

# *Palo Alto Conservation News*



Palo Alto County Conservation Board

Fall 2015

## *Celebrate Prairie Heritage Week, September 13-19, 2015*



As Iowans, we are tied to the land. Iowa is known for its agriculture and has some of the richest, blackest topsoil in the world. Why? Because it formed under the Tallgrass Prairie. Grasses grow from the root and die back every year. Year after year, these dead plants decompose and rich organic material accumulated.

Early settlers thought that if the land could not grow trees, then surely it would not be good for farming. They chose to settle in the timber along the rivers, cutting down the trees and plowing the land to grow their crops. Later, pioneers had to settle in the open prairie, and there they found the most fertile soil!

Prairie is defined by grasses. Iowa has taller grass species, because of higher annual rainfall. Further west, the grasses are shorter, as the climate is much drier. Many grasses in the Tallgrass Prairie reach 6 to 8 feet tall and their roots go 12-15 feet deep. One square yard of prairie sod can contain 25 miles of roots! These deep root systems allow prairie plants to survive extreme cold and heat, drought and fire.

More than 85% of Iowa was once covered by Tallgrass Prairie, nearly 30 million acres. Now, less than 1% remains. We have become more aware of the importance in preserving native prairie and replanting where we can. Many people have discovered how well prairie flowers do in gardens as they are adapted to our climate. Purple Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Prairie Blazing Star and a variety of asters are seen in urban plantings. We are also realizing the importance of these native flowers to bees and other pollinators.

Prairie Heritage Week encourages Iowans to visit a local prairie and learn more about its unique animal and plant ecosystem. Events across the state promote this natural habitat with a goal of helping people to better appreciate what we have in our own backyard. There are several native and restored prairies in our region including Telford Prairie, Burns Prairie and Leners Wildlife Area in Palo Alto County.

Join us for **Picnic on the Prairie, Wednesday, September 16, 6:00 pm, Telford Prairie**. Bring a picnic supper and a lawn chair or blanket. We will provide the beverage. Meet at the corner of 400<sup>th</sup> Street and 400<sup>th</sup> Avenue northeast of Ayrshire.

Look for other events scheduled across the state by visiting the Iowa Prairie Network website at [www.iowaprairienetwork.org](http://www.iowaprairienetwork.org)



## Notes from the Director

*Mary Barrick*

Fall is in the air and it is my favorite time of the year! There's something magical about the brisk days, smell of harvest, brightly colored maples, birds flocking, woolly bears crossing the road, cicadas singing, and the sound of Sandhill Cranes flying overhead. The nights are cooler and longer. Fall is an ideal time for planting trees, shrubs, and grass. September through October (six weeks before the first sign of hard frost) is the perfect time for planting because it allows the roots to become established before the ground freezes and winter sets in. Cooler temperatures and fall moisture encourages root system growth, without new top growth. When the plant begins to grow in the spring it will be better equipped to deal with heat and drought.

After serving on the Conservation Foundation Board for over 27 years, member Phil Andreasen has decided to step down from service at the end of this month. The Foundation Board was formed in 1986 and Phil joined in 1988. Phil has been instrumental in guiding the Foundation Board throughout the years and was involved with the ground breaking of the Nature Center in 1993. Phil was a very conscientious decision maker and focused on the mission of the Conservation Foundation. Phil has been a pleasure to work with over the years and we thank him for his incredible years of dedication, experience, and leadership on the Board.

The Palo Alto County Conservation Board staff has been in full swing this summer. The seasonal employees are the ones that work behind the scenes. Mowing, cleaning bathrooms, painting picnic tables, and picking up garbage are all just a part of what they do during the summer season. We could not do the work without them and appreciate their efforts. If you run into John Rouse or Roger Reed, be sure to thank them for all the things they do to keep the parks in tip top shape.

Hats off to Adam McCarthy, Chris Frerichs, and Hannah Heissel on completing their summer internship. Adam was very effective in his work and seemed to enjoy his first year here. Chris has made his mark here at the County Conservation Board with his fine workmanship on the lake accesses. Hannah was the naturalist intern and finished off the season with a pollinator display. We wish all of them the best of luck at college and all future endeavors.

