



Conservation Conversation

A Newsletter of the Butler County Conservation Board

Spring 2017

Working To Recover from Record Flooding

On September 23, 2016, the Shell Rock River reached historic flooding levels when it crested at 21.40 feet, just over a foot higher than the previous record set in 2008. Flooding wasn't caused as much by how much rain fell, but more by how quickly it fell onto land already saturated from an unusually wet summer. Some areas reported 10 inches or more inches of rain in just a few hours and with no time to soak into the already saturated ground, most of it made it's way directly into tributaries of the Shell Rock and Cedar Rivers. The flooding caused more than twenty-two million dollars in damage across the state including more than 1.6 million

dollars in damage in Butler County alone. This damage included homes, businesses, roads, and land.

With the experience of the 2008 flood under our belt, we knew that the damage would be extensive and after assessing our areas after the water receded we found damage to all four camping areas along the Shell Rock River, Sportsman Park, Renning's Landing, our maintenance shop, two sections of the Rolling Prairie Trail and a small amount of damage to the area below the Greene Milldam.

Millions of gallons of water moving downstream carries a wide variety of debris from sand and silt, trees, limbs, and branches, parts of structures and a lot of trash and it seemed that each area attracted

With the severity of the damage, Butler County along with eighteen other counties were declared as a disaster area and with that came assistance from FEMA to help repair public areas. Unfortunately with that assistance came cleanup deadlines that were made difficult by the upcoming winter



weather. In just a few short months, more than 150 loads of wood debris and 105 loads of sand and silt were removed

from our four camping areas along the Shell Rock, Sportsman Park, and the bike trail loop in Heery Woods. Beyond the debris deposits, damage included electrical systems, structural damage, and damage to yards, roads and trails.

Nearly every electrical outlet, hand dryer, switch, timer, and circuit breaker in our four parks were flooded. To repair them, they needed to be removed and replaced. This process included the need to inventory each piece, develop and let bids for replacement prices, order the needed parts, and finally replace the damaged electrical parts with all new ones. After replacement was completed, the State Electrical Inspector had to approve all repairs before electrical service could be restored. As of May 1, only the electrical work at park at Shell Rock has been completed.

In many of the parks, structural damage was limited to the deposit of silt on the floors and walls of the structures although electrical systems in many of these



buildings were damaged as well. In Heery Woods the park Kiosk sustained damage with only one of the poles left behind. Most of the damage to structures was the damage which occurred to the Board's Maintenance Shop buildings located on Timber Road.

In the days before the flood, a group of Conservation Corps members were working to finish up a boardwalk at the Paul Schoeman Nature Area. Once completed, they were going to begin work on the removal of invasive species on the South side of Heery Woods Park. When news of the expected crest reached us, the plan changed and the group helped remove tools, equipment, mowers, tractors, and vehicles from the shop area. Other items were moved to higher areas and shelves within the shop to avoid damage. Without their help, the damage to the shop and its contents would have been even greater.

At the crest, more than two feet of water was inside our shop. After 2008, the shop was renovated



which included moving all electrical outlets higher on the wall. While this saved most of our electrical systems, sheetrock, plywood, insulation, and items that we were unable to remove sustained damage. To facilitate repairs, items that could be salvaged were moved to a semi trailer for storage while things that were ruined were placed in a dumpster or hauled to the transfer station for disposal. The bottom four feet of covering on the shop walls were removed along with three feet of drywall from the office area and all of the insulation affected by the water were removed and thrown away. Once opened up, the areas were left to air dry and staff was able to begin working on other repair projects.

With several inches to several feet of sand and silt deposited onto lawns in the parks the grass in these areas was either killed by lack of sun, long term standing water, or eroded away as the water rushed over it. Because of this several areas will need to be reseeded. Some like Camp Comfort will require interseeding to thicken up the stand of grass while others like Sportsman Park will require a complete reseeded.

Although much damage was done to our parks, all

four are now open for the season. But two areas of the Rolling Prairie Trail are still under repair.

The Rolling Prairie Trail sustained damage in two areas. Near Shell Rock, most of the trail between the trail head and Glenhall Road was washed out and near Clarksville an area between the first and second bridge also washed out. Fortunately because the amount of time the trail was covered, the damage was not as severe as during the 2008 flood. Even so, to repair the damage will take time. Between FEMA, engineers, and contractors, we are hoping that the repairs can be completed late this summer or early fall. Barriers are in place in the damaged areas for safety.



