



THE NEWSLETTER

Dubuque County Conservation Society
"Organized in 1933 for Protection of Soil, Forests, Waters and Wildlife"
P.O. Box 645
Dubuque, IA 52004-0645



Editor **comments**

Due to the coronavirus and no group contact we have missing or reduced items in the newsletter:

1. Meeting minutes as we haven't met in months
2. Calendar items as the organizations we follow haven't been sponsoring group events.

Oxford Junction Workday

Submitted by Pat Hayes

We are having another work day at Oxford Junction on Monday October 12th, 9am till 1pm. We will be working the day with Kurt Kemmerer. Please let me know if you have anyone that can help?

Backyard Birding

by Bob Walton

With the onset of the Covid-19 virus, the past 9 months have found Sandy and I spending extensive time "sheltering in place" at our Otter Creek homestead. When we were not sheltering, we made several trips to some of our favorite natural areas—Green Island, Whitewater Canyon, and the Swiss Valley Nature Center. We took hikes looking for birds and admiring wildflowers. What amazed me the most was the large volume of other visitors taking advantage of our public areas. Even on weekdays, the parking lots were packed.

The vast majority of our birding has been in our own back yard, taking advantage of almost 30 years of natural landscaping that has resulted in the observation of 193 species of birds so far this year. I am convinced that anyone can transform their backyard into excellent habitat by observing a few basic practices. Birds, like all wildlife, require 3 basic essentials for survival: food, water and cover.

Food may be provided very easily with commercial seeds at a variety of bird feeders. Black oil sunflower seed in tube or platform feeders will attract the greatest number and diversity of birds. Other good bird foods are the goldfinch favorite, niger thistle seed (not a true thistle, but rather a sunflower from India), suet, and for catbirds and orioles there are orange slices and jelly. Food can also be provided by eliminating bluegrass lawn and planting small plots of native grasses and wildflowers, along with introduced perennials that attract insects and produce seeds for the birds. Excellent native shrubs are crabapples, dogwoods, wahoo, hazelnuts, and serviceberry. They are attractive landscaping shrubs, and provide a bountiful food supply. In addition, there is an introduced shrub from China called Seven Suns that blooms in the fall and attracts insects, hummingbirds and warblers in huge numbers in mid to late September.

Water is essential for birds and is particularly important for urban birds in the winter when their only source of water can be from salted streets, which is extremely toxic. Heaters can be placed in birdbaths to keep water open, thus supplying a safe source for birds. A water pond can be both decorative and attract birds. I have two ponds connected by a waterfall. The sound of running water attracts resident birds as well as warblers and thrushes during migration.

Cover is another essential ingredient for successfully attracting birds to your back yard. Adequate vegetative cover is needed for protection from both inclement weather and predators. A combination of evergreens and native shrubs planted in clusters provide escape cover when planted near bird feeders and scattered throughout your yard. If space permits, large evergreens like spruce, furs, and native white pine provide excellent shelter and attract birds, especially in the winter. Another good practice is to eliminate all lawn chemicals. Commonly used lawn chemicals are extremely toxic to birds and also eliminate many beneficial insects. If you have a cat, KEEP IT IN-DOORS. House cats that are allowed to roam outside kill millions of birds and they can completely eliminate any reproduction of birds in your immediate home area.

In conclusion, if you enjoy viewing birds, follow the message from our nearby Field of Dreams—build the habitat and they will come!

Dubuque County has a new DNR forester

Submitted by Pat Hayes

Dave Bridges is still the Iowa DNR forester for Jones, Jackson and 3 other counties. Alex Hoffman is now the forester for Dubuque and 4 other counties. He lives in Manchester and his contact information is phone 563-608-0385 and email Alex.Hoffman@dnr.iowa.gov

Establish winter habitats for backyard animals

Submitted by the Hefel Sisters from DubuqueToday Tidbits

Preparing a property for winter involves putting away lawn furniture, raking leaves and removing any annual plants that have shriveled up and spent the last of their energy. It can be tempting to want to clean up completely and leave a blank slate in the yard. But by doing so, you may be robbing wildlife of the resources they need to overwinter.

