

SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

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

Director's Dialogue Director, Chad Humpal

As we say goodbye to 2024, I wanted to highlight a couple big additions to Chickasaw County Conservation. The live animal display at Twin Ponds Nature Center was updated with a new façade and new animal tanks. As Twin Ponds opened its doors a little over 20 years ago, the conservation board and staff thought it was time to look at updating some of its displays. The live animals are always a popular attraction with the youth and adults that visit, so it only made sense to see what could be done to freshen up the display.

The staff sat down and discussed options that did not involve hiring an outside company to design and/or install the project, as that would have driven the cost of the project beyond the limited funds available. Speaking of funds, I would like to thank Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation for making this project become a reality. They agreed to pay for the new tanks, filters, and tank displays.

Last winter the staff started in and removed the old animal tanks and facade. Then as they had time they built new tanks, tank displays, reframed the wall, put on a new façade, and finished the project with new interpretive signage. I will admit we had some bumps along the way and the project took a bit longer than I was hoping. In the end it was worth the wait. The new display is incredible. Thank you, Justin, Caleb and Matt, for your time and talents.



This project has freed up some space and the staff are now working on securing funds for a new interactive/inclusive learning center to set alongside the new animal display. Estimates for the learning center are around \$45,000. When complete it will offer an experience that cannot be found in Chickasaw County. Stay tuned for updates.

The original shelter outside Twin Ponds Nature Center was built in 1963 for the purpose of outdoor education by Fredericksburg, Nashua and New Hampton School districts. To this day it is still the central focus of our outdoor environmental education programs. The over 60 year old structure has settled and bowed. The rafters have warped, the roof is no longer water tight and the concrete has cracked and heaved so that it is no longer ADA compliant.

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Congratulations Ray by Chad Humpal

Congratulations to Ray Armbricht of Fredericksburg. After 15 years of service on the Chickasaw County Conservation Board Ray is stepping down. The last 13 years Ray has been chairman of the board. If you were to ask Ray what he was most proud of over the past 15 years, he wouldn't tell you any one thing, but the fact that they kept moving things forward and got things done. Ray represented district 5 and was only the 4th representative from that district in the program's history. In 2010 Ray took over for Myrna Moore who served from 1996 – 2009. Harm DeVries served from 1980-1995. Henry Justen served from 1957 – 1979. Ray's 13 years as board chair stands as the second most in board history. Ray Armbricht's leadership and enthusiasm for Chickasaw County Conservation will be missed. Thank you, Ray, for all you have done, Chickasaw County Conservation Board.

On Monday December 16, 2024 The Board of Supervisors appointed Shane Fountain to the open seat on the Conservation Board. The Conservation Board would like to welcome Shane.



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.

mycountyparks.com 

Director's Dialogue by Chad Humpal

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

In June, after the busy spring fieldtrip season, the staff of Chickasaw County Conservation removed the old shelter and concrete pad. Jerry Tank Masonry was awarded the concrete bid and completed construction on a new pad in July. Staff then worked on getting the dirt and rock graded around the new pad. The staff then went to work on the seeding and watering of new turf around the shelter.

In early fall of 2024, the New Hampton Lion's Club started to build the new shelter. As you can see from the picture above, the frame and roof are almost complete. We just need to install the steel on the roof and close in the gable ends. Electrical bids will be opened in the January board meeting and we hope to have the electrical installed in early spring. After completion of the electrical, we are going to enclose the ceiling and trim out the rest of the shelter with cedar.

I would again like to thank the New Hampton Lion's Club for providing the labor on this project. I'm guessing that is going to save the Conservation Board \$25,000 to \$30,000 on this project. A \$10,000 donation from the Pacovsky family in memory of Mel and Jan Pacovsky, long time conservation supporters and outdoor enthusiasts. Mel was a past Conservation Board member and was employed by the Iowa DNR for many years. Jan held positions on the National



(New Outdoor Classroom/Shelter House at Twin Ponds)

and Iowa State Christmas tree growers Association. Together they owned and operated Pine acres Christmas tree farm, served as board members for Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation and volunteered their time to many more outdoor organizations and projects. Their donation was the first donation for this project, and the donation that got this project moving. Chickasaw County Community Foundation Grant awarded \$10,000 for the project. The New Hampton Hotel/Motel awarded a \$5,000 grant for the project. The Conservation Board allocated \$10,000 out of its REAP account and \$10,000 out of capital projects budget. Joanne and Tom Myrsiades have donated \$5,000 towards the purchase of new walkthrough picnic tables, and Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation will complete the balance of the new tables once the shelter is complete.

It is really incredible what we can do when we all work together. Thank you all for everything you do to make Chickasaw County Conservation a better place. If you would like to help contribute to any of the above projects or have a project in mind that you would like to see completed, please reach out, as I would love to hear from you.

Chad Humpal (641)394-4714 or c.humpal@chickasawcounty.iowa.gov

Nature Center News & Events

Full Moon Snowshoe Hike

Monday, January 13: 6:30 pm @ Twin Ponds

Come on out to Twin Ponds to enjoy a stroll through the moonlit woods. If there's enough snow, we'll use snowshoes. But if not, we'll just use our feet! Dress for the weather. This event is FREE and no registration is needed.

