



# The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter    Fall 2021

## Two New County Parks Open

It's not very often we can say we have a brand new county park, and in 2021 we opened up two!

Uhlenhopp Arboretum and Sugar Creek Nature Preserve were both officially opened to the public on August 6th. They are located in the eastern part of Jasper County, just off Highway 6 to the south.

Uhlenhopp Arboretum was gifted to Jasper County Conservation by Elliot Uhlenhopp, a former chemistry professor at Grinnell College. He had planted tens of thousands of trees all over his 250 acres and built 7 ponds, named for the days of the week. There are mowed trails for hiking, a picnic shelter, and a cabin that is now available to rent (see page 2).

Sugar Creek Nature Preserve is about 49 acres of very high quality timber previously owned by the Tallgrass Prairie Chapter of the Audubon Society. Before that, it belonged to the Grinnell Girls Camp Association. There are three short hiking loops and an indoor classroom that will be continued to be managed for public enjoyment.

Make plans to explore these beautiful areas! We have worked hard to get them ready for public use and hope schools will eventually bring students to use them as outdoor classrooms.



*Above and below:* Uhlenhopp Arboretum is now open to the public and the cabin is available to rent.



## Memorial Projects in Honor of Past Board Members

Two memorial projects were completed this summer at Jasper County Conservation parks, in honor of two outstanding Conservation Board members.

Calvin Winn was very involved in the Uhlenhopp Arboretum acquisition from the start. When Winn passed away a year ago, plans were made to use a large grain bin on the property to create a unique picnic area in his honor. The picnic shelter is located just off the parking lot at Uhlenhopp Arboretum and can be reserved by calling the Jasper County Conservation office.

We lost another former Conservation Board member in early 2021. Denis Wilcox had served on the board for 29 years. After stepping down from that role, he volunteered to mow at Ashton Park for another 10 years. The large open area at Ashton Park was named “Wilcox Green” and a large stone was placed near the entrance in his memory. A new Ashton Park entrance sign in Wilcox’s honor is coming soon!



*Above:* The Calvin Winn memorial picnic shelter at Uhlenhopp Arboretum was made using an existing grain bin on the property.

*Below:* A large stone designates the open space at Ashton Park as “Wilcox Green,” in honor of Denis Wilcox and the time he volunteered for the county.



## Uhlenhopp Arboretum Cabin

Part of the Elliot Uhlenhopp life estate gift to Jasper County Conservation included the beautiful cabin overlooking his arboretum. It took a bit of work to get it running, but the cabin is now ready for rentals!

The cabin has a full kitchen with limited pots/pans, cooking utensils, table service, and coffee pot. Kitchen and hand towels are provided, but all bedding and bath towels will need to be brought by the renter. There is one queen-sized bed in the loft and one queen-sized hideaway bed on the lower level. Pets are not allowed.

The cabin may be rented for a minimum of two nights on weekdays, Sunday-Thursday (\$130/night) and a minimum of two nights for weekends, Friday-Saturday (\$150/night). Full week reservations Friday-Friday are (\$125/night). Three night stays are required for holiday weekends (\$150/night). Reservations can be made at the Jasper County Conservation office in Newton, or by calling (641) 792-9780.



*Right:* The cabin at Uhlenhopp Arboretum is now open for rentals. Call JCCB at (641) 792-9780 for more info.



## Off the Beaten Path Trail Race

**Saturday, September 25, 9:00 AM**  
**Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve**

Registration for the 15th annual trail race will begin at 8:00AM at Ahrens Access of the preserve. The 6K trail race will kick off at 9:00AM and the 3K fun run will begin at 9:15AM.

Further information, including registration forms and directions to Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve, is at [www.jaspercountyconservation.com](http://www.jaspercountyconservation.com) and on Jasper County Conservation's Facebook page. All registered runners and walkers will receive a long-sleeve t-shirt. Proceeds from the trail race will benefit Jasper Conservation Connection.

## 120 Hours Outside Challenge

Whether you like to ride a bike, paddle a kayak, or simply enjoy a walk down one of our many nature trails, we'd like to challenge you to spend 120 hours of your time outdoors in 2021. This breaks down to only 2 hours a week!

