

SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

Newsletter of the Chickasaw County Conservation Board - Conserving our natural resources since 1957 Winter 2023

Director's Dialogue Director, Chad Humpal

When you stop and take a closer look at Chickasaw County, it has a little something to offer for every outdoor enthusiast. Chickasaw County is located in Northeast Iowa and is home to 9 different communities. New Hampton is the most central and largest populated town of the 9. Nashua, Fredericksburg and Lawler cover the south and east parts of the county. And don't overlook Protivin, Alta Vista, Ionia, North Washington and Bassett, as they have much to offer.

Chickasaw County Conservation manages 37 parks and wildlife areas, the Iowa DNR has 2 wildlife areas and we are also fortunate to have one IHAP (Iowa Habitat and Access Program) area in the county. All total, there are around 3,250 acres of public land for all to enjoy.

It wasn't that long ago that Chickasaw County was the place to be in Northeast Iowa when it came to upland bird hunting. It wasn't uncommon to see hunters from several states making memories with friends and family. Now as we are seeing bird numbers climbing their way back up, grab your son, daughter or longtime hunting buddy and give a couple of the public hunting areas a try. Ringneck Haven, Saude Recreation Area, Little Wapsi Wildlife Area, Fredericksburg Wildlife Area, Upper Wapsi and Wapsi Flats Wildlife area are a few of the areas that offer quality upland habitat that are known to hold birds.

If the fall whitetail deer or spring tom turkey is your choice of adventure, then look no further. Many great trophy Whitetail deer and long bearded tom turkeys are harvested every year from the area. Gilmore Wapsi Access, Twin Ponds, Wapsi Junction, Deerfield Wildlife Area, Ackerson-Easterly Wildlife Area, Stolz Addition, Upper Wapsi and Wapsi Flats Wildlife Area are some of the areas that have great timber stands. You will have no trouble finding the perfect tree to hang your stand or wonderful opening to set up a ground blind.

How about doing a little fishing or floating? It would be a shame if we didn't mention the fact that Chickasaw County has 7 different Rivers running through it. The Cedar, Little Cedar, Wapsipinicon, Little Wapsipinicon, East Fork of the Wapsipinicon or Plum Creek as the locals call it, Crane Creek and the Little Turkey River. The Conservation staff also manages several public lakes with fishing jetties and access points to many of the rivers mentioned above, with many opportunities to land your next big fish. If swimming at one of several beaches, floating down a river or around a lake is more your style, then Chickasaw County once again has it covered.



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Twin Ponds 20th Anniversary by Matt Crayne

The year 2023 marks the 20th year since the Twin Ponds Nature Center opened. There have been many people involved with the Twin Ponds Nature Center over the years. From the folks that volunteered their time and had the vision to build it and raise funds to make it happen, to the children that visit for school field trips today, the nature center has had thousands of visitors in its first 20 years.

The fall and spring are the busiest times of the year for nature center visitation, as that's when most schools prefer to do their field trips. However, some schools will brave the cold for winter field trips to give the kids a whole different experience.

Twin Ponds Nature Center has changed over the years. There have been some fantastic donations to the nature center that have helped make it a great place. I mean, how often do you get a **safe** photo-op with a black bear or a buffalo? In the 13 years or so that I have worked for Chickasaw County, there have been murals painted on the walls of the center, cases built by the staff to hold a number of different creatures and artifacts, oak trees have invaded the upstairs display area, a number of Eagle Scout projects have enhanced the area, and so much more. Much of this has been possible thanks to the donation of many people's time and money. It's pretty amazing how many people have come together to make the nature center such a great place.



Throughout the year, we will be holding events to help celebrate the nature center's 20th anniversary. Some of the new programs that we will be having include a woodburning class, a birdhouse gourd class, and an owl call making class. Check out page 7 of the newsletter for upcoming events.



Giving Back

Ever want to give back something to your community? Well, here is how you can make that happen!

