

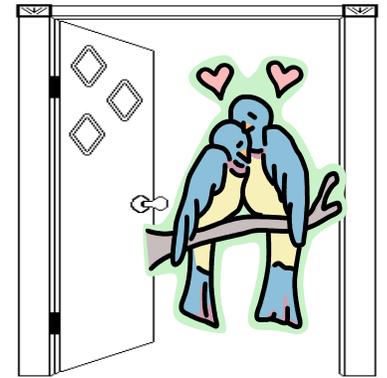
# “Looking OUT THE BACK DOOR...”

## The Sac County Conservation Board’s

Spring 2011

Volume 24/ Issue 19

### Quarterly Newsletter



## Spring— A Season of Love

Spring is a very energetic time of year. Animals are rising from their winter slumbers and returning from their winter vacations. The flowers are blooming again and the buzzing sound of insects have returned to the air. This is also the season of love. Animals start looking for mates as early as January or February and the search may continue for some as late as August. Spring is when the search for love is the strongest. Courtship rituals range from the very sweet to just plan quirky behaviors. The Opossum is an early starter, males and females may start searching for a mate as early as January/February. To indicate the male likes the female he will nuzzle her and follow her around. But, if she is not interested, things can get a bit rough for the male as she will suddenly turn and hiss, click her teeth and try to bite him. Moles which are solitary animals tend to fight when they run into each other within their network of underground tunnels. During February thru March males and females are more tolerant of each other and may even remain

together for a while. Eastern Cottontails have a long season of love. Their season can start as early as February and lasts till September. Springtime is when you see the most action, which may be where the expression “mad as a spring hare” came from. Look for males scratching on ground and acting aggressive by boxing and dancing around as they establish a hierarchy of dominance. The dominant male will defend a female. To show his interest in a female a male may run up to her and urinate on her, however if she isn’t that interested in him she may jump over him and urinate on him. She may also rear up on hind feet and strike out at the male with her front paws. Chipmunks start looking for love in February and the search can last till April. Males come out of hibernation earlier than females and stake out a territory over a females’ home range. Males will chase a female and flick their tails to show their intentions but, if a female is not interested she will turn and bite him. If she is interested in a mate they will touch noses, lick each other and

lie around in the same area. They will stay together for a while or until the female chases the male away. Woodchucks live in a complex of underground tunnels and will often tunnel near each other so that individuals’ tunnels are either accessible by connecting tunnels or above ground runways. Woodchucks come out of hibernation between late January to March. Males tend to emerge before females. During this time they search for love by wandering around at anytime day or night. The male will enter many burrows looking for a non-aggressive female. Grey Squirrel courtship displays include the mating chase and they give a muffled chuck sound. You may see them displaying this behavior in late winter through spring. Males may fight between each other to determine dominance. When you see them chasing the older more dominate squirrel is the one closer to the

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## Director's Notes

As I sit here on this last day of February, it has been three months since moving into the new Sac County Conservation Center.

It is very exciting to be able to have a facility where we are capable of expanding and enhancing our environmental education opportunities to the people of Sac County. The classroom is starting to I see increased usage from school groups, workshops, meetings, etc. We are continuing to organize and catalog our books and resources in the library as well.

This spring will see landscaping, seeding and plantings incorporated around the conservation center. Native plants will be used as much as possible to enhance the area and limit the amount of maintenance needed. If you are a person with time who enjoys gardening we will be looking for volunteers to help maintain the landscape.

The design plan is being finalized for the exhibit area on the upper floor. When finished, this will list costs and specifications for each individual display. Armadillo Arts, out of Iowa City, is the company that is doing this plan for us. We are excited as it will enable us with a "road map" if you will,

that will help us stay on course to completely finish out the interior of the Conservation Center. The Sac County Conservation Board is now available on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sac-County-Conservation-Board/182554391787162#!/pages/Sac-County-Conservation-Board/182554391787162?sk=wall>

Please make sure to check us out! If you have not had the opportunity to visit the Sac County Conservation Center please take a chance to do so. Currently the Conservation Center is open Monday thru Friday 8-4:30. Also a ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, June 5th to

## Looking into the fact files!

### Virginia Opossum



*(Didelphia Virginiana)*

- Opossums are North America's only marsupial.
- They have an opposable thumb on their hind foot.
- When the young are born they are a fraction of an ounce and about the size of a bumblebee.
- Newborn opossums must crawl up it's mothers fur and into her pouch.
- When young are large enough they will ride on their mothers back.
- Opossums are scavengers and are often seen around human dwellings.
- They are omnivores and will partake in a carrion meal.
- The opossum will hiss, growl and bear teeth when presented with danger, but it will also "play opossum"
- When an opossum feigns death it will flop to its side, stick out its tongue and either close its eyes or stare to space.
- They are excellent tree climbers and utilize their bare prehensile tail to climb.
- They do not hang from their tails.