To keep track of your hours, print off the 120 Hours Outside in 2021 chart on our website, [www.jaspercountyconservation.com](http://www.jaspercountyconservation.com), and mark off your time each week. You are also welcome to make your own chart to keep track of hours. Once you've reached 120 hours, bring your chart to our office at the Jasper County Armory/Annex Building in Newton and you will receive a prize!

It has been proven over and over again that spending time outdoors not only helps you physically, but also mentally, improving your entire well-being. Something as easy as a walk outside and taking in nature around you can be extremely good for your health!

Need a place to start? Try your luck finding our 120 Hours Outside "leaf" which is hidden in Jasper County Conservation areas. Follow the clues we share on our Facebook page. Once you've found the leaf, take a selfie with it and share the photo with us for online bragging rights. The leaf will be hidden again with new clues the following week.



So far this year our leaf has traveled to 26 different places. If you find the leaf first, you will also be entered in a drawing for a fun conservation gift basket!

## Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors (OWLS)

**Jasper County Armory/Annex Building,**  
**1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton**

Come for coffee and a short presentation. All programs are from 10:00-11:00 AM unless noted otherwise.

### **Oct. 13—Newton City Parks Update**

Jamie Murphy and Victoria Jordan with Newton City Parks will present an update of programs and projects they've been working on.

### **Nov. 10—Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden**

Alex Nuzum, Education Coordinator at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden and Jasper County native, will talk about different programs they offer for all ages and ways to get involved at the gardens.

### **Dec. 8—Evergreen Centerpieces**

Make your own fresh evergreen centerpiece to take home in this hands-on, holiday program! Pre-registration is required for this program by calling (641) 792-9780.

## Halloween Hike

**Roy G. Biv, Your Friendly Host, presents**

**"The Rainbow Connection"**

**Friday, October 15, 6:00 PM**

**Newton Izaak Walton League**

This is a fun and educational, *not* scary, event featuring skits performed by Newton Community Theatre actors and members of Jasper Conservation Connection. Hikers will meet colorful characters along the trail, learn where rainbows come from, and listen to some familiar and fun songs!

Hour-long hikes will begin at 6:00 PM and will depart every 15 minutes. Each time slot can accommodate around 25 hikers. The last hike will begin at 8:00 PM. Families with young children are encouraged to come earlier in the evening.

The hikes will end with the very popular black-light animal tracking. Participants will be able to roast marshmallows while enjoying music by the fire and hotdogs, drinks, and popcorn will be available as well.

Youth under age 12 must be accompanied by an adult. *Admission: free-will donation to JCCB.*



### A Summer of Fun!

Jasper County Conservation's naturalists were eager to get back to having in-person summer camps this year. Last year, "summer camp in box" was available for families to purchase, with three different boxes full of activities kids could do at home or at a county park on their own. In 2021, a few less in-person summer camps were offered than normal and all activities were done at outdoor locations. There was one summer camp box option that included several STEM activities.

Newton Noon Kiwanis continues to generously sponsor JCC summer camps and the funding helps Conservation staff to create camps focusing on outdoor skills, wildlife identification, watersports, art projects, and much more! All of the camps quickly overflowed with participants when the registration opened online in May. Over 150 campers, ages 5 to 16, have spent their summer with Conservation staff being "wild" in 7 different camps that spanned 17 days!

Some of the more popular activities included fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, racing down the giant slip-and-slide, taking nature photos, pond netting, games, building terrariums, and so much more.



We all had so much fun this summer! A HUGE thank you to the Newton Noon Kiwanis from Jasper County Conservation and summer camp participants for this wonderful learning opportunity! Please contact naturalists Katie or Greg if you have any questions about our summer programming.

### Floating Wetlands Project

During the heat of summer many farm ponds and lakes become covered in a thin layer of green algae. That saying of "too much of a good thing" holds true with algae because as large blooms start to decompose, dissolved oxygen levels start to plummet which can cause fish kills and poor water quality for recreational use. The upside is, we have the power to change this.

Two years ago, Mariposa Recreation Area received a major facelift in the form of a lake restoration project. The goal of this project was to remove sediment deposited into the lake from erosion upstream, create fish habitat, and implement conservation practices such as constructed wetlands and bank stabilization to improve water quality within the lake.

This summer, to compliment the conservation practices implemented during the lake restoration project, the Jasper County Conservation



Department installed a floating wetland on the north end of the lake at Mariposa Park. Unlike floating wetlands found in nature, this wetland is constructed of material made from recycled plastic bottles. The wetland is 5x5' and is injected with marine foam for floatation. Within the mat, there are 50 holes which were planted with native wetland sedges and forbs before being launched onto the lake.