The nature and conservation resource In Habitat says plants and animals depend on one another to survive. During the winter, animals may struggle to find adequate shelter and food, especially when there is a lack of sufficient plant matter available. In turn, these animals may actually take up home in people's residences, turning into pests in the process. Bats, field mice and even opossums and raccoons may move indoors into attics or basements, leaving behind waste and damage if they can't find adequate shelter outdoors.

Homeowners concerned about potential pest infestations can take steps to ensure animals have places to bed down and escape the cold in their yards this winter. These tips can help local wildlife when the temperatures dip.

- **Leave parts of the yard wild.** Animals can make a nest in leaves or piles of brushwood. Just make sure piles left out are away from the home so curious critters don't try to get inside. Leave the task of tidying up shrubs and garden borders until spring, as shrubs can be dense areas to hide for both insects and animals.
 - **Consider planting animal food sources prior to winter.** Plants like elderberry, holly, mulberry, sumac, and crabapple will grow in colder months and animals can enjoy them as a vital food staple.
 - **Don't forget water sources.** Provide access to fresh water and replace as needed if the water freezes. For homeowners with fish ponds in their backyards, use a hot pot to melt a hole in the top of the pond and allow gases that have accumulated underneath to escape. This allows oxygen to reach fish and frogs in the pond.
 - **Leave bird, squirrel or bat houses in the yard.** This is a fun and crafty project that can ward off winter boredom while also providing a safe place for local wildlife to shelter in winter.
- Animals and insects need some extra help staying comfortable when cool temperatures arrive. Leaving some clean-up tasks for the spring ensures that there are plenty of backyard habitats available to local wildlife.

How to care for wild birds this winter

Submitted by Connie Kintzle from DubuqueToday Tidbits January 2, 2020

The arrival of winter forces everyone to confront the changes synonymous with the season, and local wildlife is no exception. Low temperatures, harsh winter storms and a scarcity of food can make it challenging for wildlife, including birds, to thrive throughout the winter.

Even though several species of birds are migratory and travel to warmer climates to wait out winter, many others stay put. The Audubon Society says that keeping close to home helps some species of birds maintain their territories.

Some birds will puff up to retain heat; others will seek shelter in dense foliage or cavities to avoid the elements. Many birds will huddle together to share warmth.

Another way of keeping warm is building up fat as an insulator and energy source. The Audubon Society says more than 10 percent of some birds' winter body weight may be fat. That can be challenging to maintain when common sources of food, such as insects and berries, disappear as winter wears on. This is when some human intervention can prove handy, advise ornithologists. A few simple efforts may benefit birds and other wildlife that may not hibernate winter away or escape to the tropics.

- Have a supply of food, bird feeders, houses, and any other bird-related gear at the ready before the storms really rev

up.

- Invest in nutritious food, such as black oil sunflower seeds or blends that are high in black oil sunflower seeds. You also can make available more foods that are high in fat, such as suet, peanut butter or even whole peanuts. Mother Nature Network also suggests adding meal worms if they can be found.
- Choose feeders that will keep seed dry; otherwise, it will be prone to bacterial and fungal growth.
- Don't discard fallen leaves or any downed twigs or pruned boughs from trees. This will give birds material for creating shelter or hiding away when the weather gets especially brutal. When the Christmas tree is finished for the season, place it in the yard as a windbreak for birds.
- Put shallow water sources around so birds can drink. Replace them frequently if water freezes.

Wild birds can benefit from some help when the temperatures start to drop in winter.

How to recognize when you can stop mowing

From DubuqueToday Tidbits

Each weekend in spring, summer and fall, millions of homeowners fire up their mowers and cut the grass in their yards. A few hours spent mowing the lawn can be a great time to get some sun and some exercise in the great outdoors.

As fall gradually transitions to winter, homeowners may wonder when to stop mowing their lawns. Each lawn is different, and when to stop mowing may depend on a host of factors, including local climate and the type of turf. In addition to climate and turf, homeowners can keep an eye on these conditions to determine when the time is right to put their mowers away for the winter.

