



# The New Leaf

## Clarke County Conservation

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2023

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Conservation Director : Scott Kent

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!



Starting March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, the Friends of Clarke County Conservation will be holding a fundraiser raffle. On the next page are pictures of the items that will be raffled, which consist of a Great Lakes 350 AR, 6.5 Mossberg Patriot Creedmoor, and a Fareway meat bundle. Tickets will be \$10 per ticket or 6 tickets for \$50. To purchase tickets, you can contact any Friends of Clarke County Conservation member. Drawing will be held on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at East Lake Park. You do not have to be present to win but if you have a winning tick-

et, you will have 14 days to claim your prize. All proceeds will help fund the new Conservation Education building @ East Lake Park



Thank you to all the below for

### Board Members:

Sharon Dunfee

Larry Keller

Norm Lust

Marla Shifflet

Frank Riley

### Friend's of CCC Board:

President - Stephanie Snell

Vice President – Brian Stuva

Treasurer – Barry Mateer

Secretary – Judy Kjellsen

CCCB Rep Director – Frank Riley

CCCB Director – Scott Kent

Director – Marilyn Dorland

Director – Deb Talbot

Director – Spence Seeberger

Director – Bev Seeberger

WE NEED YOUR HELP CONTINUED....



### Membership Opportunities!

We need YOU! Yes you. We have many available opportunities to help support us. The available memberships are:

Organization/Business \$100

Family \$20

Individual \$10

Student \$5



The form is attached at the back of this news letter to fill out and return to the conservation office.

## Tall Green Milkweed: Uncommon and Uncommonly Lovely

It isn't quite Wildflower-Walk weather yet but... when the season does arrive, Tall Green Milkweed will be one of the plants that can be seen.

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I posted on Facebook... "Sweaty, soaking wet and smiling, I am. I spent a couple hours traipsing around at Oakwood Grassland and found a plant that I had not seen before. Tall Green Milkweed. Waded through tangles and over ruts and found 4 plants; two of which are blooming. Please as punch with the expedition."

Later explorations that summer found 15 of the plants and this past summer 20-some plants were growing at the boundary between a weedy gully area and an old pasture.

*Asclepias hirtella* is known as Tall Green Milkweed. It is a perennial native wildflower which matures to 3' in height and has white-green flowers. It is one of the lesser known species of milkweed and is occasionally found in upland prairies and is a most prolific bloomer.

[https://  
www.bleedingheartland.com/2019/08/14/iowa-wildflower-wednesday-tall-green-milkweed/](https://www.bleedingheartland.com/2019/08/14/iowa-wildflower-wednesday-tall-green-milkweed/)

The Minnesota DNR website says it was first classified as a separate species in 1954 and by 1984 it was listed as 'Threatened' by Minnesota. In Michigan, it is also legally protected with a state status of 'Threatened.'

**Present-from-the-get-go, the ancestors of these plants were.**

Tall Green Milkweed was not included in the seed mix that was used to re-plant an adjoining area of Oakwood Grassland so most likely these milkweed link directly back to those that would have been present when, in 1854, Thomas Funston and William Carnahan bought the land, most likely at \$1.25 an acre.



## Tall Green Milkweed Continued.....

The Clarke County page of the Iowa Prairie Plant website

<http://uipress.lib.uiowa.edu/ppi/counties.php?record=83>

Relying on research and documentation of a century ago, this website says that Tall Green Milkweed was present in Clarke County when pioneers first came by ox-drawn wagons, most from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.

The publication is from 1992 but the experts involved with the site say there is no ongoing updating with recent information. The current purpose of the website is to give a general extent of range. To add a new species for a county, it would require the formal documentation by one of the herbaria in Iowa.

<https://www.herbarium.iastate.edu/iowas-herbaria>

### **A possible project for Friends of Clarke County Conservation**

A possible project for Friends of Clarke County Conservation could be to create our own up-to-date list of native prairie plants for Clarke County. On our webpage, there could be an archive of photographs of local specimens of each species and its environment within Clarke County.

Once the new building is up and running, such an archive could easily be displayed digitally.

### **Stewardship of this Local-Ecotype Tall Green Milkweed.**

<https://www.iowaprairienetwork.org/local-ecotype>

As for protecting the current site of this ‘occasionally seen’ milkweed, there are considerations. Once the milk-

weeds were discovered in early July of 2021, a second mowing that year did not extend to that area of the old pasture.

Some websites say it is ‘deer resistant’ and ‘rabbit resistant’ but in fact, something does eat both the young and the full-grown plants. Last year the seed pods that did develop were eaten off before seeds were mature and could be collected.

Tall Green Milkweed prefers medium-wet to dry soil conditions and grows best in full sun to partial shade. Habitats include dry-mesic railroad prairies, sand prairies, rocky glades, edges of sandy wetlands, roadsides, pastures, and abandoned fields.





