



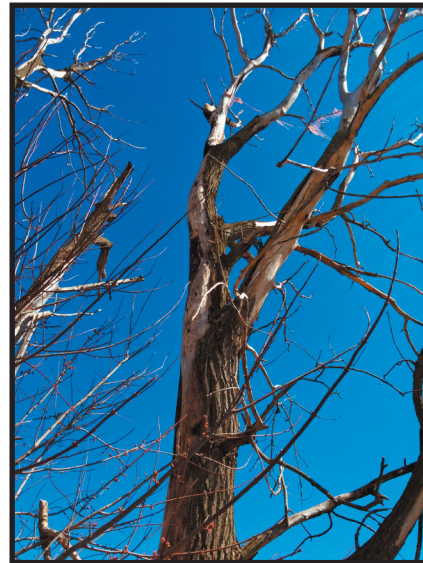
Northern Prairie Star

Spring Water's Edge Nature Center-Kossuth County Conservation Board 2015

The Broken Homes of Eagles

Kossuth County plays host to several active bald eagle nests, and the number is increasing. Most of the nests are located very near the East Fork Des Moines River. The eagles prefer these locations because of the abundance of food that is available in and along the river. Bald eagle nests are among the largest nests of all birds. A typical nest can measure 5-6 feet in diameter and 3 feet tall! A famous Ohio nest used for 34 years measured almost 9 feet in diameter, close to 12 feet tall, and weighed over 2 tons! This extra weight causes a lot of strain on trees, and sometimes causes the tree to break or completely fall over.

One of the nests in southern Kossuth County did collapse earlier this spring. It happened during one of the very windy days in early April. The nest was in a dead tree which was actually visible from Highway 169. The wind, combined with the weight of the nest, and the weakened dead tree caused one of the main supporting branches under the nest to completely break away. The entire nest fell to the ground and was destroyed.



The tree the nest was in. Look closely and you can see a string dangling in the breeze where the nest used to sit.

This nest was located on private ground, but the landowner contacted KCCB and asked if we would be interested in inspecting the wreckage. At first glance, the nest did not look very impressive. But as we got closer, the immensity of the structure became apparent. Upon

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closer inspection, we found the carcasses of several birds and animals including a rabbit, a snow goose, and a hen pheasant. All of these carcasses were being used to feed the eagle chick(s) which were also in the nest. Only one eagle chick was found, and it did not survive the collapse. It was found about 15 yards away from the fallen nest. How it got that far away will remain a mystery.

Eagles mate for life, and will use the same nest from year to year. However, often times the pair will build other nests within a few miles of the original nest, and use these in alternating years. This pair does have another nest close by, but it is unlikely that they will attempt to re-nest this year.

A typical eagle's nest contains from 1-3 eggs, and they are incubated for 35 days before hatching. It takes another 12 weeks for the chicks to be able to fly and hunt on their own. Rearing eagle chicks is very intensive, and expends a tremendous amount of energy from the parents. Because of this, only one nest is attempted per year.



The remnants of the nest, complete with leftover food. Snow goose legs anyone?



This baby eaglet was found not far from the nest. Unfortunately it didn't survive the fall.

New Campsites at Smith Lake



Campers enjoying Smith Lake will have sixteen new sites this summer. The KCCB staff is putting the finishing touches on the new sites that are located on the north side of the lake near the open shelter. Twelve of the sites are arranged in a circle arrangement of six sites per circle. The remaining four sites are the traditional single pads. All sites feature full service with electric, water and sewer hookups as well as picnic tables and fire rings. The fee for the new sites are \$18/night or \$400/ month. All sites are available on a first come-first served basis. The new sites opened for the 2015 season on May 21.

Bishop Garrigan Student Workday



On April 29, eight Bishop Garrigan students spent the morning at Smith Lake doing various work projects including planting trees and removing volunteer trees from prairie areas. Thanks to the following students for doing a great job: Logan Rosenmeyer, Miranda Book, Matt Lappe, Matt Thul, Grant Arndorfer, Paige Berte, Courtney Carlsen and Joseph Espinosa.

Hunter Education Class

This past spring the Kossuth County Conservation Board sponsored a Hunter Ed class at the nature center and the Izaak Walton League Building. Fifteen young students attended and learned about a variety of subjects including firearm safety and handling, wildlife management, survival, wildlife ID and hunter ethics. The students also participated in the outdoor sessions and had the opportunity to shoot a variety of weapons including rifles, shotguns, bows and muzzleloaders. All students attending completed the course and received their certification. Thanks to the following for helping with the course: Ryan Schmidt, Mike Smidt, Mike Denny, Bob Smith, Rick Adams, Phil Shelenberg, TJ Herrick, Tim Miller, Virginia Shulte, Kendall Stumme, Tim Miller, Jeremy Thilges, Bill Thilges and Larry Lenz.