You may have noticed a lot of changes happening at Lost Island Huston Park. The campground is under construction (for the rest of this year and next spring), lake accesses are being redone, electric wiring will be buried in some parts of the park, the nature center dock steps are being replaced, along with tree trimming and brush removal. With all of these projects going on at once, it is hard to keep up with the daily tasks, so bear with us as we finish these projects.

I attended the Lost Island Protective Association (L.I.P.A.) meeting last month. I am always impressed with the Board's dedication and hard work. The L.I.P.A.'s mission is to encourage and to promote high environmental quality of the lake area and support steps that are essential to maintain proper usage of Lost Island Lake and its surroundings.

*Continue on next page.*





The L.I.P.A. is host to a community picnic, ditch clean up, garbage pick-up, and garage sales around the lake each year. Members of the Water Quality Team have monitored seining activities, assisted in carp marking for tracking purposes, helped maintain and clean temporary carp barriers and worked with our agency and the DNR to keep themselves and the public informed about the project. The Water Quality Team funded the 25% local match for the fish cleaning station.

The L.I.P.A. was a contributor to the Lost Island Lake restoration project. The County Conservation Board started off with a successful \$180,000 WIRB grant, along with the county supervisors providing \$27,000 in construction assistance. The Water Quality Team was successful with a \$25,000 gaming grant to go toward the electrical fish barrier by the Lost Island Lake inlet. These amounts contributed toward the \$1.4 million lake restoration project funded by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Since the start of the Lost Island Lake restoration project, the ecosystem of the lake has improved dramatically. To date, the total number of carp removed is 795,642 lbs and 558,277 lbs of buffalo. With the seining efforts and a carp assessment sampling, it is estimated that there are about 10 carp per acre averaging 7-10 lbs. A watershed assessment study targeted the problems within the watershed.

A recent Fyke net assessment indicates positive numbers in crappie, yellow perch, bluegill and young walleye. Water quality parameters for Lost Island Lake (chlorophyll, turbidity, and total phosphorus) continue to trend down. The Secchi disk averages at 3 feet compared to a reading in 2010 at 1 foot. The restoration efforts have improved Lost Island's water clarity, sports fishery, and restored ecological health to the water bodies in the entire watershed.



The Lost Island Recreational Trail starts on the northwest end of Huston Park and continues through Huston Park to the Redwood (330<sup>th</sup> Street). In addition, approximately 700 feet of trail starts on the east side of Electric Park to the electrical fish barrier on Blue Wing Marsh. The next phase of the trail is to continue from the fish barrier and connect to the trail at Huston Park. Funds for the trail came from gaming grants. The 25% matching funds came from donations and a small percentage from memberships.

How did we come this far? Local commitment, volunteers, and partnerships, which takes me back to the L.I.P.A. meeting. The annual operating budget of L.I.P.A. is funded by annual membership contributions. The Lost Island Recreational Trail and Water Quality Team have their own fundraising, however, a percentage of the membership dues go towards these projects. The percentage depends on the expenses and membership income for the year. At the meeting, the committee expressed concern on low membership numbers and discussed ways to promote memberships to keep the organization more viable and more importantly, continue to preserve and protect the lake. Membership forms are sent out annually to the lake residents, seasonal residents, and those who live within the Lost Island Lake watershed. Basic memberships are \$25 per year or any amount you would like to contribute. Visitors that use the lake frequently should also be members, so be sure to pass the word around! Memberships can be mailed to: L.I.P.A., P.O. Box 383, Ruthven, Iowa 51358.

For future projects and to become eligible for any grants, local commitment and memberships are vital components. Please consider stepping up to the plate by becoming a key player to help protect Lost Island Lake and continue the trail. Your membership is important!

The L.I.P.A. is also looking for lake residents that would like to serve on the committee. The committee meets six times a year and welcomes your ideas, input and involvement. Please contact Gary Small at (712)346-8184 for any questions.



# **ANNUAL HALLOWEEN HIKE**

**Tuesday, October 27, 2015**

Lost Island-Huston Park,  
north of Ruthven



## **“MISUNDERSTOOD ANIMALS”**

Guides with lanterns will lead you down the trail  
to meet a variety of characters.

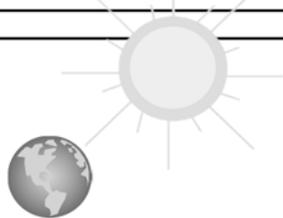
Group hikes will last about 40 minutes,  
departing every 10 minutes from the south picnic  
shelter at Huston Park beginning at 6:30 pm.

