



# The Otter Creek Quarterly

Winter, 2010-11  
Vol. 25 No. 4

*A Newsletter of the Buchanan County Conservation Board*

*Enjoy the Coming Winter Season – Pages 4-5!*

## *Here's to a Great Winter!*

Dan Cohen, BCCB Director

Winter will bring cold temperatures and snow-covered ground. Isn't it great! It will come here, requiring no travel or expense on our part. The cold winds simply arrive, the snow falls, and winter is here for all of us to enjoy.

Some people dread the coming of winter, which is too bad since winter's coming is a reality. It comes every year, lasts for around a fourth of the year, and no one who remains here can escape it. To help those who have yet to realize a great winter, I offer the following tips.

### Enjoy the Outdoors

There are many pursuits that require a good winter, and make for a great winter. Snow provides a variety of opportunities. Cross country skiing can be done in many parks and open areas. The Conservation Board grooms trails at Fontana Park, Jakway Forest, and Otter Creek Roadside Park. Where there is enough snow, some people are learning to snowshoe (see page 5). Whether on skis, or in a pair of snowshoes or hiking boots, woodland trails are great places to explore during winter. There are no annoying insects. Signs of wildlife (tracks, scat, sounds) are everywhere. And there is a special solitude in the winter woodland.

Hunters love winter - especially during the various hunting seasons that run through mid-January. There are great opportunities for young people to begin their pursuit of a lifetime of great winters by becoming involved in youth hunting experiences. The Buchanan County Chapter of Pheasants Forever is a great contact for parents who want help providing their kids with some first experiences. You won't hear too many hunters grumbling about the coming winter.

Many Iowans enjoy fishing, but when

winter arrives most of these people put away their tackle. Ice fishing is a low-cost way to enjoy many winter days. Opportunities to fish are as close as the nearest body of frozen water. There is a special excitement in drawing fish out through a hole in the ice.

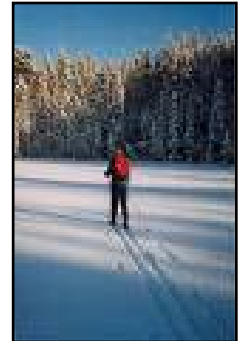
### Winter Indoors

Although there are many fun things to do outside during a great winter, short days and long nights will mean more time indoors for most people. Summer months seem to be packed full, and activities are rushed and crowded. Winter often comes with a slower pace and is an opportune time to catch up on indoor projects.

Movies, books, games, and inside hobbies sometimes seem like a waste of time when the sun is shining and outdoor chores need to be done. But on dark, winter evenings these are great ways to pass the time.

### Prepare for a Great Winter

People who spend a lot of time complaining about winter can often be distinguished without uttering a word. These are the people scurrying down the sidewalk in their gym shoes, wearing no hat or gloves. They look miserable as they move stiffly – stooped and muttering to themselves. Teenagers are notorious for trying to look tough by wearing little, but mostly these people just look miserable. Except for a few truly excruciating cold days, most anyone can be comfortable with basic winter clothing - hat, gloves, coat. Be sure to prepare properly for outdoor activities, and stock up on the supplies that will help you enjoy winter indoors. Get ready for a great winter!



# Naturalist Corner - Owls!

Angie Auel, Naturalist

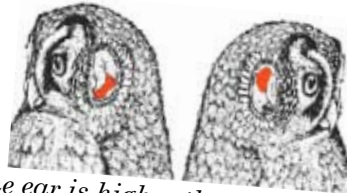
## What makes owls special?

### Eyes!!

Owl eyes are very large to let in faint night light; they are ten times more sensitive to light than our eyes. Such large eyes in a small skull must be supported by bony sockets – so the owls can't move their eyes without moving their head.

### Ears!!

Owls' ears are on the front of their head and one is higher than the other. Their ears have no outer ear like humans, instead, owls have a "dished" face which allows for better sound and reception.



*One ear is higher than the other*

### Feathers!!

Owl's body feathers are soft and loosely attached so air can go through them quietly. Owl's wing feathers have a fringe (serrated edge) which allows silent flight. Owls also have large wings with a slow wing beat which results in less noise.



*Serrated Edge of a wing feather*

### Feet!!

Owls have strong feet and sharp talons for a quick death to prey. The power of a Great Horned Owl's foot hitting its prey is equal to a rifle bullet's power.

### Pellets!!

Owls eat prey whole. After the food is digested, an owl will then spit up a pellet which is made up of bones, feathers, and fur. Scientist study these pellets to see what owls eat.