Joining the **Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation** is a great way to give back to Chickasaw County Conservation. The Friends organization was founded to get the nature center built and help with environmental education here in Chickasaw County. Joining the Friends (FCCC) group is an easy way to support County Conservation and Environmental Education. Memberships are priced as follows: \$5 Student, \$20 Individual, \$30 Family, \$50 Business. If you would like to send your membership fee or a **donation** to the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation, please send it to the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation, 1811 240th St, Ionia IA 50645. Please include your name, address, phone # and email. If you are a new business sponsor, please send a business card to be enlarged and displayed in the front entryway of the nature center.



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.

Director's Dialogue by Chad Humpal

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There are several campgrounds that Chickasaw County Conservation manages. The largest is Airport Lake Park. With a modern shower house, lake, beach, hiking trails, fishing jetties and over 70 electric and water camping sites to choose from, you will be sure to find what you are looking for. Split Rock Park also offers many of the same activities with 45 electric only sites. For primitive camping head to Saude Recreation Area, Howard's Woods or Chickasaw Park. All have pit toilets provided.

Don't forget to check out Twin Ponds Nature Center and the public programs they offer. To find out more on any of the conservation areas or to get the latest info on programming or camping in Chickasaw County please go to my-countyparks.com.

So, the next time you are looking to get away for a couple of days to do a little hunting, fishing, hiking, kayaking, birding, or just sit around the campfire, and don't want to spend a lot of time fighting the crowds and spend a pile of money, head to Chickasaw County and enjoy the tranquility of small county Iowa, and all it has to offer. Don't forget, after you have your limit, tagged out, or just need a break. Stop into one of the communities scattered around the county and check out the local watering hole. I guarantee you will have an amazing time along with meeting some amazing people.



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



Nature Center News & Events

Snowshoe/Cross Country Ski Night

Tuesday, January 3rd: 4-7 pm @ Twin Ponds

Tuesday, January 17th: 4-7pm @ Twin Ponds

Come on out to Twin Ponds to snowshoe or cross-country ski between 4:00 and 7:00 pm. The nature center will also be open during this time for those that want to visit. Short introductory lessons are available to help get you fitted to skis and shoes, and to get you going. These events are FREE and no registration is needed.

Owl Prowl and Make Your Own Call!

Tuesday, February 14: 6:00 pm @ Twin Ponds

Join us as we talk about some of the adaptations that help owls thrive. We will then make our very own owl calls. We'll then head out on the trails to quietly seek out the opportunity to see and/or hear an owl in the wild. There is no cost for this program, but pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Birdhouse Gourds!

Thursday, March 2: 6:00 pm @ Twin Ponds

Thanks to a generous donation, we have the opportunity to make birdhouses out of gourds that were specifically grown and dried for just that reason. We will talk about the process and turn those gourds into birdhouses to be put out for bluebirds or purple martins this spring. There will be no charge for this program, but pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Hunter Education Class

March 18 @ Fredericksburg Sportsman's Club

Spring Turkey season is coming quick. This is a one-day session to take care of all hunter education requirements prior to purchasing a hunting license. This is a full classroom course and NOT an online field day. 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.

**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

- Fly fishing-rods, reels, flies and other equipment
- Birdseed
- Donations toward future displays at TPNC

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:** Megan Blackford for the donation of birdhouse gourds.
- **THANK YOU:** Louie Hugh for all of his hard work on the ground at Gilmore-Wapsi Wildlife Area.
- **THANK YOU:** Mindy Foelske, Doug Schueth and Jordan Pauley for pictures to use in the newsletter.
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.

Upcoming Events

Woodburning

Thursday, April 13: 6:00 PM @ Twin Ponds

Come create a piece of art using one of the oldest art forms. We will use woodburners to make impressions on wood for a one of a kind piece of art. Space is limited so pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Chickasaw/Floyd Float on the Cedar River

Saturday, June 17 @ 1:00 PM

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. There is no charge for this program, but pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Chickasaw/Bremer Float on the Cedar River

Friday, July 14 @ 10:00 am

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. Bring your own lunch as we will stop along the river to eat. Space is limited, so pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Give a call if you have any questions. You are welcome to bring your own boat if you would like, Space is limited.

