



The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter Fall 2022

More Additions to Mariposa Park's Nature Playscape Trail

Have you been to the Mariposa Nature Playscape Trail yet? It might be time to check it out, or visit again soon! We've added several new interactive pieces along the trail, focusing especially on music and movement.

Musical chimes and a pebble harp have been installed near the stage area, and the stage now has a roof. The pebble harp looks like a wishing well and works by dropping small rocks into the holes at the top. When the rocks hit the metal rods inside, it makes a unique sound, depending on how many rocks hit the rods and which rods are struck. It is our hope children will stop and spend time experimenting to make their own unique music. And please only drop the small pebbles we have placed around its base—nothing else!

We've also installed two magnifying stations to further enhance nature exploration and a fence panel which will eventually hold more elements to experiment making music. The Little Free Library has been getting lots of use, along with the big sandbox! Make plans to bring a child to Mariposa Park this fall and have fun exploring!



Above: New additions to the Mariposa Playscape focus on music and movement.

New Benches at Mariposa Park

Jasper County Conservation was awarded \$1,918 from the Iowa Grocer Industry Association's Build With Bags program to help purchase six new park benches made of recycled plastic for Mariposa Park.

The Build with Bags program is a cooperative effort of the Iowa Grocery Industry Association, Keep Iowa Beautiful, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Metro Waste Authority and Plastic Recycling of Iowa Falls. These organizations developed a program to assist Iowa grocers in reducing the environmental impact of shopping bags with these four main goals in mind:

1. Reduce the consumption of plastic bags,
2. Encourage the use of reusable bags,
3. Increase the amount of plastic bags recycled,
4. Establish and execute a grant program to aid parks and schools in purchasing products made of recycled plastic bags.

The benches at Mariposa Park are located around the 18-acre lake and are engraved with quotes from famous conservationists, adding an educational component to the project. Newton Fareway and Dodd's Trash Hauling and Recycling supported this project in the grant request. Next time you visit Mariposa, take a walk around the lake and enjoy the views from our beautiful new benches!



Baby Girls Welcomed to our Conservation Family!

Two Jasper County Conservation staff members became new parents this summer! Jade and Chris welcomed baby Emmaline on July 8th, and one week later, on July 15th, Greg and Liz brought little Ellie into the world. We are so very happy for these families and can't wait to see the girls at future conservation events!



South Skunk River Wildlife Area

A large tract of land is now open for public hunting in Jasper County. The 482-acre South Skunk River Wildlife Area Addition contains a mosaic of native prairie and wetlands that will be managed for the benefit of upland wildlife and public access.

Native upland prairie and cool season grasses on the flood plain of the South Skunk River comprise the majority of habitat types, as well as several wetland areas that hold surface water and patches of willow trees. The property's eastern boundary is shared with the 243-acre Pheasants Forever Unit and is also near Beyers Bridge Skunk River Access, Carpenter Wildlife Area and the Foreman Nature Preserve to create a complex of public lands.

The property holds a variety of game species, including pheasants, waterfowl, turkey, deer and mourning dove. The South Skunk River Wildlife Area addition was purchased through the Build a Wildlife Area® program, with funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Iowa DNR, Ducks Unlimited, and local Pheasants Forever chapters including: Jasper County PF, Northern Polk PF, Iowa Capitol PF, Mahaska County PF, Poweshiek County PF, and Covered Bridge PF.

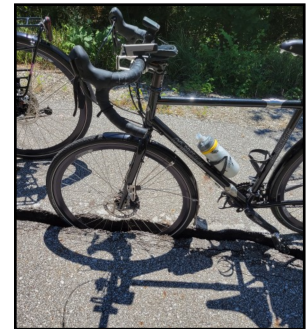


Left and Right: Summer camp kids had fishing success at the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League in Newton this year. Bass Pro Shops has donated 16 new fishing poles to use in programs such as this.

Chichaqua Trail Update

We are sure many of you have noticed the deteriorating condition of the Chichaqua Valley Recreational Trail, specifically between Ira and Mingo. We have marked the trail with signs and spray paint, so please be aware when riding.

A soil engineering firm was hired this spring to take 10' deep borings along the trail in this area to find what was happening within the base of the trail. These results are now in the hands of a bike trail engineer who is putting together a plan and final costs for a repair. From here, we are hoping to secure some local funding to make these very important repairs, but until the dollars are in place, we are unable to fix the trail. Please be sure to voice your support for bike trails in Jasper County!



Above: Cracks have formed along the Chichaqua Valley Trail between Ira and Mingo. They are marked with pink and orange spray paint.

Bass Pro Shops Donates Fishing Poles

Bass Pro Shops in Altoona has donated 16 youth spincast fishing poles along with pliers and other tackle to Jasper County Conservation's Environmental Education Program. Fishing is one of the favorite activities at summer camp and these poles are specifically for kids to use. Many of our campers have never caught a fish before. We are excited to get these in the hands of area youth and make lots of great memories!