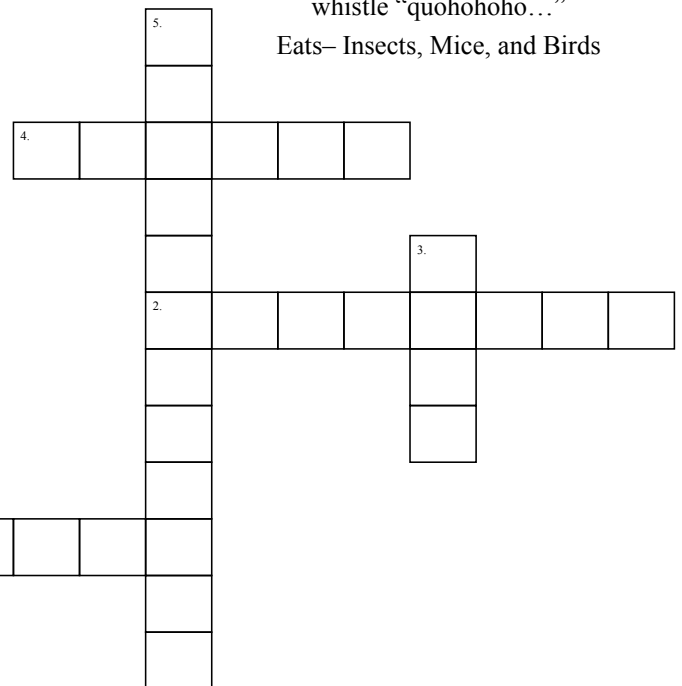
**Barred Owl**  
Call- "Who cooks for you?  
Who cooks for you-all?"  
Eats- Mice, Rabbits, and Birds



**Great Horned Owl**  
Call- "Hoo-hoo hoooooo hoo-hoo"  
Eats- Rabbits, Squirrels, Skunks, and Birds



**Eastern Screech Owl**  
Call- "Wheee..." similar to a horse's  
whinny followed by a vibrating low  
whistle "quohohoho..."  
Eats- Insects, Mice, and Birds



### Crosswords Puzzle

1. My face is \_\_\_\_\_ shaped for better sound and light reception.
2. My eyes are \_\_\_\_\_ more sensitive than humans.
3. My favorite meal is \_\_\_\_\_, rabbits, and birds.
4. My feet are \_\_\_\_\_ strong for a quick death to prey.
5. My wing feathers have a fringe called a \_\_\_\_\_.

## New Homes for the Eagles

Karen Ott, Conservation Technician

In July, the Buchanan County Conservation took on a new project in the animal display. Two new corn cribs were built for the golden eagle and the bald eagle. An ad was placed in local newspapers asking for donated, old style corn cribs. The response was fantastic. Many people called in. The first place that was checked was at the Steve and Sandy Smothers farm, and they were just right. With the help of Secondary Roads Department, the corn cribs were transferred to Fontana Park. A new coat of paint was applied to both cribs, and they were set in their permanent site.

Housing boxes were built for them, and perches were set up. Chain link fence was placed around the corn cribs, and a boardwalk was put down. Finally, after weeks of work, everything was in place. On Wednesday October 22, the eagles were moved in to their new homes. They look great in them, and have much more space to move around. The existing bird enclosures were opened up and doubled in size, giving the owls, hawk, and turkey vultures more room. Come check them out at the park!



*Eddie the bald eagle looks up from inside his new home in the Fontana Park Wildlife Display.*

## Historic House Receives a New Look

By Mike Van Raden Park Ranger

The Richardson-Jakway House, located in Jakway Forest south of Aurora, recently received some needed repairs. The "Old House" as it is sometimes referred to, was recently updated with new cedar siding. The old siding was very thin, cracked, and rotten to the point that it was letting moisture in and letting the sub-siding become exposed to the elements. Some of the old siding was actually walnut lumber, but most of it was cedar. The old cedar siding came from a mill in Washington State that burned down in 1956, so it is really hard to say just how old the siding actually was. The north side of the house still had square nails in the siding.

In the fall of 2009, some of the siding was replaced. It was then realized that most of the siding was in poor condition. The Richardson-Jakway Foundation submitted a successful grant request to the Buchanan County Community Foundation that provided funds for all material costs for residing the house. Labor was not part of the grant, and the project would only move forward with some great volunteer support.

