



# The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2021

## Two New Park Signs Dedicated

Jasper County Conservation had dedications for two new park entrance signs this fall. The first was at Ashton Wildwood Park, memorializing a very special board member, Denis Wilcox, who sadly passed this year. Ashton was his favorite park, and after serving on the board for almost 30 years, he volunteered for the next 10 years mowing the area! The center green expanse at the park was also named Wilcox Green after him. We sure miss Denis, but it was a pleasure to spend the day with his children, grandchildren, his brother, and many of his special friends at the park.

Dennis Black, who served as the first Jasper County Conservation Director from 1970-2004, was honored with his name on the new entrance sign at Mariposa Recreation Area. Dennis and his family moved into the house at Mariposa shortly after he was hired and he began a legacy of acquiring and developing land for Jasper County. In fact, the conservation board first met Dennis when they hired him to create a design for the Ashton Park campground. The rest is history!

Make sure you go check out these beautiful new additions to our parks. Winter is a great time to walk through Ashton and Mariposa. We'd like to thank Mingo Products and Krampe Welding and Fabrication for their awesome work, and all the special friends and family members who donated in remembrance of two conservation leaders. They certainly left their mark in Jasper County for all generations to come!

*Right:* Dennis Black with a few of his friends at the Conservation Department.



*Above:* Friends and family of Denis Wilcox stand by the new entrance sign at Ashton Park.  
*Left:* Wilcox Green is marked with a large rock.



*Above:* The entrance sign at Mariposa Recreation Area in honor of Senator Dennis H. Black. Dennis is pictured with his wife, Faun, and children Stephen, Stuart and AnneMarie.

### Raising Funds for a UTV

Jasper County Conservation recently opened a new park called Uhlenhopp Arboretum, located at 2706 E 146th St N, Grinnell, Iowa 50112. Elliott Uhlenhopp was a professor at Grinnell College and his wish was that his 250-acre arboretum be gifted to Jasper County Conservation upon his death. He reminded others, "The World needs more trees; plant as many as you can," and this is just what he did! JCC accepted his generous donation and has worked to create a natural area full of trails winding through prairie, timber, wetlands, and 7 ponds, each named for a day of the week. Over 4 miles of groomed trails showcase thousands of species of trees, native grasses and flowers, and encircle each of the ponds. One rental cabin (with more planned!) is also available at this beautiful area.

Jasper County Conservation is proud of this new park that opened during the fall of 2021. The amount of visitors to the area has been absolutely overwhelming. Bill Yeager, our special conservation volunteer and "Uhlenhopp trail mower" began to notice visitors coming out daily and sitting in wheel chairs at the shelter or sitting at picnic tables at the parking area and looking out into the preserve. He saw them smiling and pointing at far away sites and he wished he could get them out in to the park to show them the ponds, trails, the Great Blue Heron rookery, prairie plants and fruit trees strewn throughout the preserve.

It has brought him so much joy, and he wanted to be able to share the same joy with those who have mobility issues and could only sit at the parking area and imagine what was out over the hills and in the trees of the preserve. Bill has made it his goal to try to create a way for people with limited mobility to be able to experience the park as he has during his volunteer time. Bill has joined with Jasper County Conservation to raise



funds to purchase a UTV that will allow tours to be held at Uhlenhopp (and other conservation areas!) for individuals who aren't able to hike to view the beauty of our county parks.

If you would like to make a contribution to the UTV fundraising project, please contact Keri Van Zante at [kvanzante@jasperia.org](mailto:kvanzante@jasperia.org) or call (641) 792-9780.

### Celebrate your Love of the Land

#### Make a Gift to Jasper County Conservation

Since 1962, Jasper County Conservation has protected over 3,000 acres of local prairies, woodlands, wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams, and has created almost 40 miles of trails. Our dedicated education staff meet with over 15,000 children and adults each year to teach about the outdoors. At the heart of our mission are people who love the outdoors. People like you.

Whether your gift signifies your love of land and nature, or is a way of remembering a loved one, it will support the ongoing protection, restoration and exploration of special places right here in Jasper County. You can even choose to direct your gift to a specific project or program. Our Environmental Education Center Project is nearing \$700,000 in donations and your gift could help get us to \$1 million! Build on the legacy of the nature lover in your life by protecting more of the places you both love - for the land, water, wildlife, education, and future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

Want us to notify your honoree? Include your honoree's name and address and we'll mail them a card sharing your special donation. Your honoree's name will also appear in The Jasper County Jewel newsletter.

For more information, contact the Jasper County Conservation office at (641) 792-9780 or stop by and see us at 1030 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. S. in Newton.



### **As the new year approaches, are you making resolutions to:**

- Get involved with a group that is making a difference locally
- Donate to a great cause
- Help protect wildlife and take care of the environment
  - Stay active and young at heart
- Learn new things
- Spend more time outdoors
  - Meet new people
  - Have fun!

