

SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

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

Staff Changes

The year of 2021 has brought about some major changes for Chickasaw County Conservation. The first major change was the retirement of Park Ranger Denise Straw. Denise started as a seasonal and quickly worked her way to full-time and worked for the county for 20 years!

But Denise's retirement isn't the only major change to the staff. Director Brian Moore retired at the end of 2021. Brian started with the county in May of 1989. By my math, that means that he worked for the county for over 32 years!



With the retirements of these two county employees (CONGRATULATIONS and thank you for your years of service!), there will be a lot of experience lost. Fortunately, there will still be a couple of decades of experience in Chickasaw County Conservation still on the staff with Chad Humpal and Matt Crayne.

However, the recent retirements have still left holes to fill. Denise's retirement opened up a spot that was filled by Caleb Ciavarelli. Caleb serves the county as a Natural Resources and Parks Manager. You may know Caleb from his teaching at the New Hampton High School, or his time spent as a coach in the NHTV wrestling program. What you may not know, is that prior to his hiring, he worked the previous 7 summers for County Conservation Boards. That includes 5 summers with Butler County Conservation, and the last 2 summers prior to his hiring right here in Chickasaw County.

With Brian's retirement, the Conservation Board hired Chad Humpal as the new Director of Chickasaw County Conservation. Chad will be the 4th Director of the Chickasaw County Conservation Board since 1957. Chad's knowledge of the people and areas from growing up here in Chickasaw County will continue to be a valuable asset as the CCCB moves into the future. One of Chad's first tasks as Director will be to fill the position that opened up when he became Director.

We are starting up an email list to help let everyone know about upcoming public events and opportunities. If you would like to be on this list, please send an email to m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov.

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Director's Dialogue by Brian Moore

Entering the retirement phase of my life is something I never really thought of a whole lot. It always seemed like it would be a while before I could do it. Well, here it is! As of January 2, 2022 I will retire as Director of the Chickasaw County Conservation Board. I have enjoyed my time in Chickasaw County and have had some great experiences as the Conservation Board Director.

So, for my final article of the **Seven Rivers Record**, I will highlight some of the things I am proud to have been a part of with the Chickasaw County Conservation Board.

I arrived at the Conservation Board office in North Washington as the new Conservation Board Director on May 1, 1989. I knew after my interview, that if I got the job, I would be working in an old one-room school house. It didn't seem like a big deal at the time, because it was an office. I would soon learn the building was hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Thank God for window AC and space heaters. Plus, we had a local mouse population that was doing very well in this building.

After a few months on the job, I started to make plans of where I wanted the Conservation Board's program to go during the time I would be here. The first thing I thought we should do is get a Conservation Education program going, as many Conservation Boards had already done. After working with the Conservation Board awhile, we hired the county's first Naturalist to a half-time position in 1990. It became very evident that this would be a popular move, especially with the schools. After one year with a half-time Naturalist, the position was changed to full-time status. Chickasaw County Conservation is now working with its third Naturalist, and Conservation Education is a very important component of today's County Conservation Board.


After working out of the one-room school house for a couple of years and seeing what other counties had for facilities, I decided to present the idea of putting up a new office building to the Conservation Board. The Board agreed it should be done, so the planning began. Of course, the big hurdle with any major construction project is how to fund it. I met with the County Board of Supervisors several times, did some grant research, and talked with other counties about putting up a new building. Along the way, we thought that if we are putting up an office building, we might as well go for a nature center. At this time, it became apparent that a foundation would be good to have for soliciting donations and planning for the new building.

In 1995, the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation (Friends) was formed and was registered as a legitimate 501(c) 3 tax-exempt organization. The Friends held several fund raising events (remember the fry bread?) and finally, in 2001, we had enough money to construct the Twin Ponds Nature Center. I moved my office to the new nature center in July 2002, and as construction was completed to different parts of the building, we moved the remainder of the Conservation Board things to our new headquarters building. In October 2003, we had the Twin Ponds Nature Center Grand Opening. It took nearly 10 years from the idea coming forth to completion, but the Twin Ponds Nature Center was now a reality.

The Conservation Board now hosts several school groups every year and we get several hundred visitors to the Nature Center. We also hold many regional training meetings with various groups, and the Nature Center has proven to be a valuable asset for Chickasaw County and the Conservation Board.

...Continued on Page 3...

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.