Even with the damage, much of the sections of the Rolling Prairie Trail are open for use. The loop inside Heery Woods is open to the concrete barriers and from Allison to the orange fence on the west end of the damage. The trail is also open from



Glenhall Road to Clarksville. We ask that trail users please respect the closed areas for safety reasons.

Finally, the damage to the Greene Milldam is very minor. After the flood a consulting engineer was brought in to assess damage and found a small area on the west end of the dam received damage. Engineers hired by the Butler County Conservation Board, FEMA, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission are working to set and approve plans to repair the dam.

As we get all our parks ready for the upcoming season, we hope people are understanding of the challenges that we face as we recover from last fall's flood. We also hope that everyone has a chance to enjoy some time in our parks this season.

Upcoming Programs

June 17, Dig into Paleontology, Heery Woods Nature Center, 10:00 a.m.

June 21 - 25, Daily Activities, Butler County Fair Log Cabin, 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

June 28, Basic Kayak Skills Program, Shell Rock Recreation Area Pond, 5:30 p.m.

July 1, Monarchs, Shell Rock Recreation Area Pond Shelter House, 11:00 a.m.

August 5, Nature is NEAT Hike, Rolling Prairie Trail - Heery Woods Loop, Heery Woods State Park North Side, 9:00 a.m.

August 19, Canoe and Kayak Float, Rennings Landing to Shell Rock Park, 9:30 a..m.

August 26, Dutch Oven Basics, Shell Rock Recreation Area, 10:00 a.m.

September 16, Canoe and Kayak Float, Heery Woods State Park to Renning's Landing, 9:30 a.m.

October 14, Fall Colors Canoe and Kayak Float, Greene to Camp Comfort, 10:00 a.m.

For more information about these or other programs of the Butler County Conservation Board, contact Heery Woods Nature Center at (319) 278-1130.

Upcoming Programs

June 17, Dig into Paleontology, Heery Woods Nature Center, 10:00 a.m.

Bring your dinosaur and fossil lover to Heery Woods Nature Center and "Dig Into Paleontology" During the program, participants will learn about new dinosaur discoveries, what fossils are and how

they're made, spend time digging for dinosaurs, and make a fun dinosaur craft.

This program will last approximately one hour and is designed for participants from Kindergarten through eighth grade but everyone is welcome to attend.

**June 21 - 25, Butler
County Fair Log Cabin, 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Stop by and visit us in the Historical Log Cabin at the Butler County Fair. This year, we will be offering opportunities for fair goers to try their hand at pioneer activities, including cutting wood with a two person crosscut saw, playing the washtub bass and other primitive instruments and fire making with flint and steel. We will also give a daily dutch oven cooking demonstration, and on kids day will give kids the opportunity to assemble and take a pioneer toy called a whimmy diddle.

**June 28, Basic Kayak Skills Program, Shell Rock
Recreation Area Pond, 5:30 p.m.**

With the increase of kayakers over the past several years, The Butler County Conservation Board is pleased to offer a basic kayak skills program for those who have or are interested in the sport of kayaking. During the program participants will learn proper paddling mechanics to reduce injury, methods for steering, safety concerns and what to do if you flip your kayak. A limited number of kayakers and paddles will be available for use. Registration is required for this free public program. Call 319-278-1130 by noon on June 27 to register.



**July 1, Monarchs, Shell Rock Recreation Area
Pond Shelter House, 11:00 a.m.**

Monarchs are an important pollinator and sign of a healthy and prospering prairie ecosystem. With

monarch populations in decline, it is important to understand why and how we can improve their habitats to see more monarchs in the future. Saturday, July 1st at 11 a.m the Butler County Conservation Board is sponsoring a program about monarchs at Shell Rock Campground.

Participants at this program will learn about the monarch life cycle, their long migration from Mexico to up north, and finally how we can help to increase monarch populations in our own backyards.



The monarch program is free and open to the general public. The summer naturalist will be located by the fishing dock at Shell Rock Park, so sunscreen and bug spray is recommended. This program will last between 30 – 45 minutes. For more information about this, or other public programs, please contact Heery Woods Nature Center at 319.278.1130.

**August 5, Nature is NEAT Hike, Rolling Prairie
Trail Heery Woods Loop, Heery Woods State Park
North Side, 9:00 a.m.**

Join Naturalist Intern Katy Cantin at the information kiosk at the Heery Woods Loop Trailhead on the North Side of Heery Woods State Park for a Nature is NEAT hike!

During the hike participants will be able to appreciate Iowa's natural beauty. The naturalist will inform participants about things discovered along the trail including tree, wildlife, and plant identification.



