



# The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter Winter 2022

## Red Rock Prairie Trail Opening

The grand opening of the Red Rock Prairie Trail was held on September 8, 2022. A ribbon cutting took place at 5:00pm at Entryway Park by the bison sculpture in Prairie City. The public was encouraged to ride the trail, enjoy specials at local businesses, and then celebrate again at 6:00pm in Monroe with free hot dogs and ice cream at Red Rock Park. Free bike helmets were given to the first 50 kids under 12 in attendance at each town celebration. Two new bicycles were also given away in each town!

The Red Rock Prairie Trail is a new 10 mile concrete recreational trail from Monroe, to Prairie City, and to the entrance of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Future phases of this project include the connection of the trail to Mitchellville and then to the Des Moines metro!



Above: A large sign welcomes visitors in Monroe to the new bike trail. Trail enthusiasts gather in Prairie City on September 8 for the Red Rock Prairie Trail dedication.

## ARPA Funding

On Tuesday evening, September 6, 2022, the county ARPA (American Recovery Plan Act) committee voted on how to spend Jasper County's \$7.2 million. Through an 8-1 vote, it was approved to give \$1.25 million to conservation!

The funding recommendation was: \$450,000 to fix the Chichaqua Valley Trail, \$400,000 to add to the development of the Mariposa Campground, and \$400,000 for the nature center.

This recommendation went in front of the Board of Supervisors for a vote, and was APPROVED!! We are so every excited about this unbelievable boost for conservation in Jasper County!



Above: Architect's design for the Environmental Education Center, a project that recently received \$400,000 in ARPA funding.

### **Wellmark MATCH Grant**

The Wellmark Foundation notified 22 Iowa organizations they will receive Matching Assets to Community Health (MATCH) grant funds. Each of these grantees are planning projects that can help individuals, families and communities achieve better health through built environment initiatives that encourage physical activity or providing access to healthy foods.

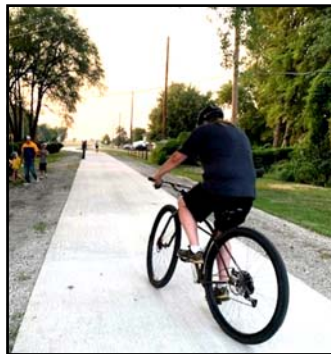
“Each project included here has the potential to make a positive, long-term impact on the overall health and well-being of their community which will enhance the quality of life for generations to come,” said Mary Lawyer, executive director for The Wellmark Foundation. “We’re excited to see the planning, focus and community engagement within each of the selected applications.”

**Jasper County Conservation received \$100,000 for the second phase of the Red Rock Prairie Trail (Prairie City to Mitchellville).** The Red Rock Prairie Trail corridor exists on an old rail bed and will eventually link with the Volksweg Trail from Pella/Red Rock to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge to Mitchellville and eventually to Des Moines and Saylorville Lake. This phase of the project will develop seven additional miles of bike and pedestrian improvements to complete the 16.35 mile Red Rock Prairie Trail.

“The Wellmark Foundation recognizes sustainable changes take time and we are pleased to continue to offer these grant opportunities to support the overall health and well-being of local communities,” said Lawyer. “Recently, we have better aligned the grant focus and awards to

encourage even more communities to get involved and take advantage of support from The Wellmark Foundation and upcoming improvements will allow for a more defined focus on physical activity and healthy foods.”

Since its inception in 1991, The Wellmark Foundation has awarded nearly \$58 million in grant and project funding to initiatives that positively impact the well-being of Iowans and South Dakotans.



*Above:* Bike riders enjoy the new Red Rock Prairie Trail.

### **Celebrate your Love of the Land**

#### **Make a Gift to Jasper County Conservation**

**Celebrate the people in your life who have instilled a lasting love of wild places. Make a tribute gift to Jasper County Conservation today!**

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 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 at \$1,320,000 in donations and your gift could help get us to \$2.2 million needed to break ground! 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 for the holidays? Give before noon on Monday, December 19, include your honoree’s name and address and we’ll mail them a personal Christmas card sharing your special donation! Your honoree’s name will also appear in the Spring 2023 issue of The Jasper County Jewel newsletter if you desire.