How does this help to improve water quality? As the plants become established on the island, the roots will grow down through the mat and into the water below. The root system which forms below the island is the perfect place for biofilm to form. Biofilm is a colony of beneficial microbes and bacteria that will uptake excess nutrients in the water (i.e. nitrates and phosphorus) which cause algal blooms and poor water quality.

The best part about floating wetlands is they do more than just help to improve water quality. The root system below the island provides newly hatched fish with a hiding spot from predators. On the top side of the island, reptiles and amphibians can use the edge of the mat as a sunning platform. Flowering plants incorporated into the island can be used as nectaring sites and larval hosts for pollinators. Lastly, our 25 square foot wetland created from recycled plastic saved 750 plastic bottles from going to the landfill!

This project was made possible thanks to a partnership with the Jasper Soil and Water Conservation District. We are also excited to expand on this project with grant money received from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. With this funding, we will be able to install eight additional floating wetlands around Jasper County. Updates on this project will be provided through the Jasper County Conservation Facebook page.

## 2021 Teacher Extern Experience

Jasper County Conservation was fortunate this summer to again have a teacher extern working with us on EE programming. Iowa STEM Teacher Externships, a program of the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council, is supported through state-appropriated funds and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) Grant for Teacher Externships with Environmental and Conservation Professionals, along with investments by Iowa business and industry partners.

During the summer, educators work side-by-side with knowledgeable and skilled industry employees who help bring the classroom curriculum to life. Teacher Externships provide educators with the exposure to answer questions about real-world application, prepare students for careers they may have in the future, and improve educational experiences.

Our externs have been phenomenal and we really enjoy working with them! Here is just a little about our 2021 summer extern, Natalie Brimeyer:

"I'm a Truman State University graduate, graduating with my biology degree in 2019 and then pursuing a master's degree in Education. At Truman State I was part of the volleyball team for 4 years and was awarded various all-conference awards. Other than playing volleyball, some of my other hobbies include: hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, and pretty much any other outdoor activity. As a teacher and lover of the outdoors, I am always trying to learn more about nature. Starting fall of 2021, I will be teaching AP Biology at Southeast Polk High School.

Working with the Jasper County Conservation team was the highlight of my summer. During this externship I was able to use my education and biology background to work on a variety of projects with the team as well as host multiple camps for students throughout the county. Some of the highlights of the externship include: water testing around the county, implementing a floating wetland at Mariposa County Park, and planning and hosting my own outdoor wilderness camp.

Throughout the summer I learned so much more about different indigenous species in Iowa. I am excited say that I can now identify a variety of prairie flowers and trees! I also learned about many conservation practices that can be used to protect and keep our environment healthy.

I hope to use all of the knowledge I gained from this experience in my classroom for years to come.

As a biology teacher there are many conservation concepts that can be applied to the standards of my class.

After my experience at Jasper County Conservation I also have a much better understanding about what naturalists and conservation officers do on a daily basis. This will allow me to better teach students about these professions and maybe even inspire them to take this career path. Overall I am very thankful for this summer experience. I enjoyed working with everyone at JCC and hope to visit some of their events soon!"



*Clockwise:*  
Teacher Extern Natalie Brimeyer collects a water sample at Mariposa Park, helps kids sort and identify the pond creatures they caught, and teaches summer camp kids a fun new game.



Jasper County Conservation Board  
1030 W. 2nd St. S.  
Newton, IA 50208

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**Jasper County Conservation Board**

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**A Big Thank You To....**

Volunteer instructors who taught hunter education, the Newton Izaak Walton League for the use of their clubhouse and facilities for programs, Bill Yeager for mowing at Uhlenhopp Arboretum, Gary Morris for mowing at Ashton Park, Newton Noon Kiwanis for sponsoring our summer camp programs, Slipstream for playing at the Caring for Conservation Concert, Northern Lights Pizza and Greencastle Tavern for providing food and drinks at the concert and to everyone who came out and enjoyed music with us on a beautiful night to support the nature center project! **Thank you!!**



Jasper County Conservation Board's programs are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age and handicap. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination, they may file a complaint with the Jasper County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, Washington, D.C. 29240