Heery Woods Loop is a paved trail and provides an easy walking surface and is wheelchair accessible. Please wear comfortable hiking or tennis shoes and bring water. The hike will take anywhere from 45 – 60 minutes and will be no more than a maximum of 2 miles total. For more information about this, or other public pro

grams, please contact Heery Woods Nature Center at 319.278.1130.

August 19, Canoe and Kayak Float, Rennings Landing to Shell Rock Park, 9:30 a..m.

Join Butler County Conservation Board Naturalist Steve Martin for a relaxing canoe float from Renning's Landing to Shell Rock Park at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, August 19th. Participants will meet at the Shell Rock Park Boat Ramp and carpool to Renning's Landing to start the float. The program will include a basic canoe and kayak safety program prior to launching. A limited number of canoes



and kayaks will be available for use on a first-come, first serve basis or participants are welcome to bring their own. Kayaks and canoes can be reserved for the program by calling

(319) 278-1130.

August 26, Dutch Oven Basics, Shell Rock Recreation Area, 10:00 a.m.

Dutch oven cooking has been an important part of outdoor cooking for generations. In pioneer times, the dutch oven was one of the most valued pieces of cookware. It could be used to boil, fry, or bake. On Saturday, August 26, join Naturalist Steve Martin to learn and experience the basics of Dutch Oven cooking. After a short introduction to dutch ovens, participants will be divided into teams where they will prepare 4 different



Dutch Oven Dishes. While they cook, participants can relax and share stories around the campfire. The program will end with participants sampling all the foods they have prepared.

September 16, Canoe and Kayak Float, Heery Woods State Park to Renning's Landing, 9:30 a.m.

Join Butler County Conservation Board Naturalist Steve Martin for a relaxing canoe float from Heery Woods State Park to Renning's Landing at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 16th. Participants will meet at the Renning's Landing Boat Ramp and carpool to Heery Woods State Park to start the float. The program will include a basic canoe and kayak safety program prior to launching. A limited number of canoes and kayaks will be available for use on a first-come, first serve basis or participants are welcome to bring their own. Kayaks and canoes can be reserved for the program by calling (319) 278-1130.



October 14, Fall Colors Canoe and Kayak Float, Greene to Camp Comfort, 10:00 a.m.

Join Naturalist Steve Martin for the last scheduled canoe and kayak float of the season. Planned for Greene to Camp Comfort participants should meet at the Camp Comfort boat ramp at 10:00 a.m. where we will carpool to Greene to start our float. The program will include a basic canoe and kayak safety program prior to launching. A limited number of kayaks will be available for use on a first-come, first-serve basis or participants are welcome to bring their own. Kayaks and canoes can be reserved for the program by calling (319) 278-1130.

For more information about these or other programs of the Butler County Conservation Board, contact Heery Woods Nature Center at (319)-278-1130.

Heery Woods Nature Center Receives Grants

Heery Woods Nature Center has been the recipient of two grants to help purchase materials for the upcoming exhibit renovation. The Prairie Rapids Audubon Society donated \$1,093.00 and the Kyle Family Trust donated \$4,000.00 to purchase the materials to construct a combination log cabin and sod house exhibit inside the Nature Center.

The exhibit will include the removal of the current center wall and exhibits. In its place an 8'x16' room will be built. The two walls closest to the current prairie area will be faced as a sod house, while the walls closest to the forest exhibit will be faced as a log cabin. The facing will be both inside and out. Visitors to the center will be able to enter the room from either area and once inside will be able to learn about life as a pioneer in early Iowa.

Thanks to the Prairie Rapids Audubon Society and the Kyle Family Trust for their support of our programs and exhibits

Because of the complexity of the project, it is scheduled to be completed in two phases. Phase 1 is scheduled to start November 1 and will include the removal of the current wall, construction of the new room, and installation of the simulated log facing. Phase 1 is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2018. Phase 2 will begin immediately after the completion of Phase 1 but will include the collection of a variety of natural materials before construction can occur.

The log cabin and sod house exhibit is part of a planned renovation of Heery Woods Nature Center and its exhibits. The plan includes an updated prairie area, river exhibit, and savanna area as well as a larger aquarium and reptile and amphibian displays. We also hope to add a classroom and additional

exhibit space in the near future.

If you would like more information about the upcoming renovation or would like to contribute to the project, contact Heery Woods Nature Center at (319) 278-1130.

Goats Set to Return to Heery Woods

For the second straight summer, goats will be a part of the landscape at Heery Woods State Park. Last summer twenty-seven goats made the south side of Heery Woods State Park their home and if everything goes according to plan 15 of them will call Heery Woods their home again this year.