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.

## Fly Tying Workshop

**Thursday, December 15, 6:00-8:00pm**  
**Jasper County Armory/Annex Building**  
**1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton**

Join us for a fly tying workshop led by local fly fishing guide, Ryan Koch, with Fly Fish Iowa. This workshop is geared toward beginners but any skill level is welcome. Ryan will show the tools and techniques used in fly tying and each participant will have the chance to tie a Woolly Bugger and Hare's Ear Nymph, both of which will be effective for local panfish and bass. To register, call the JCCB office at (641) 792-9780. Space is limited. *Fee: \$10/person.*



## 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. 11—Hoksey Native Seeds**

Nicolas Lirio will interview his father, Carroll Hoksbergen, in this live, interactive podcast program. They will discuss how Carroll started the “Prairie Farm” near Lynnville and their mission to help landowners grow native plants, as well as answer any questions you may have about prairie.

#### **Feb. 8—“The Year the Earth Changed”**

Join us for a showing of this documentary, narrated by David Attenborough, depicting how wildlife and the Earth changed during the pandemic when most of us were on lockdown in our homes. We’ll provide the popcorn!

## Family Winter Rec Day

**Saturday, January 21, 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.*



## Ski & Snowshoe

**Saturday, January 14, 1:00-3:00 PM**  
**Saturday, January 28, 1:00-3:00 PM**  
**Saturday, February 4, 1:00-3:00 PM**  
**Saturday, February 11, 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.

## Craft and Cocoa

**Tuesday, January 31, 5:30-7:30 PM**  
**Jasper County Conservation Office**  
**1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton**

Join us on National Hot Chocolate Day for a fun evening of crafting and enjoying hot cocoa. We’ll have a variety of winter activities to choose from that the whole family can participate in. *Fee: \$5/person.*



## Upcoming Maple Syrup Season

Our staff is excited for the 2023 maple syrup season. With money from grants, 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!





## 18th Annual Trail Race Results

Jasper Conservation Connection organized its 18th Annual Off the Beaten Path trail race and fun run at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve with about 60 participants competing on Saturday, September 24th. Thank you to all of our volunteers and race participants!

Overall winner of the 3K was Klayton Montgomery, age 10, with a time of 15.00. The 6K winner was Tommy Hexter, age 23, with a time of 26.48.

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



*Right:* Ten year old Klayton Montgomery, winner of the Off the Beaten Path 3K trail race, stands next to the race results.

## Mariposa Painted Turtle

Jasper County Conservation received \$8,000 from the Jasper Community Foundation to help develop more of the Mariposa Playscape Trail. With this money, we were able to purchase a large painted turtle for children to climb on and the lumber needed to put a roof over the stage.

The turtle was placed at the end of the Playscape Trail, near the wetland amphitheater area. It is our plan to extend the trail down toward the wetland and eventually add a boardwalk or dock to walk out on. If you would like to be a sponsor of the Playscape Trail at Mariposa Park, please contact Katie Cantu at [kcantu@jasperia.org](mailto:kcantu@jasperia.org).

*Right:* The painted turtle sculpted play element was installed at Mariposa's Playscape Trail this past fall. Funds will continue to be raised to keep developing the trail.



## "Power of Nature" Halloween Hike

The 18th annual Halloween Hike, sponsored by Jasper Conservation Connection, was held at the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League on October 14th. About 175 visitors were in attendance.

Hikers learned about natural disasters in six skits at the "Power of Nature" hike. Many of the performers have sang in productions at the Newton Community Theatre. They were: Rachel and Terry Faidley, Sandy and Harvey Olsthoorn, Julie Goodman, Barb Hoover, Will Edgar, Kate Fudge, Linda Dougan, Liam Dougan and Cindy Healy. 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 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: Liam Dougan, Kate Fudge, Julie Goodman, Linda Dougan, Barb Hoover, Will Edgar, Rachel Faidley, Terry Faidley, and Sandy Olsthoorn. Kneeling in front is Cindy Healy.