\$1.00 per person. Children under 12 must be  
accompanied by an adult.

Refreshments will be served at the Nature Center.

**RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED!!**

For reservations call the Palo Alto County  
Conservation Board office at **712-837-4866**.



## Lunar Eclipse

Grab your sweatshirt and a lawn chair and head outdoors on the evening of Sunday, September 27. There is a total lunar eclipse that night.

Unlike the Sun, the Moon does not have its own light, but shines because its surface reflects the Sun's rays. Eclipses of the moon occur when the Sun, Earth and Moon form a straight line. The Earth's shadow blocks all of the Sun's light from directly reaching the Moon's surface. The Sun is behind the Earth, so the Sun's light casts the Earth's shadow on the Moon.

A total lunar eclipse happens only when there is a full moon. Even though the Earth completely blocks the sunlight, the Moon is still visible to the naked eye, because the Earth's atmosphere refracts sunlight and indirectly lights up the Moon. In a total eclipse, the Moon looks red because part of the wavelengths are blocked. This will be a "Super Moon" because it is the closest to Earth the Moon can get. The alignment of Sun, Earth and Moon are also perfect, giving us the longest eclipse possible.

The event will last for 3 hours 20 minutes beginning to end. Beginning at 8:07, you will see a partial eclipse. The shadow of the Earth will continue to pass over the Moon. From 9:11 to 10:23 the total eclipse occurs with the best viewing at 9:47. The partial eclipse ends by 11:27.



## Dragonfly Migration

Most people are familiar with the amazing fall migration of the Monarch butterfly, but may not be aware that some Green Darner dragonflies also migrate. You may come across swarms of these dragonflies this fall as you drive down the road or sit in your backyard.

Dragonflies lay eggs on plant stems under water. The nymph stage emerges and spends time catching other water insects to eat. When it is ready to change into the adult form, it crawls out of the water and clings to a cattail or bulrush stalk. The skin splits and the adult emerges, unfolding and spreading its new wings like a butterfly, drying off before flying away.

There are two different population types: resident and migratory populations. Residents stay where they were as nymphs. Migratory dragonflies begin to travel south in late summer and early fall. They find their way south using natural landscape features, such as rivers. Migration takes place in large swarms and seems to follow the passage of cold fronts.

Migration is a one-way trip. The adults that head south to Florida or Mexico in the fall will not be the same ones to return in the spring. It will be their offspring completing the trip. They mate and lay eggs when they reach their southern destinations. The offspring produced develop during the warm winter in the south, before becoming adults and migrating north. Another interesting point is that these migratory dragonflies seem to alternate years between breeding in the north before migrating versus breeding in the south after arriving in the wintering grounds. Keep your eyes open for these colorful insects on the move this fall.

## New Website

We have a new website! Look up and register for upcoming events, learn more about our county's public areas, and much more!

Check us out at:  
[www.paloaltoccb.org](http://www.paloaltoccb.org)

## Outdoor Women's Workshop

Sponsored by the Kossuth, Emmet, and Palo Alto County Conservation Boards.

Saturday, September 26  
8:30 am - 4:00 pm  
Emmet County Nature Center,  
Ingham Lake

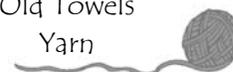


Join us for:  
Canoeing  
Pioneer Skills  
Spinning Demonstrations  
Fishing  
Making Dream Catchers  
Dutch Oven Cooking  
Peterson Point House Tour  
with Buffalo Ridge Renegades

Call 712-867-4422  
for more information  
or to register.  
Registration deadline is Sep. 18  
Limit of 25 people.  
Cost of \$25 to cover  
food and materials  
Must be 18 or older.

## Wanted

Storage Containers  
Old Towels  
Yarn





Programs are sponsored by the Palo Alto County Conservation Board and SWCD. All programs are held at the Lost Island Nature Center unless noted otherwise. Please call 712-837-4866 for programs that require registration.

