remembered time!

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Director's Notes

The Sac County Conservation Center is getting closer to becoming a reality. The inside of the Center is essentially finished. Desks, tables, chairs and other furnishings have been ordered and should be arriving in the next month. The phone system and computers are in and will be hooked-up when we move in. We are starting to obtain display and exhibit material as well.

On the outside, the retaining walls are being completed and we are currently accepting bids for sidewalk and parking area work. We are planning on officially moving our office and operations later this summer and will have a grand opening thereafter.

Landscaping will be started this fall and finished up next spring. For those of you who would like to view the center please stop by at Hage Park. We would be happy to show it to you.

Another exciting project that is currently going on, is the concrete paving of the 13 miles of the Sauk Rail Trail between Carnarvon and Maple River. The work has started at Maple River and is proceeding north. We hope the work will be completed by mid-summer and finally the entire Sauk Rail Trail will be hard-surfaced from Black Hawk Lake to Swan Lake. Should anyone like more information on these two exciting projects going on in Sac County or would like to help please contact our office at Hage Park.

Have a great summer and enjoy your Sac County Parks!



Looking into the fact files!



(*Castor Canadensis*)



- They are among the largest rodents
- Their long orange and white incisors never stop growing
- The orange is a hard enamel and the white is softer, which sharpens the teeth as they eat
- They burrow in banks but will also make an area suitable for them by building dams (lodges)
- The lodges may have a large family in them consisting of monogamous parents, young kits, and the yearlings from last spring
- They eat leaves, bark, twigs, roots and other aquatic plants
- Beavers can swim up to 5 miles an hour
- They can stay underwater for 15 minutes
- On their eyes they have a second set of clear eyelids, giving them natural goggles.
- The fur is very oily and waterproof
- They are one of few animals that manipulate their environment for their survival
- They can live to be 24 and can weigh up to 60 lbs

Thank You

- Iowa DNR for use of their areas
- Coon River Outfitters for hosting the antler scoring program
- The DNR staff: Mike Mahn, Dan Mork, Ben Wallace, David Hoffman for their assistance with programs
- Carroll Count for use of their equipment
- All the wonderful volunteers who assisted with the Conservation Field Days
- Everyone who has continued to support the Conservation Center
- The Wall Lake Community center



Upcoming Programs



Fishing Clinic- June 5th— This fun-filled event is meant for kids in grades 3rd through 6th. The clinic will be held at Arrowhead Lake from 9 am to 12 pm. Kids will learn fish ID, fishing rules and safety, casting, make their own pop can fishing equipment and receive snacks and prizes. In order to sign up please call Steph at the Extension office at 712-662-7131. This is a free fun event so make sure to sign up now!

It's summer camp time again! The fees will be the same as last year, \$20 for 5-7 year olds, \$30 for 8-10 year olds, and \$40 for 11-14 year olds. Camps are filled with environmentally themed activities, games and crafts. The 5-7 year olds will receive a snack while older children will need to bring a lunch. To sign up for a camp please call 712-662-4530 as soon as possible. .

5-7 year olds- Camp times are 9-11:30 or 1-3:30

June 8th-10th- Wild About Water—Learn about the animals that are wild about water such as frogs, fish, amphibians and much more. Visit a pond and look for these animals.

June 15-17th- Rockin' Reptiles— We will answer questions about reptiles such as why do snakes stick out their tongue? Where are the scales on a turtle? Can you win a staring contest with a snake? We will answer those and many, many more questions about reptiles

June 22-24th-Mammal Mania-What makes a mammal a mammal? What makes them different from other animals. Come to camp and learn how these animals escape danger and much more.



8-10 years olds-Camp times are from 10 am -2 pm

June 29th- July1st-Early American Days— Learn about the lives of Iowa's first people and of pioneer life. Experience some of tasks and games of these people's lives and see how much they depended on the nature surrounding them.

July 13-15th- Jr. Naturalists-Nature Lovers— Do you like nature? Learn about birds, plants, nature inventors and much more through games, hikes, pond dipping and much more.

