

Spring 2016



# Conservation Matters

## Upcoming Event Highlights

### GPS Easter Egg Hunt

March 19th  
10:00 am



### Volunteer Work Day

April 16th  
10:00 am



### Snakes!

May 21st  
11:00 am



*More program details and contact information located in newsletter.*

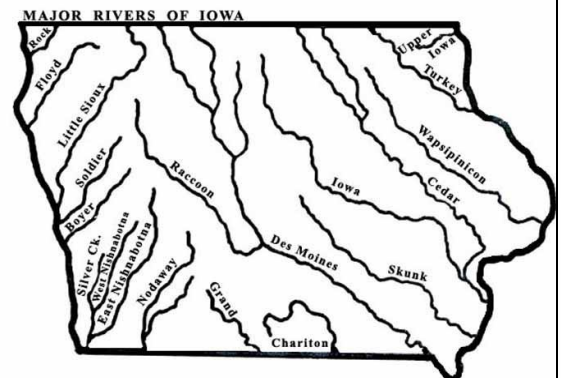
Mills County Conservation Board

## Nishnabotna River

The Nishnabotna River flows across Southwest Iowa with two main forks, the West Nishnabotna and the East Nishnabotna. Here in Mills County we have the West Fork that flows from the northeast corner of the county and meets Highway 34 near Hastings then continues down south of Malvern. It is fed within the county by three smaller tributaries: Indian Creek, Silver Creek, and Mud Creek, as well as, numerous smaller streams. Eventually it meets the Missouri River and water that once flowed right through Mills County is headed for the Gulf of Mexico.

The Nishnabotna is an important natural feature of our area and is overlooked by many. Canoeing, kayaking and tubing are some great ways to get out and see the sites of the river. Parts of the river have been drastically channelized while other parts are closer to the historical meandering route the Nishnabotna is known for. Floating the river makes for a nice, lazy afternoon with a scenery of tree lined banks and Iowa's famous crop fields. During the dry summer months you can typically walk right across most sections of the river. Safety is always top priority though so make sure to wear a life jacket when enjoying the river. The two, new canoe accesses in Mills County will provide people with better opportunity to enjoy the Nishnabotna. The first access is located on the east side of the river on Hutchings Ave. The second access is located at Fisher Wildlife Management Area, two miles east of Malvern on H-38/Lambert Ave. On a float trip down our section of river there are numerous wildlife watching opportunities. One of the neatest sites is when you float under the Highway 34 bridge and hundreds of Cliff Swallows are flying around overhead. These birds like to nest in colonies and build impressive mud nests. Other common wildlife spotted include, raccoons, white-tailed deer, dozens of bird species including bald eagles, beaver, muskrats, and turtles. Soft shell turtles are an elusive species that live in the Nishnabotna and can be seen basking on sandbars. If you are really lucky you might spot a River otter.

The MCCB provides family oriented float trips down the river in canoes when conditions are favorable during the summer months. Watch for the summer edition of the newsletter to learn of upcoming opportunities. As with every natural resource, if you visit the Nishnabotna River make sure to leave nothing behind and respect the wildlife habitat.



## Mills County Neighbor

Wild bergamot is a perennial, native flower that grows in prairie areas in Mills County. Other common names for this plant include, bee balm and horse-mint. It grows up to 4' tall and has a gorgeous lavender or violet bloom. The unique bloom is a cluster of tube-like structures and when in full bloom resembles a firework show. This plant is very fragrant and the leaves have a strong mint smell. It blooms from late Spring to early fall which provides a great nectar source for numerous pollinators. Hummingbirds are especially attracted to it because of its tube shaped flowers. It is common throughout tallgrass prairie regions and can easily be established in areas. Wild bergamot is a great plant to add to your outdoor plantings to serve a variety of purposes. Since it is a native plant is beneficial to native insects and a variety of native wildlife. Hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies really enjoy it. People have used this plant for decades to make Bergamot tea which was believed to have medicinal purposes and is still used for herbal teas.

If you are interested in planting this beautiful, native plant on your property you can purchase seeds from a variety of online resources or call and request a catalog from Stock Seed Farms 1-800-759-1520.



