

# SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

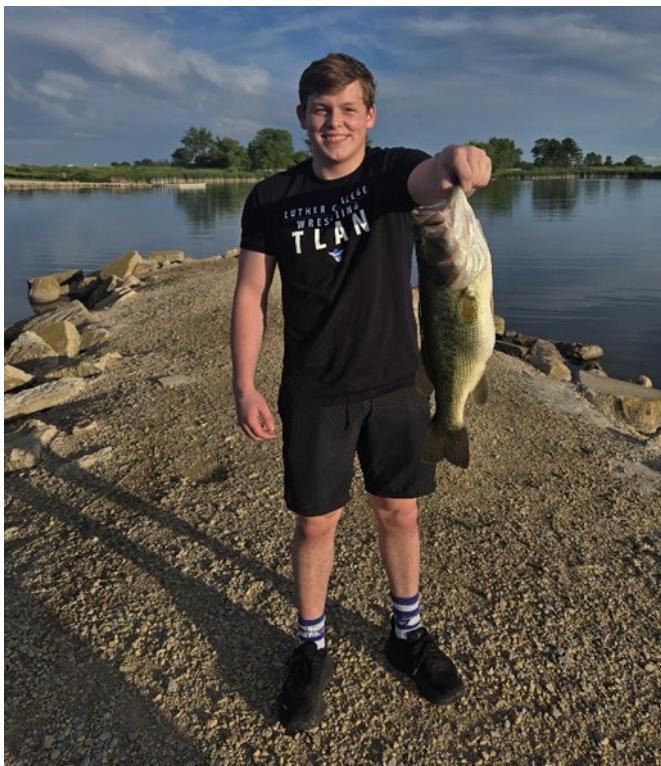
Newsletter of the Chickasaw County Conservation Board - Conserving our natural resources since 1957      Summer 2025

## Director's Dialogue      Director, Chad Humpal

I love it when someone stops me to tell me their story of harvesting a beautiful white-tailed deer, how they called in a long-bearded tom turkey or chased a ringneck pheasant around one of our prairies. Let's not forget about listening to a fishing story or two. I especially enjoy it when it happens in one of Chickasaw County Conservation's managed areas.

Let me tell you about a personal fishing story that happened just a few weeks ago, right here in Chickasaw County. My family stopped out to Airport Lake to spend some time with our brother/sister in-law and their kids. They are avid outdoors people and enjoy camping and kayaking at Airport Lake Campground. My family also enjoys spending time outdoors and values it even more when they have some of their cousins to enjoy it with.

We were not at the campground for very long, and the kids decided they were going to try a little fishing to pass the time. Off they headed for one of the fishing jetties. It was not more than 15 minutes from the time the kids headed out, and we heard this commotion coming from the fishing



jetty. At first, I did not know what to think. Did someone fall in? Was someone hurt? It didn't take long to figure out that they had a big one on the line. We adults quickly headed for the jetty. We arrived just in time to see my son Hunter, along with help from his cousin Drake, land this great largemouth bass.

The sheer joy and excitement that was coming from that jetty was incredible. I will say it was a bit loud for the rest of the people in the park, but they would have done the same given the opportunity. It was one of those moments that I will remember for a very long time. In the end it was just as much about spending time with loved ones as it was the fish. Watching our kids do something they love and enjoy is why my wife and I do what we do.

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# Director's Dialogue by Chad Humpal

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What is your story of the one that didn't get away, or maybe did? Many times, the one that got away makes a great story. If you have a story or photo of your experience from one of Chickasaw County Conservation's managed areas, please reach

out and let me know. I would love to hear it! If you don't have a story to tell, then head out to one of our wonderful areas right here in Chickasaw County and start making some!

One last thing. The kids did release this wonderful fish in hopes that someone else will be able to have a story of how they landed the big one. I look forward to hearing all about it.



## Iowa Flood Center by Chad Humpal

In light of the major flooding that we have had in the past year or so throughout the country, I wanted to ask if you know where to go to get critical information on our local rivers. The University of Iowa houses the IOWA FLOOD CENTER. The flood center works side by side with the National Weather Center and local organizations to provide Iowans with the most up to date information out there. We are fortunate to have such a resource at our finger tips, as many states like Texas and Tennessee (a couple of states that have had major flooding the last couple years) don't have a state ran flood center.

The center has put together the IOWA FLOOD INFORMATION SYSTEM or IFIS for short. IFIS is a one-stop web-platform to access community-based flood conditions, forecasts, visualizations, inundation maps, flood-related information, visualizations and applications. Their logo and link are displayed below.