11-14 year olds- Camp times are from 10 am -3 pm

July 20-23rd- Eco-survivors— Work in teams to earn points while learning outdoor survival skills. Learn more about fire, see live creatures and go canoeing. This camp includes an overnight camping trip along the Raccoon River

Time is running short—so please make sure to sign up now

August 28th- Monarch Tagging

Bring nets and come prepared to tag some monarchs before they migrate to their wintering grounds in the south. Learn the difference between males and females. Come to Reiff Park from 2-4 pm . Please



Dutch Oven Cooking August 29th—1:00-3:00

Learn the basics of Dutch oven care, cooking basics and taste some easy and delicious recopies. The program will be held at the Hagge Park Shelter house.



Look for Halloween Night Hike to come!!



Kid's Korner—

Animals are given names when they are found in a group. Some of these group names are strange and weird. Try your best to match-up the correct group name to the animal.



A. Murder

B. Army

C. Herd

D. Colony

E. Cete

**F. Skulk or
Leash**

**G. Aerie or
Convocation**

**H. Sloth or
Sleuth**

1=F, 2=H, 3=H, 4=G, 5=D, 6=B, 7=C, 8=A





Create your own Compost!

Compost piles recycle unused food and yard waste into fresh nutrient rich soil. Composting is a good way to reduce the amount of yard and food waste one throws out. The organisms that break down and recycle the nutrients are called decomposers. These decomposers include bacteria, fungi and larger critters like worms, sow bugs, nematodes. These decomposers need a few essential elements to stay alive. These elements are a water, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon. In general this means that the pile will need a mix of green nitrogen rich material as well as brown dead carbon rich plant material. The rain will keep the pile moist, however during dry spells it may become imperative to water the pile. The compost pile will also need to be turned in order to introduce oxygen. The

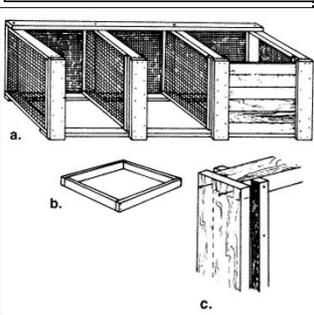
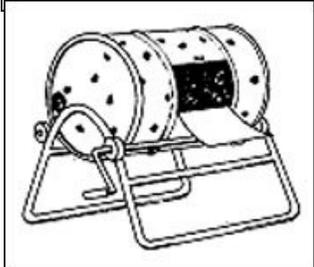
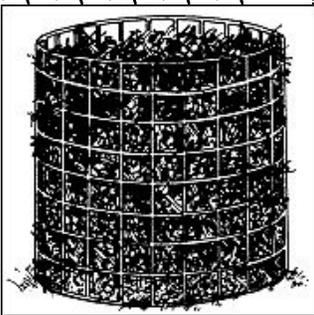
more often a pile is turned the faster the decomposition rate. There are a few compost DO NOT's, these include adding any meat products, diseased materials and pet manure. This is because the meat can spoil and may attract animals that will dig around in your pile. The pile may not reach temperatures high enough to kill weed seed. Lastly, pet waste may carry disease. Other than those don't s composting can be as simple or as involved as you choose. The more you chop up the material into smaller pieces the faster they will decompose. An easy way to cut up grass clippings and leave is to simply run them over with a lawn mower a few times. The first and easiest way to compost is called cold composting. This is for those who do not have much time and don't have a lot

of material to compost. With cold composting one simply puts the material in a pile and leaves it there. The pile will still need turned and kept moist but this will not take much time with such a small pile. It can take up to a year for the material to break down and will not get hot enough to kill any weed seeds. The second type is called hot composting. These piles are more work than the cold piles but the return is much better. With in a few weeks to a month the pile will be rich nutritious soil. The minimum size for a hot pile is 3' x3' x3' but bigger is better, however it is also more work. As decomposition happens the pile will shrink and more materials will need to be added. The best carbon (brown plants) to nitrogen (green plants) ratio is 1 to 1.... Cont. Pg. 6