Frost: Warm-season grasses typically go dormant after a couple of significant frosts. Homeowners can jot down each frost during fall. Frosts are most noticeable in the early morning hours, so be sure to check lawn conditions each morning as the weather begins to grow cold. Frost may be noticeable without even going outside, but homeowners may need to go outside to check on chilly mornings or on days when the previous night was especially cold. If you must go outside, stay off the grass to protect it. Two or three frosts might be enough to make warm-season grasses go dormant for the winter. Cool-season grasses may keep growing and require mowing even after a few frosts, so it's imperative that homeowners determine which type of grass is in their yards.

Soil temperature: If it's hard to determine if frosts have occurred, homeowners can try checking the temperature of their soil to decide if they need to keep mowing. The lawn care experts at Pennington recommend homeowners continue mowing warm-season grasses so long as they keep growing. Lawns may not grow as quickly in fall as they do in spring or summer, and growth may not be as visible to the naked eye during this time of year as it is in other times. Homeowners can routinely check soil temperature to determine if their grasses have stopped growing. Warm-season grasses tend to stop growing once the soil temperature is consistently at 55 F or below, while cool-season grasses tend to stop when temperatures are 45 F or lower.

Falling leaves have long been a barometer used by homeowners to determine if they need to keep mowing their lawns. That's *not necessarily a reliable metric*, as grass can still keep growing even if leaves have been falling for weeks. In addition, using a mulching mower when leaves begin falling is a great way to provide the lawn with nutrients it can use throughout the winter. Some trees shed their leaves more quickly than others, but it's a good rule of thumb that lawns will need to keep being mowed if trees are still retaining more than half their leaves.

A host of factors can help homeowners determine when it's safe to put their mowers away for the winter.

The value of the Upper Mississippi River

Submitted by Pat Hayes

The Upper Mississippi River generates \$345 billion annually, provides over 643 million gallons of water per day for domestic and industrial uses along its 133-county corridor, and supports a \$673 million shipping industry.

But so much industry comes at a cost.

Tourism and outdoor recreation along the river generate roughly \$25 billion annually and support more than 420,000 jobs.

People are drawn to the Upper Mississippi River for its scenic vistas and wildlife experiences. The Mississippi is a globally significant flyway used by hundreds of species of birds and provides unique habitat for fish, mussels, reptiles, amphibians and mammals.

Top three ways to handle fall leaves

From Christine.Paulson@dnr.iowa.gov.

Fall leaves are beautiful – until they pile up in your yard. But don't send those precious nutrients up in smoke. Instead, put them to good use. Your leaves, branches and other landscape materials can nourish your lawn, garden or community. It's as easy as 1 – 2 – 3:

1. Composting leaves and food scraps is a great way to turn this waste into nutrients for your garden. A good compost mix needs both carbon (dead or dry leaves) and nitrogen (green materials like food scraps and grass clippings). Many types and sizes of compost containers are available. For tips on low-tech ways to compost, check the DNR website (https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/DNR-News-Releases/ArticleID/383?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).

2. Your lawn will love you if you chop up and leave your leaves in place. Leaves are a free and natural fertilizer and they add organic matter to enrich your soil. Use your regular lawn mower. Or use a mulching lawn mower to shred and mix leaves and grass into your yard.

3. Bag it. If you have too many leaves or branches to compost, check with your community to see if they collect yard waste or have a drop-off site. Sometimes there's a fee, but the upside is that anyone can pick up composted materials for their yards or gardens.

Burning leaves seems to capture the smell of autumn. But breathing leaf smoke pulls pollutants such as carbon monoxide, soot and toxic chemicals into your lungs. While it may smell good, smoke is especially harmful to children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems such as asthma. Turning leaves into nutrients is the healthy way to protect your and your neighbor's lungs.

Trees at risk along the Mississippi

Submitted by Pat Hayes

Studies are finding that the extended high water for the last few years is taking its toll on the health of trees along the Mississippi River. The mortality rate among the trees is over twice that of average and the regeneration is way below normal.

Trees that normally reestablish include green ash and elm, both of which have other issues. Cottonwood are not reestablishing at normal rates either.

