



openspaces

Newsletter for Whiterock Conservancy

A Non-Profit Land Trust

REFLECTIONS FROM KEN

Spring has sprung and summer is well on its way. As Whiterock's Board Chair, I am serving as interim Executive Director while we conduct a nationwide search for a new leader. In this role, I have had the fortune of visiting Whiterock at least weekly beginning in April. This has given me the luxury of enjoying nature's gift of an early spring awakening, complete with arrivals of birds, flowers, budding trees and some very productive fishing.

As I drive towards my temporary office at the historic Garst Farm, I have a strong desire to turn south off of Highway 141 and into the heart of Whiterock.

Approaching Coon Rapids and passing Whiterock's lovely new river-valley Bur Oak Visitor Center, my strong desire is to park and walk the trails.

When at the Garst Farm, I take a few minutes to wander to the fishing pond to see the water, feel the pond, and see if fish are active on the surface. **I am reminded of the power and draw of nature every time I enter the beautiful Middle Raccoon River valley.**



Such is the splendor of Whiterock, and the beauty of the 5,000 acres this non-profit organization was set up to steward. The task at hand is daunting. We have junk trees to cut, prairies to burn, and trails to build and maintain. Staff and volunteers are busy maintaining the grounds, buildings, and managing the landscape. Scientific experts in plants, geology, archeology and soils are busy at work documenting the special features that make this unbroken expanse of land so unique. In addition, fundraising is starting on a huge internal trails project that will finally open the larger Whiterock land base to equestrians, mountain-bikers and hikers.

The exciting part is seeing the vibrancy of the organization and the creative ways it is moving forward in its mission to connect the public to the landscape. For example, our volunteer recognition event in March recognized more than 70 individuals who are engaged in helping to maintain and enhance the landscape. One man stood and told how he had moved to Coon Rapids specifically so he could spend his days volunteering at Whiterock. I am proud of these volunteers and their collective accomplishments, nor more grateful for our growing donor base.



1390 Highway 141
Coon Rapids, IA 50058
(712) 684-2697

www.whiterockconservancy.org
Phone extensions:
x111 Interim Executive Director
x112 Rec. Services & Accom.
x114 Chris Troendle, Land Mgr.
x115 Darwin Pierce, Farm Mgr.
x117 April Schultes, Office Mgr.

It is with this sense of appreciation, mission, pride and gratefulness that I ask for your continued support. There is no question that **Whiterock is on course to become one of Iowa's most unique and authentic rural destination areas.** What makes it even more so are the exciting music, art and food offerings coming out of neighboring Coon Rapids. The newest buzz is the fabulous burgers at Coon Bowl were just recognized as the best burgers in the entire state. Lucky me to have yet another thing to enjoy on my weekly visits to Whiterock!

Yours in conservation,
Ken Herring, *Board President and Interim Executive Director*

BIO Blitz 2012

Noon June 8 – Noon June 9

You can still sign up! Everyone is welcome to participate in this exciting, educational experience. Plus, anyone interested in our volunteer land stewardship program should attend as this is a thorough preparation for land stewards. To learn more or to sign up, contact Chris Troendle by phone at (712) 684-2697 ext. 114 or email Chris at landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org

We are featuring an outstanding line-up of professional to lead us. They are:

Rebecca Christoffel - Reptiles & Amphibians

Rachel Simmons - Birds

Stephanie Shepherd - Butterflies

James Durbin - Moths, Dragon Flies & Damselflies

Russell Benedict - Bats

John Olson - Fish

Tom Rosburg - Botany & Ecology

Bill Clark - Small Mammals & Predators

Joe Artz - Geology and Archeology

Dinner, breakfast and lunch will be provided. **RSVP to Chris today!**

Geology at Whiterock Conservancy - Part 1: Landforms

If you are interested in geology, Whiterock Conservancy is a fun place to visit. There are many different and exciting things to see in and around Coon Rapids by car or on foot. You can see and compare two of Iowa's largest landforms and explore the ecotone, or edge, between them. You can also explore straightened and natural streams, learn about how the river is adapting to climate change, visit the nearby "M&M" (Mississippi and Missouri) divide, and closely inspect 100 million-year-old sandstone outcrops.

Whiterock's two major landforms are the Prairie Pothole and the Southern Drift Plain. The Prairie Pothole landform lies on the north and east edges of Whiterock and extends north all the way into Canada. In north and west central Iowa, the Prairie Pothole landform was shaped by the Des Moines lobe of the Wisconsin Drift, the most recent glacier to cover a large part of North America, and which receded 11,000 years ago. Whiterock lies on the very southwest edge of this huge formation. The wall of ice, one mile tall, stopped its advance right in the middle of Whiterock.

To the north of Whiterock, the land becomes flat and, in its natural state, very, very wet. Whiterock's wetlands are in the vicinity of the Burr Oak Visitors Center, and there are large wetland tracts in Dunbar Slough 5-8 miles northeast of Coon Rapids. There used to be a couple very large, shallow pothole lakes just north of Coon Rapids, but they are long gone. Like almost all of the prairie pothole region, water has been artificially drained from the landscape. The drainage system consists of old clay tiles and modern plastic perforated pipes laid under the ground, which feed water into man-made ditches and then into the rivers. With the excess water removed, the soils made by 11,000 years of wet prairie vegetation form some of the very best farmland in the world.