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.com 

Director's Dialogue *(continued)*

When I came to Chickasaw County, the Conservation Board managed 23 areas of about 820 acres. For some reason I had a personal goal, and I don't know why, of being able to get total Conservation Board areas to 2,000 acres or more. I didn't know if that was realistic or not, it was just something I wanted to do. Over the years, with the cooperation of the County Board of Supervisors, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and local donations, we did it. The Conservation Board now manages 37 areas totaling 2,140 acres.

There are a few other projects I could write about, but I have to leave room for other items in the newsletter.

I have had the pleasure to work with some great staff members, some wonderful people in other branches of Chickasaw County Government, and some terrific Conservation Board members. I am going to miss them all.

There are many in State Government and other County Conservation Boards across Iowa that I have met over the years, become good friends with, and received many helpful ideas from. I will keep in touch with some of them, but many will never be spoken to again. That is the sad part about retiring from this job.

As I close, my final "Director's Dialogue," I want to say "Thank you" to everyone who has helped me and the Conservation Board through the past 32 plus years. It has been a wonderful experience and we have a great thing going in Chickasaw County. Continue to support the Conservation Board and its staff, because I know they will do many more very beneficial things for Chickasaw County in the future.

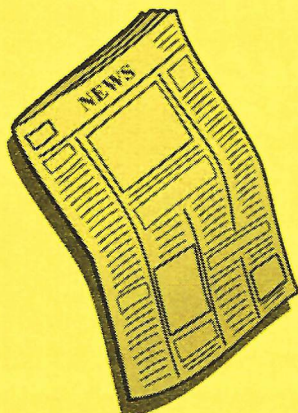


Newsletter Option

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 c.humpal@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov including the following:

Name
Mailing Address
Email address
Phone Number



Nature Center News & Events

Full Moon X-Country Ski/Snowshoe

**Twin Ponds Nature Center
Monday, January 17 5:00-8:00 PM**

Whether or not you've cross country skied or snowshoed, join us for an opportunity to do it under a full moon. Staff will give the inexperienced users a lesson on how to correctly use the equipment. Registration is not required, but we will need to have enough snow to properly use the equipment. So if you aren't sure if there is enough, call 641-394-4714 the day of to check for cancellations.

Suet Making Program

Thursday, January 20 6:00 PM

This is for all of you out there that like to feed the birds. Suet is a great way to supplement the diet of woodpeckers and some other birds, especially in the wintertime. We will reuse containers from already used suet so that you will be able to make and take home your own suet. Pre-registration is required for this program so that we are able to accommodate all attendees by calling 641-394-4714.

Valentine's Weekend Snowshoeing and Skiing

Saturday, February 12 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Bring your sweetheart, friend or someone else out to Twin Ponds to go out on the trail for a snowshoe hike or some cross country skiing. Trips out on the trail will be lead by staff at 11:00 and 1:00. We'll travel by the Wapsipinicon River and we'll keep our eyes out for signs of wildlife! No registration is required. (If there isn't much snow, please call ahead of time as the event may be cancelled.)

Owl Prowl

Tuesday, February 15 6:00 PM

Interested in Owls? Join us for a short presentation before we head out on the trail (either by snowshoe or just on foot) and try to call in one of Iowa's amazing owls! Make sure to dress for the weather as we might be outside for an hour or so.

(MORE PROGRAMS LISTED ON NEXT PAGE)

**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
- Gently used or new fly fishing or ice 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:** Don Shurr for the donation of Sage Grouse Mount
- **THANK YOU:** Emma Kerns for helping with the Halloween Hike
- **THANK YOU:** Donna Becker and Dan for help with the Halloween Hike
- **THANK YOU:** Amanda Rodgers and the NH 8th Graders for their work on the Halloween Hike
- **THANK YOU:** Jo Myrsiades for the donation toward the purchase of an AED machine.
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.
- **THANK YOU:** Iowa Ornithologists' Union for the donation of the new Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas

Upcoming Events

GPS Pot O' Gold

Thursday, March 17

Twin Ponds Nature Center 4:30-6:30 PM

Come out to Twin Ponds to find your 'pot o' gold' using a GPS unit. There will be goodies at the end of the 'rainbow' that is marked on the GPS unit. Each family or group will be loaned out a GPS unit(s) to find five different locations at Twin Ponds. No need to register ahead of time, just show up and enjoy the hunt!