Getting to Know the KCCB Staff: Office Manager, Kristyn Thul

When you aren't at work, what do you enjoy doing?

When I am not at work I enjoy spending time with my family. We enjoy golfing, boating, jet skiing and fire pits on cool summer nights.

What makes you happy?

Spending time with my family makes me happy! Preferably all of us being on a tropical beach somewhere or up in the mountains of Colorado!

What is your favorite season of the year and why?

Summer and fall are my favorite seasons!

I love the warm weather and look forward to seeing all the leaves change color in the fall.

Of all the animals in the world what can you see yourself being?

I could see myself as a Dolphin perhaps due to my inquisitiveness, my need for adventure, my friendly personality and the fact that I love warm weather and tropical places!

Give us a low-down on your family.

I come from a family of 7, including my parents. I basically have grown up on my family's golf course as my parents and aunt and uncle built it when I was about 4. I have three daughters; Jenna who will be a junior at ISU and Alexa and Abbey who will be juniors at Algona High School this fall. I have a Morkie (Maltese/Yorkie mix) named Nikko that we rescued from a shelter about 5 years ago and a significant other of 4 years who makes me laugh everyday and has really sparked my interest in farming!



Paddleboats at Smith Lake

New to Smith Lake this summer will be paddleboats available to rent at the Smith Lake campground. Ed and Lavidia Kiilsholm have purchased five paddleboats for campers and visitors to use on Smith Lake. The paddleboats are stored in the garage near the south beach and may be rented on the weekends between the hours of 10 am and 5 pm. The paddleboats will be available beginning Memorial Day weekend. For more information call 515-341-0570.



Smith Lake Butterfly Garden

In 2000 a local Eagle Scout prospect, Ray Roof, took on a project at Smith Lake to beautify the park and benefit butterflies and other pollinating insects. The project was successfully completed, and he earned his Eagle Scout status.

The butterfly garden was laid out with paving stones as its border. Then native prairie plants and other flowers that are preferred by butterflies were planted. Finally, a layer of mulch was applied to help keep weeds under control.



After the Boy Scout troop could no longer take care of it, a volunteer, Linda Redemske, took over the caretaking duties. Linda weeded, replaced dead plants with new ones, removed old dead growth, applied new mulch, and many other things for many years in order to keep the butterfly garden in top condition. In 2014, Linda turned over the project to a local 4H group.



The 4H club from Algona, the Lotts Creek Lassies and Lads, has now volunteered to keep the project going. On Sunday, May 3rd, they performed the annual "spring clean up". Old growth and new weeds were removed, and new mulch was applied. This group has 31 members and is made up of kids in grades 4 through 12. In addition to maintaining the butterfly garden, the club adopts multiple families at Christmas to provide them with gifts and food for the holiday season. Officially the club is led by Jackie Fonley, but the parents of this group have been extremely helpful.

The club will be back at Smith Lake on June 7th for their annual Family day, where they will be canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and having a GPS treasure hunt.

The butterfly garden is one of many projects on Kossuth County Conservation Board property that would not be possible without the help of many volunteers like Linda Redemske and the Lotts Creek Lassies and Lads 4H group. Many thanks go out to these giving people, not only from the staff at KCCB, but from all the people who enjoy our areas and programs.

Upcoming Programs

Chalk the Walk

Water's Edge Nature Center

Sunday, June 14

1-4 p.m.

\$10



Do you want to show your artistic talents? Then register by Friday, June 12 at 4:30 at the Nature Center to participate in Chalk the Walk. Participants will be given a section of the sidewalk and a set of pastel chalks to create a nature inspired masterpiece. Art work must be completed by 4 p.m. Pieces will be judged by age groups and prizes awarded.

Age divisions:

Elementary-1st to 4th grade

Junior High-5th to 8th grade

High School-9th to 12th grade

Build a Bug Box and Bug Hunt

Smith Lake Campground Shelterhouse

Saturday, June 20

10 a.m.

\$5



Build a bug box and go for a bug hunt with a Kossuth County Naturalist. All materials will be provided. If you have an electric drill please bring it along. After the construction process is complete, we'll head out to catch any bugs we can find. An adult must accompany all children. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. Call 295-2138 by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18 to reserve your spot. Cost is \$5.00 per box.

New Spotting Scope



A big "Thank You" goes out to The Water's Edge Nature Center Foundation for applying for the Kossuth County Community Grant Foundation. The money obtained was used to purchase a new, state of the art spotting scope and tripod. Bird watchers rejoice because this thing is AWESOME!!!!