



Keokuk County Conservation Board News

Winter/Spring 2023

*Serving through education, recreation,
and conservation of our natural resources*

INSIDE...

Director's Notes ... 2

Walleye ... 4

Ranger Report ... 5





Director's Notes...

The Conservation Board staff has had a very busy fall and winter with the spring season going to be just as busy. Most of our time has been occupied with a reconstruction project of the gabion marsh on the North-West area of the Lake Belva Deer watershed. The process for this project started way back in September of 2021 with the preparation and writing of a Fish Habitat grant and submitting that grant in November of 2021. Grant scoring was done in December 2021 and formal approval from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources was awarded in February of 2022 in the amount of \$220,150.00. The estimate for the project came in at \$246,000.00 which came in close for the 90/10 matching money that KCCB would be responsible for. The winning bidder was Iowa Bridge & Culvert with a bid of \$298,781.60. Due to the length of the grant process, material cost increases, and some supply chain problems the cost of the project came in higher than the original estimate. The balance and extra cost was made up by our Capital Projects account. In the end it was a fabulous project and working with French-Reneker (our engineering firm) and Iowa Bridge & Culvert has been an absolute pleasure. The structure is completed and due to the winter months only the backfill, seeding, and safety fence are left for completion. All in all it is a great addition to Belva Deer Lake and should have great consequences to water quality, fish health, and support to one of Iowa's outstanding outdoor recreation areas.



*Director Pie
Reighard*





WALLEYE *Sander vitreus*

It is ice fishing season at Lake Belva Deer. For most this means time spent boring holes in the ice in pursuit of bluegills and crappie when they are at their best taste wise. Many are rewarded with another fish which is considered to be even better eating, the walleye.



Walleye are the largest member of the perch family and are freshwater natives to most of Canada and the northern United States. Due to their popularity as a game fish, they have been successfully introduced to many watersheds where they did not naturally occur. As mature adults, walleye can reach 30 inches in length with a weight approaching 20 pounds. The name "walleye" refers to the species pearlescent eyes which are caused by a reflective layer which in addition to allowing them excellent eyesight in low light conditions, gives the eye an opaque appearance. Walleye are olive color grading into gold on the flank with at least 5 darker saddles extending down the sides. The color shades to white on the belly. They have two large fins, one spined and one soft, running along the top of the body. They have a large mouth which is armed with many sharp teeth that can make lure removal a challenge.

The walleye is an extremely desirable game fish which leads many state and county departments to periodically stock them into certain lakes and rivers that do not provide suitable conditions for natural reproduction. Spawning normally occurs in gravel lined, rocky tributaries with substantial current. They are nocturnal fish whose eyesight affects their behavior which the angler should take into consideration when pursuing them. They see extremely well in low light conditions, avoiding bright light to feed upon

other fish which cannot see as well as them. Night fishing is very effective as is fishing during times of rough, turbid and breaking waters. Walleye anglers would do well to learn to look for locations where a good "walleye chop" (rough water) occurs. On windy days, walleyes will be found in shallower waters (6 ft.) taking advantage of the murkier, highly oxygenated waters. On calmer, brighter days they will be found deeper (10 ft. or more) along shoreline drop offs and slopes. As summer heat drives water temperatures ever higher, the walleye will move into the deepest portions of the water body where they can continue hunting.



Walleye are carnivores, feeding almost exclusively on other fish and aquatic species including crayfish, minnows and leeches. Using these for live bait is very effective. Artificial baits such as spoons, spinners and plugs which imitate these small prey can also bring good results. Many walleye are taken incidentally by anglers here at Belva Deer while casting for bass and jigging for panfish. I personally have not encountered anyone fishing exclusively for walleye but then they might just be keeping that close to their chest! You are allowed 5 walleye per day with no length restriction at Belva Deer. The majority of the walleye I see in angler's possessions are in the 18 to 21 inch range. I would like to see and visit with a dedicated walleye fisherman here at some point. Good luck!

Ranger Brian Ulin

Ranger's Notes

During the cold spell that came across Iowa in late December it made me wonder what life would have been like in the time that Native Americans lived in the open prairie without the luxury of a modern house, forced air heating, and grocery stores to buy food when the growing season was done.

Winter was a challenging time for Native American communities in Iowa, the harsh weather and limited resources made it difficult to survive. However, these indigenous peoples were highly adaptive and resourceful, and they developed a range of strategies to make it through the winter months. One of the most important strategies was to gather and store food in the fall. This involved hunting and fishing, as well as gathering nuts, berries, and other wild plants. Native Americans also cultivated crops like corn, beans, and squash, which could be stored for the winter. In addition to food, they gathered firewood and other materials they would need to build shelter and keep warm.



Meskawki woman outside her wickiup (wigwam). Photo courtesy State Historical Society of Iowa.

Once winter arrived, Native American communities in Iowa spent much of their time indoors, huddled together for warmth and protection from the elements. They lived in wigwams or long-houses, which were made from a framework of poles covered with mats or animal hides. The interior of these homes was lined with furs and blankets to keep out the cold, and fires were kept burning to provide heat and light. Despite the difficulties of winter, the indigenous peoples of Iowa still found ways to have fun and stay active. They played games, told stories, and danced around the fire.

Winter was also a time for spiritual and cultural activities, such as traditional ceremonies and rituals like the Winter Solstice, which occurs around December 21st, was an important event for many Native American communities. This was the

shortest day of the year, and it marked the beginning of the winter season. Many tribes held ceremonies to celebrate the return of the sun and the promise of longer days ahead. These ceremonies included the lighting of fires, the singing of songs, and the sharing of food.

Dreaming ceremonies were also an important part of many Native American cultures. During the winter months, when there was less work to be done and more time for reflection, many tribes held dreaming ceremonies to seek guidance and insights from the spirit world. These ceremonies often involved fasting, meditation, and the use of traditional herbs and plants, these events were an important way of connecting with the natural world and honoring their ancestors.

While winter was a challenging time for Native American communities in Iowa, they were able to adapt and thrive through their resourcefulness, cooperation, and cultural traditions. These skills and traditions have been passed down through generations and continue to be an important part of the heritage of indigenous peoples in the region today.

Ranger Stratton Bond

KCCB Board Members

Tom Hotchkiss South English
 Alan Glandon Sigourney
 Greg Dyer Richland
 Julie Wohler Sigourney
 Rex Greiner South English

Staff

Pie ReighardExecutive Director
 Stratton Bond.....Ranger/Naturalist
 Brian Ulin.....Maintenance/Ranger

If you would like to receive the Conservation Newsletter, please send a postcard with your name and address on it to:

Keokuk County Conservation Board
Attn: Newsletter
 P.O. Box 323
 Sigourney, IA 52591



Designed and printed by The Design House Plus, Sigourney, Iowa.

Keokuk County Conservation Board's programs are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and handicap. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination, they may file a complaint with the Keokuk County Conservation Board or the office of Equal Opportunity, US Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 29240.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Keokuk County Conservation Board
P.O. Box 323
Sigourney, IA 52591



Non-Profit
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Sigourney, IA
 Permit No. 17