[Iowa Flood Information System \(IFIS\)](#)



Chickasaw county has its own weather station that provides up to the minute information to the Iowa Flood Center. It is located on the north end of Split Rock Park and is cared for by Chickasaw County Conservation. I encourage you to check out both the weather station and IFIS website.

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.

**mycountyparks**  
.com



# Tallgrass Summer by Matt Crayne

For me, every year seems to go by faster and faster. Well, every month, week, heck even every day seems to go by faster. For that reason, and many others, I think that it's crucial for everyone to get outside.

While I will be the first to admit that I spend too much time in front of a screen. Whether it be the computer that I'm typing this on, a television, or those terribly wonderful (or maybe wonderfully terrible?) little computers that we carry around in our pockets, they can cause our brain to not function as well as it should, and our connection with the world around us suffers.

When it comes to work, we don't necessarily get to choose how much time we spend at a screen, but in our personal time, we can definitely make our own choices and set limits for ourselves. My screen time on my phone pops up once a week, and I take a brief moment to contemplate how well or how poorly I did for the week. And I tell you what, I'm not happy about how much time that I've wasted looking at that little thing. (This is the time that you can say to yourself, "I need to make a change.")

Ok, now that I have confessed my sins, what am I going to do to make it better and enjoy the tail-end of the summer before it disappears? Well, I am going to start by spending more time in the outdoors. While it's now the dog days of summer, it doesn't mean that there aren't parts of the day that can be comfortable outside. If the heat is too much for you, get outside with the sunrise and the early morning. It's typically the coolest part of the day, and heck, a sunrise is magical and every single one is unique. Seeing the pinks, oranges, blues and yellows of the world waking up is good for the soul. Sunsets are pretty cool as well, and you can feel the air around you cool once that sun goes away.

What about when you are working? The law requires that your employer gives you breaks throughout your shift. Try to get outside, or at least to a window to see and soak in some of that daylight. The light from the sun is much different than those lights that are hung from the ceiling. How about during your 'lunch' break. I know that not everyone works a standard 9-5 type job, and meal breaks vary greatly. Whenever you get a longer break, try to get outside and move your feet. Going for a walk everyday can do wonders for your well being, especially when you are outside. For those of you self employed folks. Well, you get to make your own breaks, so make sure that you make it happen and get a little bit of time for yourself in that isn't work.

Another thing that can help you get outside is to have an outdoor hobby. Maybe it could be birdwatching, fishing, hiking/exploring, gardening, or one of the many other outdoor activities out there. For me, this spring and summer I've been trying to get out and play disc golf more. It can be a fun activity that can be enjoyed with others, or you can do it solo. While I was in Missouri for a week this summer, I played courses in 3 different locations. I experienced tallgrass prairie and woodlands, and it was just fun to check out areas that I'd never been before. I think that all of the above activities, with the exception of gardening can allow these types of experiences.

Getting out in the native landscapes can definitely build a greater connection with the natural world. It also makes me feel better about my day before I lay my head to rest. It's easy to prioritize other things ahead of ourselves. But as I age, I get a better understanding of how little time that we have to just live and enjoy life. Make some time for yourself. Find what suits you, and go out and enjoy the life that we get to live.



# Nature Center News & Events

## Hunter Education Class

**September 4 & 6 @ Fredericksburg Sportsman's Club**

There will be a Hunter Education class coming up here shortly. This is a full classroom course and participants must attend the entirety of both sessions. Online Registration with the Iowa DNR is required by going to [https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx?gl=1\\*196igvl\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*NTAwOTcyNzA5LjE3NTAwOTY2MzI](https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx?gl=1*196igvl*_gcl_au*NTAwOTcyNzA5LjE3NTAwOTY2MzI).

If you have questions, feel free to call us at 641-394-4714.

## Dutch Oven Cook Off

**Saturday, September 27      Airport Lake Park**

Try your hand at competing with others at our annual Dutch oven cook off at Airport Lake Park. This is a fun little community that likes to come together, make delicious food, and share recipes and ideas with each other. See more information on the next page.

## Halloween Hike

**Tuesday, October 14 6:00, 6:15, 6:30 and 6:45  
@ Twin Ponds**

This might be our favorite annual fall event. Every October, the naturalists of Chickasaw, Butler and Bremer CCBs get together to have a fun, educational hike for elementary aged kids to enjoy. With the help of volunteers we are able to provide snacks and guides for the hikes. There are 4 different hike times and pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714. Space will be limited, so make sure that you don't wait until the last day to try to sign up!