*Right:* Cindy Healy and Julie Goodman sing about being prepared for all that Mother Nature throws at us.



## Volunteer Spotlight

We would like to recognize Brad Van Zante and Kraig Holubar as our Jasper County Conservation Volunteers of the Year! Brad and Kraig volunteered to drive UTV tours at Uhlenhopp Arboretum, which took place from June through October of this year.

Four times were scheduled through the JCCB office ahead of time and riders met Brad or Kraig at the arboretum for their 1-hour driving tour. In all, Brad and Kraig provided 28 tours for 149 people, logging over 140 miles of trails driven in the UTV!

The UTV tours were the idea of Bill Yeager, who felt there needed to be a way for people of all abilities to see the beauty of Uhlenhopp Arboretum. With some very generous donations, JCCB was able to purchase the six passenger vehicle and four times filled up quickly.

Brad is Lynnville resident and retired deputy from the Jasper County Sheriff's Department. Kraig is a Newton resident and a retired US naval officer. We greatly appreciate all their time making this program happen and look forward to UTV tours again next year!



*Above:* The UTV stops at Sunday Pond at Uhlenhopp Arboretum, a beautiful location full of wildlife, however a long, hilly hike to get to. Bill Yeager felt all park visitors needed to be able to see this special place and helped JCCB get the UTV program going.

*Right:* The Great Geocache Hunt 2022 has ten caches hidden throughout county parks! Coordinates are posted on Facebook @jaspercountyconservation and prizes will be given out to those who find all ten!



## Newton High School Job Experience

Every Wednesday morning this past fall, we have a special group of freshman and sophomores from the Newton High School Experienced Based Career Education (EBCE) program visiting us at the Conservation Office. The students are gaining job experience by taking care of all of our animal friends.

Each week, they feed and water our turtles, salamander, toad and snake. They also add water to the turtle tank, give Franklin the ornate box turtle a "bath", and practice handling Cupcake, our fox snake! Students participating are Robert Harger, Thomas Russell, SeaAna Allen, Alex Church, Maynard Meling and Cameron Muhs. We have all enjoyed these visits and the kids are quickly becoming super naturalists!

*Right and below:* Maynard Meling gives Franklin the turtle a bath and SeaAna Allen holds Cupcake the fox snake during a visit to care for the JCCB office animals.



## Save the Date! Caring for Conservation Golf Classic

**Saturday, May 20, 2023**

**Shotgun starts at 8:00AM and 1:00PM  
Westwood Golf Course, Newton**

This fundraising event for Jasper County Conservation will feature an 18-hole best shot scramble. Individual entry is \$80/person and team entry is \$320. Entry includes 18 holes, cart, lunch and two drink tickets.

Sponsorship opportunities are available, please contact Jade Read by phone at (641) 792-9780 or email [jread@jasperia.org](mailto:jread@jasperia.org).



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

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**Jasper County Conservation Board**

M - F 8:00 - 4:00 (641) 792-9780  
email: [conservation@co.jasper.ia.us](mailto:conservation@co.jasper.ia.us)  
website: [www.jaspercountyconservation.com](http://www.jaspercountyconservation.com)

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Jerry Ratliff.....Park Officer  
Kent Dunsbergen.....Maintenance Technician  
Ethan Vander Pol.....Maintenance Technician  
Jacob Arrowood.....Maintenance Technician

**Special thanks this past fall for....**donations from Ina Heidemann, Bill Yeager and the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. Thank you to Claudia Beckwith for keeping the bird feeders filled at Jacob Krumm Preserve and to Bran Van Zante and Kraig Holubar for driving the UTV tours at Uhlenhopp Arboretum. 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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