



The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2024

Jasper County Conservation Goes All Out for New Campout

By Christopher Braunschweig, Newton Daily News, 6/03/2024

Mariposa Park is nothing like it was 10 years ago, and that's a good thing. The 151-acre recreation area, located about seven miles northeast of Newton, has undergone massive improvements since then, including a project that extracted heavy amounts of sediment in the nearby lake, to the point fish can be seen from the bottom.

The latest project ensures more visitors can see that for themselves. Jasper County Conservation officially launched the Bison Ridge Campground and Coneflower Cottage, 6825 N. 67th Ave. E., at Mariposa Park this past weekend, allowing campers near and far to take advantage of modern utilities when enjoying a few days of outdoor activities like kayaking, hiking and fishing.

Each of the 15 campground sites has access to electricity and water, and the nearby bathhouse has restrooms and shower facilities. Fire rings and picnic tables are installed at each site and there is also a dump station for when guests leave. This style of campground is the first of its kind for conservation.

"It just seems like something we've talked about for so long," said Keri Van Zante, Director of Jasper County Conservation. "People have been asking about it, and now it's finally here. I'm excited to see new people coming to our parks and the same people coming to our parks, but also seeing them stay longer."

Of course the other new addition is a furnished rental cabin with two bedrooms, one bathroom, a full kitchen and a back deck with one of the best views in the park. Conservation contracted out the foundation and insulation work, as well as the utilities installation, but it was otherwise fully



Above: Conservation staff and board members stand in front of Coneflower Cottage at Mariposa Park.

constructed by staff. Ethan Vander Pol, Maintenance Technician for Jasper County Conservation, took on most of the construction work, which was completed in roughly six months. He said the conservation board had been wanting a cabin out at Mariposa Park for some time, so to finally see it come to fruition is gratifying and exciting.

"The vision was kind of a cool spot down here," Vander Pol said in an interview with Newton News while on the back deck of the cabin, which overlooks the lake. "It's a spot for people who don't want to camp or don't have a camper. They can come stay here and use the park and benefit from all of this."

Greg Oldsen, a naturalist for Jasper County Conservation, said now is the time to see all of what is available at Mariposa Park. "There are a lot of extra opportunities people now have at the park," Oldsen said, noting amenities like the boat ramp, the kayak launch, kayak rentals and the nature playscape are big draws. "There are just so many things that families can do while

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they are out here. And that's pretty exciting."

Vander Pol confirmed the cabin was built with families in mind, which is why one of the bedrooms is equipped with bunkbeds and the living space has a pull-out couch. The other bedroom is furnished with a queen-style bed. Conservation wanted families to be comfortable and enjoy the easy access to park activities. While Mariposa Park still has its primitive campground, Vander Pol expects the modern alternative will be just as popular, if not more.

"I'm happy with the outcome and it's kind of been what my job has been here lately," Vander Pol said. "Because we did the whole campground and that shower building, too. This whole project started with the campground probably a year ago; it's when we first started doing the dirt work for that."



Above: The view of Mariposa Park's pond and lake from Coneflower Cottage .

Funding for the project was primarily facilitated through a land and water conservation grant and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Jasper County Board of Supervisors. In September 2022, the supervisors provided \$850,000 for bike trail repairs and modern campground additions at Mariposa Park. Later that month the supervisors provided \$400,000 in ARPA money to go towards the new nature center, which may break ground this year.

For Van Zante, these new additions not only give people something new to try out but may also have bigger implications for the county in the long run.

"We want people to see the progress and the care we've all taken to add this opportunity to everybody in Jasper County, and hopefully beyond Jasper County," Van Zante said. "Maybe it

will bring people who think we have so many great things here that they want to live here."

The new, modern-style campground sites are available to rent today for \$25 per day for a minimum of two days. The cabin is available to rent for \$175 per day for a minimum of two days. Visit www.mycountyparks.com to book a stay at the new camping facilities in Jasper County.



Above: Jasper County Conservation staff and board members at the Mariposa campground and cottage ribbon cutting.

Dennis Cooling Retires

Dennis Cooling began work with Jasper County Conservation on January 5, 1998 as the Park Officer at Mariposa. Cooling and his wife and kids lived at the house located in Mariposa Park for the next 26 years until his retirement on April 5, 2024.

Dennis had the opportunity to watch the park grow and change through the years, from a large lake and fishery restoration to the new modern campground and cabin that just opened. We hope Dennis will enjoy the slower lifestyle of retirement, but we will miss his humor! Congratulations Dennis!