## Turkey Time

**Tuesday, November 25      5:30 @ Twin Ponds**

Bring the kids out to learn about Turkeys right before turkey day. They will learn about what turkeys do, how they communicate and will make a craft. They may even get a chance to try their hand at using a turkey call.

**Please keep an eye out as more events may be added!**

**TWIN PONDS NATURE CENTER**

**1811 240TH ST - IONIA**

**641-394-4714**

**Public Hours**

**Monday - Friday Noon - 4:00 p.m.**

**Open from 1-4 the 1st Sunday of the month based on volunteer availability.**

**Closed for Holidays.**

**You may also call for an appointment if those times don't work for you.**

# Nature Center Wish List

- Birdseed
- Medium-sized Fishing Bobbers
- Any used canoes in decent shape, or paddles
- Fly fishing rods/reels, cross-country skis, snowshoes

These items are used for the nature center, school programs, scout programs, and other public programs. We appreciate any and all support.



Check out [mycountyparks.com](http://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:** Republic Community Church bible school students for their generous donation to the Friends of CCC.
- **THANK YOU:** New Hampton Lions Club for their work on the Twin Ponds Shelter
- **THANK YOU:** Tim Riley for his work at Airport Lake Park.
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.
- **THANK YOU:** Tina Rowe and Shelly Tanner and Brian Wurzer for all of the work they do as our campground hosts.

## Upcoming Events

### Dutch Oven Cook-off

**Airport Lake Park Campground**

**Sponsored by the Friends of CCC**

**Saturday, September 27: Sign in at 10 am**

Want to see how good of a Dutch Oven cook you are? Join us at the Airport Lake Park campground for a Dutch Oven cook-off. Each participant will create one main dish and/or one dessert to be tasted by judges. Registration for the event is free! Sign-in starts at 10 am. Dishes will be judged around Noon depending on how fast everyone finishes and prizes for the winners will be awarded after all scores are tallied. Come meet some new friends and have fun!



### Lending Library at Airport Lake Campground

**If you're camping at Airport Lake Park and are looking for something to help pass the time, visit our lending library. This is thanks to our campground host Tina Rowe. THANKS TINA!**



# Creature Feature

by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

## Black Bear

*Ursus americanus*

When I made the decision to write this article, I was shocked that I hadn't used the black bear for one of these yet. They are such a cool animal that can occasionally be found in Iowa and they are becoming more prevalent.

When Europeans came across what is now Iowa in the mid 1800's, there were plenty of black bears. However, the black bear population was wiped out from overhunting. Since then, the black bear can be occasionally seen wandering into Iowa from other states.

In April, I found an article on the Iowa DNR's web page talking about the possibility of seeing more bears in Iowa this year. According to the article (<https://www.iowadnr.gov/news-release/2025-04-29/black-bear-sightings-rise-northeast-iowa>), there may be 2-4 bears that have overwintered in Iowa. There are typically 2-5 bear sightings each year in Iowa, and there are no signs of reproduction in the state. It is believed that the bears that visit Iowa are typically young males. There haven't been any threats to people at all, but they have cleaned out some bird feeders and damaged some bee hives.



If you see a black bear in Iowa, it is likely just looking for food or a mate. They tend to scare easily. So, if you keep a safe distance and make loud noises (the Iowa DNR recommends banging pots and pans or slapping 2x4's together) the bear will typically flee the scene. Make sure that you give them the space to have a safe exit. Also, make sure that if you have bears in your area to not leave out food sources for them (pet food, food wastes, bird seed). Much like you and I going to the grocery store, bears will come back to an easy food source.

Black bears are typically identified by their black, or very dark brown, thick fur. They often have a white patch on their chest. As far as size goes, adult female black bears are typically in the 125-175 pound range, while males will be larger and weigh up to 300 pounds. That isn't to say that they can't get larger. The largest recorded U.S. black bear was in North Carolina and it weighed 880 pounds! Adult black bears are typically 5-6 feet long.

Black bears have a long muzzle and a tremendous sense of smell. According to the North American Bear Center (bear.org), their nasal mucosa area is about one hundred times larger than that of humans. The limits of their smell remain untested, but it is believed that bears can smell things from miles away. This is why when you are camping in bear country, it is highly recommended to safely hang your smellable items (food, deodorant, toothpaste, etc.) in a tree out away from the trunk and high enough so that bears cannot get at them.

Black bears have differing teeth in their mouths. Being omnivores, they possess teeth that are great for catching and eating animals, while also having teeth that are more suited for eating vegetation. They have large canine teeth that are great for grabbing and holding onto prey, smaller incisors in front that allow them to be more selective with what they are taking from a plant or animal, and large, flatter molars that are good for chewing vegetation as well as meat.