Eyes To the skies

- **June 12th– New Moon**
- **June 21st– Summer Solstice**
- **June 26th– Full Moon**
- **July 11th– New Moon**
- **July 26th– Full Moon**
- **July 28-29th– Southern Delta Aquarid Meteor Shower**– It will be rare for us to see much of this shower between the moon and the fact that it is taking place so far south. However we may see a few strays. The best time to look for meteors is after midnight to the south east and produce up to 20 meteors per hour.
- **August 10th– New Moon**
- **August 12-13th– Perseids Meteor Shower**– This shower will run from July 23rd to August 22nd but will peak on the night of the 12th. This shower should be good as a new moon will make it possible to see the meteors. During the peak there will be up to 60 meteors per hour. Look to the east after midnight.
- **August 13th– Triple Conjunction with the Moon**– The planets Mars, Venus, and Saturn will be close to the waxing crescent moon. Look to the west just after sunset.
- **August 20th– Neptune in Opposition**– Neptune will be at it's closest approach to earth although it will still look like a little blue dot though the best telescope.
- **August 24th–Smallest Full Moon**—This month's full moon will be the farthest and therefore smallest of the year.

The following is the do's and don'ts of composting. Starting with the do's, do find a well drained area to place the compost pile. It is best if it is near your garden for ease of transporting materials and it will be easier to deal with if it is on level ground. To provide these decomposers with fresh oxygen place some logs on the ground before you start your pile. The next step is not necessary but if you have a lot of wild life around it might be helpful. It is to find a way to contain the compost pile. There are many commercially sold bins and a simple internet search will provide many options to choose from. The prices range from less than \$20.00 to over \$100. Or make your own with just a few re-bar and galvanized chicken wire fencing or hardware cloth. You could also use snow fence and poles. Thinking about how the pile is going to be turned will be important for your time and sanity later as these piles should be turned every day or two for faster decomposition. If a pile is turned ever week or so it will still work but it will take months instead of weeks to get your soil. The images below shows a rotating barrel made out of an old barrel and a wire three bin turning unit. The images and directions to build these bins can be found at: <http://extension.missouri.edu> and search for build your own compost bin. Now it is time to start building your pile. Start with either the brown or green material. Layer each about 2-4 inches thick. Next add a few shovel full of soil, the soil adds microbes and other decomposing critters. Sometimes mixing the nitrogen and carbon layers may help to increase decomposition. If there is an excess of brown and not enough green material you can add fertilizer. Add it at a rate of 1/2 cup for every 10 inches of material. Now just proper watering and turning will give you a rich reward of soil. The pile should reach temperatures of 110- 160 degrees F. Turn the pile when it heats up to 130-140 degrees, if you don't have a thermometer, reach into the pile and when it is uncomfortably hot it is time to turn. Lastly, some compost don'ts. Watch your water, the pile should be moist not saturated. If the microbes can't breath then they die. If composting food waste (only plant matter) it is best to make a hole in the middle and place the waste there otherwise the pile may attract flies and other pests. Finally composting is a bit of an art, if the pile is too cold add more nitrogen, too hot add more carbon or check if it is moist and has a good supply of oxygen. Composting is a fun way to spend time outdoors and provide a fresh supply of compost for your gardens!



Summer Staff

This year there will be some familiar faces that you will see while camping at your local county parks this summer. Two returning summer rangers are Joel Schwarzkopf, graduate from DMACC in Ankeny and Adam Haakenson, student at Iowa State University. Roger Huster, another familiar face will serve as Grant Park Attendant. He did a great job last year and we are happy to have him back.

The campground hosts are back and we are glad to see them! Jim and Nancy Meusburger are the hosts for Hagge Park.



The hosts are extremely valuable as they are there to assist a camper if the rangers are not around. With such great people around this is sure to be one of the best camping seasons yet!

Sac County Conservation Board

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- Kenny Bentsen—Sac City—Chairman
- Rich Feilmeier—Early—Vice Chairman
- Barb Bloom—Odebolt—Secretary
- Dean Stock—Lake View—Member
- Andy Meredith—Lake View—Member

Staff

- Chris Bass—Executive Director
- Sandi Huster—Secretary
- Rene Stroud—Naturalist

Meetings

Regular board meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM at the Hagge Park office. These meetings are open to the public.

Hagge Park Office Phone: (712) 662-4530
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The Sac County Conservation Board in the provisions of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age, or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Sac County Conservation Board Office or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington D.C. 20240