## Tall Green Milkweed Continued.....

Flowering occurs from late June to early August; fruiting begins in early August.

It will reproduce by seed rather than by its central taproot which makes the plant very drought-tolerant.

The Michigan DNR site says this species most likely requires open conditions and woody plants encroachment should be watched. In 2022, in an adjoining area, an area of cedar and hedge trees were removed. With the additional sunlight, it is possible that in the coming years, the area will be expanded in which the Tall Green Milkweed can grow.

Wildflower Walk or Wildflower Hay Ride: come one, come all, and come yet again.

Last year, the 3 annual Wildflower Walks added the option of a Hay Ride viewing.

A path is mown through the 40-acre replanted prairie patch and participants can walk, without much wading through the undergrowth of the prairie, or one can remain seated on a straw bale through the frequent stops as different native wildflower are spotted and discussed.

There is a Wildflower Walk in June, in July, and in August to catch the extent of the changes that the prairie goes through within those two months.



## Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*

Length, 64-81 cm    Weight, 850-2000gm    Wingspan, 180-200cm

Turkey vultures are a New World vulture, meaning they are found in the Western Hemisphere. They have evolved independently from Old World vultures (vultures found in the Eastern Hemisphere), but there are marked similarities that parallel adaptations to similar feeding habits.

All vultures have a bare skin on the head. Since vultures eat carrion, it makes sense that there are no feathers on the head that would get dirty from picking their heads into to prey. The bare skin also can serve as temperature regulation and the color of the head in adult birds is important for display purposes, recognition, threats, and dominance interactions.



Another method of heat regulation is something called, "urohidrosis", where they squirt urates (fecal material) on their legs and let that evaporate, thus having a cooling effect. Charming!

Vultures are predominantly scavengers in that they obtain food by finding dead animals, refusing to kill even animals that are obviously about to die. Turkey vultures have a broad range of other food items as well, such as insects, dung, berries and fruits, small mammals, snakes, and lizards. A remarkable feature they possess is the ability to withstand bacterial toxins. They have a high resistance to botulism, but, however, have not developed the ability to cope with the toxins which man pollutes the environment with.

Vultures have huge wings making them well adapted for soaring flight as opposed to flap flying. Soaring flight enables them to cover greater amount of territory in their search for food with a much-reduced energy cost. They make use of rising air currents called thermals, to gain altitude, rather than flapping. Once they have climbed as high as they need, they glide away, slowly losing altitude until they contact another thermal. Being scavengers and locating carcasses is not dependable so using the soaring technique of flying is a real energy saver.



All vultures have large feet, which are used to hold down food while they tear it apart. Their feet are weak, and they do not have the gripping or grasping strength found in other birds of prey. When a meal is located, vultures have developed the ability to eat large amounts of food. They eat so much that they must stay grounded for a few hours to digest the meal. If during this time they are threatened or disturbed, they have to regurgitate part of their meal until they are light enough to fly. Vulture vomit is one of the foulest things on this planet.

Turkey vultures are among a select group of birds that possess a sense of smell. Other birds having this ability are the kiwis of New Zealand, and some of the petrels. The vulture's nostrils, or nares, lack any internal separation,

can look right  
tured also totally  
which is the  
voice box. These  
silent and can't  
bird songs or  
duce some very  
rattling, sneezing,  
snorting sounds.  
show well-  
behavior, stretch-  
full length and ei-  
or away from the  
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which means you  
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lack a syrinx,  
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birds are almost  
produce normal  
calls. They do pro-  
strange hissing,  
wheezing and  
Turkey vultures  
developed sunning  
ing their wings out  
ther facing toward  
sun. This is done  
morning to warm

up after a cool night. They are the most versatile of all vulture species with regards to habitat, being found everywhere from extreme deserts to grasslands, to temperate forests and dense tropical rainforests.

Turkey vultures are solitary nesters, in fact they don't make a nest at all. They usually will find a scrape under a bush or a rocky outcrop, a cliff or a high tree cavity to lay their 2 eggs. The incubation period is 38-41 days and chicks hatch with a covering of white down and a bare head. They will fledge at 70-80 days or more.

The North American Turkey vultures are migratory, spending the non-breeding season south, sometimes all the way to South America.



Murray roadside Park is located 8 miles west along Highway 34, just south of Murray. The area was originally used as a barrow area for dirt to build Highway 34 for the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT then leased the area to the Clarke County Conservation Board (CCCB) in 1972 to make it the first county park in Clarke County. A small piece of land was purchased by the CCCB to build an entrance into the park. In 1982 the DOT quit claim deeded the park to the CCCB.

The park was developed with a Federal Land and Water Conservation Grant that was a 50% match with local funds. This grant provided a shelter, playground equipment, picnic tables, garbage cans, and rest rooms. Several tree plantings were also done by the CCCB in the early years of the park because there were not any trees in the park originally.

