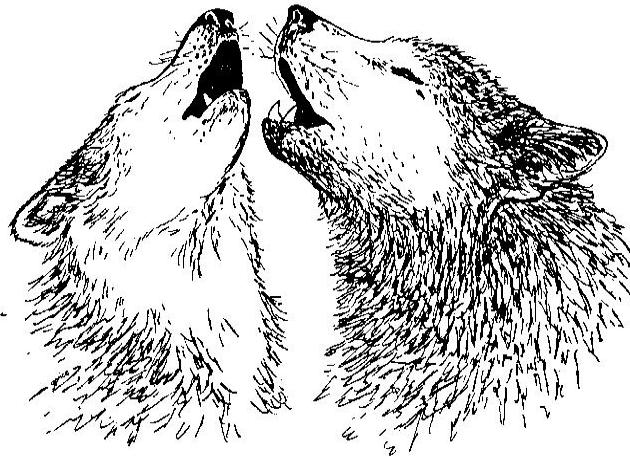


# Osborne Oracle

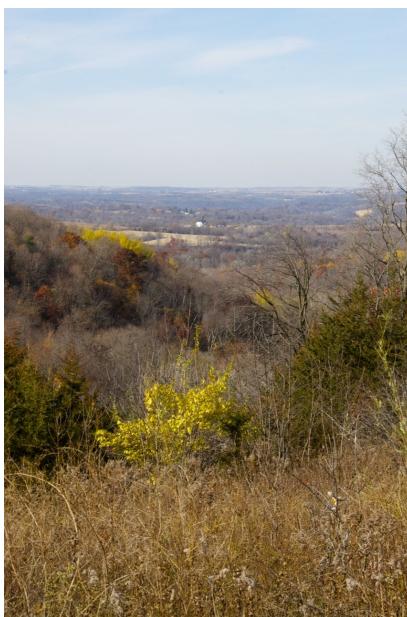


Spring 2019

Clayton County Conservation

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## ***REAP What You Sow: The Good & The Bad by Jenna K. Pollock, Director***



*The Pleasant Ridge Wildlife Area, a REAP-funded natural gem*

In Galatians 6:7 we encounter this verse that can be translated in the familiar proverb, “what goes around comes around.” Or in other words, the consequences of one’s actions will eventually be dealt with- be they good or bad.

Another quote, a Greek proverb, states, “A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.” These two quotes convey a similar message to me, but the elements of time and tangibility vary. “You reap what you sow,” conveys a shortened

period of time. It’s that caution of karma, “do unto others as you would have done unto you.” There’s a tangible reciprocity in Galatians. Whereas the Greek proverb seems to imply a long term investment of time and effort isn’t often enjoyed by those that do the work, but causes a lasting impact for others.

Which epitaph do you think Conservation greats lived by? Were they leading legends in stewardship so that they would reap the rewards in their time? In the Conservation Field, I often feel a deep sense of disconnection with the here and now. We work toward land stewardship, care for natural resources for all persons, not for us in this moment but for future generations.

I think it was the rural ethic I was raised by that causes my personality to put others first, sacrifice my needs to benefit the community. I think that same rural ethic taught me the value of the land, limited resources, appreciation for natural beauty, and ultimately to be at the whim of Mother Nature, or natural world order if you prefer -the acceptance that some live, some die. When I look across Iowa, I see this same rural ethic reflected back at me. It’s the cozy blanket covering our state, the hard work ethic Midwesterners are known for. The motivating driver to do good work is to reap a benefit.

I’m only starting to recognize that my beliefs aren’t as balanced as I imagined. Perhaps rural Iowans reaped more than they sowed? Or did they sow more than they reaped? That seems to be the argument bubbling up at the state legislature. 2019 bills introduced in the state legislature all target the black holes of lost revenue in our rural landscape. Some are determined to pinpoint public lands as the greatest threat to state revenues. They even go so far as to strip the rights of private landowners, city governments, and county governments to make sure all counties don’t become property poor. It unsettles me that we are nearing a turning point that seems to favor today with no thought for tomorrow

As my thirtieth birthday draws near, I am confounded and feel an overwhelming sense of cognitive dissonance. You see two things were conceived in 1989. One of these, REAP, may be laid to rest while the other (me) faces the world without REAP for the first time in my life. I’m not sure what that looks like. My thoughts harken back to all the Conservation Pioneers that lead Iowa into the mecca of land stewardship. Their tireless efforts lead a nation to care for natural resources, and now as the hands of time have ticked by, all those efforts are challenged on an annual basis. It’s a conflicting space, when the programs that have generated so much good are portrayed as being so bad.

