

The Prairie Country Quarterly

Winter, 2024



A NEWSLETTER OF THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

Hanson Nature Center Grand Opening!

The big day finally arrived! On Saturday, July 13th, we officially dedicated the Hanson Nature Center! Fundraising for the Center began in 2018 and construction was delayed for a bit by Covid. But, after 6 years, we can happily say that Winnebago County now has a nature center!

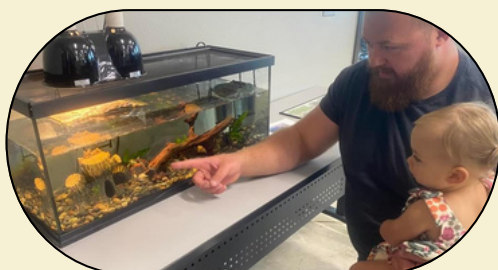


The Grand Opening was well-attended and we want to thank everyone who stopped by that day to see our new facility! Although we didn't have any professionally-constructed displays up yet, people were happy with the exhibits that we had developed in-house. As time goes on, we will continue to put up new exhibits whenever we can, and we will be hiring professionals to work on future displays, as well. In addition to the indoor displays, people are also welcome to walk the prairie surrounding the Center. And there are wonderful benches on the spacious deck that visitors can use to relax and reflect.

A student asked recently when the Center will be finished. Our hope is never! We will always be improving things and creating new exhibits so that you have new things to see and learn about each time you visit. And, as time goes on, we will also be enhancing the area around the Center, including erecting nesting boxes and bird feeders and putting up outdoor exhibits.



Now that the Hanson Nature Center is open, we have set visiting hours. The Center is open on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 AM-1:00 PM and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00-4:00 PM. We have also been open on a few select Saturdays as well, but we probably won't be open much on the weekends now until spring. We are also open whenever someone is working there, which is actually most of the time, or by appointment. Just call us if you'd like to visit during "off" hours and we'll make time for you!



Remember that this is Winnebago County's nature center; it belongs to all the county's residents. So, please continue to support it, visit it, and enjoy it whenever you can!

Winnebago County Conservation Board

Hanson Nature Center
41600 Highway 69
Leland, IA 50453

641-567-3390

www.winnebagocountyia.gov/conservation

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New Faces at the WCCB

Welcome, Chris Barber!

In July, we welcomed Chris Barber as the new Director of the Winnebago County Conservation Board! Chris is not new to the County Conservation System here in Iowa, though, coming to us from the Hardin County Conservation Board where he was the Interpretive Park Manager at the Calkins Nature Area.

Chris replaces Robert Schwartz who retired in July after 34 years as the Winnebago County Conservation Board Director. Our Hanson Nature Center Grand Opening also served as a retirement party for Robert. We are very grateful to Robert for his many years of leadership as Director of the WCCB!



Welcome, Walker Allan Templeton!

We want to welcome a new member of the WCCB family-- Walker Allan Templeton, the son of our Natural Resource Technician Nicole Templeton and her husband Alex. Walker was born on October 30th, weighing in at 7 lbs, 13 ounces. We look forward to watching him grow, surrounded by the wonders of nature!



Mark Flatrud Replaces Mike Korth on WCCB

Earlier this year, Mark Flatrud of Thompson replaced Mike Korth of Forest City on the WCCB. Mike retired from the Board in December, 2023. He had served on the Board for over 18 years, since May of 2005. We want to extend a very heartfelt thank you to Mike for his many years of dedication to conservation here in Winnebago County!



Quilt Raffle Winner Announced

Last spring, Diane Rickerl and Cindy Sarver created a beautiful, prairie-themed quilt that they donated to our Friends Foundation to be used as a fundraiser. We sold raffle tickets throughout the summer and fall and we finally drew the raffle winner at our November Foundation meeting. The lucky winner was Jen Lauer from Illinois! Altogether the raffle raised \$840.00, all of which will go towards new exhibits and other amenities for the Hanson Nature Center. We wish to thank Diane and Cindy for their thoughtful donation, as well as everyone who purchased a raffle ticket!

Fall, 2024, Events at the Hanson Nature Center

With the opening of our new nature center, we now have a wonderful location to host programs and traveling exhibits. So, this past fall, we began doing just that! Through the month of September, we hosted a traveling wolf exhibit from the International Wolf Center in Ely, MN. The display showcased six different taxidermy mounts, along with fascinating information about the various species of wolves, their habits, and their status throughout North America. Along with the display, we also arranged for the Wolf Center to present a Zoom program entitled, "Wolf 101." During that program, an educator from the Wolf Center presented facts about wolves and answered questions from the public. Both the exhibit and the Zoom program were very well-received!