Part of the problem is that pioneer trees often get started on bare mud flats but these areas are being taken over by invasive species which crowd out the trees, preventing them from regenerating. The diversity of the timber along the Mississippi keeps shrinking.

Family-friendly outdoor activities

DubuqueToday Tidbits

Children who spend a lot of time outdoors benefit from exposure to nature in myriad ways, some of which may surprise even the most devoted outdoorsmen.

According to a 2006 study published in the journal *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, fifth graders who attended school at a local prairie wetlands where lessons in science, math and writing were integrated in an experimental way had significantly stronger reading and writing skills than their peers who attended more traditional schools. Another study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that holding a class outdoors one day a week significantly improved the daily cortisol patterns of students, reducing their risk of stress and improving their ability to adapt to stress.

Parents who want their children to reap the rewards of being exposed to the great outdoors can encourage educators to incorporate nature into school curricula and also embrace these family-friendly outdoor activities.

- **Nature treasure hunt:** A treasure hunt in nature can keep kids engaged on family hiking excursions and provide an

excellent opportunity for parents to teach children about the assortment of plants, birds and wildlife that live in the parks and along the trails near their home.

- **Outdoor art class:** Families don't even need to leave their properties to spend quality time together outside. Pick a pleasant afternoon and set up an outdoor painting station, encouraging everyone to paint what they see. Fall is a great time to host an outdoor art session thanks to the assortment of vibrant colors that have become synonymous with autumn landscapes.

- **Bonfire:** Outdoor activities need not be limited to daylight hours. A post-dinner backyard bonfire can entice everyone outside, where families can tell scary stories as they make s'mores.

- **Stargaze:** Stargazing is another way families can spend time outdoors and learn a few things at the same time. Some blankets, a thermos of hot cocoa and a chart of constellations can provide the perfect complement to a sky full of bright stars. If visibility is compromised in the backyard, find a local spot where everyone can get a clear view of the night sky.

- **Fruit picking:** Apple picking is a popular autumn activity, but families need not wait for the autumn harvest to enjoy a day picking fruit or vegetables at a nearby farm. Visit a local farm during its harvest season, teaching children about how the foods they love are grown and eventually make it to the family dinner table.

Families looking to spend more time together in the great outdoors can look to a number of activities people of all ages can enjoy.

Events Calendar

Swiss Valley Nature Center/EB Lyons/Audubon Society/Hurstville Calendars

All programs are subject to weather conditions. To check for changes to this schedule, check the websites in the list of organizations below. The programs are open to the public and are designed for people of all ages unless otherwise described. For additional info or preregistration contact one of the following depending on the program's location:

Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Road Peosta, IA 52068, 563-556-6745. www.dubuquecounty.org or you can search for "Swiss Valley Nature Center Facebook".

EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Heights, Dubuque, IA at 563-556-0620. www.minesofspain.org

Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63rd Street, Maquoketa, IA at 563- 652-3783. www.jacksonccb.com

Dubuque Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3174, Dubuque, IA 52004-3174, 563-582-215. www.audubondubuque.org/

Building Better Birders Friday, October 9, 2020 at 10am-11:30am Heritage Pond 11330 Rupp Hollow Road
Live birds? Raptors & owls up close oh my! This event will be conducted by Kelly McKay (BioEco Research and Monitoring Center), with assistance from Mark Roberts (Clinton County Conservation). Please bring a chair/ blanket for the live bird presentation. Park in the parking lot near the pond and walk west across Rupp Hollow Road to the Pavilion. We encourage you to also go on a short bird hike after the presentation. Bring your binoculars!

Building Better Birders Friday, October 9, 2020 at 10am-11:30am Whitewater Canyon

Wildlife Area Bernard, IA 52032

World-class birder Kelly McKay will lead you on a birding expedition through Whitewater Canyon. Kelly is known for bringing birds up close and teaching tips and tricks to identifying birds both visually and by their sounds! From a novelist birder to an expert all are welcome! We should be able to catch a glimpse of the birds of night as well!

Natural Dyes Friday, October 16, 2020 10am-11:30am Mud Lake

Come join Naturalists and learn how to harvest plants to make your own dye along with learning how to properly dye fabric. Clothing dye toxins from textile manufacturing can runoff into nearby waterways, contaminating them and negatively influencing the wildlife. Natural dyes offer a much safer option because the dye is derived from vegetables or plant material and produces no harmful waste.

