

Conservation Matters

Quarterly Newsletter of the Mills County Conservation Board
Fall of 2007

MCCB Conducting Survey

I wanted to lead off this issue of Conservation Matters, by informing you, our readers, that the Mills County Conservation Board is conducting a survey. The purpose of the survey is to allow the citizens of Mills County a chance to voice their opinions about conservation and recreation within the county. You will find a survey enclosed, but please know:

- It is optional.
- You will not be contacted about the survey.
- You don't have to put your name on it.
- If you completed one at the Mills County Fair, it is not necessary to do it again.
- You can return the survey via mail, or return it to any of the following locations:
 - Pony Creek Park (MCCB Office)
 - Malvern Public Library
 - Glenwood Public Library
 - Mills County Auditor's Office

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please call us at (712) 527- 9685 or email us at: millsccbia@hotmail.com .

We will gladly answer any questions you may have regarding the survey. For those who receive the newsletter online, and would like to participate in the survey, please email us for a copy. Thank you.

News From The Mills County Fair!

While I was at the MCCB booth during the Mills County Fair, I was able to meet quite a number of people with various questions, concerns and suggestions. I was also able to visit with a number of children that recognized me from various programs I had done for their classes during this past school year. It was nice to be recognized, because it gives me hope that they retained something from my programs – other than my name.

I was also able to visit with a few people who were a wealth of information on our parks. It was interesting to learn how some of our parks have changed in their lifetimes alone.

You can visit us at 56235 Deacon Road, Pacific Junction, call us at (712) 527-9685, or email

us at millsccbia@hotmail.com with any questions, comments or suggestions you may have.

Meet Your WILD Mills County Neighbors!

You know the people that live in your neighborhood – maybe not all too well, but you know of them. What about the wild animals and plants that live in your neighborhood? How well do you know them? Can you readily identify them? Do you know which ones to steer clear of, and when?

This first time, I want to talk about the **White-Tailed Deer**.

First off, why is it called the White-Tailed Deer? It is somewhat obvious, but it gets the name from the under part of the tail being white. This is usually displayed when the deer is on the run; it is often used to alert other deer of possible danger being nearby.

The White-Tailed Deer is typically a reddish-brown, tan and even gray bodied, herbivore. The male deer (buck) will develop antlers (not horns) made of bone. The antlers are replaced each year – which is the reason they are not called horns. A buck will use its antlers to defend itself, and in sparring with other bucks during the rut (Oct - Dec) to establish dominance and mating privileges. Bucks are very aggressive during this time. A typical buck will have its most impressive antlers between 5 and 6 years of age. Sometimes, due to hormonal imbalances, a female deer will develop antlers, which can cause some confusion.

The female White-Tailed Deer is called a doe. The doe is typically smaller than the buck by about 30 percent. A doe in Iowa commonly gives birth to twin fawns, and in some cases even triplets – which is how our White-Tailed Deer population got so numerous. This fact has led to Iowa enacting “antlerless” deer seasons. This allows does to be harvested, which will give us the greatest chances at slowing down their population growth, which will yield less collisions with deer, less browsing pressure on crops and trees and less chance of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) contaminating our wild Iowa White-tails.

Deer size can be attributed to its sex, diet, genetics, and age – but another thing to take into account is where it lives. Mammals (including deer) in the northern regions have bigger bodies. Larger bodies lose less heat, which allow the larger sized mammals (i.e. deer) to survive during harsh winters.

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Deer eating your plants? There is a product called Plantskydd that may help stop it. You can research it and buy it online at www.plantskydd.com.

There are many other home remedies that may help control deer browsing on your plants. I have not tried them, so I am not sure as to their effectiveness as a deer deterrent. Some of those include human hair clippings around the plants, smothering a plants foliage with chili powder (or other hot spices) as high as you can reach – being careful not to get it in your eyes, hanging fragrant bars of soap on a string surrounding your plants, and even tying fragrant fabric softener sheets up near your plants. If you're into high tech gadgetry, you can set up a series of motion-activated lights, or even a garden hose that is attached to a motion activated squirt gun.

In Iowa, the White-Tailed Deer is the only animal species with a "protected" status based on skin pigmentation (or lack thereof). Any white-tailed deer showing any signs of being Albino (all or part white body with red or pink eyes) cannot be legally harvested during any deer season. This does not mean that they can be harvested out of season, either. Deer poachers are met with some pretty stiff punishment as it is, but I imagine that poaching an albino deer, which is protected in Iowa, merits harsher penalties.

Plants To Avoid

During the Mills County Fair, I had images on display depicting 2 fairly common plants that should be avoided. I received many questions and comments about these images, so I am working on placing them on the website. These images show the plants as well as the results of being exposed to them. I will be adding several more to serve as learning tools. We will be covering Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Poison Sumac, Wild Parsnip and Nettles (Itch weed). You will find Poison Ivy and Wild Parsnip to be the first added to the website. Should you desire a paper copy, it can easily be printed off from the website:

http://www.millscoia.us/consboard/plants_to_avoid.htm

THANK YOU

The Mills County Conservation Board would like to say "Thank you" to our two

seasonal Summer Aides. This summer, Bryant Rasmussen and Eric Young returned from their respective colleges and picked up where they left off last summer. They started their positions in May, and recently left for college once again. During their summer the "boys", as one of the Technicians called them, assisted in many worthwhile tasks such as the electrical campsite renovations and re-roofing the pit latrines. They also played roles in maintaining the Mills County Conservation Board parks. We hope that they are successful in their college pursuits, and hope to see them again sometime in the future. Thanks again, "boys", for a job well done!

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| 9/3/07 | LABOR DAY |
| 9/15/07 | 7:30am – 10am
Breakfast w/ the Birds at Pony Creek Park |
| 9/23/07 | 7:30 pm – 9pm
"Welcome Fall" Canoe Float on Mile Hill Lake
Fall Begins |
| 10/13/07 | 9am – 1pm
Youth Fishing at Mile Hill Lake |
| 10/26/07 | 7:30pm – 9pm
Owl Prowl & Night Hike at Pony Creek Park |
| 11/9/07 | 7:30pm – 8:30pm
Winter Bird Feeding at Pony Creek Park |

The Mills County Conservation Board is able to accept, in the name of Mills County, any gifts, bequests, contributions and appropriations of money or other personal property for conservation purposes. Your tax-deductible donations, and our grant writing, promote the growth and betterment of our facilities for the enjoyment of the citizens of Mills County and its many visitors.