## Thank You

- Volunteers who helped at the open house
- DNR and Sac County Extension Service for help during the Ice Fishing Clink
- Thanks to Margo's and Details for their donation of flower petals for Valentine's Day cards.
- To all that participated in the Christmas Bird Count.
- To everyone who made donations towards the kitchens in the Sac County Conservation Center
- Rosemary Partridge and Barb Bloom for their donation of books.
- Mike Zimmerman for his donation of a mounted coyote and pheasant.





# Upcoming Programs

## March 10th– Knee High Naturalists-Birds Tweet

This free program for 2-4 year olds will run from 6-8pm in the classroom of the Sac County Conservation center. Learn about birds, make items to take home and much more! To sign up call 712-662-4530.

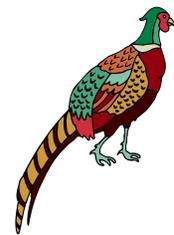


## March 18th– Sac County Sportsman’s Club Fish Fry

Tickets are available at the door, at Shamrock in Auburn, at MGM in Sac City and at the Sac County Conservation Board. Money will be used for educational programs and habitat improvement projects.

## March 25th– Pheasants Forever Banquet

Come out and support the Sac County Pheasants Forever efforts to increase wildlife habitat and support outdoor education. Tickets are available at the door at by contacting Rene Stroud at 662-4540. The banquet will begin at 5 PM at the Wall Lake Community Building.



## April 8th & 9th – Iowater Training

IOWATER is a statewide volunteer water quality monitoring program. After the program you will be a certified IOWATER Citizen Monitor. Workshop registration fee is \$20, which covers all program fees, meals, and testing equipment. Group registration fee is \$30 for up to three people; ten dollars for each additional person. This program will be held in the classroom of the Sac County Conservation Center on April 8th (from 5:30-9:30) & 9th (from 8–12). To register call Tom Duncan at 712-830-7770

## April 10th– Pelican Fest

During this exciting day at Lake View there are kids games, educational programs, horse drawn rides, and much, much more! Scopes will be available for spotting the waterfowl on the lake. To enjoy this day simply come to the bay area from 1pm to 4pm.



April 29th- Photo Contest Due– Photographs are due by 4 pm to the Sac County Conservation Board. For information on rules and how to enter the photo contest please see page 6.

## May 28th– Wild Edibles

Spring is a very delicious time of year. Come try out cattail pollen pancakes and much more at this delectable workshop. Be prepared for a hike and to enjoy the spring woodlands. This free program will run from 1 to 3 pm at the Sac County Conservation Center. To register please call 712-662-4530.



**Look forward to summer camp information!**

## Kid Korner

Walking though the outdoors you may hear animals that you cannot see. Below are some fun animal sounds to match.

- |                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| 1. Squirrel         | A. Gobble  |
| 2. Pheasants        | B. Croak   |
| 3. Herons           | C. Boom    |
| 4. Turkeys          | D. Squawk  |
| 5. Chipmunks        | E. Yap     |
| 6. Prairie Chickens | F. Chip    |
| 7. Wild Geese       | G. Chatter |
| 8. Fox              | H. Honk    |
| 9. Owl              | I. Cackle  |
| 10. Frogs           | J. Hoot    |