## Conservation Tip

COMPOSTING, we have all heard of it but why is it important and how do you get started? Composting is a beneficial way to keep your yard waste and kitchen scraps out of the landfill and in return you end up with gardening gold. Food waste is actually one of the top three items that is sent to landfills. Keep your leaves, grass clippings and food waste out of the landfill with these simple tips. The first step to composting is selecting a structure to contain your decomposing organic matter. From that description you can already see it does not need to be fancy. All the organic matter needs to be held together while the beneficial bacteria heats up and works effectively at breaking down the plant matter. You can make your own or purchase something from a store. Once you have your container the next step is getting your "ingredient mix" right. A combination of brown and green plant matter plus moisture will get things moving. Mixing your pile and adding more "ingredients" are important to do on a regular basis. These basic steps are just a simple introduction to the world of composting. Composting is a breeze once you get the hang of it and the benefits are great. If you are interested in learning more about it head to your local library or hop online, there is a vast amount of knowledge available on this topic.

## Classroom Connection

The East Mills 5th grade Science has been busy learning about ecosystems and how populations survive. We completed a total of 5 programs consisting of, Animal Adaptations, Home Sweet Habitat, Winter Wildlife, Nature Journaling, Who Polluted the Missouri River, and the 3 R's (reduce, reuse, recycle). It was tons of fun and the students learned a lot through hands on activities, games, and discussions. The East Mills Preschool also had some environmental education fun learning about conserving water and animals that live in water. The students had the chance to hold and look at turtles, crayfish, water bugs, and snails.

Remember to encourage the educators in your children's lives to take advantage of the free, environmental education programs we offer.

## Nature Center Update

The Nature Center project is reaching its final phase of construction and is set to be complete in April! There will be a Chamber Connecting Coffee hosted by the Glenwood Area Chamber of Commerce on May 12th @ 9:30 am. Come out and visit YOUR new Nature Center. We will schedule other events to welcome everyone to the building in the near future. Keep an eye on our Facebook page, Mills County Conservation Board, and your local newspaper for events.

## Upcoming Public Programs

### GPS Easter Egg Hunt

March 19th @ 10:00 am



Mills County Conservation is hosting an Easter Egg hunt at Pony Creek Park designed for children 5th grade and above or for younger children who have an adult that is willing to help with the GPS. GPS's will be provided to find Easter eggs that are hidden around the park. Pre-registration is required, space will be limited. Please call 712-527-9685 to sign up!

### Volunteer Work Day

April 16th @ 10:00 am



Earth Day is April 22nd, come out and help us celebrate early by volunteering to help improve one of your Mills County parks. We will have job opportunities for people of all ages. Meet at West Oak Forest at 55877 195th St, bring work gloves if you have them, we will have some gloves available. Long pants and sturdy shoes are highly recommended. Give us a call at 712-527-9685 if you will be attending so we can plan accordingly.

### Snakes!

May 21st @ 11:00 am



This will be a fun, educational program for all ages to learn about our local snakes and the role they play in our environment. There will be LIVE snakes to help us learn identification skills and everyone will have the opportunity to hold one. Pre-registration is required, please call 712-527-9685 to sign up! This program will be held at Pony Creek Park, 56235 Deacon Road.

#### Interesting "National ..... Days" for Spring

- National Plant a Flower Day- March 12th
- National Learn About Butterflies Day- March 14th
- National Take a Walk in the Park Day- March 30th
- National Earth Day- April 22nd
- National Bird Day- May 4th
- National Start Seeing Monarchs Day- May 7th
- National Frog Jumping Day- May 13th
- National Love a Tree Day- May 16th
- National Endangered Species Day- May 20th
- National Bike to Work Day- May 20th
- National Scavenger Hunt Day- May 24th

## **Mills County Conservation Board:**

### **Contact information**

**Mills County  
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### **MCCB Staff:**

Jerad Getter, Director  
Dessa Montgomery, Naturalist  
Zach Kohlhoff, Specialist  
Jesse Ayers, Technician

### **MCCB Board Members:**

Jan Faraci, Mineola  
Brad Rasmussen, Glenwood  
George Marshall, Malvern  
Lana White, Hastings  
Kreg Kinzle, Glenwood

The Mills County Conservation Board is committed to providing the citizens of Mills County with quality outdoor recreation areas and opportunities for environmental education experiences. Please take advantage of these services and visit the nearly 1,800 acres of public land available!

**CONSERVATION MATTERS  
MILLS COUNTY CONSERVATION  
56235 DEACON RD  
PACIFIC JUNCTION, IA 51561**