## Upcoming Programs

### September

- 12-20 Clay County Fair.** Stop at the Sundholm Environmental Cabin on the west side of the fairgrounds and check out the "Night Life". Palo Alto Conservation will give a presentation on "Bats" at 10:00 am 9/15.
- 16 Picnic on the Prairie.** 6:00 pm at Telford Prairie. Corner of 400th St. & 400th Ave. Celebrate Prairie Heritage Week - bring a picnic supper, we will provide the beverage.
- 17 Canoeing.** 9:00 am at Five Island Lake. Call to reserve a canoe. Meet on the east side of Soper Park by the beach.
- 22 Morning Hike.** 9:00 am at Watson Heritage Area. Take airport road south to Burns Road. Meet at river bridge.
- 24 Canoeing.** 9:00 am at Salton Park (N side of Silver Lake). Call to reserve a canoe.
- 26 Outdoor Women's Workshop.** 8:30 am-4:00 pm. Emmet County Nature Center, located on Ingham Lake. See details in this newsletter.

### October

- 7 Morning Hike.** 9:00 am at Brushy Bayou. 4 miles south of Emmetsburg on Hwy 4, 1 mile east on Brushy Bayou Road.
- 18 Waffle Breakfast Fundraiser.** 8:30 am-12:30 pm. Emmetsburg Legion. Proceeds support the Lost Island Nature Center.
- 27 Halloween Hike.** 6:30 pm on the trails at Lost Island-Huston Park. Reservations are required for time slots. Call 712-837-4866. Cost is \$1.

### November

- 14 Geocaching.** 1:00 pm at Lost Island Nature Center. Learn how to use GPS for an outdoor scavenger hunt.

### December

- 12 Cross Country Skiing.** 1:00 pm at Lost Island Nature Center.

*Thank you for your help!!*

## Fishing Derby

**Session Leaders** - Tim Murphy, Joel Horsley, & Darrel Frerichs  
**Donors** - Bobber Down - (Steve & Peg Chizek), Murphy's Bait Shop, Emmetsburg Hardware Hank, Emmetsburg Pizza Ranch, Wentzel's True Value, and Emmetsburg Dairy Queen

## Summer Kickoff

Jane Hoyman, Bev Norland, Nancy Cozine, Mary Lou Morrison, Jamie Christensen, Helen Augustine, Renee Jedlicka, Karen Chism, Rosemary Matthews, Myrna Heddinger, Jane Bruch, Lois Enger, Angie Fay, and Angie Beem

## Saturday in the Park

Barry Fisher, Bill Whiting,  
Cynthia Berkland, Darca Saxton  
Goff Insurance, Howard Smith,  
Helen Augustine, Pat Molitor,  
Iowa State Bank,  
Jay & Julie Bargman,  
Jim & Jean Carpenter,  
Julie Egeberg,  
Michael Engelmann,  
Julie Nelson, Ken Ebeling,  
Kris Hackbart,  
Lakeland EZ Stoppe,  
Linda Pitt, Marlene Boernsen,  
Maureen Horsley, Megan Stroh,  
Palo Alto Garden Club,  
Redwood Resort,  
Walt & Tricia Reichert



## Wings & Wetlands Weekend

### Ducks Unlimited

Brian & Nate Garrels,  
Ron Riha, Eric Hanson,  
Roger Graff, Dave Smith,  
Andy Stolley, Mark Moen,  
Mike Shannon, Brad Smith,  
Brent Mehan, Peter Morlock,  
Desean Hoffman

### T Shirts

Pro Cooperative

### Group Leaders & Bars

Maureen Horsley, Jim & Jean  
Carpenter, Kris Hackbart, Julie  
Nelson, Sharon Whiting  
Karen Spies, Helen Augustine,  
Bev Hayden, Shana Herke



*Thank You!*

- Don Nauss** - Kia Sportage Donation
- Lauren Mickelsen** - Ruby Raindrop presentations
- Ken Ebeling** - Night Sky program
- Bill Dickey, City of Emmetsburg** - Storm drain stenciling
- Mike Houge** - Photos for website
- Lois Neighbors & Bev Norland** - Judging soil conservation art posters
- Pat Molitor, Joe Neary, Joel Horsley, Don Hagen** -  
5th Grade Conservation Field Day
- Gwen Donahue** - Donation of books
- Bobber Down & Murphy's Bait Shop** - Worms for salamander
- Angie Fay & Ruthven/Emmetsburg Girl Scouts, Troop 10-230** -  
Spring garden clean up
- Karen Spies** - Volunteer at front desk during field trips