Goats are a part of the invasive management plan developed by the Conservation Board and Iowa DNR District Forester to combat burning bush, asiatic honeysuckle, and even a little bit of buchthorn

that was found in the park.



The goats are one part of a three pronged plan to control and remove invasives

from the park. The other two parts of the plan include labor intensive physical cutting and treating and fire.

Last year, the goats were placed in areas where an electrical fence could be used to contain them. They spent approximately two weeks in each area where they were allowed to graze as much of the understory as possible. The result was a reduction in the amount of small understory plants including the three targeted invasive species.

After the goats were removed in the fall, the Iowa Conservation Corps was hired to come in and remove and treat all the larger invasives especially

those that were creating seeds. During the time they were here, they cut several of the asiatic honeysuckle and burning bush as well as the few buckthorn they found. They also found a small area of garlic mustard which they pulled and removed. Once they finished that, they began the process of cutting and removing the downed trees and shrubs in preparation for a controlled burn. Although it will likely be a long time before the area is ready for a burn.

The third part used in controlling invasives will be the use of controlled fire. Allowing a fire to burn through the area will kill the living parts of the invasives and set them back. Used in combination with the grazing and manual removal and treatment, to remove most of the seed bearing plants, controlled burns would likely become the main control for the invasives before they regain a foothold.

Many people spent days watching the goats and will be happy to see them return. We ask that for everyone's safety, they remember to follow the rules as the goats work to help us control the invasives at Heery Woods State Park.

Goat Vegetation Management Rules

While goats are being used to manage invasives in the park, the park will remain open during normal business hours and when the lodge is rented. During those open hours please observe the following rules.

1. Do not enter the goat enclosure area.
2. Feel free to observe the goats but please do not pet or harass the goats.
3. Please do not feed the goats. We want them to eat as many of the invasive plants as possible in the shortest amount of time possible.
4. Park gates will only be open daily when staff members are present or the lodge is rented. Staff members may inform you that the gates will be closing if you arrive less than 30 minutes before the end of normal business hours (8 a.m.-4 p.m.)

Area Spotlight

About a year and one half ago, the Butler County Conservation Board was approached about buying a property north of Highway 3 between Union Avenue and County Road T55. The area, which is centered nearly in the middle of those two roads, is 36.2 acre mixture of upland and wetland habitat and contains a small fishing pond. Not wishing to lose such a unique area, the Butler County Conservation Board asked The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to purchase the area prior to applying for a Wildlife Habitat Stamp Grant. While the area is currently known as the Hogencamp Wildlife Area, its final name will be chosen by the Conservation Board once the transfer has been completed.

The area is mostly cool season grasses and wetland plants. The area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. In the spring, migrating waterfowl including ducks, geese, and swans have been observed on the area while in the drier fall weather it provides excellent cover for upland game such as pheasants and rabbits.

While the area is owned by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, it is not open to the general public. The Butler County Conservation Board has applied for and hopes to receive a Wildlife Habitat Grant to complete the transfer of ownership to the BCCB. Once the area is in public ownership, the area will be open to public hunting and fishing, While it will be a public area, it is bordered on three sides by private property so hunters will be asked to respect all boundary fences.

Once it is open to public hunting, the wet nature of much of the area will limit development, a small parking area at the current entrance is planned and a small food plot the west end is a possibility.

For more information about the Hogencamp Wildlife Area, contact the Butler County Conservation Board at 319-278-4237.

Become a member of the Friends of Heery Woods Nature Center! Your tax-deductible membership or donation goes to support environmental education and outdoor recreation program opportunities in Butler County.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Please mail this form with your tax-deductible check, made payable to *Friends of Heery Woods Nature Center*, 28727 Timber Road, Clarksville, IA 50619

The Friends of Heery Woods Nature Center is recognized as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

Membership and Donation Categories

Memberships:

Student	\$3
Individual	\$10
Family	\$15
Business/Organization	\$15

Donations:

Seedling	\$10-99
Maple	\$100-249
Cherry	\$250-499
Oak	\$500-999
Walnut	\$1000+



*All memberships will receive Conservation Conversation and a certificate of membership.

Heery Woods Nature Center
Heery woods State Park
27887 195th Street
Clarksville, IA 50619
(319) 278-1130
email: srmartin@butler-bremer.com
Find Us Online at:
www.butlercoiowa.org/departments/conservation
facebook: www.facebook.com/ButlerCountyConservation
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28727 Timber Road
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