

HERITAGE

An Environmental Visionary & Thirty Years of Hard Work!

This year marks a remarkable milestone in the history of JCHT, our thirty years of commitment to this county can not be underestimated. From the land that we preserve to the partnerships we provide other groups in the community—JCHT has become indispensable. Additionally, the inspiration we instill around the county can never be measured, but is vital too.

In the late 1970s who would have thought creating a land trust in Johnson County, Iowa, would have become such a valuable part of our community? Our group was quite progressive for Iowa, we even shared our newly devised land trust by-laws with another group just getting started at the time, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Great things don't occur by mistake and the challenges were many. Johnson County, although progressive for the state, was by no means an environmental haven as the residents clung to a strong background rooted in farm use rather than preservation. The tides were slowing going toward a conservation ethic, however. Speaking with three of the original JCHT Board members; Jean Lloyd-Jones, William Hines and James Lindberg about this they shared these issues and other such challenges they faced when starting JCHT. Each of them are satisfied with the development of JCHT and look forward to the next thirty years.

To be fair, the first and foremost idea each shared was how Johnson County owes a tremendous thank you to a local, environmental visionary—Nancy Sierberling. She, without doubt, is someone that anyone involved with JCHT should know about and admire. Nancy not only inspired the formation of JCHT, but she also began Project GREEN and was part of a River Front Commission in the 70s as well.

After thirty years it seems to safe to say that the JCHT legacy has been passed on one generation. Our mission, "to preserve our natural heritage through identification, acquisition and management of land with significant environmental value," has never been more true. Nancy and those involved with creating JCHT have our utmost respect and thus, I list the original board members names here: David A. Ferree,



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Heritage is published twice a year. If you have articles you'd like to contribute please do so to info@jcht.org

JCHT Information to keep in mind:
This newsletter is sent to over 1200 people, both friends and members of JCHT. Check our website to see if your annual membership is current. Feel free to pass along this newsletter to others.
Volunteers Needed: If you like to work with land, with fundraising, writing for a newsletters, or anything else JCHT may very well have a spot for you to help.

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Congratulations everyone, 2008 is the 30th Anniversary of Johnson County Heritage Trust! Please think of JCHT for not only lifetime gifts, but also as a part of your testamentary planning. A gift to JCHT is a gift to your children and community.
Join JCHT! It's easy and affordable. At many levels: Heritage Keeper (\$500 or more) Benefactor (\$250) Sponsor (\$100) Sustaining Member (\$50) Family Member (\$40) Regular Member (\$25) Student Member (\$10) _____
It's not too early to plan ahead, The Second "Under A Cider Moon" JCHT fundraiser is Saturday, September 20, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at Dick Schwab's barn (same location as last year) \$50.00/ticket. This a fun way to support JCHT and celebrate the fall season.

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P.O. Box 2523
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www.jcht.org



Family Day 2008, preparing bird watching journals.

Betsy Hillman, N. William Hines, Fremont Isaacs, Jean Lloyd-Jones, Louis Loria, Nancy Seiberling, Harold Stager and James B. Lindberg. Also of note was Mary Neuhauser, who worked closely with Nancy, prior to 1978, while she was Mayor of Iowa City.

Ironically, we are in a similar situation to 1978 when JCHT began. Part of the need to create JCHT was a missed opportunity with Hickory Hill Park. Just this year, we embarked in what is a successful partnership with Hickory Hill Park to increase and add environmental value to this park. Early on JCHT acquired and passed on Ryerson Woods to the City of Iowa City. Presently we are regularly consulted by land owners in Johnson County about what to do with land, as well, we hope to play a role in the upcoming "Our Land, Our Water, Our Future" bond issue this fall.

The environmental land ethic and spirit of JCHT and Nancy Sieberling absolutely remain alive today. We plan to inspire and continue harvesting many more environmental visionaries along our JCHT journey.



JCHT's Family Day: Helping Overcome Nature Deficit Disorder!

JCHT Family Day event (see photos to the left) at Turkey Creek Preserve in May was a terrific success! We had fifty people in attendance, although a few bicyclists stopped by for information, water and rest. Our 3 guides were from the University of Iowa's, School of the Wild Summer Camp Program were just what we had hoped they would be, interactive and informative for people of all ages. They focused on three areas: the creek, the prairie and birds. The kids (and adults) loved the creek and all of the interesting things found there! All of the plants and birds located and identified were enjoyed as well. Anytime you have a group of kids and adults dressed up in wading boots and are able to watch each of them leave with smiles on their faces you know the event was a success. We expect to continue hosting Family Days in the future.