After years of the trees growing, the park was shielded from the highway by the trees. This allowed

## Murray Roadside Park

a lot of vandalism and things to happen because they could not be seen easily. In 2017 the CCCB used equipment from Clarke County Secondary Roads to remove the unwanted trees and leave the desired ones. This opened the park back up to be visible again. The area was seeded with wildflowers paid for with a grant. The vandalism stopped and people were again using the park for its intent. Another grant was acquired to install some educational signs about the wildflowers and the animals found in the prairie area. Murray Roadside Park is used by many people during lunch breaks, as a break from traveling, or just a place to take in the view of the wildflowers.





# The Buzz with Bees!

Bee keeping has been a hobby all throughout history. In 2018 Scott Kent, having been a long-time friend reached out to me asking if I had bee hives. I responded that yes, I had been a bee keeper for several years. Scott then laughed and said that he also had several hives and had no idea that I also was a bee keeper. We agreed to meet at the Conservation office to discuss how we each approached bee keeping. During our discussion we wondered how many others were in our area keeping bees, and at that moment the Southern Iowa Hive Handlers bee

club was born. There are many different reasons why people keep bees. Some keep bees for pollina-



tion of their orchards and gardens, others for honey and wax to use and sell. Scott and I realized that while we each kept bees for different reasons, we also did many of the same tasks differently. Each hive is differ-

ent, and has its own personality. What works for one hive, might not work for another. Scott asked if I thought we would have any interest in the club, and I honestly told him I thought it would just be the two of

us. Who in their right mind likes to get stung, deal with a species they are unable to communicate with, and lose money all at the same time. There couldn't possibly be that many of us, but still felt that it wasn't a bad idea. We each had different

problems with a hive that season and when talking, the other person had a solution to the problem. Truly a quick simple fix. Maybe there were others within the community that had hives as well and had easy solutions to problems, or were having problems themselves and it could be resolved with knowledge

that we had. After much discussion and laughter we decided to spread the word about the club. To say that we were both shocked about the response is an understatement. Our first meeting we were surprised that eight people attended, and it has steadily grown from there. We hold meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month where Scott or myself has chose a topic to discuss, as well as what is happening within the hive that month. There is always lots of open discussion and all members know that there is no stupid question. Everyone has a voice and is respected on their approach to bee keeping. I myself have learned many things from others

due to overthinking a simple problem with in my own apiary. The group continues to grow every year, with a consistent number attending meetings every month. The Facebook group is 350 members strong and all members must be within a 150 mile radius of Clarke County. Doing this helps keep discussion relevant, meaning that we are all experiencing similar weather seasons with our hives. It is easy to give advice that one thinks is relevant to a bee keeper only to find out that they are located in a different climate and your solution actually harms their hive. Communication and the willingness to learn are important in bee keeping. As the environment and seasons

change, we as bee keepers need to adapt and change to help keep the hives happy and thriving. The club members support each other and many times will help each other out when needed. If you have any interest in bee keeping, or just learning about bees in general feel free to reach out to Scott or myself. We would love to help you learn.

Rose Greif  
Greif Farms  
Ivan's Apiary



## Friends Of Clarke County Conservation

The Friends of Clarke County Conservation Foundation, known as *Friends*, is a tax exempt corporation organized under the Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act, Chapter 504A of the 1990 Code of Iowa, and the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The foundation was established in 1997 for the purpose of soliciting and accepting gifts and donations from persons and organizations for developing and enhancing environmental education and conservation projects within the scope of the jurisdiction of the Clarke County Conservation Board.

The goals of the organization are: (1) to support and further the functions of the Clarke County Conservation Board by serving as a vehicle for community involvement, (2) to advise CCCB of the needs of the community regarding facilities and programs, (3) to raise funds for designated projects, and (4) to serve as an organizational base for volunteers.

Categories of membership are determined by the annual dues, which range from Student at \$5.00 to Organizational at \$100, (see enclosed membership form). Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible. Membership in the "*Friends*" foundation is open to everyone regardless of race, religion, creed, national origin, age, gender, or handicap.

An annual general membership meeting is held to elect the "*Friends*" Board of Directors, a seven (7) member board that sets the policies and goals, and generally manages the affairs of the foundation.

### Friends of Clarke County Conservation

#### Membership Application

- ☐ Organization/Business (\$100)
- ☐ Family (\$20)
- ☐ Individual (\$10)
- ☐ Student (\$5)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Yes! I want to be a part of the "*Friends*" volunteer corps.

Make checks payable to:  
Friends of Clarke County Conservation,  
C/O Clarke Co. Conservation Board  
100 South Main, Osceola, IA 50213



Clarke County Conservation  
100 S. Main St.  
Osceola, IA 50218