Right: Dennis Cooling retires from JCCB after 26 years of serving as the Park Officer at Mariposa.



Meet Our New Maintenance Tech

My name is Tristan Hunt and I'm the new Maintenance Technician at Mariposa Park for Jasper County Conservation.



I went to school at Central College where I played football and got my bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies. Through Central, I was able to get my first summer internship with JCCB in 2022 and I enjoyed the work I did so much that I came back the following summer in 2023 for another internship.

I became interested in conservation because of my hobbies, which include fishing and hunting, so I thought what better thing to do for a job than work outdoors in the conservation field! I look forward to working with the campers at both the primitive and the new Bison Ridge campgrounds.

Meet Our Summer Intern, Levi

Hello, my name is Levi Janssen and I am the seasonal park technician at Jasper County Conservation. This summer I'm working to help maintain the several parks in Jasper County. We have several projects that I'll be helping with and am excited to get started on.

I am going into my senior year at Central College in Pella. At Central I'm studying Environmental Science and I am also on the football team.



In my free time I enjoy fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, and hanging out with my friends and family. I also enjoy golfing, lifting weights, and many other active hobbies.

Volunteer Work This Spring

Employees from Chevron Renewable Energy Group volunteered for a full day with Jasper County Conservation this spring! The dedicated staff spent a day at Mariposa, clearing invasive brush between the parking lot and the Nature Playscape Trail. Thank you so much to Chevron for your dedication to our community and the environment!



Left and Below: Staff from Chevron Renewable Energy volunteering at Mariposa Park.

Hammock Purchase Brings New Opportunities Outdoors

Jasper Conservation Connection (JCC) recently approved the purchase of 25 hammocks for Jasper County Conservation Board's programs. Hammocks are a great way to connect with nature, relax, fight boredom and boost creativity. The first scheduled event with hammocks will be at a youth nature camp on July 16th! See page 5 for details.

Jasper Conservation Connection is a 501.c3 nonprofit organization under the umbrella of the Jasper County Community Foundation. The group's goal is to provide conservation education programs in Jasper County for both children and adults, build partnerships with local organizations and agencies to enhance the quality of parks and recreational opportunities in Jasper County, and to preserve and enhance natural resources in Jasper County. The JCC group also recently approved the purchase of a large park map board at Ashton Wildwood Park.

If you would like to learn more or be involved with local conservation programs and projects, please join us for the next meeting, Tuesday, July 30 at 12:00pm at the Jasper County Armory/Annex Building in Newton.



4 Upcoming Events/Programs

Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors (OWLS)

10:00–11:00 AM

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

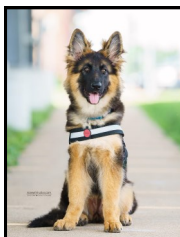
Come for coffee and a short presentation. All programs are from 10:00-11:00 AM unless otherwise noted.

June 12—Des Moines Botanical Garden

Alex Nuzum, Education Manager at the Des Moines Botanical Garden, will give a general overview of the Botanical Garden, their history, plant collections, and a few updates on some exciting events coming up.

July 10—Crisis Canines of the Midlands

Steve Ashing of Jasper County Emergency Management will be joined by his partner, K9 River, who is a certified Therapy Dog. They will present on how this new program is pairing First Responders with certified Therapy Dogs to provide Animal Assisted Crisis Response to those who respond to and are affected by critical incidents within their communities.



August 14—Newton Main Street

Erin Yeager, Director of Newton Main Street, will talk about the many projects that have happened through this program to preserve Newton's downtown history and invest in Newton's future. Most notably is the development of Harmony Park, which will be located just west of the downtown square.

NEW! Just Hammocking Around

Camp for Kids

for kids ages 10-16 years old

Tuesday, July 16, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

Mariposa Recreation Area

Fee: \$20.00; limit 10 kids

Relaxing in a hammock is an effective way to quiet your mind, fight boredom, boost creativity and build a connection with nature. We'll spend the morning hanging out while reading, journaling, drawing, bird watching, and going on a short hike break. Participants can bring their own books and binoculars. Kids will also be given a book and nature journal and we'll have binoculars to borrow. Please bring a sack lunch. Registration and payment for this camp must be made at www.mycountyparks.com.

UTV Tours

Jasper County Conservation is providing UTV tours at Uhlenhopp Arboretum and Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve for individuals who aren't able to hike and view the beauty of our natural areas.

Tours are 1 hour long and can accommodate up to 5 people. They will be Wednesday and Thursday mornings. A few Saturday options are available. Please call (641) 792-9780 for specific time listings and to reserve a spot!