BUTTERFLIES OF BIG GROVE

by Don Bolin



On a warm summer afternoon, the meadow at Big Grove Preserve is a fine place to be; the meadow glows with purple beebalm or yellow goldenrod, and a brightly colored palette of butterflies continually flits from flower to flower, casting a lovely spell over this little oasis. As you walk along the paths, tiny butterflies, that I call "kickers", rise up from the grass and earnestly flutter along just ahead of your feet. Slow down and try to get a close look at these smallest butterflies, for they are quite pretty, and the eastern-tailed blue is perhaps the prettiest; a dusty lavender-blue, as soft as the morning sky. Look for the small orange spot at the back of each wing, and the small tail on one wing. The eastern-tailed blue spends its life skimming just off the ground, feeding on clover. As they flit along just ahead of you, every ten feet or so another little eastern-tailed blue flies up out of the grass, and the two butterflies spiral rapidly around each other like two tiny shards of ice-blue glass.

In late summer, when the thistles are blooming, the queen of the Big Grove meadow is the great spangled fritillary (pictured above); these improbably delicate appearing butterflies seem to float through the warm air, finding the most attractive flowers to perch on, then stretching wide their silver-spangled wings. The silver spots (spangles) reflect the color of whichever flower the butterfly is on.

Following a butterfly about, through thistles and brambles trying to identify it, is not made any easier by the mimics. Butterflies do not mimic other species out of admiration; it is a matter of survival. Locally, the two most well-known butterflies that are copied are the pipevine swallowtail and the monarch. Both of these butterflies protect themselves by having eaten toxic or distasteful plants when they were caterpillars. The mimics have realized they don't have to eat poisonous plants; they just have to look like they did... the adult butterflies copy the appearance of the monarch and pipevine, so predators avoid them, even though their caterpillars spent their days feasting on tasty plants. The monarch is copied by the viceroy, and the pipevine is so toxic it has no less than five mimics. Three of these are seen at Big Grove; the spicebush and black swallowtail are close copiers. The red spotted purple isn't even a swallowtail, but it still shamelessly freeloads on the pipevine bandwagon.

The silver spotted skipper is a favorite of mine; at a quick glance, it is a smallish, drab brown butterfly which, like all skippers, holds its wings closed when sitting. However, looked at closely, it has a large gold spot on the forewings and a whitish silver band on the hindwings, looking as if metallic paint was dripped from above onto this dusky little vagabond. Butterfly experts (skipperologists) say that the silver spotted skipper almost never lands on yellow flowers, which I can attest to after following one about the goldenrod-filled meadow at Big Grove.

The summer azure is to me the embodiment of fleeting, late summer days; delicate and with its inner wings a clear blue, it is easily recognized by its greyish outer wings with a row of spots and a faint stitching submarginal line, with fringing of the wing edges. The summer azure takes me back to summers of long ago, rambling through the fields and woods of my youth.

OAK WILT IN THE COUNTY, DO NOT PRUNE OAKS IN SPRING OR SUMMER

Contributed by Mark Vitosh

It is important to know that spring and summer are very risky times to be pruning oak trees. The bottom line of this article is avoid pruning oak trees between March and October 1st. Avoiding pruning at this time is critical, because open wounds can make an oak tree susceptible to a disease called oak wilt. This disease has been present in Johnson County for many years, and it is caused by a fungus. The trees in Iowa most commonly impacted by this disease are species such as black, red, and pin oak, but it can also infect white, swamp white, and bur oak. If black, pin, or red oak are infected by the fungus that causes this disease they usually die within the summer they are infected. White, swamp white, and bur oak can often take a number of years before they succumb to this disease after infection.

Basically, a healthy tree can be infected by the fungus that causes this disease two different ways. The first is through open wounds during the growing season (March through September). The fungus is carried from a diseased tree to a healthy tree with an open wound by a small beetle. The second form of infection is through root grafts between oak trees of the same species. For example, if a red oak is infected and there is another red oak within 50 to 100 feet there is a good chance that the roots of these trees are grafted and the fungus can move from the diseased tree to the healthy tree.

Infected black, red, and pin oak can start showing disease symptoms by June, and infected white, swamp white, and bur oak may not start showing symptoms until mid- to late summer. Symptoms to look for on infected trees usually include leaves turning a bronzed brown along the outer margins of the leaves. These leaves can often still have some green on them as they fall from the tree. There is often a sharp line of separation between discolored and green tissue. In some cases leaves are still completely green when they fall off the tree.

