

# Conservation Matters

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mills County Conservation Board  
Winter '06 / '07

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## First Public Event Held!

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Hello again everyone! As several of you know, we had our first public event on the eve of December 5<sup>th</sup>. We had our annual “Brr Hike”, though it wasn’t quite as cold as the name implies! It was a great night to be out and about. The cloud cover was solid, but it didn’t take long for the moon to show through! The Canada Geese were making a lot of noise on Pony Creek Lake that moonlit night. It was fun to be able to show & explain random things to people who are excited about the outdoors.

Many of you may not have been aware that the “Brr Hike” was being held the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. In the future, watch the Town & Country Shopper for the events we’ll be holding, and also be sure to check out our website online for future events. The website can be found at:

[www.millscoia.us/consboard/consmap.html](http://www.millscoia.us/consboard/consmap.html)

At the moment the events are not posted on the website because I am working on scheduling them. They’ll be there soon!

## Mailings and Website (Take 2)

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Due to the low number of people calling in with address changes & requests to keep receiving a paper copy of our Conservation Matters newsletter, we are making the effort to notify people one last time before we cease mailings. We have the 2 previous newsletters and the current newsletter on the website for viewing. We have 3 main goals in this effort:

- Reach more people
- Cut down on use of paper
- Cut general costs

If you would like to continue receiving the newsletter through the mail, or have address updates, please call James at (712) 527 9685 and he would be happy to assist you. If you would like to email us with your address changes or requests you may do so at:

[millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com)

If you do not call or email, we will cease sending it out, with the understanding that you can view the newsletter on our website. For those who have

already responded, you don’t have to do so again. Thank you.

## Make Winter for the Birds!

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It is evident that in many communities we have “snowbirds”, the people who stay in the neighborhood during the warm months and then travel south when the weather starts getting colder. They miss being able to feed the birds that over-winter here, and miss the opportunity to be entertained by the variety of birds that could show up at a birdfeeder or a heated water source. There are several varieties of bird feeders sold in local stores: tube, thistle, suet and shelf feeders. Many people choose to make their own.

The type of birds you attract depends on what you put out for a winter food source. If you put up several different styles of feeders, you’ll attract a greater variety of birds (same goes in warmer weather). Black Oil sunflower & thistle seed will attract finches, cardinals, tufted titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, some woodpeckers and juncos. Suet and peanut butter are high fat choices for woodpeckers. Red & white proso millet can be put in a tray feeder and is a favorite of mourning doves. These are just a few of the visitors that can show up at your feeder during our winter season in Iowa.

A constant water supply is a necessity for birds during the winter. To do this, you could simply buy a heated birdbath or a water heater of some sort to keep the water source from icing over. A black trash can lid (or painted black lid of some sort) can also be effective at keeping the water from icing over, through the absorption of heat from the sun. This method must be routinely monitored to keep it filled & ice-free.

It is important to clean the feeders and birdbaths. This should be done every 2 weeks or so, by removing the moldy seed & fecal matter that birds (and the occasional squirrel or raccoon) leave behind. The ground will become littered with seed shells during this time, and it is a good idea to try to clean the mess up, otherwise it could possibly instigate a fungal disease.

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## Winter Travel Advisory

Due to recent winter-like events (snow fall & cold weather), I decided I should write about winter safety. It seems like every year those of us who drive anywhere have to become acclimated to driving in winter conditions all over again. This is usually evident when we see vehicles in ditches in different areas. Slick spots, slush, and drivers not adjusting to road and weather conditions lead to accidents. After living in both North Dakota and Iowa, 70 miles per hour (interstate) + curve + “slush” on that curve can equal a long slide into a ditch, or even worse. Leaving earlier, and driving a bit slower will usually get you to your destination safely & on time. Also, put some winter gear in your car. You should already have your ice scraper, gloves & hat in your car. In case of emergency (like a slush ride), you should add a couple of blankets, some water and a small amount of food items (jerky / peanuts). Keep more than a quarter tank of fuel in your vehicle. Less than that may gel up, and leave you stranded. In winter driving conditions, cell phones are both good and bad. They are good, because you can call a tow truck to get you out. They are bad because they could be the reason you need that tow truck. Do not use cell phones while YOU are driving – in any road conditions.

## Ice Fishing Safety Tips:

Every year, we hear of someone who has perished while being out on the ice fishing, or performing some other ice activity. Unfortunately, many times, it is hard to tell the conditions of the ice.

Never go onto the ice alone. Treading ice water will drain your energy quickly, and hypothermia can set in rapidly. If someone is there to throw you a rope and help get you out, your chance of survival increases. Life preservers are an essential survival tool during open water fishing, but they are also capable of saving your life during ice fishing. If you were to take a ring preserver, and attach a 50 ft rope, you would have a viable means of saving a life on the ice.

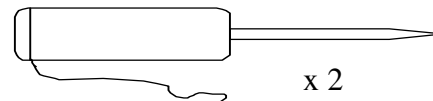
Clear blue ice is the safest. Be cautious if there are several inches of snow on the ice. The snow insulates the ice and prevents the ice from refreezing.

## Ice Strength Guidelines:

1 inch = not safe  
2 inches = one person, under good conditions  
3 inches = group in single file or spread out  
4 inches = general use (ice fishing)  
5 inches = snowmobile traffic  
7 inches = light car (2 ton gross)  
8 inches = light truck (2 ton gross)  
10 inches = medium truck (3 ton gross)

## Homemade Personal Ice Safety Picks:

The picks are two wooden dowels 2 inches in diameter and 6 inches long, tethered together by a 4-foot cord, which you could easily wear around your neck when not in use. The pointed parts are long nails, driven solidly into the dowel, with the head ground off to a point. Use tape to cover the points, to prevent injuries and reduce complications during an emergency. In case you fall through ice, stab the nail into the ice, and pull your way out, stabbing with one pick at a time. You don't have to remove the tape, because the point of the pick will protrude through the tape upon impact with the ice.



## Upcoming Events:

January 27<sup>th</sup> – Ice Fishing @ Mile Hill Lake  
Noon – 2pm

Learn Ice Safety, equipment needs, fishing techniques, and fish identification. There is a limited number of ice fishing poles available, and a manual ice auger. Please dress appropriately, as you will be exposed to the weather for a prolonged period of time. Please bring something to sit on (a bucket) and any ice fishing gear that you may have available to you. This event relies upon safe ice conditions.

**Please be sure to purchase your 2007 Iowa Fishing licenses before this event, because all of the 2006 Sporting Licenses are now expired.**