In November, a group of volunteers helped put new siding

on the house. The new siding looks great, and in spring it will be stained to return it to the "romantic color of red", as documented in late nineteenth century accounts of the House. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this project a success:

Harvey Davis  
Bob Glew  
Loren Hamilton  
Steve Hasenour  
Ranor Hoffman

Doug Lentz  
Howard Miller  
Don Shonka  
Chuck Watson  
Chuck Wessels



*New siding on the "Old House" will be stained red this spring.*



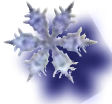
*Above: Conservation Volunteer Don Shonka cuts siding boards to length, as others nail boards in place.*

The Richardson-Jakway House is the featured building in the Historic Site at Jakway Forest, and is managed by the Conservation Board. The Richardson-Jakway Foundation is a nonprofit group dedicated to raising funds for restoration and interpretation of the Historic Site.



## Green Gift for Christmas

Wednesday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.  
Fontana Park Nature Center



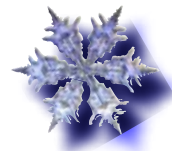
Is there someone who is hard to shop for on your Christmas list? Maybe a grandmother, teacher or co-worker? After attending this program, you will have completed a green solution to the problem. Participants will be making a shopping/tote bag that is not only reusable, but reused. This is a simple process that will take less than an hour to complete. Children 8 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

*Unless otherwise indicated, programs are free. You should call 319-636-2617 to preregister for programs, or email fontanapark@iowatelecom.net.*



## Reconnecting Children with Nature: Growing Up Wild

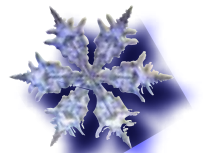
Taught by Angie Christensen  
Saturday, January 8, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Fontana Park Nature Center  
Registration Deadline: December 20  
Fee: \$30/person payable to the IA DNR



Growing Up Wild workshops provide hands on activities and resource materials to lead your own nature explorations. It is great training for teachers, parents, day care providers, and others who want to guide children in the outdoors. Growing Up WILD activities use age appropriate concepts to build on children's sense of wonder and invites them to explore nature and the world around them. Specially written for children 3-6, activities include sections to address many learning areas, including math, science, language, literacy, health living, play, and creativity.

The Growing Up WILD activity guide was a culmination of work by natural resource agencies, early childhood professionals, and educators, and correlates to national education standards.

Participants will receive a Growing Up WILD activity guide, Iowa DNR handouts, and a Resource CD for Early Childhood. Credit Options are available.

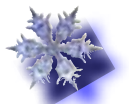


### Great Backyard Bird Count - February 18-21

Join the more than 85 thousand people who last year reported 635 species and nearly 10 million individual birds in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Find out all you need to know at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org), or call the Conservation Department (319-636-2617) to find out how to participate without internet access. Each year, in addition to entering their tallies, participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Participants in the 2011 count are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube; some will also be featured on the GBBC web site. Visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) to learn more.

### Moonlit Snowshoe

Wednesday, Jan. 19, 6 p.m.  
Fontana Park Nature Center – \$5 fee  
Preregistration required



Strap on a pair of snowshoes and explore the beauty of a winter evening. If conditions are right, a waxing moon will light our way. No prior snowshoeing experience is necessary. Participants will meet at the Nature Center, where hot beverages will also be served after the walk.

### Congratulations Photo Contest Winners!

Winners in the 2010 Buchanan County Natural Areas Photo Contest were recently chosen by photographer Kip Ladage of Tripoli. Thanks to everyone who entered one or more pictures, and congratulations to all the winners.

Laura LaMasters of Fairbank was chosen Overall Winner for her photo a young girl holding a bullfrog. Jenni Fratzke of Independence won in the People Enjoying Nature category with a photo of a fish scooped in hands. Deanna Porter of Independence won in both the Wildlife and Landscapes categories with photos of a butterfly on wild bergamot and a snowy creekside. Samantha Finley of Brandon won in the Plants & Wildflowers category with a photo of coneflowers. And Tracy Belle of Independence won in the digitally altered category with a photo of a dew covered spiderweb.