*Continued on page 2...*

## REAP What You Sow: The Good & The Bad (continued from page 1)

REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) has provided nearly \$5.5 million dollars to Clayton County since 1990, and \$340 million across the State of Iowa. When REAP was passed into legislation it was supposed to be funded by the state at \$20 million annually.

While it's never been funded at the full amount, its great success has been felt at the city, county, and state level. Through Historic Preservation, Environmental Education, Native Roadside Vegetation Management, Soil Conservation & Water Quality, Open Spaces, Land Management of Public Parks, and County Conservation projects, the funds have been invested for development and preservation of natural resources.

Sometimes preservation of natural resources comes in the form of land acquired for public property—land sold or gifted to governing entities to be cared for into the future. This has to be evaluated at every level of government, often through multiple channels to evaluate whether or not that's a good idea. Not all state land pays property tax, and most city and county land goes

untaxed. This may lead to a loss of revenue on the previously taxed property and that's viewed as bad for the bottom line. But in theory, those public areas provide a different kind of value, a different kind of currency, a mix of both real and intangible value. That's how I would define the rural ethic I was raised by—both real and intangible value.

In comparison to those that pioneered Iowa's earliest conservation efforts, we are not without the resources to evaluate the good and bad of our way of life. Perhaps most challenging of all, we have to encounter those hours of cognitive dissonance when two things we support oppose one another. We have reached a tipping point in Iowa where we will without doubt feel some discomfort. We have to decide through our advocacy efforts and evaluating proposed legislation whether, “[We will] reap what we sow,” or if we “...plant trees whose shade [we] shall never [know].” They're not polar opposites. Like legislation, it's not always clear what's being proposed or what lasting impacts may impart. Are we going for a quick fix or a long-term investment? Is it for us or them?

### REAP at work in CLAYTON County \$5,412,344 since 1990

Red numbers represent the total allotted to the Program Area to date.  
Recent projects are listed below. For all projects, go to [www.iowareap.com](http://www.iowareap.com).



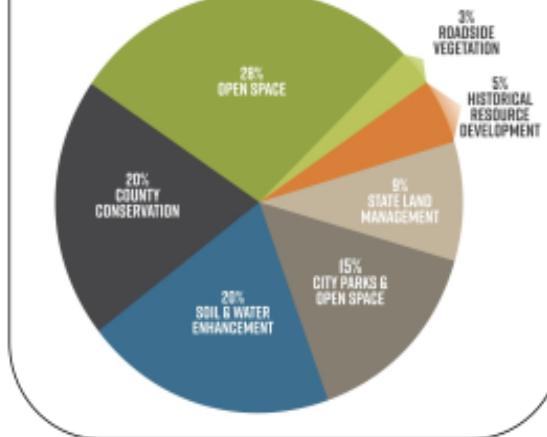
Natural Resource plates support habitat, water quality, city, county and state parks, wildlife species of special concern, and more. These plates are added to state gaming revenues to finance REAP. For more information visit: [www.iowareap.com](http://www.iowareap.com)

### How does the funding work?

Each year, the Iowa Legislature appropriates a dollar amount for REAP, up to \$20 million. From that amount, the first \$350,000 goes to conservation education and the next 1 percent for DNR administrative costs. From there:

### FUND DISTRIBUTION

\$350,000 CONSERVATION EDUCATION & 1% ADMINISTRATION



### Benefits

- Improve quality of life
- Enhance local economies
- Protect water and land resources
- Expand wildlife habitat
- Create recreational opportunities
- Preserve historic sites
- Beautify landscapes
- Educate Iowans, and much more!