If a black, red, or pin oak is infected by the fungus that causes this disease there is no way to stop the tree from dying, but there are ways to limit the spread of the fungus to neighboring trees. If white or bur oaks are infected they do not always die immediately. To find out more information about how to identify, prevent, and manage oak wilt go to <http://shadetrees.iowadnr.gov> (Tree Health Section) or go to the Johnson County Extension Office at the Johnson County Fairgrounds and purchase the publication called Oak Wilt-Identification and Management. The best way to prevent the spread of oak wilt is to not prune any oak tree between March and October 1st. If a tree is wounded or pruned during this time treat the wounds immediately with a non tar-based wound dressing such as latex paint.

Vital Pieces of Useful JCHT information:

Reminder Being a member of JCHT is more than just getting our newsletter. We need your paid membership on an annual basis so that you can become part of our great natural places here in Johnson County. Have you sent in your JCHT membership? Do you know someone who might be interested in knowing about JCHT? If so, email us their address and we can provide them with more information.

Our Two New JCHT Board Members

Mark Vitosh is originally from Iowa City, and he has a B.S. and M.S. degree in forestry from Iowa State University. Mark has been a forester since the fall of 1988, and has worked in Oklahoma and Iowa. He has been a District Forester with the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau since 2000. He assists private landowners in managing their forest resources in Johnson, Linn, Muscatine and Scott counties. He loves to hunt mushrooms in the spring.

Pat Sippy is a county native and lives on the family farm in the NW quarter of Johnson County. Most of the farm is enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, which has provided opportunities to establish various types of cover. She is an active Master Gardener and enjoys her three retired horses. Pat is currently working at the USDA Farm Service Agency, Johnson County Office.

County Bond Issue: Johnson County Conservation Board Proposes Major Land Preservation Effort

Contributed By Harry Graves, Director JCCB

In his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, author Richard Louv eloquently discusses American's "nature-deficit disorder" and makes a statement that resonates with many people throughout the nation:

"Many of us sense that something has been taken from our lives and know our kids are missing out. I think that once parents and other adults understand that not only what is being lost but also what can be gained by reconnecting our kids, and ourselves, to nature, then great changes will follow. But, it is not only children who are subject to nature-deficit disorder. It is a much bigger concept than that. You could say that nature deficit-disorder also affects adults, neighborhoods, whole communities, and the future of humankind's relationship to nature."

These feelings seem to be generally held among many thoughtful persons in Johnson County as well. Consider our collective disconnection from nature with the large and growing concentration of population in the Iowa City/Johnson County area. From 1990 to 2000, Johnson County's population grew by 15.5%. During that same decade, the state's population increased only 5.4%. Population estimates for the county, released July 1, 2006, revealed an increase from 111,006 in 2000 to 117,038—an increase of 6.33% in just six years. Johnson is the second fastest growing and the fifth largest county in the state. A population of more than 140,000 could be expected by 2020.

The downside of all of this growth is the ongoing loss of open space/natural areas for housing or commercial enterprise development and, hence, further disengagement from nature. Growth, in itself is not bad, and we are not opposed to growth. However, once natural areas are bulldozed for housing, or covered with asphalt for parking lots, they are lost forever.

There is a growing sentiment, throughout the county, that mirrors a nationwide trend that our green infrastructure - the natural environment - is of equal or greater value when compared to gray infrastructure - buildings and development. We hear that comment more and more and much has been written in books, magazines and newspapers. Local organizations and individuals struggle to preserve some natural lands. The Johnson County Conservation Board (JCCB) which has this mandated responsibility has responded by making a serious commitment to find ways to protect more remaining vestiges of unique natural areas before they are destroyed by the relentless march of development.

Months of work and investigation have already gone into this effort. With the assistance of Mark Ackelson, President of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the JCCB opened dialog with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) in March 2007. TPL is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that works with government agencies to protect land for human enjoyment and well-being. Their work is funded through a grant and there was no charge to the county for their services.

Initially, TPL conducted a feasibility study to research viable funding options for long term land preservation in Johnson County. It was concluded that the most acceptable method of funding was county General Obligation (G.O.) Bonds, which require voter approval by a super majority (60%).

Next, in October 2007, TPL commissioned the firm of American Viewpoint of Alexandria, Virginia, to conduct a public opinion survey of 400 Johnson County voters. The survey was conducted, on October 18 & 19, 2007, using a direct telephone interview with this cross section of likely voters. The results of

the poll clearly show strong support throughout the county for this proposed \$20 million ballot measure.

Mr. David Carter, Southeast Conservation Finance Program Director for TPL, has been working with the JCCB on this issue since July, 2007. On February 6 he discussed the results of the public opinion survey at a joint meeting of the Conservation Board and Board of Supervisors.