June, August and October tours will be at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve which is located at 15148 Jacob Ave., Grinnell, IA 50112.

July and September tours will be at Uhlenhopp Arboretum which is located at 2706 E 146th St. N, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Hunter Education Course

Wednesday, July 31, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Thursday, August 1, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

(students must attend both sessions)

Izaak Walton League Clubhouse, Newton

This course will be offered by the Jasper County Conservation Board and the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. Students must attend both sessions to receive certification. Students need to pre-register for this course online at www.gooutdoorsiowa.com and pick up their workbooks at the JCCB office prior to the class.

The hunter education course is free and all materials will be provided. Persons must be at least 12 years old to take the course. Students should bring a sack lunch both days.



Off the Beaten Path Trail Race

Saturday, September 21, 9:00 AM

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

Check-in and day-of registration for the 20th 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 pre-registration forms and directions to Jacob Krumm Preserve, will be at www.jaspercountyconservation.com and on Jasper County Conservation's Facebook page. Proceeds from the trail race and will benefit Jasper Conservation Connection.

Environmental Education Externs

Jasper County Conservation has two teacher externs working with us on EE programming again this summer. 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 (NR) 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 will not only assist JCCB naturalists in current summer programming, but will also help provide insight and updates to our curriculum, and will offer summer programs of their own! Please keep watching our website and Facebook page @jaspercountyconservation for program updates.

Meet our teacher externs:

Micaela Sciarrotta

“My name is Micaela Sciarrotta. I am a 4th grade teacher at Newton Community School District. I grew up in Newton and I love being back in my hometown and having opportunities to serve my community. When I am not teaching, I love being outdoors, exploring our parks, going for walks with my dogs, and working in my garden. One of my favorite summer jobs was interning at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and since then I have taken environmental science courses for teachers and have worked to incorporate these lessons into my teaching.

This summer, I am looking forward to working with Jasper County Conservation as a teacher extern. I will learn a lot from this opportunity and I can give back through my experience as an elementary teacher to help with their programs! Outside of working for JCC, I am excited to have more time to spend with my fiancé, future stepdaughter, family, and friends. I hope to read lots of great books, grow plants and food in my garden, and relax with my loved ones.”

Right: Micaela Sciarrotta will be working with JCCB staff this summer as a teacher extern.



Summer Teed

“Hi, I'm Summer Teed and I'm excited to be partnering with Jasper County Conservation this summer through the STEM externship program! I have been a science teacher for 12 years and have taught everything from physics to astronomy to environmental science. I currently teach at Colfax-Mingo High School and live in Colfax with my husband and three children. My family and I love spending time in nature and exploring new places, and we were so excited to discover so many amazing parks right here in Jasper County. I'm really looking forward to collaborating with the naturalists this summer!”



Left: Summer Teed will be working with JCCB staff this summer as a teacher extern.

NEW! Little House on the Prairie Camp

for kids ages 8-12 years old

Tuesday, July 23, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

Fee: \$20.00; limit 12 kids

Spend a day like Laura, Mary, Carrie, Ma, and Pa! Kids will dress up in aprons, bonnets, vests, and hats (provided), build a log cabin, hike through the prairie, study wildlife on the prairie, and learn about the Osage Nation (the Native Americans that lived where Laura's family settled). Please bring a sack lunch. Registration and payment for this camp must be made at www.mycountyparks.com.

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

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JASPER COUNTY
CONSERVATION

Jasper County Conservation Board

M - F 8:00 - 5:00 (641) 792-9780
email: conservation@jasperia.org
website: www.jaspercountyconservation.com

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Tristan Hunt.....Maintenance Technician
Jacob Arrowood.....Maintenance Technician

A Big Thank You To...

Ina Heidemann for her donations to the educational program, Brad Van Zante and Kraig Holubar for providing UTV tours, Glenda Duffus, Chris Noel, Mark Pollastrini, Pam and Andy Stone, Ina Heidemann and the Lynnville Historical Society for volunteering their time to help with school field trips. Thank you!!

Shelter House Reservation

Did you know that shelter houses located in Jasper County parks can be reserved for \$25 per day? Shelters are located at Ashton Wildwood Park, Mariposa Recreation Area, Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve, Uhlenhopp Arboretum, Reimer Refuge, Wagaman Mill and the Chichaqua Valley Recreation Trail. Go to mycountyparks.com to make your reservation.

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, sexual orientation, gender identification, 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