Bring a large 32 oz jar & lid and fabric to dye. Fabric will need to be consisting of animal or plant fibers. 100% cotton or wool works great. Not shirts or coats something smaller like a handkerchief or gloves.

Halloween Hike - Friday, October 16, 2020 at 6pm-8pm Swiss Valley Nature Center

Join us for a non-scary hike! Walk the illuminated trail and meet some colorful characters at this family favorite event. This year's theme is Scooby Doo! Hike through on a guided trail to listen how Scoob and friends fight back the nasty invasive species. Hikes leave every 15 minutes and you must be pre-registered.

Cost \$3/person (ages 4 and up). Your more then welcome to dress in costume but please dress for the weather and wear good shoes as it will be about a 1/2 mile hike. To register call 563-556-6745

The Great Swiss Gnome Hunt Friday, November 27, 2020 at 10am-2pm Swiss Valley Nature Center

Every year Swiss Valley staff report sightings of tiny men in red hats hiding out in nooks and crannies along the trails of the preserve. Gnomes are known to be highly skilled wood workers and deeply care for nature may be why they are found here.

It's been long said that garden gnomes are nocturnal creatures being timid and afraid of humans. They freeze during the day in hopes that no one can see them, much like rabbits do. Or perhaps they keep moseying around, it's hard to say. You'll have to come and discover for yourself.

Keep a safe physical distance of six feet or more from all gnomes, as well as other humans who are not a part of your group.

Don't get discouraged if you can't find every gnome in each setting. After all, they might scamper around and are try to hide from you! Clues will be posted about their location closer to the event.

We invite you to share your gnome sightings, insight and research with us on Facebook. Remember don't touch them! Happy searching!

Fall Scavenger Hunt Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020-Oct. 31 Hurstville Interpretive Center, Jackson County

Let's go for a bear hunt! A teddy bear hunt that is. Starting October 21st hunters will be able to pick up a 'hunting license' from the Hurstville Center or from our website with clues and maps on where to go to find the bears. Once you find the bears, marked with a zip-tied label, participants will be asked to take a selfie with the bear and put it back for the next person to find. Participation prizes will be available!

Unhuggables of Iowa Friday, October 23 9-12 am Hurstville Interpretive Center

Does it slither, creep or flap? Does it make your skin crawl? Join us for a fun program meeting some of of Iowa's "unhuggables". This free family friendly program will be between 9 and 12pm on Friday, October 23rd at the Hurstville Interpretive Center. Please call 563-652-3783 or email Jen@jacksonccb.com to reserve your time. Participants are encouraged to RSVP at least 48 hours in advance and wear a mask when they arrive.

Leopold Bench Workshop Friday, October 23 and October 24 1-4 pm Hurstville Interpretive Center

Leopold benches are a great addition to any yard or garden. A workshop is being held on Friday, October 23 and Saturday, October 24 at the Hurstville Interpretive Center for participants to build their own Leopold bench. Bench kits can also be picked up to build at home. Cost is \$40 for treated lumber and \$25 for recycled wood. Workshop will be held outdoors, please dress accordingly. And to keep group sizes small, participants can sign up for a time slot between 1:00-4:00 pm either day. Please contact Jackson County Conservation at (563) 652-3783 to register or for more information. Registration deadline is October 16.

Building Better Birders Workshop Monday, November 2, 8 am Hurstville Interpretive Center, Jackson County

Learn about the waterfowl species of Iowa and have a chance to put their knowledge into practice. Participants will learn from a presentation on the waterfowl of Iowa presented by Birder Kelly McKay. Following the presentation we will travel to Green Island Wildlife Management Area, and meet at 10:30 am. Kelly and participants will take advantage of the fall waterfowl fall migration go waterfowl watching!

To sign up or for more information call the Hurstville Interpretive Center at (563) 652-3783. All participants must sign up 48 hours in advanced and all children must be accompanied by an adult.