Dutch Oven Cooking

Thursday, April 21

Twin Ponds Nature Center 5:00 PM

Join us for an opportunity to do some outdoor cooking with Dutch Ovens.. Together, we will prepare and make 2 or 3 dishes in Dutch ovens. Registration is required by April 19th by calling 641-394-4714. Please let us know of any dietary limitations ahead of time.

Intro to Kayaking

Keep an eye out for opportunities throughout the warmer months for opportunities to try out kayaking and to go on river floats.

Creature Feature by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

SNOWY OWL

Bubo scandiacus

One of the most magnificent creatures that I've seen in Iowa is the snowy owl. The snowy owl is a migratory bird. Yes, that's right, it's a bird that flies to a warmer climate in the cold winter months. The funny thing though, is that we are the warmer climate in the winter time here in Iowa! I don't know about you, but there are definitely some times in the winter that I wish it were a little bit warmer in January and February!

If you take a look at the range map to the right, you can see that the breeding range for the snowy owl is WAAAAAY up North in the arctic tundra, North of the arctic circle. You can also see that the winter range is mostly in Canada and along the national border. However, there are snowy owls that visit Iowa. By nature, these snowy owls are seen hunting the open grasslands as they are somewhat similar to what they are used to hunting in up North. There have already been several reports in December of snowy owls in Iowa.

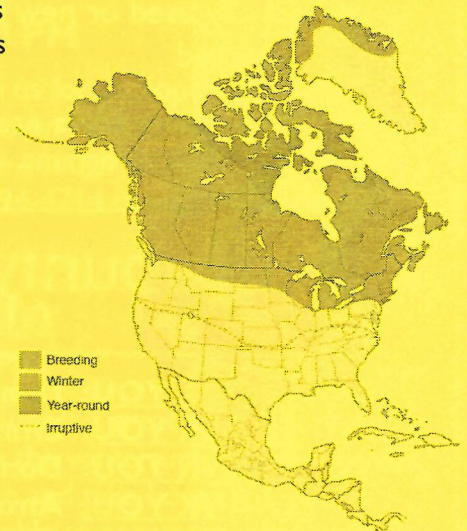
Snowy owls are pretty easy to tell apart from other owls in Iowa. They will be larger than any other owl in Iowa, have very noticeable yellow eyes, have white feathers covering their feet and be predominantly covered with white feathers.

Of the snowy owls found in Iowa, you are most likely to see a juvenile owl. Both juveniles and females will be white in color with brown markings on their body (like in the picture to the right). Male snowy owls, especially as they get older, will be more white in color. Keep your eyes peeled if you would like to see one. There are groups online that you can find that can help let you know where they are at in order to help give you a better chance to view one.

The snowy owls are ground nesters and will tend to choose a location on the top of a rise so that it will not have much for snow. The female will scrape out a depression or bowl shape in the ground for the nest. It will be lined with vegetation for insulation of the eggs. They may lay up to eleven eggs. Both parents will care for and help raise the young. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snowy_Owl/lifehistory#), the eggs will be incubated for about 32 days, and the young will remain in the nest for about 3 weeks after hatching. When they hatch, they are wet and blind. It won't take long for them to turn into little white fluff balls of down feathers though. Their eyes will open about 5 days after hatching. As they develop, the feathers will grow in darker and they will eventually look like the adult females.

The diet of the snowy owl can be made up of many different things, but the animals most caught by snowy owls up north are lemmings. It used to be thought that when the lemming population dropped up north that we would be more likely to see snowy owls here in the south. But through more recent research, it is found that when the lemming populations are doing well, the snowy owls up north thrive and have a higher success rate with the survival of their young. In turn, the population of snowy owls grow, and we are then more likely to have more snowy owls come down south. As with most things, the research will continue and more will be found out about the great snowy owls and the amazing life that they live.

If you would like to learn more about snowy owls, or birds in general, visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology online at allaboutbirds.org. It is a great reliable source for bird information. Also, feel free to visit the library at Twin Ponds, or in your community, to find a book to read more about birds.