# *Clayton County Conservation Board's*

## *Upcoming Events & Programs*



### **Motor Motor 5K Trail Run**

*Saturday, March 16th, 9:00 AM*

*Motor Mill Historic Site*

Get off the road with this rugged and beautiful trail run through the prairies & woodlands surrounding the Motor Mill Historic Site. Registration info can be found at [www.ClaytonCountyConservation.org](http://www.ClaytonCountyConservation.org)

### **Climbing Denali (Or At Least Trying!)**

*Wednesday, March 27th, 7:00 PM*

*Osborne Nature Center, Elkader, IA*

Marquette resident and adventurer Don Smalley had a mission: climb the highest point in all 50 states. With 49 under his belt, he's done pretty well. But Alaska's Mount Denali is no walk in the park. Hear about his adventure with "The Great One" at this amazing program at the Osborne Nature Center.

### **Agroforestry In Uganda**

*Saturday, April 27th, 3:00 PM*

*Osborne Nature Center, Elkader, IA*

Former seasonal naturalist and ISU forestry student Jesse Matt will share his story working on agroforestry in the African nation of Uganda. Jesse is a phenomenal storyteller, and the pictures alone will make this presentation a can't-miss.

### **Rattlesnakes!**

*Monday, May 20th, 2:00 PM*

Iowa DNR conservation officer Burt Walters is one the state's leading experts on rattlesnakes. Come and hear more about these misunderstood creatures with this free presentation—complete with a live rattlesnake!

### **30 Years As An Iowa Welcome Center**

*Thursday, May 2nd*

*Osborne Nature Center*

The Osborne Nature Center has served as an official Iowa Welcome Center for over 30 years. Come and join Clayton County Conservation in celebrating this milestone!

### **60 Years As A Conservation Board**

*Friday, July 12th*

*Osborne Park, Elkader, IA*

The Clayton County Conservation Board was created by ballot measure in 1958. We're celebrating with an open house, inviting the same public we've served for six decades to come and share their stories and memories as we look ahead to the next half century of providing recreation, stewardship, and scenery for all to enjoy.

### **Naturalist's Choice**

*August TBD*

Say goodbye to summer in style. As their season draws to a close, Clayton County Conservation's seasonal naturalists will host a public program focused on a topic of their choosing.

### **Monarch Release Party**

*Friday, September 6th*

*Osborne Nature Center*

The iconic Monarch butterfly has long been in peril, but there are signs of hope. The dedicated efforts of countless conservation organizations, as well as simply concerned citizens, has helped stave off their decline. Come and celebrate with a program about the life cycle of these amazing creatures, topped off with the tagging and release of live monarchs! Feel free to bring your own to be tagged, and be a part of this nationwide effort to save a species.

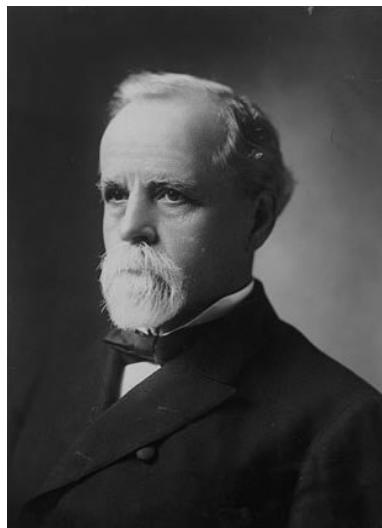
For more information on any of these programs, call 563-245-1516, or visit [www.claytoncountyconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountyconservation.org)

## Iowa's Conservation Heroes by Abbey Harkrader, Naturalist

Iowa has a long and distinguished history leading the conservation movement. In the late 1800's people started noticing the damage that was being done to the land and the wildlife. Many Iowans took up the challenge to make conservation their priority. These "Conservation Heroes" not only led conservation here in Iowa, they led conservation at a national level.

Iowa is considered to be the most altered state in the nation. Only 10% of our wetlands remain, 19% of our forests, and one tenth of one percent of our natural prairies. By the 1880's, Iowa had lost many of the species that had thrived just a couple decades prior. Disappearing game included deer, elk, bison, wolves, bear, prairie chickens and countless birds like the passenger pigeon that was soon to go extinct. Plowing, draining, chopping, and over hunting were taking their toll. Habitat had disappeared at an alarming rate and with it went the species that depended on it. Over harvesting and clearing also impacted pollution, flooding, and soil productivity.

