

# Muscatine County Conservation Board 2020 At a Glance

Well, 2020 was certainly a different kind of year for everyone including the Conservation Board. It started out like most other years with education staff filling up the calendar with spring field trips, public programs, and summer nature camps. Office staff was busy taking reservations for picnic shelters and signing kids up for summer camps, and maintenance staff worked on their usual cold weather projects like cutting and treating brush in wildlife areas, trimming trees, and getting equipment ready for spring.

Little did we know that in a few months a lot of things would come to a screeching halt. In early March COVID hit Iowa, and suddenly our calendar was clear. All field trips, summer camps, and public programs were cancelled, and the Environmental Learning Center closed to the public.

In Iowa, campgrounds were finally allowed to open in mid-May which was almost a month later than we usually open. We were busy from the beginning with people itching for any sort of normal activity and camping seemed to be relatively safe. Staff spent much more time cleaning the shower house and restrooms in accordance with COVID protocols.

Our other parks, especially those with trails, were also very busy. People who normally did not spend

much time outdoors were out using the trails-on foot and on bicycles. Unlike in the past, it wasn't unusual to see entire families out walking together-even the teenagers. Picnic shelters were busy during the week not just on the weekend like a normal year. Organizations rented them for meetings and groups of friends rented them for lunch. Outdoors was the place to be.

The Deep Lakes Park cabins arrived and were set in place in July. All the utilities and septic system were installed. Sidewalks were poured, and the road and parking areas constructed and paved. Some furniture was ordered, but delayed due to COVID. Work continues on the interiors; painting, installing window coverings, etc. Landscaping and other outdoor work will be done as the weather permits. Plans are to be ready to rent the cabins in Spring 2021.

Other projects done in 2020 were finishing the sidewalks around the Discovery Park restrooms, deep cleaning, sorting and throwing stuff away in the Environmental Learning Center, and constructing a small parking lot on 57th Street at Deep Lakes Park.

The Environmental Learning Center reopened briefly in the fall until COVID cases started rising again.

Environmental education staff began doing virtual programs with some of the local schools and in-person programs with schools that allowed them.

The Conservation Board held one event in October that allowed for social distancing. A Halloween drive-through at the decorated Saulsbury campground turned out to be way more popular than we imagined, and benefitted the Muscatine Food Pantry and Muscatine Humane Society.

Sue O'Donnell was appointed to the Conservation Board in February to take the place of Jenny Paetz who left to pursue other endeavors.

We hope that things turn around in 2021, or at least get back to some sort of normal. But, as normalcy returns we hope that people don't forget about their outdoor experiences over the past year and continue to make use of our outdoor resources.



## 2020 CONSERVATION BOARD

Chairperson Mike Schulte  
 Vice-chairperson Deb Elliott  
 Member Jim Goedken  
 Member Mark Petersen  
 Member Sue O'Donnell

## Environmental Education Programs

In 2020, Conservation Board Staff gave 208 programs to 5,299 people. Program participants ranged in age from toddler through senior citizen.

In 2020, a little more than two-thirds of the programs were presented to children ranging in age from 18 months through high school. The remaining programs were given to adults. About two-thirds of the programs were given in various school classrooms. In Fall 2020, staff started doing virtual programs for the schools and other organizations.

Raptors, Animals in Winter, Geology, Weather, Archery, Reptiles & Amphibians, Monarchs, Fire & Shelter Building, Animal Tracks, Food Chains, and Fishing were just a handful of the many programs presented to participants.

Most of the weekend programs normally held, like the Fishing Seminar/Derby, Hunter Education classes, and the Halloween Hike, were all cancelled due to COVID. We did manage to get in Bald Eagle Day that drew 160 people and one Hunter Education class with 41 people before COVID closed things down.

Since holding the annual Halloween Hike did not seem like a good idea due to COVID, staff came up with Halloween Magic in Motion. The campers at Saulsbury decorated their campsites for Halloween. The public was invited on

## MISSION STATEMENT

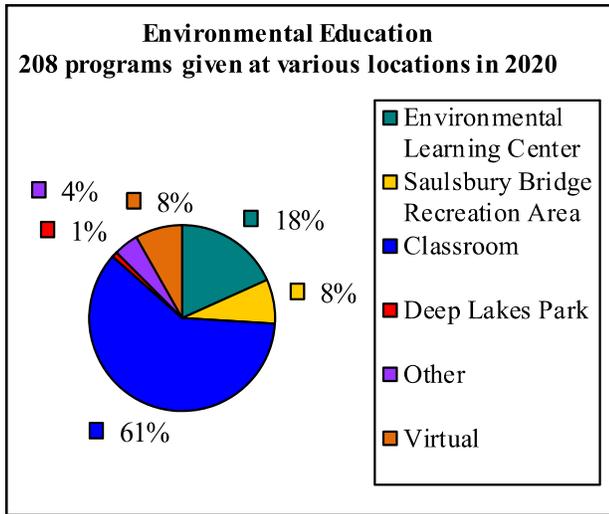
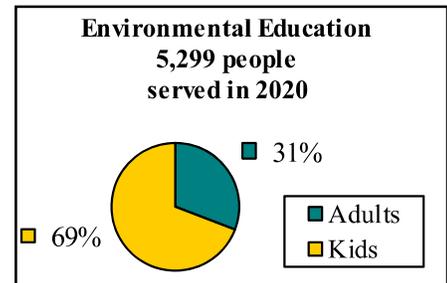
The mission of the Muscatine County Conservation Board is to preserve and enhance natural areas and resources in Muscatine County for the use and benefit of the community; to preserve sufficient natural habitats in Muscatine County; to ensure the survival of native plants and animals; to acquire, develop and manage land for public hunting, fishing, camping and recreation; and to promote public appreciation and responsibility for the environment through education.

one evening to drive through and enjoy the decorated campsites. The first 300 kids received a treat bag. We also asked that people bring a donation for the Muscatine Food Pantry or Muscatine Humane Society. Around 400 cars with about 1,700 people drove through the campground to enjoy the decorated campsites. The event also brought in lots of donations for the Food Pantry and Humane Society.



## Environmental Learning Center

In 2020, approximately 1,132 visitors (not including people who participated in our programs) came to the Environmental Learning Center to view the exhibits. Due to COVID, the Environmental Learning Center was closed from mid March until early October. It was then closed again in mid November through the end of December.





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