Black bears' claws are crucial for their survival. When they are cubs, their only way of protecting themselves from danger is by climbing up a tree. The claws are somewhat hooked, and that makes it easier to climb. Their claws are important for tearing into rotten logs for insects, marking trees and digging for the purposes of denning for the winter.

**...Continued on Page 7...**

# Nature Center Volunteers

If you enjoy visiting the Twin Ponds Nature Center and would like to make it available to others that aren't able to visit during our normal hours, consider becoming a Sunday nature center host. We are trying to have the nature center open for the first Sunday of the month from 1-4 pm. and are always looking for more volunteers. If you are interested in hosting, please contact us at 641-394-4714, or at [m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov](mailto:m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov).

## Creature Feature Continued from Page 6

Bears go through a period of hibernation during the winter months. Being that they range from Mexico to Northern Canada, the length of hibernation varies greatly depending on climate. They may hibernate for up to 7 months in their northern range while not going into hibernation in their southern range.

The black bear is an animal that people often fear. Usually this is taught to them as young children in story tales such as Goldilocks. While black bears are capable of inflicting damage to people, so are white-tailed deer, raccoons, dogs, etc. The danger of black bears in Iowa to you is almost non-existent (do not approach, feed, taunt, etc.). So, if you ever happen to have the opportunity to see a black bear in the wild, consider yourself lucky and enjoy watching from a safe distance.

## 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](mailto:m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov) including the following:

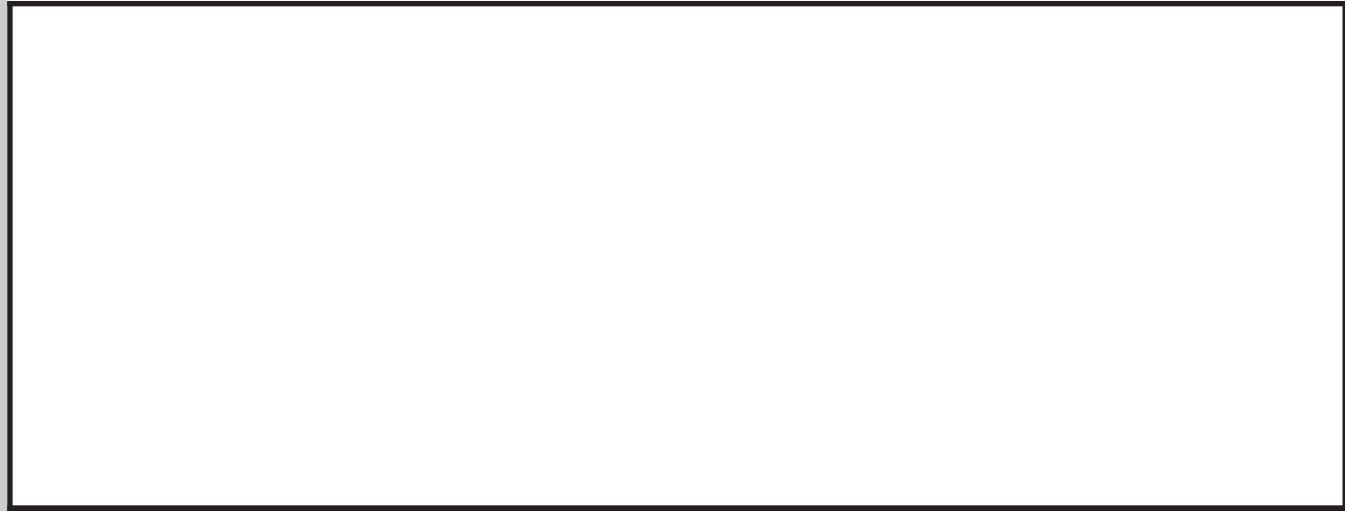
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# SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

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## Board Members

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Jim Allison

## Staff

Chad Humpal Director  
Matt Crayne Naturalist  
Caleb Ciavarelli & NR & Park  
Justin Van Driel 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 Tuesday of the month at the Conservation Headquarters located in Twin Ponds Nature Center at 1811 240th St, Ionia. Watch the Chickasaw CCB website 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 Tuesday. Changes are noted on the website. For more information, call Chickasaw County Conservation at 641-394-4714.

## **Nature Center Hours**

Or by Appointment - Closed for Holidays.

[www.mycountyparks.com](http://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 receive the newsletter or need to change your address, call the County Conservation office at 641-394-4714 or email: [m.crayne@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov](mailto: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.