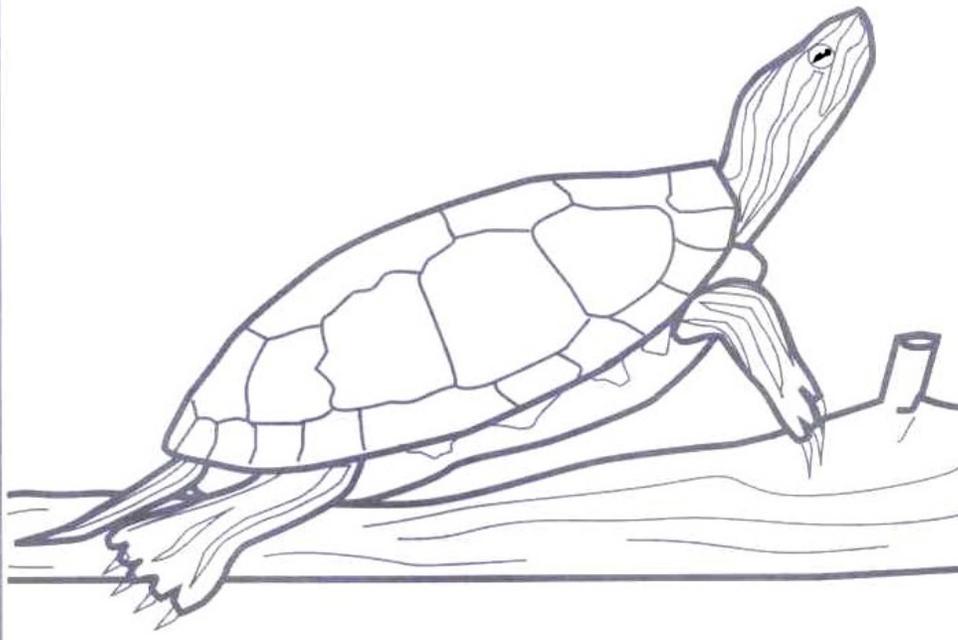
In the spring many animals are coming out of hibernation. Painted Turtles can be see swimming under the ice in early spring and basking on rocks in the summer. Young turtles hatch in fall and hibernate in their nest during the winter. In the spring they crawl out of their burrows and can be seen crawling along the ground in search for water. A great place to go look for these little guys is at the Stubb Severson Trail in Black Hawk State Park or along any water area that has sand near by. Color this painted turtle.

### Painted turtle

The painted turtle has a dark brown or green upper shell, with red lines around its edge. Its lower shell is yellow, and its body is streaked with red, yellow and black lines. Color the painted turtle!

### Nature Fact

The painted turtle is cold-blooded. This means it does not control its own body temperature. You often see turtles sunning themselves on logs to warm up their bodies.





Continued from page 1

Many woodpeckers including the Downy and the Hairy start defending territory and displaying courtship behavior in January and these activities may last till May.

Drumming for territory “signal posts” is a prominent behavior. The woodpecker will pick out the loudest tree or object such as a gutter or tin siding and hammer away. A competing male may hammer back. Courtship behaviors also include waving their head side to side, fluttering, and still pose. During still pose the birds stare at each other and can last up to twenty minutes.

White-breasted Nuthatches serenade their sweethearts with song bowing. A male will sing and bob in time to each phrase. They may chase the females but they will bring them food and even keep stores, so he can continuously feed her until eggs are laid. Pairs talk to each other by giving little calls to each other. Pairs stay together throughout the year in the same area and stay within 50 feet

of each during the spring when they are forming pair bonds. You may be able to find next year’s nest hole by watching the birds in the late afternoon and following them to the holes they rest at and where mate feeding happen. Watching Northern Cardinals at a feeder in the spring gives a person a chance to see some unique courtship behavior. One of which is the Lopsided pose, they lean to one side and hold the opposite sides wing out within view of the female. The males are not being aggressive at feeders which can happen in the winter and participate in mate feeding. A male has been seen opening up a rejected seed for a female then offering it again. Males start singing from prominent roosting areas and females or males may counter sing. Once bonds are formed, if a bird comes into a pairs territory the bird of the same gender pushes it out. American Kestrel are normally solitary birds. Once a pair has been formed a male does almost all the

hunting and participates in mate feeding. He approaches nest and rapidly flutters wings with food in his talon then gives many calls. The female flies out to him and calls and follows him until they land on a special perch where food is transferred. This continues for a 8-12 weeks. Male and female bald eagles exhibit an unusual courtship ritual. While at high altitudes they lock talons and then tumble and somersaulting towards the ground breaking apart only at the last minute. Bald eagle pairs mate for life and may use the same nest, adding sticks to it in each season. Their nests can reach six feet across and eight feet deep and weigh hundreds of pounds. Another amazing courtship ritual is the acrobatics of the American Falcon. These bird perform amazing air maneuvers, including high soaring figure eight loops, steep dives, undulating flying and chases. They may touch beaks and talons in flight. Once a pair is formed they will lower their heads

