

# SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

Newsletter of the Chickasaw County Conservation Board - Conserving our natural resources since 1957 Summer 2022

## Director's Dialogue Director, Chad Humpal

As most of you know by now, I took over as Director of Chickasaw County Conservation Board on January 2, 2022. I would like to thank the Chickasaw Conservation Board for giving me the opportunity to lead the conservation department into the future.

Brian Moore served the people of Chickasaw County for over 30 years. I would like to thank Brian for his years of service and for all he taught me over the past 12 years. Thank you, Brian and best of luck to you in your future endeavors.

As we start the next chapter of Chickasaw County Conservation, I want to say that I am extremely excited for the future. We have hired Justin Van Driel to fill the void that was created when I moved into the Director role. Justin joins Caleb Ciavarelli who joined us last June as a Natural Resource and Park Manager. You may have already seen both of them in the parks as they are the driving force behind our maintenance department. We were also able to hire Tyler Sassmann as our summer intern. Tyler jumped right in day one and has done a great job. With all of the rain we had, this spring wasn't an easy one, but I can say that the parks are looking great. The guys have done a wonderful job. Thank you, Caleb, Justin and Tyler. If you see them in the parks and have any questions, please stop them as they would be happy to help. Matt Crayne has led our environmental education department for the last 12 plus years. He is also coming off of a busy spring fieldtrip season where he saw over 800 students and held over 60 programs. Thank you Matt, for making a difference for so many kids.



Working in a small county you learn early on that you are going to have to wear many hats. Many times, you will be wearing several of them at the same time. As we settle into our new roles at Chickasaw County Conservation, and yes, I'm going to include Matt as I have asked him to add several administrative tasks to his plate. Mostly things I don't like to do, sorry Matt. We are going to make a mistake or two, don't worry, we will make things right. We have a lot of great ideas and plans for additions to our environmental education programs, parks and wildlife areas. Some old, some new. We are always looking to improve what is already a great County Conservation Department. As I said earlier, please reach out to us if you have any questions or comments. We welcome your ideas and feedback.

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# Director's Dialogue by Chad Humpal

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It wouldn't be fair if I didn't thank the people that mean the most to me, my family. My beautiful wife Mindy, of 18 years. I hope that is correct. I'm sure if she reads this, she will let me know if it isn't. Our wonderful children Hunter, Chase and Harper. If I'm not at work you will find me at a ball game, soccer game, wrestling meet, trap shoot, dance recital or a scouting function. They keep us extremely busy and I wouldn't change any of it. Thank you for always supporting and helping me in whatever journey I am on.

As I looked to close my first director's dialogue, I was trying to think of way to let the readers know my thoughts, passions, views, excitement and just the general direction of how I would lead the Conservation Board. I kept coming back to a quote that I read on an obituary of a very passionate and influential conservationist a few years back. It was one of those moments that I will never forget. I remember it like it was yesterday. To me it says it all in one short sentence. So, I leave you with this.

Carleton H. Parker – "I like **Audubon Society's** definition of a **true conservationist** as **"a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children."**"

## New Faces

Hello, my name is Justin Van Driel. I live outside of New Hampton with my wife Kim, and two kids Lane and Bristol. I grew up in Rock Valley, IA and went to college at South Dakota State University where I graduated with a degree in Park Management. Hunting and fishing have always been my hobbies. A Conservation related job has always been a dream of mine, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve the residents and habitat of Chickasaw County.



Pictured: Justin on the upper-right, tyler on the lower-left



Hi, I'm Tyler Sassman. I grew up in the town of Fredericksburg. I grew up hunting and fishing, which led me to go to the University of Iowa for Environmental Science. I graduated with a B.A. in 2021. I then worked at a water plant in Iowa City and then also one in North Dakota before moving back home this summer and being hired by Chickasaw County Conservation as the seasonal conservation aide.

Visit [mycountyparks.com](http://mycountyparks.com) to check out what is going on with Chickasaw County Conservation as well as other county conservation throughout the state of Iowa.