All images courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>



Airport Lake Update

Airport Lake Park, just NW of New Hampton, is our most frequently used park. In order to keep things nice and to accommodate the increased demand in use, Chickasaw County Conservation has put forth several efforts over the last decade to make it a destination for visitors and residents of Chickasaw County. Here's a little bit of the history of Airport Lake Park (ALP):

- 1977:** The City of New Hampton leased what is now called Airport Lake Park to the Chickasaw County Conservation Board. It is a 99 year lease @ \$1.00 per year.
- 1979:** The dam for the lake was constructed.
- 1980:** The jetties on the NW corner and East side of the lake were constructed.
- 1981:** The well was dug to provide water to park visitors.
- 1985:** An aeration system was installed for winter aeration.
- 1986:** The Conservation Board gave approval for the installation of the 12 original campsites.
- 1998:** A cement boat ramp was constructed to improve water access for boaters.
- 2007:** The north 23 campsites of the camping loop were added.
The shelter was added south of the beach.
- 2015:** The shower house/restroom facility was constructed.
- 2016:** A new playground was added to the East of the shower house building.
- 2017:** Campsites were added to the South side of the camping loop.
The Chickasaw Pioneer Chapter of Pheasants Forever did a habitat project north of the campground with a hiking trail.
- 2018:** The group camping loop was added to accommodate larger groups of campers in addition to more campsites added on the South end of the camping loop.
- 2019:** More campsites were added to the East side of the camping loop.
- 2021:** Water was added to the campsites that did not previously have it.
Eleven additional campsites were added to accommodate an increased number of campers wishing to camp at ALP.

With the growing popularity of the Park and campground, along with the recent changes in people's leisure time activities due to Covid-19, we have seen camping record highs broken multiple times in recent years.

If you've never camped or recreated at Airport Lake Park, we hope that you consider giving it a shot. Whether you enjoy camping, fishing, boating, hiking or just relaxing in the outdoors, you should be able to find something that you enjoy when you visit.



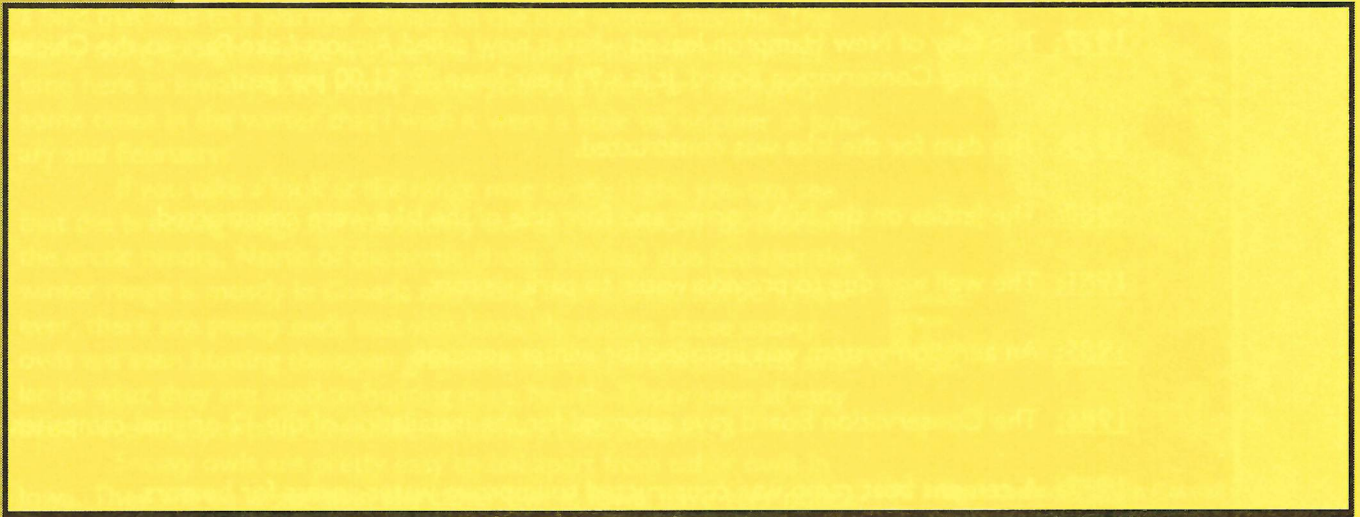
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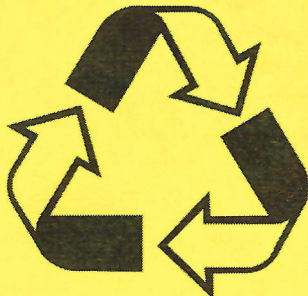


Board Members

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

Staff

Chad Humpal	Director
Matt Crayne	Naturalist
Caleb Ciavarelli	NR & Park Manager



**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 or www.chickasawcoia.org/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. You will receive the newsletter at no cost. Donations to cover costs for printing and postage are welcome.