

SEVEN RIVERS RECORD

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

Winter 2026

Director's Dialogue Director, Chad Humpal

Successful Season? I think so!

Let's start with the completion of our new outdoor classroom/shelter house. As you can see from the photos, the finished project is incredible. Although, the photos do not do it justice. I can't thank the New Hampton Lion's Club enough for the work they put into this project. I would also like to thank Tom and JoAnne Myrsiades for the donation of the new recycled picnic tables for the shelter. I can't wait for the spring fieldtrip season to see all the kids using this facility. If you are looking for a place to have an outdoor wedding, I think we have a spot for you.



If you are out looking at the new shelter you may notice a new fire ring next to it. When we put up the new shelter, we needed to remove the old fire ring. My daughter Harper Humpal decided to take this opportunity to complete her Eagle Scout Project. She installed a 12x12 concrete pad along with 2 benches, a table and of course a new fire ring. Thank you, Harper, and all your donors for this great project. Dad is proud of you!



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Winter Fun Day

**COME JOIN US FOR OUR WINTER FUN DAY ON
SATURDAY JANUARY 24**

Participate in one of our activities and be entered to win prizes at
Twin Ponds at NOON

- Ice fish at one of the designated lakes
- Snowshoe or X-Country Ski at Twin Ponds
- Build a snowman in front of the nature center
- Go sledding down the hill at Twin Ponds



**MORE DETAILS
TO COME!**



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)

If you continue your drive a little further out to the pond north of the Nature Center, you will see our new family fishing dock. Tony Hoffman's family donated funding for this dock in memory of Tony. This is a wonderful place to take the kids to do a little fishing, or maybe you just want to use one of the benches to enjoy a sunset. Either way, we hope you get an opportunity to use this new dock. We as a staff have had several youth groups on it and they absolutely love it. Thank you to Tony's family, what a wonderful, inclusive way to honor his memory.



If you head to Saude Recreation area in the Northeast part of the county, you will see 4 new cooking grills donated by Dave Johnson in memory of his wife Dawn. Dawn enjoyed spending time at Saude Recreation Area, and Dave wanted to help people enjoy the area as much as Dawn did. Thank You Dave. You have truly found a wonderful way to honor and celebrate Dawn.

Looking for a great spot to watch the Cedar River roll by? Check out the new memorial bench for James Koenigsfeld at Chickasaw park. It was not uncommon to catch Jim strolling around East Chickasaw Park. He enjoyed fishing in the area and visiting with other park goers. It seemed only fitting for the family to place a memorial bench in one of Jim's old fishing holes. Help us thank the Koenigsfeld family by stopping out, grabbing a seat on Jim's bench, and watch the river pass by.

We are currently working on an Eagle Scout project at Ringneck Haven, a dock donation for Howards Woods, and also a new Interactive Learning Center at Twin Ponds Nature Center. There will be more to come on those projects as they are completed in the new year.

How do you measure success? I get it. In business, the measurement may be profitability. In competition it may be wins and losses. For us, it is not always as black and white as profit or wins and losses. For me, I ask, "Are people buying into what we are doing? Do they see our vision and trust we are headed in the right direction?" If you look at what people have contributed in time, treasure, talent, and money to Chickasaw County Conservation, you definitely get the feeling of success.



None of this happens without an incredible staff and Conservation Board that are also united in the journey. I also need to thank Friends of Chickasaw County Conservation as they usually fill in any gaps in funding that we need to complete these projects. Also, thank you to the Chickasaw County Board of Supervisors for funding our department. Thank You all!

Have an idea for a project or looking to donate to a great organization? Give us a call at Twin Ponds Nature Center at (641) 394-4714.

Nature Center News & Events

Winter Fun Day/Ice Fishing

Saturday, January 24

There will be a variety of activities for people to participate in for our Winter Fun Day. You can ice fish at one of the designated locations, snoenjoywshoeing or X-country skiing at Twin Ponds, or maybe build a snowman if there is enough snow! We will meet up at Twin Ponds at NOON for soup and a chance to win prizes!

Owl Prowl

Thursday, February 5, 6:00 pm @ Twin Ponds

Ever been to an Owl Prowl? It's a lot of fun. It will start out with a lesson about the basic biology of owls. We have owl mounts and owl parts to check out. After that, we'll go out on the trail in search of barred owls. We will quietly meander through the woods and try to call barred owls in hopes of a response. We usually have pretty good luck. If there is enough snow, snowshoes will be available for the hike. Pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714 by February 4th. This program is FREE!

Hunter Education Class

Saturday, March 28 @ 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.

