

SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

Newsletter of the Chickasaw County Conservation Board - Conserving our natural resources since 1957 Summer 2024

Director's Dialogue Director, Chad Humpal

Summer is here, and let's forget about the rain!

As I look back over the last few months, I can say it was a bit crazy. As a staff, we went into winter feeling good with everything we had accomplished. It almost felt like we had caught up or maybe even were a bit ahead of where we should be. Spring was looking good, and then the rain started. It didn't take long and that feeling of being caught up was gone. This is more what we are used to, more things to do than we have time for. A list that grows faster than we can cross things off.

Justin and Caleb just kept moving forward one day, one project at a time. It is times like this that I am grateful for the staff I have. Many times, their hardest job is keeping me in line and making sure I'm not in their way. As this is just my third summer as director, I still find myself wanting to get outside more than I do. You see before I took over as director, I knew Chickasaw County Parks and Wildlife areas better than anyone. I was the one with boots on the ground. I got to see the areas from all angles. Now it seems I spend more time pecking away at this keyboard or sitting in on the Board of Supervisors meeting asking for money to start the next project. Many days I am jealous of them as they walk by my office headed out to make Chickasaw County Conservations Areas better.

Well, make them better they have. Despite all the rain this spring, things are looking great. The parks are open, the water is on in the campgrounds, over 3,000 trees planted, over 700 acres burned, a new area seeded down into natives and the food plots are in. A couple of them may have gotten planted a bit later than we liked, but we are not looking for 220-bushel corn. Heck we even like a bit of Foxtail in the rows, it adds a bit of cover for the smaller animals. They even tore down the old shelter in front of the Nature Center. Hopefully I will have more on a new shelter/pavilion in the next newsletter.

I need to mention after a bit of looking we were able to hire Tom (Butch) Britt as a member of our seasonal team. Hopefully Matt will have a bit more on Butch later in the...

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Director's Dialogue by Chad Humpal

...newsletter. What I can say is he has fit in with the guys and has been doing an excellent job keeping the parks mowed. It has not been an easy year mowing, but again the guys just get it done. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard (from the public) how nice the parks look, well it is thanks to the hard work of our small staff.

Fieldtrip season has come to a close for spring as well. It was another great year for Matt and our Environmental Education program. I really enjoy seeing the kids from around the area. We will have New Hampton, Summer-Fredericksburg and Nashua-Plainfield school districts, as well as several home school groups visit us each spring. Again, Matt does a great job with all the groups.

Before I finish, I would like to thank the crew behind the scenes of Chickasaw County Conservation. My Board members. Jim Allison, Ray Armbricht, Lori Carey, JoAnne Myrsiades, and Mike Pickar. All together they have a combined 47 ½ years of experience on the Conservation Board. All five members are on at least their second 5-year term, with a couple of them on number 3. It is incredible to find a group of people willing to donate their time and effort. It makes my job much easier when I have a board with the knowledge and passion that they all have for conservation. We don't always agree, but we do always get along.

To sum it all up, I am very grateful where Chickasaw County Conservation is at and the direction we are headed. At times it seems like society likes to focus on all the negative in the world. So, let's take some time this summer to grab a loved one and head out to our favorite park or natural area and just have a minute to take it all in. Enjoy the greatness of the outdoors, be thankful for what we have, and fill our hearts, minds, and souls with the beauty and peacefulness of the natural world around us.

P.S. If you do not have a favorite spot, stop by one of our areas. I guarantee you will be able to find a place to calm your mind.



Visit 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 

Great Donations!

Safari Club International Grant Awarded

Chickasaw County Conservation was awarded a grant from Safari Club International in order to purchase 8 air rifles, 6 heavy duty target traps, pellets, safety glasses, and rifle cases. We would like to thank SCI Iowa for their generous donation. This should be a great addition to future programming in Chickasaw County.



Canoe Donation

Chickasaw CCB recently received a donation of an aluminum canoe in great shape from Kathleen Riley. We could use a few more canoes in good shape to round out the fleet in order to provide canoe programs to the public. If you have a canoe that is in good shape and would like to donate it so that it can be used to help give others the experience of canoeing, please contact us. Also, make sure that you have the registration handy so that ownership can be changed over.

We would also like to thank Kathleen for a generous donation to the Friends of CCC to help with future tree planting.

ATV-UTV OPERATION STATE PARK ROAD SYSTEMS

SECTION 321I.10(2A) NEW SUBSECTION

**Ref. House File 2237
Effective 7-1-24**

A registered all-terrain vehicle or off-road utility vehicle may be operated on state park road systems, and may be operated anywhere within the boundaries of a state park that a motor vehicle required to be registered under chapter 321 is authorized to operate.

The Conservation Board will follow the new code section that allows registered all-terrain vehicle or off-road utility vehicle in state parks. The board also wants to point out that the code states and may be operated anywhere within the boundaries of a state park that a motor vehicle required to be registered under chapter 321 is authorized to operate. This is understood to be roads/drives and parking lots that regular vehicles are allowed to operate. It does not give permission to go off-roading in any areas. Please reach out to Chickasaw County Conservation if you have any further questions. 641-394-4714

Nature Center News & Events

Pond Study

July 23rd @ Twin Ponds Nature Center- 5:30 pm

Join us for a look at the life that you don't think about that's living in the water. We will explore the seedy underbelly of aquatic invertebrates and talk about their importance. We will then go to both a man-made pond and a natural wetland pond to compare the aquatic life in each. If you have questions, feel free to call us at 641-394-4714. Registration is required by calling or registering online at <https://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Chickasaw.aspx>

Hunter Education Classes

August 2,3 @ Nashua Fish and Game Club

September 5,7 @ 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>. You do NOT need to do any online class work, just register online. If you have questions, feel free to call us at 641-394-4714.