Birdhouse Workshop

Thursday, February 6: 6:00 pm @ Twin Ponds

We will be holding a bluebird box building workshop at Twin Ponds. Each participant can make their own box to take home and hang up. There is a recommended \$10 donation to the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation, and pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714 by February 4th.

Hunter Education Class

Saturday, March 15 @ 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.

Intro to Pellet Gun Shooting

Tuesday, April 15: 6:00 pm @ Twin Ponds

This is a great opportunity for people of all ages (except the very young) to try some shooting. We will talk safety and technique before you get your opportunity to try to hit some targets. There is no cost for this program, but pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Look on the next page for more programs!

**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

- Tempera Paints for Kids programs
- 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:** For all of our Sunday volunteers for donating their time.
- **THANK YOU:** Evan Grimes for the use of his salamander picture.
- **THANK YOU:** To the Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation for all of their efforts in supporting the CCCB and upcoming programs and projects.
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.

Upcoming Events

Chickasaw/Floyd Float on the Cedar River

Saturday, May 31 @ 10:00 AM

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 Seter's Landing to West Idlewild Campground. Bring your own lunch to eat along the river, and water to drink. There is no charge for this program, but pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Chickasaw/Bremer Float on the Cedar River

Saturday, June 21 @ 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, Once again, space is limited.

Intro to Archery

Thursday, July 10 @ 6:00 PM

Join us for an introduction to archery program at Twin Ponds. We will talk about the different types of bows, arrows, and give you an opportunity to do some shooting. This program is FREE and is open to participants in 4th grade and up. Pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Creature Feature by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

Caribou (Reindeer) *Rangifer tarandus*

The holiday season has passed us, and even though we sing a song about a reindeer, most of us don't know much about them. And honestly, I'm guessing that a lot of people might think that reindeer aren't a real thing. Well, flying reindeer aren't real (I haven't seen one yet), but caribou (also known as reindeer) certainly are.

Caribou are members of the Cervidae family, and much like other deer, they don't have glowing noses. However, they are built for surviving the cold winters of the north. They are covered in hair from their noses to the bottoms of their feet. Their coloration varies depending on their location. Woodland caribou may have dark brown fur, while caribou that live on the tundra may have white fur. Just like other animals from across the world, their ability to blend in with their surroundings can sometimes be a difference between life and death. They have an undercoat of short, soft fur that keeps them warm, along with long guard hairs on the outside of the undercoat that are hollow and help to hold in heat and shed moisture off of their body.

Speaking of a caribou's body, they have an impressive identifying characteristic. They all have antlers! That's right, even the females have antlers. The females' antlers aren't as impressive in size as are the males, but they do hold onto them later than the males do. The females' antlers get to be about 20 inches long, while the males' may reach as long as 51 inches. According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, females will hold onto them until the spring, while the males will drop theirs after mating later in the fall season. The males will also begin growing their larger antlers sooner (February) than the females (May).

Caribou live in the northern parts of North America, Europe and Asia. They migrate a longer distance than any other mammals in North America. They may migrate beyond a 745 mile round trip. The main reason for the migration (which varies by herd) is to have food to eat. In the warmer months of the year, the caribou's diet may consist of the leaves of willows, sedges, flowering

tundra plants, and mushrooms. In the cooler months, they will switch to lichens, along with dried sedges and small shrubs. They will use both their hooves and their antlers to help gain access to lichens, such as reindeer moss, to help them survive the winter.

Caribou usually give birth to one calf, but just like humans, twins, triplets and even quads have been recorded. The young are able to stand within an hour of birth, and can run alongside their mother within a day. A caribou may live to be around 15 years of age in the wild. Females may average around 200 pounds in weight, while males may weigh around 350-400 pounds. The size of the animal will vary depending on the region that they are found in. Some males may reach over 700 pounds in weight!



Forestry Projects at Twin Ponds

By Maison Hubrig, Private Lands Forester, Iowa DNR

In April of 2025, Chickasaw County Conservation, will be planting 4,000 bare-root seedlings across 10 acres in preparation for regeneration harvests. The seedlings will be planted in the understory, 1-2 years ahead of a harvest, which allows them to develop strong root systems that will enable them to begin growing immediately after the harvest.

The merchantable trees will then be harvested, the tree tops and non-merchantable material will be left on site. Any remaining trees will be felled on top of the seedlings to help hide them from deer, who will eat the seedlings to the ground if unchecked. The woody material (tops, non-merchantable trees) will eventually rot and return critical nutrients and organic matter back to the soil.

This is being done to regenerate desirable hardwoods (oak, hickory, walnut) in areas where the oaks are declining / dying. This harvest will create diversity in species and age classes throughout the forest, improving habitat for game and non-game species alike. Since oaks are intolerant of shade, clear cutting is necessary to grow them. The ecological importance of oaks and the gradual encroachment of shade tolerant species makes timber harvests and clear cutting an important and necessary practice in the regeneration of our oak woodlands.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding forest management at Twin Ponds, please contact:

Maison Hubrig – Private
Lands Forester, Iowa DNR.
563-608-0086

Maison.Hubrig@dnr.iowa.gov



Twin Ponds Nature Center - Timber Harvests



T95N-R13W Section 27
Dayton Twsp. Chickasaw County

0 400 800 1,600
Feet



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Jim Allison	Ionia

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.