Then, in October, we worked with the Corner Pumpkin Patch up the road to host our first "Pumpkins and Prairies Palooza" event! Over 300 people showed up to enjoy events and activities at both the pumpkin patch and the nature center. At the nature center, kids got to make native plant seed balls as well as jack-o-lantern tree cookies. And, in addition to the displays at the nature center, everyone enjoyed apple cider, apple nachos, and popcorn. We also provided hayrides back and forth through the prairie between the center and the pumpkin patch. Thanks to the success of the event, don't be surprised if you see it scheduled again for next fall!

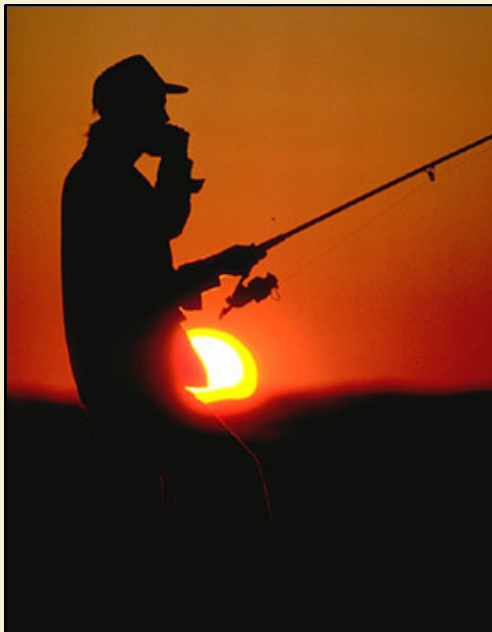
We want to thank everyone who attended these events and helped to make them so successful. In the future, we look forward to providing more such events at the Hanson Nature Center!



Come Check out These Winter Programs!

OWLS OF IOWA SUNDAY, JANUARY 12TH HANSON NATURE CENTER 7:00-8:00 PM

Come learn about the owls that call Iowa home, including how to identify them, where to look for them, and how they're able to hunt in almost total darkness! There's no need to preregister for this program and there is no fee.



BUILD YOUR OWN FISHING ROD CLASS FRIDAY, JANUARY 24TH-SATURDAY, JANUARY 25TH HANSON NATURE CENTER

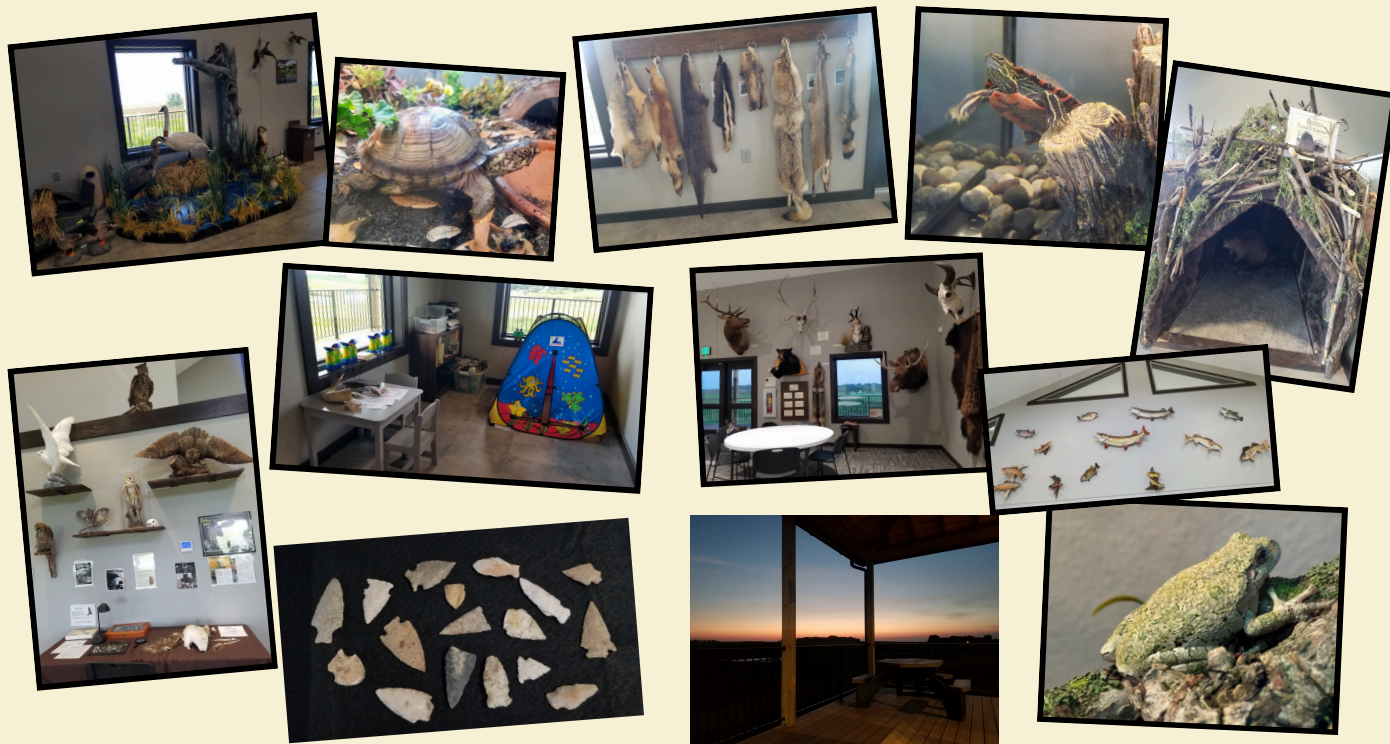
Imagine catching that huge lunker with a fishing pole that you built yourself! Natural Resource Manager Rick Lillie will help you do just that. This will be a two-session class, with the first session beginning at 6:00 PM Friday evening, and the second session running from 2:00-5:00 Saturday afternoon. Participants will need to buy a fishing rod kit from mudhole.com; otherwise, the class itself is free. Registration is required, though, by contacting Rick by Friday, January 10th, at which time he'll help you decide which kit will be right for you.