Please consider volunteering with Jasper County Conservation! We would love to add you to our dynamic group of supporters. Contact our office by phone or email to learn more about the opportunities available.

## Ski & Snowshoe

Saturday, January 8, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Saturday, January 15, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Saturday, January 29, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Saturday, February 5, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Saturday, February 12, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Jasper County Armory/Annex Building  
1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton

Try out the cross-country skis and snowshoes with Jasper County Conservation! We have equipment in all sizes, so bring the whole family. Check in behind the Armory Building for equipment and then spend the afternoon exploring Maytag Park in the snow.

There is a \$5.00 fee per person to check out the equipment and a limited number of skis and snowshoes. If there is no snow cover, the program will be cancelled. Call (641) 792-9780 the Friday before to check on conditions or watch our Facebook page for updates.



## Older, Wiser, Livelier

### Seniors (OWLS)

Jasper County Conservation Office,  
1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton

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

### Jan. 12—Falconry 101

Brenda Smith, who works for the Iowa DNR and is also a licensed falconer, will talk about how she and her husband Jeremy got started in this hobby. They have successfully flown three red-tail hawks in recent years, releasing the first two back to the wild. Currently they have one red-tail named Artemis who will be visiting OWLS!

### Feb. 9—Make Your Own Gnome

Viann Clancy will bring a fun project to work on at this month's OWLS. All the materials and instruction will be provided to make your own cute Valentine or spring-themed gnome.

Space is limited; please preregister for this program by calling (641) 792-9780.



## Falconry Demonstration

Saturday, January 15, 2:00-3:00pm  
Ashton Wildwood Park, Wilcox Green

A follow up to our January OWLS program, licensed falconer Brenda Smith will have her red-tail hawk, Artemis, out for demonstration. Brenda got started in falconry five years ago with her husband Jeremy. Artemis has so far caught 7 rabbits, 1 red squirrel, 1 gray squirrel, and countless mice. The Smith family has a passion for the outdoors and is excited to share their love of nature with others. The public is invited to watch Artemis in action at this free program!

## Family Winter Rec Day

Sunday, January 22, 1:00-4:00 PM  
Newton Izaak Walton League  
889 Hwy. F-36 W, Newton

Jasper County Conservation and the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League are partnering up to provide a family winter sports day at the Newton Izaak Walton League. Try out ice fishing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. All equipment and bait will be provided. This event will be cancelled if we do not have snow or good ice conditions. *Fee: \$5/person, ages 5 and under free.*



## Upcoming Maple Syrup Season

Our staff is excited for the 2022 maple syrup season. This past year brought an extremely short season for the Sugar Shack at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve and we continue to learn a lot along the way. Hopefully the weather will cooperate a bit better for us!

With money from grants and syrup and t-shirt sales, we've added a new ventilation system, concrete sidewalks and loading pad, a ventilation hood, as well as a new 330 gallon storage tank and 35 gallon head tank. The Sugar Shack will be open to the public during operation hours for a short tour and explanation of the process. Open house times and other updates are posted on our Facebook page, @jaspercountyconservation.

Once production starts, Uncle Jake's Pure Maple Syrup will for sale at our office while supplies last. We look forward to a good year and hope to see you out there!



### Caring For Conservation Auction Benefitting Environmental Education Center

**Saturday, April 2, 2021, 6:00pm**  
**Sugar Grove Vineyards and Gathering Place**  
**6602 Ginger Ave., Newton**

Fundraising for the Environmental Education Learning Center continues, and money raised from the Caring for Conservation Auction on April 2 will go towards this state-of-the-art, LEED Platinum Certified facility which will be located south of Newton.

The doors at Sugar Grove will open at 6:00pm, the silent auction begins at 6:30pm, followed by a live auction. There is no charge to get in, free appetizers and music are provided, along with a cash bar. Many items and experiences have already been donated for this great cause. There will be something for everyone!

We are still looking for donations and sponsorships. All donations are greatly appreciated and are tax deductible. Your donation can be something as simple as a gift certificate to your business, cash donation or an item to contribute to a gift basket. If you have a special skill to offer that could be shared with someone as an unique experience, please consider donating your time. Donations can be mailed or dropped off at the Jasper County Armory/Annex Building in Newton. Contact Jade Read at [jread@jasperia.org](mailto:jread@jasperia.org) for information about making auction donations.

More information about the project can be found at [www.jaspercountyconservation.com](http://www.jaspercountyconservation.com). If you have questions please contact Keri Van Zante, Director, at [kvanzante@jasperia.org](mailto:kvanzante@jasperia.org) or call (641) 792-9780. We hope to see you at this exciting event!