Red Rock Prairie Trail Opening

Thursday, September 8

Entryway Park, Prairie City, 5:00 PM

Red Rock Park, Monroe, 6:00 PM

Join Jasper County Conservation for the grand opening of the Red Rock Prairie Trail. A ribbon cutting will take place at 5:00 pm at Entryway Park by the bison sculpture in Prairie City. The public is encouraged to ride the trail, enjoy specials at local business, and then celebrate again at 6:00 pm in Monroe with free hot dogs and ice cream at Red Rock Park.

Free bike helmets will be given to the first 50 kids under 12 in attendance and each town celebration will be giving away a free bicycle!

The Red Rock Prairie Trail is a new concrete recreational trail from Monroe, to Prairie City, to the entrance of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Future phases of this project include the connection of the trail to Mitchellville, Thomas Mitchell Park, and then to the Des Moines metro!

For questions about the Red Rock Prairie Trail or the grand opening, please contact Jasper County Conservation at (641) 792-9780.

UTV Tours at Uhlenhopp Arboretum

Wednesdays in September and October

9:00 AM-3:00 PM

With the help of a few very generous donors, Jasper County Conservation purchased a 6 passenger UTV that allows tours to be held at our county parks for individuals who aren't able to hike and view the beauty of our natural areas. Several wonderful volunteers will be leading these tours.

UTV tours will be offered Wednesdays in September and October. Please call the JCCB office at (641) 792-9780 to check on availability and to make a reservation. Tours are 1 hour long and can accommodate up to 5 people.

Uhlenhopp Arboretum is located at 2706 E 146th St N, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Right: The new UTV is currently running tours of Uhlenhopp Arboretum for those who are unable to hike the trails.



Off the Beaten Path Trail Race

Saturday, September 24, 9:00 AM

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

Registration for the 18th annual trail race will begin at 8:00AM at Ahrens Access of the preserve. The 6K trail race will kick off at 9:00AM and the 3K fun run/walk will begin at 9:15AM.



Further information, including registration forms and directions to Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve, is at www.jaspercountyconservation.com and on Jasper County Conservation's Facebook page. All registered runners and walkers will receive a long-sleeve t-shirt. Proceeds from the trail race will benefit Jasper Conservation Connection.

Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors (OWLS)

Jasper County Armory/Annex Building,
1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton

Come for coffee and a short presentation. All programs are from 10:00-11:00 AM unless noted otherwise.

Sept. 14—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Jasper County

Nichole Baxter, Conservationist with the NRCS Department, will talk about how NRCS and partner agencies are working with landowners and producers to improve soil and water quality and protect natural resources in Jasper County. Nichole will discuss common practices implemented in the county and demonstrate the importance of soil health for a sustainable future.

Oct. 12—Houseplants 101

Alex Nuzum, Education Coordinator at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, will talk about growing various houseplants and answer questions you may have about your plants at home.

Nov. 9—Discovering Norway

Newton resident Marie Quanbeck will talk about growing up in Norway and will share information about her Norwegian heritage.

Dec. 14—Evergreen Wreaths

Make your own fresh evergreen wreath or swag to take home in this hands-on, holiday program! Preregistration is required for this program by calling (641) 792-9780.

Halloween Hike

Friday, October 14, 6:00 PM
Newton Izaak Walton League

This is a fun and educational, *not* scary, event featuring musical skits performed by Newton Community Theatre actors and members of Jasper Conservation Connection. Hikers will meet fun characters along the trail, learn about nature and the environment, and listen to some familiar and fun songs!

Hour-long hikes will begin at 6:00 PM and will depart every 15 minutes. Each time slot can accommodate around 25 hikers. The last hike will begin at 8:00 PM. Families with young children are encouraged to come earlier in the evening.

The hikes will end with the very popular black-light animal tracking. The Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League will serve hotdogs and s'mores at the campfire. Popcorn and drinks will also be available.

Youth under age 12 must be accompanied by an adult. *Admission: free-will donation to JCCB.*

The Great Geocache Hunt 2022

Think you know Jasper County's parks pretty well? We are challenging you to find 10 hidden geocaches in 10 different county parks!

Coordinates for the Great Geocache Hunt 2022 are posted on Jasper County Conservation's Facebook page, @jaspercountyconservation, the first of every month. If you are not on Facebook, you can contact Naturalist Katie Cantu by email for the coordinates at kcantu@jasperia.org.

Each of the 10 geocaches has a different wildlife card to collect. If you collect all 10 by the end of the year and turn them into the conservation office, you will receive a fun JCCB prize!