One of the first and most notable Iowans to champion our natural resources was the honorable



Eight-term congressman  
John F. Lacey, circa 1903

**John F. Lacey.** Born in 1841, he moved from Virginia to Oskaloosa, IA as a teenager. A life dedicated to service, he was a lawyer, a civil war veteran and a congressman from 1888-1907. During his distinguished political career he earned the designation "Father of American Conservation" by chairing the Public Lands Committee, starting the Forest Reserve Program in 1891 and championing important legislation creating migratory bird laws and wildlife reserves as well as

shepherding The Antiquities Act and The Yellowstone National Park Protection Act of 1894 through congress. The most important legislation of his career was The Lacey Bird Act of 1900. This was revolutionary legislation designed to protect wildlife by prohibiting the transporting of illegal game across state lines. At the time, market hunting and the feather trade were rapidly wiping out entire bird populations and bird protection became one of his top priorities.

*"For more than three hundred years destruction was called 'improvement' and it has only in recent years come to the attention of the people generally that the American people were like spendthrift heirs wasting their inheritance."*

-Major John Lacey

Three professors also shaped conservation in Iowa and paved the way for later conservationists by training, mentoring, and sharing their passions with the next generation as well as the

general public. In the mid-1800's, the study of natural science was only beginning to gain widespread traction as a university discipline. These three professors dedicated their lives to teaching and public service, creating many of the parks, natural spaces and learning centers we value today.

**Thomas H. MacBride** is considered the "Father of Iowa Conservation". Born in 1848 in Tennessee, he attended Lenox College in Hopkinton, Iowa, and then Monmouth College in Illinois. He became Assistant Professor of Natural Science in charge of botany in 1878 under Geologist Samuel Calvin and later took over as president at the State University of Iowa.

**Louis H Pammel** was a botanist born in Wisconsin in 1862. Pammel graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1885, went briefly to Chicago, then to Harvard, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and Washington University before coming to Iowa as a professor of botany at the Iowa Agricultural College in 1889.

**Bohumil Shimek** was born in Iowa in 1861 from Czech immigrants and moved to Iowa City in 1870. An orphan at a young age, he worked his way through high school and in 1878 he entered the State University of Iowa earning an engineering degree. He later returned to the U of I as a professor of botany with expertise in multiple disciplines.

These three men spent their careers focused on teaching people that the natural world mattered and pushing for conservation of Iowa's natural resources. They were founding members of the Lakeside Biological Laboratory on Lake Okoboji, the Iowa Conservation Association, university extension programs and The McGregor Wildlife School, working tirelessly to spread awareness about conservation, preservation, and the natural sciences. The McGregor Wildlife School helped them promote public education and conservation of Iowa's natural resources and attempted to establish a national park along the Mississippi where Pikes Peak and Effigy Mounds are now found.

They were celebrity speakers delivering countless lectures throughout the region and writing hundreds of articles and essays. One year, Macbride delivered 60 lectures in 50 weeks, it is said that "Macbride's talks were just as eloquent as his essays." Tireless conservationists, they kept speaking and writing on botany, conservation and many other topics right up to their deaths. When they died in the 1930's Iowa had 40 designated state parks and preserves, jurisdiction over 7,500 acres of land, 41,000 acres of lake waters, 800 miles of rivers, and 4,200 acres of drained lake beds. Their legacies are preserved in the natural parks and preserves that still bear their names.



Ada Hayden, Iowa State's first female PhD

A student of these great professors who cannot be overlooked is Dr. Ada Hayden. *Continued on page 5...*

## Iowa's Conservation Heroes (*continued*)

Hayden was the first woman to receive a PhD from Iowa State College and became a professor of botany there eventually taking over for Pammel. Born in 1884, she developed her passion for Iowa's prairies exploring them on her family farm north of Ames. Today she is known as the "Voice for Prairie Preservation" and her state prairie inventory gathered from 1919 – 1950 is invaluable data still used in prairie research today.

The two most famous Iowa conservationists were writers who did more than just use their pen. **"Ding" Darling** and **Aldo Leopold** used their writings to further conservation not just in Iowa, but nationally.