[mycountyparks.com](http://mycountyparks.com) 

# Arbor Day with 4th Graders by Matt Crayne

Each year, Soil and Water Commissioner Kim Leichtman leads the charge to getting trees out to the local 4th graders. This year, I was able to participate in an endmester class at the New Hampton Middle School. These students spent some time preparing the trees to be handed out to the 4th graders of each school throughout the county. They also helped deliver trees to the New Hampton Elementary School. In the other photo, you can see myself with the 4th graders from St. Joseph's School in New Hampton with their trees.

Arbor day is a celebration in which people plant trees to make a better future for our land. It started in Nebraska in 1872 by J. Sterling Morton. The goals of Arbor Day were to bring trees to the West. These trees would provide shade, building materials, windbreaks, and more. According to [arborday.org](http://arborday.org), it is estimate that over 1 million trees were planted that first Arbor Day.

On behalf of all the people that love trees, I would like to thank Kim for all of the effort that he has put in over the years to make these Arbor Day tree handouts a success. While I've only been in on a few, I hope to be part of many more. THANKS KIM!



## Newsletter Option

Here in the electronic age, Chickasaw County Conservation is trying to keep moving forward. For the upcoming newsletter, you have the option of getting the newsletter sent to you electronically.

If you are interested in receiving the newsletter electronically, please send an email to [m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov](mailto:m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov) including the following:

- Name
- Mailing Address
- Email address
- Phone Number



# Nature Center News & Events

## Chickasaw/Floyd Float on the Cedar River

**Saturday, July 23 1:00 PM start time**

Want to go on a great river float with naturalists from 2 counties? This is your opportunity. Join Heidi and Matt on a float from Floyd County's Midway Access to Chickasaw County's Howard's Woods. We have kayaks, and Floyd CCB has a couple of canoes as well. Pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714. (You're welcome to float your own boat, just let us know that you plan on coming!)

## Hunter Education Classes

**August 5,6 @ Nashua Fish and Game Club**

**September 8, 10 @ Fredericksburg Sportsman's Club**

There will be 2 Hunter Education classes coming up here shortly. These are full classroom courses and participants must attend the entirety of both sessions. Online Registration with the Iowa DNR is required by going to <https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.

If you have questions, feel free to call us at 641-394-4714.

## Chickasaw/Bremer Float on the Cedar River

**Friday, August 12th @ NOON**

Want to go on a great river float with naturalists from 2 counties? This is your opportunity. Join us on a float from Pearl Rock Canoe Launch Site to North Cedar Park. Space is limited, so pre-registration is required emailing [naturalist@co.bremer.ia.us](mailto:naturalist@co.bremer.ia.us). Give a call if you have any questions at 641-394-4714. (You are welcome to bring your own boat if you would like, please just let us know that you are planning to come along.)

## Survival Camp

**Thursday, August 18**

**Twin Ponds Nature Center 4:00-6:00 PM**

Are you, or do you know an 11-14 year old that has an interest in learning outdoor skills? Then this program should come in handy. We will discuss shelter building, fire starting and building, and maybe even make our own fishing poles or rigs to fish with. You will want to wear long pants as we will be wandering around in the woods and tall grasses. Pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

**TWIN PONDS NATURE CENTER**

**1811 240TH ST - IONIA**

**641-394-4714**

**Public Hours**

**Monday - Friday Noon - 4:30 p.m.**

**Closed for Holidays.**

**You may also call for an appointment if those times don't work for you.**

# Nature Center Wish List

- Trail Cameras
- Any used canoes or kayaks in decent shape, or paddles
- Fly fishing rods/reels, cross-country skis, snowshoes
- Birdseed

These items are used for the nature center, school programs, scout programs, and other public programs. We appreciate any and all support.

mycountyparks.com



Check out mycountyparks.com for great information and mapping for all of the public areas managed by Chickasaw CCB as well as anywhere else that you travel in the state.