Other Events Calendar

Summer Farmer's Market Saturday, 7am-noon 1300 Iowa Street

Company Sponsors

Please support our local sponsors

<i>All Seasons Heating</i> 798 Cedar Cross Rd	<i>Environmental</i> <i>Management Services</i> 5170 Wolff Rd	<i>Oky Doky Food Mart</i> P.O. Box 300	<i>Steve's Ace Home and</i> <i>Garden</i> 3350 JFK 200 South Locust
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<i>Artistic Cleaners</i> 107 Locust St.	<i>Home+Floor Show</i> 1475 <i>Associates Dr.</i>	<i>Organic Valley</i> <i>Dickeyville WI</i>	<i>Therapeutic Massage</i> 2255 JFK Road
<i>Brennan Baumhover Ins.</i> 2615 Dodge St.	<i>The Friedman Group</i> 880 Locust St. P. O. Box 1780	<i>Pfohl's Blinds, Drapes Inc.</i> 335 West 1st Street	<i>U.S. Bank</i> 270 West 7th
<i>Dennis Baumhover Ins.</i> 2615 Dodge St.	<i>Leo H. Frueh, Consulting</i> <i>Forester</i> 2230 Chippewa Dr.	<i>Pregler Electric</i> 216th Ave LaMotte IA	<i>Weber Paper Co.</i> 4300 Chevenelle Dr.
<i>Behr's Funeral Home</i> 1491 Main St.	<i>Hendricks Feed Co.</i> 880 Central	<i>Premier Bank</i> 1975 JFK Rd.	<i>White Front Feed & Seed</i> 4290 Dodge St.
<i>Breitbach's Country</i> <i>Dining</i> 563 Balltown Rd.	<i>Herbst Upholstery & Auto</i> 76 Main St	<i>Schuster Heating & Pump</i> 15674 Key City Lane	<i>White Water Native Seeds</i> Epworth, IA
<i>Cedar Cross Overhead</i> <i>Door</i> 1040 Cedar Cross Rd	<i>IIW Engineers &</i> <i>Surveyors P.C.</i> 4155 Pennsylvania	<i>Schuster Tree Service</i> 7273 Schueller Heights Rd	<i>Zuccaro Dental</i> 895 Main St suite 900
<i>Citizens State Bank</i> P.O. Box 50 New Vienna	<i>Kaufmann Painting</i> 17368 S John Deere Rd.	<i>Schwartz Plumbing</i> 4904 Asbury	
<i>Copper Kettle</i> 2987 JACKSON ST	<i>Klauer Optical</i> 1705 Delhi St.	<i>Sisters of Saint Francis</i> 3390 Windsor Ave.	
<i>Dupaco Credit Union</i> P.O. Box 179	<i>Miller Flooring</i> Box 125 New Vienna	<i>Skip Breithbach Feed</i> Balltown, IA	
<i>DuTrac Credit Union</i> 3465 Asbury	<i>Nature's Way Lawn Care</i> 440 Burch St.	<i>Spahn & Rose Lumber Co.</i> 1101 Jackson St.	
		<i>Stecklein Tree Service</i> Epworth, IA	

Board Members 2020

Name	Title	563 except as noted	Name	563 except as noted
Mark Kaufman	Vice President	879-3452	Gerda Preston Hartman	588-0649
Pat Hayes	President	542-2960	Whitey Kemp	582-7752
Connie Kintzle	Treasurer	583-3907	Punkie Birkel	
Bob Walton	Secretary		Dan Simon	583-0514
Tom Klinge	Newsletter	815-747-7786	Paul Kaufman	583-5030
			Bev Rettenmeier	

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P. O. Box 645
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Reminders:

There currently are no plans for the next meeting until the Coronavirus has been eradicated. Check back on our webpage or Facebook page. See below to access these.

Check the event calendars for some exciting things to do.

Support your local Farmer’s Markets. Support our local Sponsors

This months insert - None

This month’s focus - None

Change your furnace filter.

Recycle whenever possible.

Visit our web page at www.dbqccs.org

- OR -

Visit our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Dubuque-County-Conservation-Society/421655257997596>

or you can search for “Dubuque County Conservation Society Facebook”.