First federal duck stamp, drawn by Sioux City's J.N. "Ding" Darling

biggest contributions to conservation were helping establish the first state fish and game commission (DNR) and the Bureau of Biological Survey (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). He also founded The National Wildlife Federation, and created the first

Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling was from Sioux City Iowa, born in 1876. Darling was a journalist for the Des Moines Register who's Pulitzer Prize winning political and conservation cartoons were picked up by newspapers throughout the nation. While he was a brilliant journalist and artist, his

Federal Duck Stamp to be used for critical habitat improvement.

Aldo Leopold was born in 1887 and grew up in Burlington, Iowa. After graduating Yale he worked for U.S. Forest Service in New Mexico before teaching at UW- Madison's Dept. of Wildlife Management where he eventually earned the title "Father of Wildlife Management." His book *Game Management* created a new science that intertwined forestry, agriculture, biology, zoology, ecology, education and communication to manage wildlife populations. Leopold's most important work though is arguably his book *A Sand County Almanac*. Considered almost sacred to many conservationists, Leopold portrays his "Land Ethic" using words and memories to paint a bittersweet picture of his ideas and observations from his shack in Sand County Wisconsin.

Today the words and teachings of these great conservationists still hold true. Join Older Wiser Livelier Souls this season as we explore the legacies of these and other great Iowa conservationists.

*"Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher "Standard of Living" is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of in the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a Pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech. --Aldo Leopold*

## O.W.L.S

### Older, Wiser, Livelier, Souls

"Conservation Greats." Looking for an excuse to get out of the house, make some new friends, enjoy a good meal while exploring our area? Join us for Older Wiser Livelier Souls, the 3rd Thursday each month March through November for an exciting program followed by lunch.

March 21 - Natural History Museum - Iowa City

April 23 (\*Tuesday) - The Art of Conservation:  
A Visit with Ding Darling - Tom Milligan-

May 16 - The Art of Sauntering in Clayton County

June 20 - The McGregor Wildlife School - McGregor

July 18 - Women in Conservation

Aug 20 (\*Tuesday)- Maiden Voyage on the Mississippi

Sept 19 - Aldo Leopold's Sand County - Wisconsin Trip

Oct 17 - Sylvan Runkle: Citizen of the Natural World

Nov 21 - Conservation Greats- who took the lead...  
Iowa Men and Women Who Championed Nature

Date: Third Thursday of each Month.

Time: Call for details

Reservations are required for both program and lunch.  
Cost: Call for details



Osborne Nature Center

Phone: 563-245-1516  
[www.claytoncountycconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountycconservation.org)

# The Spirit of the Ice Age by Kenny Slocum, Naturalist/Resource Manager

It is now early March and I haven't seen my lawn in almost two months. I can only assume it's still there, though the forecast holds some promise I might see it again soon. I think back to the first snowstorm of this season, back in November. I was trout fishing along Sny Magill creek, and as I gazed between casts at the snow-covered hillsides I remember wondering what it would be like if these cold, snowy conditions persisted all the way until early June, like an Ice Age coming back for an encore. Well, we're on our way. And my mind is still tracking back, now subconsciously, to Ice Age Iowa.

Last night I had a dream that another polar vortex descended upon Iowa. Only this was no normal vortex; this was a visible, swirling mass of snow and ice approaching like a tornado. Even more remarkably, this vortex brought with it not just weather from the north but *animals* from the north as well.

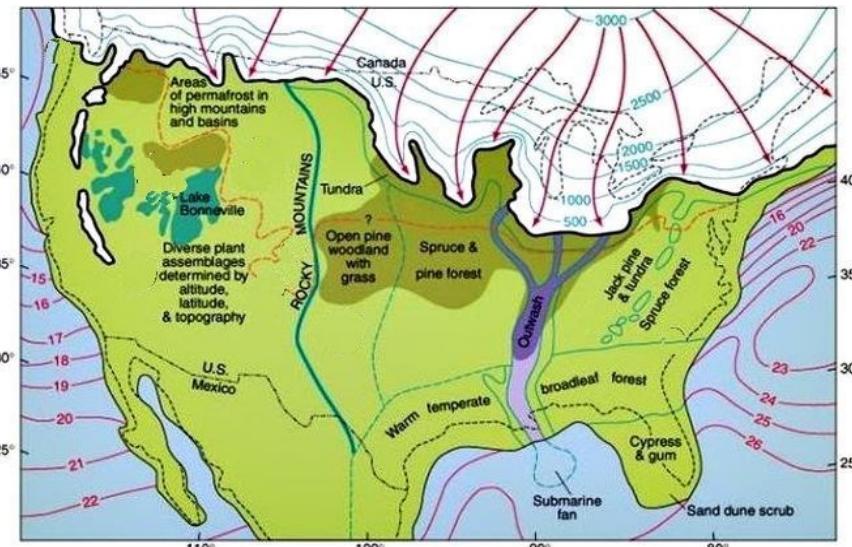
In my dream, with the sun darkened behind a mass of snow and ice, wolves chased moose through the deepening snow. A Caribou flew past the window like the Wicked Witch, thrashing in the wind. When the vortex had passed, I looked out my window to find a bewildered Musk Ox standing in my front yard. I was delighted, of course, having never seen a live Musk Ox.