- **THANK YOU:** Carl Fliris for the recovery of a brown creeper for display.
- **THANK YOU:** New Hampton Schools for archery equipment.
- **THANK YOU:** Mike Hruska for bird feed.
- **THANK YOU:** Jenna Steffen, Marc Waterlander, Patrick Dirks, Jeff Ira and everyone else that helped with field trip season!
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.
- **THANK YOU:** The Slick family for the donation of plastic pallets for fish structure projects.

## Upcoming Events

### Dutch Oven Cook-off

Airport Lake Park Campground

Sponsored by the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation

Saturday October 1

Want to see how good of a Dutch Oven cook you are? Join us at Airport Lake Park for a Dutch Oven cook-off. Each participant will create one dish to be tasted by judges. The winner of this event will be awarded a brand new Dutch Oven! Registration for the event is \$10. Registered campers will not be required to pay the registration fee. There will be a discounted registration for scouts. Registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

### Halloween Hike

Tuesday, October 11

Twin Ponds Nature Center 6:00, 6:15, 6:30, or 6:45 PM

Come enjoy our annual Halloween Hike. This hike lasts about 45-60 minutes and is an educational hike, and NOT SCARY. It is intended for elementary aged children. There will be characters along the trail to learn from and there will be treats in the nature center basement for after the hike. Pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

# Creature Feature by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

## Western Fox Snake

*Elaphe vulpina*

While many people fear snakes, most snakes are nothing to worry about. Here in northern Iowa, there is a very small chance that you will ever run into a venomous snake. In fact, most species of snake in Iowa are non-venomous. And, NONE of the snakes here in Iowa are large enough to even think about eating a person. When people get bit by snakes, it is almost exclusively because they were messing with the snake (harassing it) and didn't give it an opportunity to get away from them. Many people fear these amazing creatures because their parents are afraid of them and they learned to fear them because of that influence. And I will admit, when I was a kid, I didn't have a desire to be around snakes at all. They weirded me out, simply by the fact that they didn't have arms and legs. Over time though, I learned to appreciate them and the role that they play in our complex ecosystem. Hopefully, this is an opportunity for some of you to open your mind to the idea of snakes being a good thing, and you can develop a deep appreciation for all things natural.



One of the more common snakes found across the state of Iowa is the western fox snake. These beautiful creatures can get up to about 5 feet long. They are a member of the rat snake family, so their main food of choice tends to be mice. They are opportunistic hunters though, and like most of us people, won't pass up an easy meal! Fox snakes are constrictors, which means that when they hunt their prey, they will bite it to hold on to it, and then they will wrap themselves around that animal to suffocate it. Snakes have a tremendous adaptation of being able to unhinge their jaw in order to swallow prey that is larger than their head! The snake will then swallow the prey whole. And depending on the size of the prey, you can see a lump travel through it's body until it is ready to be digested. (If you have never seen this process, I suggest that you hop on YouTube and find yourself a video or two to watch).

The western fox snake has thick scales that cover its body. On its back and sides, the scales are ovalish shaped. On their underside, the scales are more rectangular. In order to get around without legs, they stretch out their body and use those rectangular scales to grab on to whatever surface that they are on. They then pull their body back closer together before stretching out again. They are great climbers, which can help them maneuver themselves among trees and rock walls. This sometimes allows them to get at other prey, such as birds and eggs. Fox snakes are also swimmers.



In the winter, fox snakes, and other snakes, will find a place to hibernate. They will try to get below the frost line in order to keep them from freezing. Old pits, foundations, rock crevices, wells and other places can provide this. If you want to welcome snakes to your property for hibernation/brumation, look into building a snake hibernaculum for them.

Snakes in general provide a great ecological service to us as they help control rodent populations. Much like if you get a bird or bat in your house, the best way to get a snake out is by giving it a chance to escape. You can leave doors open and try to coax it out. Other wise, you can use something like a broom to help direct it the direction that you would like it to go. If you run across this issue, and are having trouble, feel free to give us a call to help you figure out the best way to deal with the situation. Odds are, if a snake got in your house, it found an opening that is large enough for a mouse to get through as well. So you might want to take care of that issue as well!