If you do not already have GPS on your mobile device, we recommend downloading the free Geocaching app. Geocaches will remain in the parks for the year so you'll have plenty of time to locate them all.



Right: Ten geocaches, similar to this one, will be hidden in Jasper County parks this year.

Uhlenhopp Cabin Rentals

The cabin located at the beautiful Uhlenhopp Arboretum in eastern Jasper County is available to rent all year long!

The cabin has a full kitchen with limited pots/pans, cooking utensils, table service, and coffee pot. Kitchen and hand towels are provided, but all bedding and bath towels will need to be brought by the renter. There is one queen-sized bed in the loft and one queen-sized hideaway bed on the lower level. Pets are not allowed.

The cabin may be rented for a minimum of two nights on weekdays, Sunday-Thursday (\$130/night) and a minimum of two nights for weekends, Friday-Saturday (\$150/night). Full week reservations Friday-Friday are \$125/night. Three night stays are required for holiday weekends (\$150/night).

Reservations can be made at the Jasper County Conservation office in Newton, or by calling (641) 792-9780.



Above: The cabin at Uhlenhopp Arboretum is available to rent. It is beautiful at all times of the year!



Programs at Ashton Observatory

The Ashton Observatory will be open for public programs through the end of October on Saturday nights at 8:00pm. There will not be talks inside the building, but telescopes will be outside for opening viewing.

The telescopes will be operated by the Des Moines Astronomical Society (DMAS). For more information or to reserve a viewing time for a small group, check out their website at www.dmastronomy.com.

A Summer of Fun!

Newton Noon Kiwanis continues to generously sponsor JCCB summer camps and the funding helps Conservation staff to create camps focusing on outdoor skills, wildlife identification, water-sports, art projects, and much more! All of the camps quickly overflowed with participants when the registration opened online in May. Over 150 campers, ages 5 to 16, have spent their summer with Conservation staff being “wild” in 19 different camps that spanned 23 days!

Some of the more popular activities included fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, racing down the giant slip-and-slide, creek stomping, pond netting, games, looking through microscopes, launching rockets, and so much more.

We all had so much fun this summer! A HUGE thank you to the Newton Noon Kiwanis from Jasper County Conservation and summer camp participants for this wonderful learning opportunity! Please contact naturalists Katie or Greg if you have any questions about our summer programming.



Above: A few camp pictures from this past summer. Katie identifying wild edible plants in the woods, trying out the new paddleboards, Greg helping make hummingbird feeders, and catching frogs.

2022 Teacher Extern Experience

Jasper County Conservation was fortunate this summer to again have two teacher externs working with us on EE programming. Iowa STEM Teacher Externships, a program of the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council, is supported through state-appropriated funds and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) Grant for Teacher Externships with Environmental and Conservation Professionals, along with investments by Iowa business and industry partners.

During the summer, educators work side-by-side with knowledgeable and skilled industry employees who help bring the classroom curriculum to life. Teacher Externships provide educators with the exposure to answer questions about real-world application, prepare students for careers they may have in the future, and improve educational experiences.

Our externs have been phenomenal and we really enjoy working with them! This year, our externs were Ashtyn Vandersnick, 1st grade teacher at Fairview Elementary in Grinnell and Danielle Hoenig, High School Earth & Space Science teacher at SE Polk. They assisted naturalists with summer camps, worked on floating wetlands, and helped make improvements to the Jasper County Community Garden in Newton.



Above: Teacher Extern Danielle Hoenig helps summer campers identify the pond creatures they caught and Teacher Extern Ashtyn Vandersnick helps plant a floating wetland that was installed at Mariposa Park.

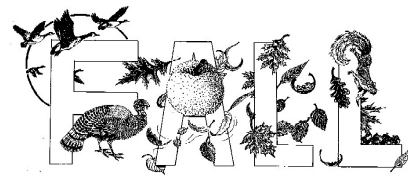
Thank you



Kiwanis
Newton Noon

Jasper County Conservation Board
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A Big Thank You To...

Volunteer instructors who taught hunter education, the Newton Izaak Walton League for the use of their clubhouse and facilities for programs, Bill Yeager for mowing at Uhlenhopp Arboretum, Gary Morris for mowing at Ashton Park, Brad Van Zante and Kraig Holubar for driving UTV tours, Newton Noon Kiwanis for sponsoring our summer camp programs, Ina Heidmeann for supporting our EE program and the Nature Playscape Trail, Slipstream for playing at the Caring for Conservation Concert, Sea Turtle Ice Cream. Magoo's Pizza, Sticky Fingers Chicken, and Greencastle Tavern for providing food and drinks at the concert and to everyone who came out and enjoyed music with us to support the nature center project! **Thank you!!**

Jasper County Conservation Board's programs are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age and handicap. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination, they may file a complaint with the Jasper County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, Washington, D.C. 29240