April Fool's GPS Hunt

Wednesday, April 1, 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm @ Twin Ponds

Want to come and wander around Twin Ponds, and maybe win a prize? Come as an individual, with a friend, or as a family to search for hidden items using a GPS unit. This program is FREE, but pre-registration is required by calling 641-394-4714.

Look on the next page for more programs!

2026 CAMPING FEES

Airport Lake Park:

Full Hook-ups \$27

Water and Electric \$25

Tent Sites \$15

Split Rock Park:

Electric \$20

Tent \$15

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.



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:** Stephanie Steege for acting at the Halloween Hike.
- **THANK YOU:** Tina for all of your work as Camp Host at Airport Lake Park.
- **THANK YOU:** Shelly and Brian for your work as Hosts at Split Rock Park.
- **THANK YOU:** Kellogg's Honey for supplying and maintaining the Twin Ponds bees.

Upcoming Events

May-day Wildflower Walk

Friday, May , 1 5:00 PM @ Howard's Woods

One of the most amazing things about the Spring is witnessing the Spring wildflowers. If you've never seen them, you are in for a wonderful surprise! We will meet at Howard's Woods, North of Nashua, where there are usually a bunch of great wildflowers blooming. 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 6 @ 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.

Dutch Oven Cooking

Thursday, July 16 @ 6:00 PM

Explore the world of Dutch oven cooking outdoors. Together, we will prepare and make both a main course dish and a dessert. Registration is required by April 13th by calling 641-394-4714. Please let us know of any dietary limitations ahead of time. (We request a \$5 donation to the Friends of CCB to help cover expenses.)

Creature Feature

by Matt Crayne, Naturalist

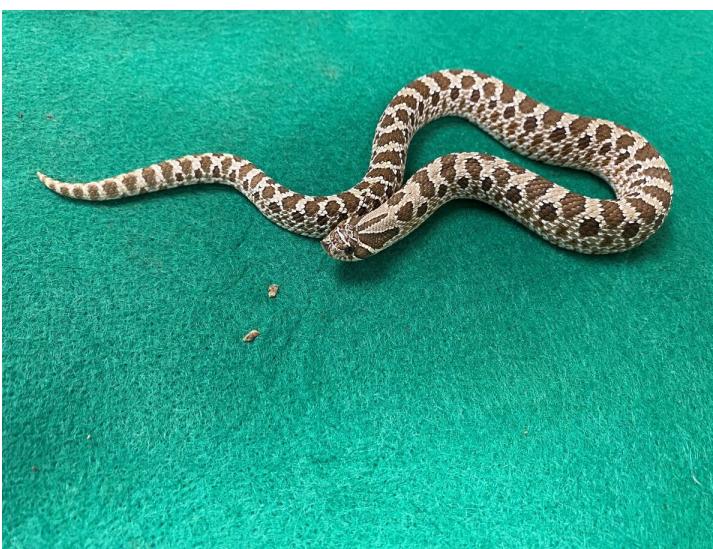
Western Hognose Snake

Heterodon nasicus

The Western what nose snake? That's probably what a few of you are saying to yourselves. Most Iowans aren't familiar with the western hognose snake, and with it being listed as Endangered in the state of Iowa, you aren't likely to run into one.

The western hognose snake is found mainly in the great plains states, North into Canada, and South into Mexico.

Western hognose snakes (also known as plains hognose snakes) are very unique looking. They are a wide-bodied, medium sized snake in length. They have a tan to light greenish color with dark blotches on their body. Perhaps one of the western hognose's most distinguishing characteristics is its upturned 'nose'. The front of their face has an upturned scale that resembles the snout of a pig. The only other snake found in Iowa that bears a resemblance to this is the eastern hognose snake. Much of the underside of the western hognose snake is dark in color, but it will have yellowish square/rectangular like markings mixed in.



Hognose snakes are interesting in the ways that they deal with danger. When a hognose feels that it is threatened, it may first try to escape to a safe place. This may be simply 'out of the way', or they may go underground. If that isn't an option, they may try to look intimidating. They are able flatten out their head and neck area and hiss to mimic a cobra. They may even feign striking at their threat, or they will even strike at them with a closed mouth. They can also shake their tail to imitate a rattlesnake. They do not have a rattle. Several snakes will use this tactic to try to scare off predators. (There is much debate as to whether or not hognose snakes should be considered venomous. They are rear-fanged and possess a mildly toxic saliva that helps subdue prey. **THEY ARE NOT CONSIDERED DANGEROUS TO HUMANS).**

One final tactic that hognose snakes will use in the face of danger is to play dead. They will roll onto their backs and lay with their mouth open and their tongue hanging out. They may also release feces from their vent. While not being a dangerous snake to humans, they have a bag of tricks that they use to try to get us to leave them alone.