### 17th Annual Trail Race Results

Jasper Conservation Connection organized it's 17th Annual Off the Beaten Path trail race and fun run at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve with about 80 participants competing on Saturday, September 25th. Thank you to all of our volunteers and race participants!

Overall winner of the 3K was Smith Skouson, age 13, with a time of 13.21. The 6K winner was Andrew Johnson, age 29, with a time of 22.41.

Race times are posted on our website at [www.jaspercountyconservation.com](http://www.jaspercountyconservation.com). We hope to see you all again next year!



### "Rainbow Connection" Hike

The 17th annual Halloween Hike, sponsored by Jasper Conservation Connection, was held at the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League on October 15th. About 200 visitors came out on a beautiful night. The weather could not have cooperated any better and the attendance was amazing!

Hikers enjoyed six skits in the "Roy G. Biv, Your Friendly Host, presents The Rainbow Connection" hike. Many of the performers have sang in productions at the Newton Community Theatre. They were: Katie Healy, Mike Healy, Sandy and Harvey Olsthoorn, Julie Goodman, Barb Hoover, Will Edgar, Kate Fudge and Amy McGhghy. Special thanks to Cindy Healy for coordinating the performers, skits, and costumes!

Halloween Hike visitors also enjoyed hotdogs provided by the IKES, roasted marshmallows at the campfire, and looked for animal tracks during the fun blacklight tracking activity.

Thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers and participants who make this event a success every year! If you would like to help with next year's event, please contact the JCCB.



*Above:* Halloween Hike performers put on another fantastic show at the Newton Izaak Walton League. From left to right: Katie Healy, Mike Healy, Julie Goodman, Will Edgar, Kate Fudge, Sandy Olsthoorn, and Barb Hoover.

*Right:* The 120 Hours Outdoors in 2021 scavenger hunt leaf moved 34 times throughout county parks this year! A grand prize winner will be randomly selected and announced on Facebook @jaspercountyconservation!



## Volunteer Spotlight

We would like to recognize the LaPlant Family from rural Newton as our Jasper County Conservation Volunteers of the Year. Jim, his wife Carol, and daughter Jessica Cole, have all been great volunteers for Jasper County Conservation for so many years.

Jessica, a first grade teacher at Thomas Jefferson Elementary in Newton, always plans an annual field trip with her students to learn about animals and the forest each fall. Jim and Carol provide the “habitat” for this field trip and the kids receive an unforgettable experience led by hosts Jungle Jim and Pocahontas Carol! This is always a favorite field trip for Conservation Staff to attend as well!

Jim also recently donated to create a water stop on the Chichaqua Valley Trail in Ira Park. Stop by and enjoy a cold drink of water and rest on the donated benches and say a thank you to the LaPlant Family for always caring for conservation!



## Waldo Walker Bird Blind

Waldo Walker was a professor at Grinnell College who enjoyed walking and birding along the trails at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve. In his later years, Walker would watch birds from his car in the parking lot. When he passed away this year, Walker’s family and friends decided to dedicate a bird blind in his memory. Materials were purchased with this generous gift and the blind was constructed by JCCB Naturalist, Greg Oldsen. Come have a seat and watch the birds visiting the feeders this winter!



Above: The Waldo Walker Bird Blind is located at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve.

## Trees Forever Grant

JCCB received a Trees Forever grant to purchase 15 trees for Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve. These trees were planted with the help of Lynnville-Sully 5th grade students as part of their fall field trip to the preserve. Tree species planted were Sugar Maple, Redbud, Tuliptree, Serviceberry, and Golden Raindrop Crabapple.



Above: Fifth grade students in Mrs. Downing’s and Mrs. Hamre’s classes learned how to plant trees at Jacob Krumm Preserve.

## 120 Hours Outdoors in 2021 Challenge

At the beginning of the year, we challenged folks to keep track of their time spent outdoors, preferably in county parks, but any quality outdoor experience counted. As of this newsletter printing, we have had several people turn in their completed log sheets. Everyone who completed the 120 Hour Challenge received a free equipment rental for a choice of cross-country skis, snowshoes, kayak, canoe or paddleboard. Those completing the challenge were:

Marilyn Schuler  
Sue Springer  
Katie Springer  
Brad Van Zante  
Glenda Duffus

Congratulations! We hope you continue to enjoy your county parks!

Jasper County Conservation Board  
1030 W. 2nd St. S.  
Newton, IA 50208

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**Jasper County Conservation Board**

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Jacob Arrowood.....Maintenance Technician

**Special thanks this past fall for....**donations from Ina Heidemann, Bill Yeager, Fareway, and the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. Thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who presented for the OWLS group and who helped with the trail race, Halloween Hike and many fall field trips!  
**THANK YOU!**



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