WINTER STARGAZING FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH HANSON NATURE CENTER 7:00-8:00 PM

Come join us for an evening of stargazing! Naturalist Lisa Ralls will lead an informal tour of the winter nighttime sky, helping people to identify some of the brighter stars and constellations visible this time of year. Afterwards, come inside to enjoy a hot cup of hot chocolate or apple cider! This program will be free of charge and there is no need to preregister.



If you haven't been to the new Hanson Nature Center, yet, we encourage you to stop by! Here are a few of the things you can see...



GIVE 
SUPPORT 

Although this year we completed the construction of our nature center, we still have a lot of work to do! We have already put together some displays, but we will be enhancing and adding to those as time goes on. For that, we will continue to need funding. And, by becoming a member of our Friends of Winnebago County Conservation Foundation, you can help us out! Annual dues all go towards WCCB projects, many of which are now Hanson Nature Center projects. And, in the future, we also plan to have member-only perks and benefits, as well.

If you'd rather not become a member, you can still donate to the Foundation. Since it is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, your contributions are all tax-deductible and will be recognized in this newsletter.

For more information about becoming a Friends member, you can go to the [Foundation page](#) of our web site. If you would just like more information about how you can donate to the Center, please check out the [Hanson Nature Center page](#). Thank you, in advance, for your support!

All of us at the Winnebago County Conservation Board and the Friends of Winnebago County Conservation Foundation want to wish you all the Happiest of Holidays! Make sure to take some time to enjoy the wonder of the season!



*Thank you to the Following Volunteers
for Donating Their Time at the Nature Center this Fall!*

*Paul Bartelt--6 hours
Brad Huntington--6 hours
Paul Fitzgerald--6 hours
Nancy Helm--3 hours
Julie Hagenson--3 hours
Gracie Barber--3 hours
Hazel Barber--3 hours
Char Hanson--3 hours
Shirley Carlson--3 hours*

**We also want to extend a hearty thank you to the following people
for their donations over the past few months! All cash donations go towards
developing and enhancing our nature center exhibits.**

Ruth Bachman (In Memory of William "Bill" Jensvold), Robert Kuefler, and Lynn and Julie Hagenson--The last people to donate to our Capital Campaign to build the Hanson Nature Center

Ray Hansen--For donating a set of fishing poles

Brad Buffington Family--For donating 4 pairs of kids' binoculars to the nature center

Lynn and Julie Hagenson (2)--In Memory of Jay Swearingen, In Memory of Cord Stenberg

Dave and Sue Kingland

John and Karen Monson--In Honor of Robert Schwartz upon his retirement

Ruth Bachman--In Honor of Robert Schwartz upon his retirement

Joe and Pam Angstman

Lynn and Rosalie Juhl

Terry and Shelby Tweeten

Paul Bartelt

Susan Langerud

The Lake Mills Afternoon Literary Club

St. James Catholic Church, Garner

Steve and Kathy Iverson--In Honor of the Wedding of Susan Smith and Myron Lupkes