Halloween Hike

Tuesday, October 15 6:00, 6:15, 6:30 and 6:45 pm

@ Twin Ponds

This might be our favorite annual fall event. Every October, the naturalists of Chickasaw, Butler and Bremer CCBs get together to have a fun, educational hike for elementary aged kids to enjoy. With the help of volunteers we are able to provide snacks and guides for the hikes. There are 4 different hike times and pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714. Space will be limited, so make sure that you don't wait until the last day to sign up!

Talkin'Turkey

Tuesday, November 26 @ Twin Ponds Nature Center 5:00 pm

Bring the kids out to learn about turkeys. We will go over some of their habits as well as how they communicate, including turkey calls. We will finish up with a turkey craft. Registration is required by calling 641-394-4714, or by registering online through <https://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Chickasaw.aspx>

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.
When volunteer help is available, the nature center is open the first Sunday of
the month from 1-4 pm (excluding holidays).**

Nature Center Wish List

- Medium-sized Fishing Bobbers, split shots and fishing hooks for programs
- 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.



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:** Kathleen Riley for the donation of a canoe and a generous donation to the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation for tree plantings.
- **THANK YOU:** Dick Rausch for the donation of a picnic table.
- **THANK YOU:** Heather Gamm and Angie Auel for helping out with a field trip.
- **THANK YOU:** Marc Waterlander and Jed Becker and everyone else that helped with field trip season.
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.
- **THANK YOU:** Tina Rowe and Shelly Tanner and Brian Wurzer for all of the work they do as our campground hosts.

Upcoming Events

Dutch Oven Cook-off

Airport Lake Park Campground

Sponsored by the Friends of CCC

Saturday, September 28: Sign in at 10 am

Want to see how good of a Dutch Oven cook you are? Join us at the Airport Lake Park campground for a Dutch Oven cook-off. Each participant may enter one dish for both a main course and/or dessert. Prizes will be awarded after each dish has been tasted and scores are tallied. Registration is required by calling 641-394-4714. Sign-in at 10 am. Dishes to be served between 11:30 and 12:30.



Lending Library at Airport Lake Campground

Need something to read? Check out the lending library at the Airport Lake Park campground. This is thanks to our campground host Tina Rowe. THANKS TINA!



Creature Feature by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

Striped Skunk *Mephitis mephitis*

The scientific name of the striped skunk is Latin for 'bad odor'. I don't know about you, but I don't mind the smell of a skunk, as long as it's not too close! I remember being a young man and liking the smell and taste of a certain skunky beverage made in Holland. And fortunately, I've never been sprayed by a skunk. I suppose that makes it a bit easier to not mind the smell. I'm sure that those of you with dogs that don't mind tangling with skunks probably have a different opinion!

The striped skunk does its best to let those dogs, as well as people, know that you should leave them alone. I mean a black body with white striping should be a pretty good indicator right? The striping starts with a thin white line behind the nose. It widens greatly on the back of the head and then splits around the shoulders. The coloration can vary individually. If you see a skunk turn its back end towards you and lift its tail, it is time for you to leave the immediate area, and quickly!

The skunk is a medium sized mammal with a thick body and short legs. They have 5 clawed toes on each foot (with longer claws on the front feet). They are about 20-30 inches in length and can weigh up to about 12 pounds. Similar to many other mammals, the male skunk tends to be larger than the female skunk.

The lifespan of a striped skunk is not particularly long. In the wild, they usually don't live more than 2 or 3 years. This means that in most cases, the wild population has been replaced in a 5 year span. They have been known to live up to 10 years in captivity. Overall, the striped skunk is considered a nocturnal animal, even though it can be seen foraging during the daylight hours.

Striped skunks can be found throughout the continental United States, most of the southern 1/2 of Canada, and in Northern Mexico. They are adaptable to a number of habitats, but prefer woodland edges, thick and brushy areas, fencerows, grasslands and ravines. They do require a permanent source of water nearby. They will den underground or in an old stump, hollow log, brush pile, etc. They will also use burrows left behind from other animals such as woodchucks. These dens need to reach below the frostline for winter. They will insulate a chamber with leaves and/or grasses, depending on what's available, and may plug openings for the winter as needed.

Striped skunks breed in the late winter to early spring. Gestation is about 2 - 2 and 1/2 months, and they will have litters of around 4-8 young who will stay with the female until fall.



Nature Center Volunteers

If you enjoy visiting the Twin Ponds Nature Center and would like to make it available to others that aren't able to visit during our normal hours, consider becoming a Sunday nature center host. We are trying to have the nature center open for the first Sunday of the month from 1-4 pm. and are always looking for more volunteers. If you are interested in hosting, please contact us at 641-394-4714, or at m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov.

New Face in the Parks

Meet Butch (Thomas Britt). Butch grew up on a farm outside of Lawler and attended Turkey Valley High School. Keep your eyes peeled for Butch while you are out visiting our parks this summer. You'll likely see Butch on a mower keeping the parks looking good. Butch has been a nice addition to the staff this summer and we appreciate all of the work he does.



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 including the following:

Name
Mailing Address
Email address
Phone Number



SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

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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 the Chickasaw CCB website 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 on the website. 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 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 receive the newsletter or need to change your address, call the County Conservation office at

641-394-4714 or email: m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov

You will receive the newsletter at no cost.

Donations to FCCC to cover costs for printing and postage are welcome.