*Direct Ask*

- Bob & Nancy Cozine
- Darca & Mark Saxton
- Gary & Brownyn Small
- Mike Houge



*Memorials*

- In memory of Arlene Varcoe**  
Marvin & Eileen Thiesse
- In memory of Bernadine Brown**  
Larry & Rose Mary Rustan
- In memory of Charley Naig**  
Joel & Maureen Horsley
- In memory of Corneal Joyce**  
Bob & Nancy Cozine  
Helen Augustine
- In memory of Donald Kuhn**  
Gene & Della Twait
- In memory of Donald Weishaar**  
William & Marcella Frevert
- In memory of Elaine Wigen**  
Larry & Rose Mary Rustan
- In memory of Evie Wigdahl**  
Bob & Nancy Cozine  
Jeanine Wichman
- In memory of Flo Nauss**  
Bob & Nancy Cozine  
Don Nauss  
Larry & Rose Mary Rustan
- In memory of Gene & Austin Opheim**  
Joel & Maureen Horsley
- In memory of Gerald & Mildred Nelson**  
Jerry Nelson

- In memory of Gail Jacobsen**  
Bob & Nancy Cozine
- In memory of Helen Imes**  
Robert & Lynn Swan
- In memory of Irene Potter**  
Larry & Rose Mary Rustan
- In memory of Jason (Jay) Bleuer**  
Wilma Cargin
- In memory of John Vold**  
Bob & Nancy Cozine
- In memory of Kent Olson**  
Bob & Nancy Cozine  
Bill & Ginger Grange
- In memory of Lynn Salton**  
Larry & Rose Mary Rustan
- In memory of Norman Nielsen**  
Steve & Mary Lou Morrison
- In memory of Pete Hansen**  
Jim & Sharon Neighbors
- In memory of Richard Westergard**  
Bill & Ginger Grange
- In memory of Roger Wichman**  
Jeanine Wichman
- In memory of Ruth Spencer**  
Larry & Rose Mary Rustan

- In memory of Ron Sanculi**  
Bill & Ginger Grange  
Bob & Nancy Cozine  
Christopher & Catherine Grange  
Dave & Julie Nelson  
Gary & Ann Holck  
Jim & Sharon Neighbors  
Mike & Rosemary Geelan  
Steve & Linda Pitt

*Brick & Bench Memorials*

- In memory of Bernadine Brown**  
Family of Bernadine Brown
- Celebrating Bob Blighton & Joe Blighton**  
Carolyn Blighton
- In memory of Dorothy Litts**  
Stephen & Mary Litts
- In memory of Gail & Thorvald Jacobsen**  
Ray Grandstaff family
- In memory of Margaret Nelson**  
J. Arnold Walker & Marjorie Nelson  
Robert & Lynn Swan
- In honor of Rod & Miriam Patton**  
Stephen & Mary Litts
- In memory of Pete Hansen**  
Family of Peter Hansen

Palo Alto Conservation Board  
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712-837-4866

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Our programs and facilities are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding race, color, national origin, sex, age and handicap.



There was a bill introduced to the Iowa Legislature last session to nominate the Regal Fritillary as Iowa's State Butterfly. It did not make it out of committee, but will still be viable next session, so we encourage you to talk to your senator or representative asking for their support. Iowa is one of only 4 states without a state butterfly or insect. The Regal Fritillary is native to Iowa and found statewide.

**Palo Alto County Conservation Board**

[paccb@ruthventel.com](mailto:paccb@ruthventel.com)

[www.paloaltoccb.org](http://www.paloaltoccb.org)

**Conservation Board Members**

Darrin Adams, Emmetsburg  
Sam Henkelvig, Emmetsburg  
Mike Reynolds, Ruthven  
Karen Spies, Graettinger  
Tony Streit, West Bend

**Foundation Board Members**

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Jay Bargman, West Bend  
Jim Carpenter, Emmetsburg  
Maureen Horsley, Emmetsburg  
Julie Nelson, Ruthven  
Shana Herke, Graettinger

**Conservation Board Staff**

Mary Barrick, Director  
Rob Allen, Operations Supervisor  
Jeremy Wichman, Park Ranger  
Miriam Patton, Naturalist  
Macey Newhouse, Office Manager