## Eyes To The Skies

- **March 4th– New Moon**
- **March 19th– Full Moon**– This full moon is unique in that it has many names. It has been called the worm moon (as the earthworms start moving with the warming of spring), the full snap moon, the full crust moon and the full crow moon as it is the biggest full moon of the year.
- **March 20th–Spring equinox**- The earth’s northern hemisphere is tilting towards the sun after this date.
- **April 3rd– New Moon and A show from Saturn**– Saturn will be on it’s closest approach to earth and will be lit by the sun. This would be a great time to take out the telescope.
- **April 18th– Full Moon**– This moon is the first full moon of spring so it is the Paschal Moon. However early people called it the pink moon as it is the time of year when many of the pink spring flowers are blooming.
- **April 21st & 22nd– Lyrids Meteor Shower**– This shower can be seen the 16th-24th but peaks on the dates given with a peak of 20 meteors per hour. Due to the waning gibbous moon the faintest meteors will not be seen. This shower emanates from Lyra the Harp. Look after midnight in a dark location
- **May 3rd– New Moon**
- **May 5-6th– Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower**– Meteors from this light shower (peak at 10 per hour) can be seen radiating out of Aquarius after midnight or in the morning ours of the 4th through the 6th.
- **May 17th– Full Moon**– This moon was called the full flower moon as the spring flowers are in full bloom at this time of year. It has also been called the milk moon or full corn planting moon.



Continued from page 5.

Beavers are monogamous and stay together throughout the year. The family is close knit and long lived. The young stay with parents for two years. A family of beavers consists of two parents, two yearlings and 2 kits from the current year and mom rules the roost. Beavers are very territorial and post sent mounds that let lone beavers know there is an established couple living in the area. Coyotes are monogamous for at least one year. Males search for females from January though April. To find a mate he howls and if she howls back, they sing a duet. The male may also mark a territory. Packs may range from two resident mated pairs to a whole pack with a mated alpha pair. Fox may be monogamous for a year or more. They start marking and fighting for a territory. The males will start calling and spending time playing and being near females in their territories. Once a bond has been formed they go house shopping and will dig out many dens. The same den may be used for several generations. A fox will pile up the dirt on the downward slope, and leave a messy den with bones. Skunk males start traveling in the late winter through spring and can search up to 5 miles a night for a female. His journey may be dangerous if he runs into traffic or another male as they will fight. If he finds a female that doesn't like him she may spray or fight him. Painted turtles come out of hibernation under the mud once the water temperature warms and can even be seen swimming around under the ice. Their courtship rituals are visual and tactile as males will vibrate their nails in front of a female then touch her neck and sides of her face with his nails to gain her favor. Tiger salamanders come out of hibernation to return to the breeding ponds or pools that they were born in. Like the painted turtles they are very early spring breeders and may group up in deep water under ice or in vernal pools to perform their unique courtship rituals. They tend to move a night and during the first few spring rains. Males tend to arrive first and begin their frenzied underwater ballet dance.

Spring is an exciting time for the animals and for people as the animals focus is on love and their rituals may make them more visible giving the outdoors adventurer great looks at these critters and maybe some great photographs too!

### Sac COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD PHOTO CONTEST

Calling all amateur photographers to capture the beauty of Sac County's

1. Maximum size of 8 X 10 photograph and it must be framed, no slides please.
2. Photos must be taken within Sac County.
3. Photos must be of nature, no domesticated animals or people.
4. Up to two photos per participant may be entered.
5. Photos must be entered into one of two age categories; 15 and under or 16 and up.
6. On the back of the photo please attach print with the location it was taken, your name, and phone number, and age bracket under which you are entering the photo .
7. Entries must be delivered to the Conservation Center by April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010 by 4 pm.
8. Individuals whose main source of income is photography are not eligible for this contest.
9. The SCCB reserves the right to display photographs within the Conservation Center
10. Photographs may be in color or black and white

natural resources!

Entries due April 29th, 2011

Photo Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age Category: 15 and under Or 16 and up

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_



### Sac County Conservation Board

#### Board Members

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

#### 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

Email: saccocon@frontiernet.net

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