### Lead in the Environment: Protecting America's Heritage and our Children

Presented by Laura Zaugg, Dallas County Naturalist  
Wednesday, Feb. 16, 6 p.m., Fontana Park Nature Center  
Fee: \$2/person or \$5/family

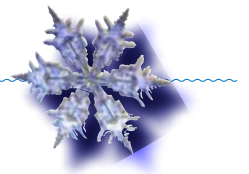
As early as the 1930's, extensive research has been carried out on the effects of lead shot in waterfowl and bald eagles. Federal law banned the use of lead shot for duck and goose-hunting in 1991. Still, wildlife rehabilitators continue to see an alarming number of bald eagles with lead poisoning, and most of them do not survive. Wildlife rehabilitators, veterinarians, and researchers say bald eagles have been dying of lead poisoning for years. The evidence now is overwhelming that the source of that poison is fragmented lead bullets fired by hunters. A few years ago, deer hunters, health officials and wildlife managers were shocked when lead bullet fragments were discovered in venison donated to food shelves. Come hear about this hot issue, and how you can protect America's heritage and our children.

### Sandhill Crane Bus Tour

Saturday - Monday, March 26-28, Kearney, Nebraska

Contact us for details, or go to [www.buchanancountyparks.com](http://www.buchanancountyparks.com) for a copy of the registration brochure.

Registration deadline is February 21.



Each spring, up to 500,000 sandhill cranes can be found along the Platte River between Kearney and Grand Island, Nebraska. Seeing this large group of cranes, and hearing their rattling calls, is truly a spectacular experience. The cranes stage at this area to refuel on their northward trip to their breeding grounds. The trip will culminate with an evening observation of the cranes as they return to roost in the Platte River. We will stop at the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area Saturday evening to view an Iowa birding phenomenon, the booming of the prairie chickens. Once the most abundant game bird in Iowa, male prairie chickens perform an elaborate courtship ritual, which includes loud vocalizations and the display of orange neck sacks, to attract females.

The Linn and Buchanan County Conservation Departments are cosponsoring this bus trip to view these spectacular birding events.



## 2010 Volunteer Supper

The success of conservation is largely a function of how well people are engaged in community conservation efforts. The Buchanan County Conservation Board provides excellent parks and natural areas, award winning educational and recreational programs, and landowner assistance. But it is the active participation of the people in the Buchanan County area that ultimately affect the quality of our environment.

On Monday, September 27, about 80 people attended the annual Conservation Volunteers Banquet held at Fontana Park in recognition of the active involvement of citizens who provide their support of conservation programs through volunteering. A Buchanan County Supervisor, Conservation Board members, and Conservation Department staff also attended the banquet to show their appreciation of conservation volunteers. During the past year, more than 100 conservation volunteers donated their time and skills to the Conservation Board in a variety of ways.

Volunteers and their guests who attended the Banquet were served grilled burgers, hot dogs and side dishes. Special thanks to the Buchanan County Cattleman for the use of their grill.



Volunteer Recognition FY 2010 Awards	
• Verla Sperry	Total Hours Nature Center Receptionist
• Mellisa Kania	Most Hours Receptionist
• Rosemary Boland	40 Hours Receptionist
• Jane West	40 Hours Receptionist
• Marybeth Jaggard	40 Hours Receptionist
• Verla Sperry	30 Hours Receptionist
• David Voigts	30 Hours Receptionist
• Helen Hoefler	30 Hours Receptionist
• Joanne Rowe	30 Hours Receptionist
• J'Andrea Gibney	20 Hours Receptionist
• Marilyn Gallo	20 Hours Receptionist
• Patti Olmstead	20 Hours Receptionist
• Faith Rulapaugh	20 Hours Receptionist
• Joy Hintz	20 Hours Receptionist
• Chris Goarke	20 Hours Receptionist
• Judith Porter	20 Hours Receptionist
• Shirley Rozendaal	20 Hours Receptionist
• Vern & Wanda Tiedt	Campground Hosts
• Paul Bachman	Park Grounds (Cortright)
• Wapsi Bowhunters	Park Grounds (3 Elms)
• New Wildlife Monitor	Ed Husman
• Ind. Senior Center	Newsletter Folding
• Friends of Fontana	Fundraising Award
• Fontana Herb Society	Gardening Award
• R-J Foundation	Fundraising Award
• Tony Bengston	Special Project (Wapsi Cleanup)
• Les Van Fossen	All Around Volunteer
• Peter Lodholz	Long-time Volunteer

Left: A group of conservation volunteers conducted a cleanup on the Wapsipinicon River. Tony Bengston organized the event through the Littleton-Chatham Historical Society.