Creature Feature by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

As the winter settles in here in Northeast Iowa, let's take a few minutes to think about one of the fascinating birds that we'll see in the warmer months, the green heron.

When most of you read the word heron, you most likely think of the much larger great blue heron. For those of you that travel the rivers, you've no doubt seen your share of great blue herons as you inadvertently chase them from their fishing holes. The great blue is of course easy to identify by its 'great' size. The green heron, however, is much easier to overlook as its size pales in comparison. The green heron is around the size of a crow, but plumper in size. As a heron, it has longer, yellow legs. Its back is a deep green coloration with blue/gray wings and a rusty colored breast and neck area. Along with the shape of its body, the bill definitely speaks heron. It is long and pointed like the head of a spear or a bayonet. Its neck is like other herons in that it is long and will rest in a crooked position when in flight or just resting.

Rivers aren't the only place to find green herons. They can be found in wetlands along the coast, shallow inland wetlands, ponds, lakes and other wet areas that have some tree/shrub vegetation around them for nesting. While the green heron is usually quick to take flight at the sight of people, like most wildlife, they can become accustomed to habitat that includes more people when necessary.

The green heron is generally a solitary animal when it is not involved in reproduction. The male will find a suitable location in its territory to start the nest. He will bring long thin sticks to the female for her to finish constructing the nest. The nest is up to a foot wide with a shallow depression in the middle. The nest is not lined. Green herons may use an old nest or parts of an old nest in the construction of a new one. The nest usually sits in a secluded location in a bush, shrub or tree somewhat near the water. They are not species specific as far as the nesting location goes.

The green heron lays a clutch of 3-5 eggs, and depending on their location, may have up to 2 broods in a year. Incubation lasts for about 3 weeks. When the young hatch, their eyes are open, and they are covered with down. The nestlings will fledge at about 2 and a half weeks, but may remain with the parents for a month or more after leaving the nest. Predators of the green heron include raccoons, snakes and snapping turtles.

The green heron is one of those birds that many people won't even know that they saw it. It seems like during this past summer they were plentiful. Maybe they were, or maybe I just had lots of luck seeing them. Either way, I hope in the coming warm seasons that you are able to see as many as I was able to see this past year, and enjoy this cautious creature before it disappears from your sight!

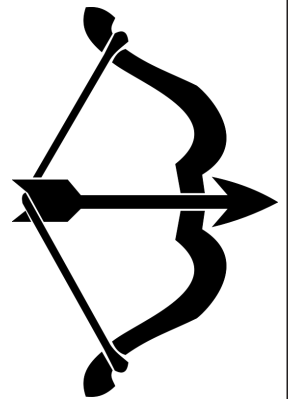


TPNC 20th Family Fun Day

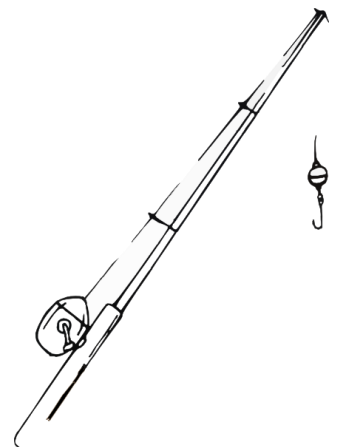
We are having ongoing discussions for a big 20th anniversary FAMILY FUN DAY at Twin Ponds.



Some of the potential activities may include kayaking, fishing, archery, atlatls, a live animal presentation, crafts and more!



Keep your eyes peeled for a date in the late summer or early fall. If you would like to be involved with planning this event or sharing different ideas, email Matt at m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov



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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 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

You will receive the newsletter at no cost.

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