The western hognose snake will eat a variety of small animals. They are known to use their upturned nose to dig under things in search of prey. They are known to consume toads. One of the defenses of toads against predators is to puff up with air to make themselves more difficult to swallow. The western hognose combats this with its rear fangs to 'deflate' the toad. Other animals that the western hognose may eat include, frogs, eggs, smaller snakes, rodents, lizards and small birds.

If you are interested in checking out a western hognose snake in person, keep an eye out for an upcoming program, or stop out to Twin Ponds Nature Center.



© Jeff LeClere www.HerpNet.net

Reservable Campsites

Chickasaw County Conservation is excited to announce that we will be providing the option for online registrations for campsites through mycountyparks.com. This opportunity comes with a \$4.00 processing fee for each electronic transaction.

Airport Lake Park Campground: We are making 20 of the campsites and the group camping loop reservable. (As of right now, this is a work in progress, and will be reservable in the Spring of 2026). In order to reserve sites, you will need to go to <https://www.mycountyparks.com>. There, you should be able to select the campsite that you wish to reserve.

The reservable sites are spread throughout the campground to provide a variety of sites and locations. Each reservable campsite will have a QR code at the site that will be used to pay for the site, if it is not already reserved. These sites will be paid for by card only, not cash or check. All of the other campsites at Airport Lake will still be paid for by cash or check as they have been in the past.

Step 1: Go to mycountyparks.com and click on the shopping cart in the upper right corner of any page. You may continue as a Guest, or Create a User Account

Step 2: Select the **Book Now** tab from the top of the page

Step 3: Choosing a Facility:



- Select **Facility Type** of your choice (Cabin, Campsite, Shelter, etc.)
- If you know the **County** you prefer— select from the listing
- Select your desired **Check-in and Check-out dates** from calendars
- Select **Search** and review your opportunities (**non-specific selections will search entire state**)

Step 4: Reserving the Facility:

- Select **Facility** of your choice (Cabin, Campsite, Shelter, etc.) you would like to reserve
- Read the **Special Regulations** and **Facility Contract**
- Double-check that **selected dates** are correct/select correct date
- **Add to Cart**
- Follow pages through to the **checkout screen** and make **payment**
- A **confirmation email receipt** will be sent immediately

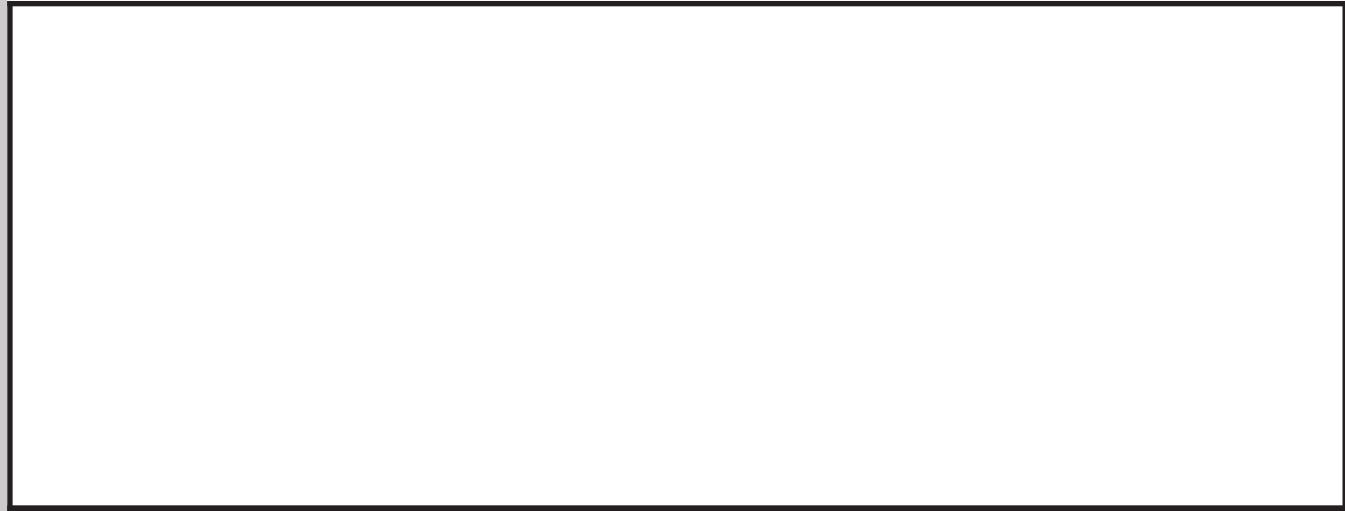


Split Rock Park: We will also be accepting electronic payments at Split Rock Park this year. There will be a pay on site option, and there will not be reservations. This will be done by scanning a QR code on site and following the instructions given.

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**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

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.