**Yes, I want to donate to the Friends of Fontana Park!**  
*Enclosed is my donation. I am glad to be able to contribute at the level shown below.*

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor (\$1-99)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter (\$250-499) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor (\$1,000-4,999)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor (\$100-249) | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$500-999)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Founder (\$5,000 or more) |

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please contact me regarding making a donation as a memorial to a friend or relative. | <input type="checkbox"/> Please contact me regarding making a donation as a gift in the name of a friend or relative. |
|---|---|

Names) as you wish them to read on recognition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
**Friends of Fontana Park** and Mail to: Fontana Interpretive Nature Center, 1883 125th St., Hazleton, IA 50641

## Volunteers Wanted!

Volunteer Orientation  
Wednesday, March 9, 6:30 p.m.  
Fontana Park Nature Center

Conservation Volunteers assist the Conservation Department in more than 18 different categories that include outside and indoor work and projects. Attend the March 9 orientation, and learn how you can become involved. Call 319-636-2617 or email [fontanapark@iowatelecom.net](mailto:fontanapark@iowatelecom.net) to let us know you plan to come.

## Nature Center Shopping

During the upcoming season of gift giving, consider shopping at the Nature Center's Gift Shop to share a love of nature. Some "fair trade" items include rainforest seed earrings, hand embroidered bags, and coffee. These items help preserve the rainforests where many of our migrating birds overwinter, and direct money to farmers and crafts people who produce the goods.



Also in the Nature Center Gift Shop are a large assortment of field guides, recycled bird feeders, animal puppets, nature stickers and tattoos, wildlife puzzles, garden signs, Iowa wildlife T-shirts, and more! Gift certificates are available for Buchanan County campgrounds and summer camp sessions.

For the really tough to buy for, consider a donation for an animal or birdfeeder sponsorship.



Stop out during normal business hours (see back cover) and see the merchandise on display.

Bison are among the animals still available for sponsorship for the 2011 calendar year. To sponsor an animal, a group or individual needs to make a minimum donation. For more information about becoming an Animal Sponsor, call 319-636-2617.

## Conservation Calendar!

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Dec. 4      | <i>Sleigh Rides at Cortright</i><br>Cortright Wildlife Area, 1 p.m. (Full)  |
| Dec. 8      | <i>Green Gift for Christmas</i><br>Fontana Park, 7 p.m. (P. 4)  |
| Dec. 16     | <i>Christmas Bird Count</i><br>Independence, 7 a.m. (P. 5).   |
| Dec. 21     | <i>Conservation Board Meeting</i><br>Bill's Restaurant in Independence, 5 p.m. (subject to change).                   |
| Dec. 24     | <i>Christmas Eve</i><br>(Nature Center closed at noon)  |
| Dec. 25     | <i>Merry Christmas!</i><br>(Nature Center closed)   |
| Jan. 1      | <i>Happy New Year!</i><br>(Nature Center closed)  |
| Jan. 8      | <i>Growing Up Wild!</i><br>Fontana Park, 8:30 a.m. (P. 4).  |
| Jan. 17     | <i>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i>  |
| Jan. 18     | <i>Conservation Board Meeting</i><br>Fontana Park, 7 p.m. (subject to change).  |
| Jan. 19     | <i>Moonlit Snowshoe</i><br>Fontana Park, 6 p.m. (P. 5).   |
| Jan. 21-23  | <i>Winter Solstice Educator Workshop</i><br>Honey Creek State Park, Moravia, IA<br>Call 319-636-2617 for information. |
| Feb. 15     | <i>Conservation Board Meeting</i><br>Fontana Park, 7 p.m. (subject to change).  |
| Feb. 16     | <i>Lead in the Environment</i><br>Independence, 6 p.m. (P. 5).  |
| Feb. 18-21  | <i>Great Backyard Bird Count</i> (P. 4).  |
| Feb. 21     | <i>Sandhill Crane Bus Tour</i><br><i>Registration Deadline</i> (P. 5).  |
| Feb. 21     | <i>President's Day</i><br>(Nature Center closed)  |
| March 9     | <i>Volunteer Orientation</i><br>Fontana Park, 6:30 p.m. (P. 7).   |
| March 26-28 | <i>Sandhill Crane Bus Tour</i><br>Kearney NE, call for info. (P. 5).  |

For information about Conservation Board programs or activities, call 319-636-2617, email [ccbdban@iowatelecom.net](mailto:ccbdban@iowatelecom.net), or visit [www.buchanancountyparks.com](http://www.buchanancountyparks.com).