Some dreams are inscrutable. This one was pretty easy to interpret. This winter, the spirit of the Ice Age has indeed come back for an encore. The average temperature for Elkader in January, based on 121 years of data, is 27.4°F. In 2019, the average temperature was 14.5°F, just a little more than half the usual heat.

Certainly, the polar vortices helped to pull that average down. Elkader already holds the state's record for coldest recorded temperature at -47°F, and that record was approached with a reading of -41°F this January. February followed up with absolutely staggering snowfall totals; more than 20 inches fell, compared to the historical average of around 8 inches here in Elkader.

It's enough to make anyone's psyche circle back to Pleistocene, and wonder what life was like when winters were even more long and brutal than they are today. What did Iowa look like? Would we even recognize it?

It is difficult to overstate how much our fine state has changed in



North American landscape types during the last glacial maximum

the geologic blink of an eye. Should we find ourselves thrust backwards in time 26,000 years – before the arrival of the first humans in Iowa, or at least so we think for now – we would find ourselves in a world completely unlike even the coldest of winter days.

Any such discussion of course begins with the charismatic megafauna. 26,000 years ago – give or take a few centuries – marks the Last Glacial

Maximum (LGM).

The Wisconsinan glaciation covered North America in an ice sheet which extended to roughly the present day city of Des Moines. Fossils from an array of Pleistocene monsters make certain the presence of Mastodons, Giant Ground Sloths (*Megatherium*) in the Hawkeye State Before Time.

But we can also reasonably assume a few other amazing critters trundled through our backyards before they became our backyards. Glyptodonts – Volkswagon-sized, turtle-shaped relatives of the modern armadillo – would have contentedly munched anything from plants to carrion, not unlike modern skunks.

American Cheetahs would have chased any number of the 14 species of Pronghorn – of which only one currently still survives in America – across the vast wilderness. And yes, Musk Oxen, albeit slightly different species than those presently occupying portions of Alaska, Siberia, and Northern Canada, would have chewed their cud amongst the harsh glacial winds.

But how can we guess at the presence of animals for which we have no fossil evidence? *Palynology*, the study of ancient pollen, allows scientists to reconstruct ancient habitats. By taking cores of deeply-buried sediments in existing or now-dried lakebeds, microscopes can illuminate the plants and by extension the habitats from past millennia. Looking for traces of that plant matter in fossilized fecal matter can tell us what was eating those plants, shining a paleontological light on their habitats and behaviors.

Palynology shows that during the LGM, the landscape to the west of the Des Moines Lobe would have been “temperate steppe grassland,” perhaps not so different from today.

Continued on page 7...

## The Spirit of the Ice Age (continued)

Right up until the arrival of European settlers, Iowa's western grasslands supported Pronghorn, as it had for tens of thousands of years. The Pronghorn today runs at nearly 60 MPH. Its speed – far in excess of anything needed to outrun even the speediest modern predators – is a testament to its wild showdowns with Cheetahs tens of thousands of years ago.



Reconstructed *Botherium bombifrons*, on display at the Illinois State Museum

this forest was *taiga*, also known as boreal forest, composed largely of spruce, pine, and larch trees. Today, taiga is the second largest biome on earth after deserts, encircling the sub-tundra regions of the planet's northern latitudes.