# Invasive Species

Unfortunately, sometimes we do things that we shouldn't. Over the years, there have been many species of plant and animal brought to North America from elsewhere. Some of these species have a minimal impact, while others are very detrimental to the local ecosystems. When identifying weed species, please be certain of which plants you are removing, and the impacts that you may have on the soil and surrounding plant life when using herbicides or other treatments.

One of the easiest examples of an invasive species that comes to mind, is the dandelion. The dandelion was brought over from Europe prior to European colonization in North America. It was brought over as a food source, as well as for its medicinal purposes. While dandelions can grow many places, and will happily grow in someone's yard, it does not out compete most native plant life (prairies, forests). There are a number of pollinator species that have become dependent on dandelions as a food source in the spring when little else is blooming. While the dandelion will forever have mixed reviews across the landscape, one thing is for certain: it's not going anywhere anytime soon!

Another invasive species that we can find on our landscape is the honeysuckle. There are 4 non-native species that are considered invasive: Japanese Honeysuckle, Morrow's Honeysuckle, Amur Honeysuckle and Tatarian Honeysuckle. These all were introduced to North America between the mid 1700's to the late 1800's. They were brought here for ornamental purposes as well as to see if they would grow here. Unfortunately, they have all been successful, and they are easily spread by birds that eat the berries and then 'drop off' the seeds in other locations. Honeysuckles grow best with full sunlight, but some are also shade tolerant and can take over a forest floor. The best ways to remove honeysuckle plants are to either cut and treat the stump with herbicide, or some sources recommend using the herbicide as a foliar spray. Once again, keep in mind the impact that you can have on other species.



Both common and glossy buckthorn are invasive species that are great at taking over the understory of a woodland. Buckthorn was introduced for landscaping and hedge rows. Much like the honeysuckles though, it produces berries that birds eat, and in turn, spread the seeds through defecation. It is a shrub that can grow up to 20 feet tall or so. The bark is brown with silver



markings on it. The buckthorns' leaves have tiny serrated edges and come to a point at the end. The leaves also hold on well into the late fall, longer than the other deciduous plants of the forest. Unfortunately, getting rid of buckthorn requires a lot of manual labor, and likely some herbicide to finish the job. If the plant is small enough, you can dig it out. Unfortunately, it has an extensive root system, and that can become quite the task. Most buckthorn removal requires a saw or lopper and is followed by chemical treatment.

## BUCKTHORN REMOVAL DAYS

Tuesdays November 8th & 15th

Join us for an opportunity to help remove buckthorn from the woods of Twin Ponds. We will cut and treat the stumps and move cuttings to suitable locations. This is an ongoing process and all help is appreciated!

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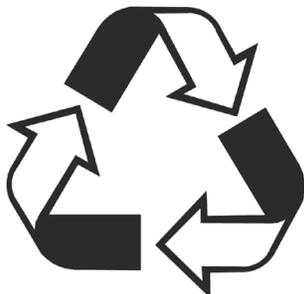


## Board Members

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Mike Pickar	New Hampton
Ray Armbrecht	Fredericksburg
JoAnn Myrsiades	Alta Vista
Jim Allison	Ionia

## Staff

Chad Humpal	Director
Matt Crayne	Naturalist
Caleb Ciavarelli & Justin Van Driel	NR & Park Managers



**This newsletter is printed on  
recycled paper.**

## Board Meetings

Conservation Board meetings are open to the public. Visitors are welcome to attend. Meetings are held the first Monday of the month at the Conservation Headquarters located in Twin Ponds Nature Center at 1811 240th St, Ionia. Watch your newspaper for notice of the monthly meeting, the agenda and a start time. Please note that meetings may be scheduled for dates other than the first Monday. Changes are noted in the newspaper. For more information, call Chickasaw County Conservation at 641-394-4714.

## Nature Center Hours

Monday - Friday                      Noon - 4:30 p.m.

Or by Appointment - Closed for Holidays.

[www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com) or <https://chickasawcounty.iowa.gov/conservation/>

The CCCB does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.

## Mailing List

If you would like to be placed on our mailing list or need to change your address, call the County Conservation office at

641-394-4714 or email: [m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov](mailto:m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov)

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