This newsletter is available via email, and an email listserve provides more information throughout the year. To sign up for the email list or listserve, email [ccbdban@iowatelecom.net](mailto:ccbdban@iowatelecom.net).

**Buchanan County Parks (acres)**

- 1. Fontana Park and Jarrett Slater Addition (134)..... Hazleton
- 2. Jakway Forest (315)..... Aurora
- 3. Lime Creek Area (45)..... Brandon
- 4. Boies Bend Area (26)..... Quasqueton
- 5. Buffalo Creek Area (81.5)..... Winthrop
- 6. Otter Creek Roadside Park (13)..... Hazleton

**Buchanan County Natural Areas (acres)**

- 7. Mickey Fox Area and Anderson Addition (97)..... Jesup
- 8. VanLaningham Area (3)..... Independence
- 9. Otter Creek Wildlife Area (100)..... Hazleton
- 10. Hoover Area (20)..... Troy Mills
- 11. Sand Creek Area (80)..... Quasqueton
- 12. Nibeck Nature Preserve (25)..... Hazleton
- 13. Pine Creek Area (40)..... Quasqueton
- 14. Buffalo Creek Wildlife Area (60)..... Winthrop
- 15. Rowley Fen (43)..... Rowley
- 16. Koutny Pond/Hoffman Woods (106)..... Brandon
- 17. Putty Root Preserve (17)..... Quasqueton
- 18. Blazing-Star Prairie (7.5)..... Rowley
- 19. Crumbacher Wildlife Area (368)..... Independence
- 20. Bearbower Sand Prairie (40)..... Brandon
- 21. Swartz Preserve (4)..... Aurora
- 22. Bryantsburg Prairie Preserve (1.5)..... Hazleton
- 23. Frogville Access (135)..... Troy Mills
- 24. Iron Bridge Access (1)..... Quasqueton
- 25. Schneider-Heinick-Rowe Area (20)..... Troy Mills
- 26. Newton Township Natural Area (158)..... Quasqueton
- 27. Patton Prairie (45)..... Aurora
- 28. Hodges and North Wildlife Area (67)..... Jesup
- 29. Fairbank Fen (40)..... Fairbank
- 30. Anderson Addition to Cutshall (24)..... Jesup
- 31. Ham Marsh (54)..... Independence
- 32. Wehner Woods (30)..... Lamont
- 33. Cortright Wildlife Area (186)..... Jesup

**Buchanan County River Accesses (acres)**

- 34. Troy Mills Wapsi Access (63)..... Troy Mills
- 35. Wapsi River Access (51)..... Independence
- 36. Three Elms Area (75)..... Independence
- 37. Cutshall Area (85)..... Jesup
- 38. Robert "Chic" McGlaughlin Easement Access (5)..... Jesup

**Board Members**

- Roger Johnson..... Chair
- Jim Klever..... Vice Chair
- Gary Buresh..... Secretary
- Pat Fencl..... Member
- Ranor Hoffman..... Member

**Conservation Staff**

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- Sondra Cabell..... Interpretive Naturalist
- Angela Auel..... Interpretive Naturalist
- Mike Van Raden..... Park Ranger
- Jeremy Whittle..... Park Ranger
- Chris Hansen..... Park Technician
- YuVonne Buckman..... Receptionist
- Linda Heins..... Office Manager
- Dorothy Wehling..... Secretary
- Karen Ott..... Wildlife Caregiver/Park Tech
- Elaine Walker..... Custodian

*The Otter Creek Quarterly* is printed on Exact Offset paper manufactured by Wausau. This is a Green Seal paper - a mark of environmental responsibility. For more information about Green Seal paper, got to [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org). The newsletter is edited by Dan Cohen. Contact the Conservation Department (319-636-2617/[bccbdan@iowatelecom.net](mailto:bccbdan@iowatelecom.net)) for more information.

*The Buchanan County Conservation Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age, or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subject to discrimination, he or she may file a complaint with the Buchanan County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.*

For more information regarding Conservation Board activities, call 319-636-2617/[bccbdan@iowatelecom.net](mailto:bccbdan@iowatelecom.net)



*A unique project began during the fall months at the Cortright Wildlife Area. A channel was dug to reconnect two ponds to the Wapsipinicon River. The result will be improved fishing in the ponds, and areas of improved backwater habitat for fish in the Wapsipinicon River. The project is being funded through a Fish Habitat Grant, and is the first such project to be implemented on an interior river in Iowa (similar projects have been successful on the Mississippi).*