But the musk oxen lumbering through Iowa's taiga would have been a slightly different species than those persisting today. Of the four ancient species who thrived on the frozen landscape, the most widespread was *Botherium bombifrons*, also known as the Helmeted Musk Ox. This generalist herbivore was widespread, with fossils found from Alaska to Texas, and from California to New Jersey. The "type specimen" for this species was found in

To the east of the Des Moines Lobe, in our neck of the woods, palynology paints the picture of a landscape covered in dense forest, again perhaps not so different from today. Only rather than the eastern hardwood biome of oaks, hickories, maples, and the like,

Big Bone Lick, Kentucky in 1807 on an expedition sent by President Thomas Jefferson.

The Helmeted Musk Ox is particularly well-understood amongst its Pleistocene peers, due to the relative abundance of its fossil remains. Bones can certainly tell a story, but for most extinct animals full skeletal remains are rare. Typically the finer details – what kind of hair, skin, or muscle adorned that skeleton – are limited to educated guesswork. But not *B. bombifrons*. In the 1940's, Alaskan Gold Miners made an incredible find: a fully-mummified Helmeted Musk Ox, complete with preserved skin and hair. I can only begin to imagine their surprise, digging through the layers of half-frozen dirt and muck seeking riches, only to find the complete body of a creature that hadn't walked the earth for millennia.

Stories like these make the Ice Age seem palpably close to us in time. As children many of us dreamt of finding a mammoth fossil in our backyard. Some of us never grew out of it. President Jefferson himself, one of America's greatest minds, specifically instructed Lewis & Clark to send back any interesting bones they found on their famous voyage to the West Coast, though he also went one step further. He "secretly" thought the duo might find an actual living Mammoth, as the idea of extinction was not fully accepted or understood at the time.

Today, we know that even the deepest wilds of the American West harbor no mammoths or megatheriums. All but a few of the Pleistocene Megafauna retreated with the last glaciation.

But during a harsh, snowy, bitterly cold winter, we can dream. And at least in our lifetimes, that will have to be enough.

## Osborne Junior Naturalist Camp

The Osborne Junior Naturalist Program is an exciting program held during the summer at the Osborne Nature Center. Offered to 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in the Clayton County area, it is an overnight camp that focuses on exploring nature, making friends and getting muddy! Programs are led by naturalists at the Osborne Center, local resource specialists and outdoors experts.

### Dates

**6th Grade:** June 18-19; June 25-26

**7th Grade:** July 9-10

**8th Grade:** July 23-25

The deadline for sign up is May 13. Students will receive information at their school. However, if you need an application form or have more questions, please call the center at 563-245-1516 or visit our website: [www.claytoncountyconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountyconservation.org)



### **Conservation Board Members:**

Gary Kregel, Garber.....Chair  
Daryl Landsgard, St. Olaf.....Vice Chair  
Larry Stone, Elkader.....Secretary  
Marilyn Lenth, Postville.....Member  
Pam Vaske, Strawberry Point.....Member

### **Staff**

Jenna Pollock.....Director  
Tucker Anderson.....Operations Supervisor  
Jay Farmer.....Operations/Maintenance  
Abbey Harkrader.....Naturalist  
Kenny Slocum...Naturalist/Resource Manager  
Molly Scherf.....Office Manager  
Tammie Kraus.....Office Assistant  
Deron Hakert.....Maintenance

**Visit:**  
[www.claytoncountyconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountyconservation.org)  
and LIKE us on Facebook!

**The mission of the Clayton County Conservation Board is to promote the health and general welfare of the people and to encourage preservation, conservation, education, and recreation through responsible use and appreciation of our natural resources and cultural heritage.**

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**Clayton County Conservation**  
Osborne Conservation Center  
29862 Osborne Rd, Elkader, IA 52043  
(563) 245-1516

The Clayton County Conservation Board does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Clayton County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

## **Osborne Nature Center & Gift shop Hours**

**Monday-Saturday**

8:00Am - 4:00pm

**Sunday**

Noon-4:00pm



### **Native Wildlife Exhibit Hours**

**Everyday 10-4:30**

Clayton County Conservation Board meetings are the second Tuesday of every month at 6:00pm in the Osborne Center Auditorium.  
Meetings are open to the public.