The survey results revealed that on the initial ballot test, 60% said they would support this measure and only 28 opposed it. When voters learned more about the proposal – positive and negative - ballot test support rose to 65% with only 24% saying they would vote against it.

The survey tested possible uses of voters' tax money, by the Johnson County Conservation Board, for a wide variety of concerns. The top uses were to: protect drinking water sources (93%), protect the water quality of rivers, lakes and streams (93%) and protect watersheds of the Iowa and Cedar River (92%). Other uses also ranked very high: protect existing green areas (89%) protect forests to improve air quality (88%), protect natural areas from development (86%), and provide new hiking, walking and biking trails (85%).

According to estimates from County Assessor Bill Greazel, the owner of a 200K house would pay an additional \$26.36 a year (\$13.18 per half) for 20 years.

Farmland owners would pay approximately an additional 21 cents per acre for 20 years.

Part of the discussion clarified that no land will be condemned and the money will be leveraged, whenever possible, with dollars from other sources (federal, state and private), and there will be an annual audit to keep the public informed of how their dollars are used, if the ballot measure is passed by the voters in November.

Ninety percent of survey respondents agreed to the statement that "Johnson County's land, water and wildlife are our natural heritage and we have a stewardship responsibility to protect and preserve them" and 80% agree that, "With land prices rising dramatically and the amount of undeveloped land dwindling, we must act now to protect the last remaining open space for future generations."

On February 7, 2008 the JCCB formally requested that Johnson County Board of Supervisors place a \$20 million land preservation ballot initiative on the November 4, 2008, General Election Ballot.

Pending approval by the Board of Supervisors, the land protection measure, is expected to be placed on the November 4, 2008, ballot. It will give every voter in the county an opportunity to decide on the importance of this issue.



A Note From the Treasurer:

As many of you are aware, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to include a \$20 million land preservation ballot measure in the 2008 General Election. The funding would be issued and administered by the Johnson County Conservation Board. Because JCHT is a public charity, any activities on the part of the Trust to influence legislation or voting is severely limited. However, because our mission is aligned with the land preservation objectives of the Bond Issue, the Board of JCHT has authorized a \$2,210 donation to the "Our Land, Our Water, Our Future." We have carefully followed Treasury Regulations and have made a special election with the Internal Revenue Service related to the donation.

Letter from the President

Our spectacular spring is drawing to a close and we are entering what I expect to be yet another glorious Iowa summer. In this letter, I want to reinforce some important points that all of us need to keep in mind to protect and preserve our beautiful but fragile planet. We all need to be conscientious about following the four R's.

The four R's I am referring to are:

1. Reduce
2. Reuse
3. Recycle
4. Rethink.

REDUCE

Our economy, and much of our society, is fueled by consumerism. Shop for a newer, faster, cheaper, better gizmo. Keep ahead of the Jones'. On sale now; buy it now. Six months no interest. And on and on and on!

Don't get drawn into this line of reasoning. This isn't a good measure of success. This won't make you happier and it certainly isn't good for our world. Instead, look for ways to reduce your use of energy. Look for ways to reduce your reliance on products which are non essential. Measure your progress not by how much you consume, but rather by how good a steward you are of our finite resources.

REUSE

It's time to reframe our thinking (and our children's thinking). Redefine 'cool' to include reuse. Instead of constantly throwing away items which are 'out of style', see how long you can make something last! Challenge yourself to care for and use items until they are completely worn out!

There is great pleasure and pride to be had in fully utilizing nearly any item you can think of. Take good care of your things, maintain them and repair them rather than replacing them. This can become an interesting and very beneficial approach to life!

RECYCLE

I suspect nearly all of us are conscientious about recycling. This is an essential practice to both reduce the amount of trash we send to the landfill and to decrease the amount of raw materials we must extract from the earth. Keep up the good work; and do more.

Look at everything you buy. Make sure it's packaged in recyclable materials. Don't buy items that are double or triple packaged! Buy in bulk whenever possible. Bring your own bags or boxes. Make sure the businesses you frequent are diligent about recycling.

RETHINK

Look at the world differently. Buy locally whenever possible. Eat plants instead of animals. Don't participate in shopping therapy. Be mindful of your carbon footprint and do everything you can to reduce it. Spend time in nature instead of shopping malls. Participate in conservation activities and organizations.

I have only scratched the surface on ideas and suggestions that you can follow to preserve and protect our wonderful environment and natural heritage. I encourage you to spend time with family and friends talking about the four R's. Both your life and our world will be better for it!

Yours in preserving our Natural Heritage,

Dick Schwab, President, Johnson County Heritage Trust