The second and larger landform at Whiterock is the Southern Drift Plain, which covers almost all of southern Iowa. When you get atop any of the hills at Whiterock, look around ... all the other hills you can see are the same height, forming a plain scraped flat by an ancient glacier more than one million years ago. All the valleys between the hilltops were carved by the same one million plus years of erosion. Although the Southern Drift Plain is very old and weathered,



in western Iowa it still has reasonably good farmland soils, thanks to an overlay of "loess" soils, which winds deposited from the Missouri river bottom about 22,000 years ago.

Because Whiterock is situated in two completely different landforms, the property offers visitors a huge variety of wildlife and landscapes. Whiterock sports one of the longest breeding bird lists in the state, as well as very long species lists for plants, dragonflies, and more.

For many reasons, it is worth considering this Coon Rapids slogan:
***"The Last Glacier Stopped Here.
 You Should Too."***

Father's Day at Whiterock

Do you want to do something different this year with that special Father in your life? How about coming out to Whiterock Conservancy to check out our new buffalo calves? Last winter Whiterock traded out old bulls for five new females. "We wanted to get some new blood-lines. It's good for the herd," said Whiterock employee Matt Reiling.



This year we are seeing the results of that freshening, in the form of at least three new calves. The total herd is now one bull and eight females plus the new calves who roam on 50 acres of restored prairie. To find the buffalo pasture, turn into the historic Garst Farm located on Highway 141, one quarter-mile east of Coon Rapids, and drive to the west side of the farm.

Music in the Park: June 24, 4 - 7 p.m.

As Whiterock assumes stewardship for 5,000 acres of beautiful river-valley land and begins to open that land to the public, folk, blue-grass and country music is emerging as a special way to help our visitors forge a connection with Iowa's authentic rural culture and values.

Whiterock Conservancy will host its **4th annual Prairie Concert at Riverside Park** (located at the east edge of Coon Rapids, IA, below the cemetery). Join the locals as we gather along the edge of our beautiful river to enjoy great company and great music by the Finnders & Youngberg band.

Finnders & Youngberg is more than a bluegrass band. They focus on original material, incorporate the pedal steel guitar, and take an adventurous approach to all types of Americana music. Check out their website for music clips and more: <http://finndersandyoungberg.com>

Come See the Changes!

Staff and volunteers worked hard this past year to improve our facilities and landscape. A **BIG thank you to everyone** and a special shout-out to our St. Gregory's partners. They take on major pruning, landscaping, and facility beautification projects at various Whiterock locations year-round.

St. Gregory's is a rehabilitation center located in Bayard, Iowa. Program residents are required to fulfill community service hours as part of their treatment. **This group is instrumental in helping us enhance our grounds and recreational facilities.** It has also been a stepping stone for those in the program to understand what Whiterock is and spread the news across the U.S. about our fantastic organization.

Whiterock staff invites you to come and spend some time this summer enjoying the scenic Middle Racoon River Valley and all the work that is being accomplished.

Hope to see you this summer! -Chris Troendle, *Land Manager*

Volunteer Opportunities

Whiterock Conservancy is looking for anyone interested in donating their time to help us manage our lands and buildings. We need assistance with maintenance mowing, soft trail construction, gardening, fencing, building repairs, etc. If you or someone you know may be interested please let us know how you can help! **Contact Chris Troendle by phone at (712) 684-2697 ext. 114 or email Chris at landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org.**

In-Kind Donations

With so many volunteers and our never-ending renovation and landscaping activities, we find ourselves in need of the following:

- Trail mower/belly mower
- Dump trailer
- 4X4 pickup in decent shape
- Skid steer loader
- Woodworking tools
- Chain saws
- Salt and mineral blocks for our buffalo herd or a donation for feed
- ATV in working condition
- Splitting maul & axes
- Wood splitter
- Trailer
- Riding lawn mower
- Hay wagon/running gear
- Tractor accessories
- Hay mower
- Hay bailer
- Tree planter
- Tree and shrub pruning equipment
- Fencing material & equipment
- Refrigerator in good working condition
- Floor jacks
- Welder
- Cutting torch

If you can help provide any of the above please contact Chris Troendle by phone at (712) 684-2697 ext. 114 or email Chris at landmanager@whiterockconservancy.org



Upcoming Events

June 8 - 9 BioBlitz & Land Stewardship Volunteer Training

June 15-17 Father's Day Weekend

June 20 River Cleanup; we provide the canoes

June 24 Prairie Concert at Riverside Park, Coon Rapids (see Music in the Park story on page 3)

July 19 2nd Annual River Float from Riverside Park to River House (free)

August 18 Flam Chen Fire Show at the River House

September 14 10th Annual Star Party, Friday evening activities open to the public

October 25 Fall Family Hayrack Rides

For more details, check our website:
whiterockconservancy.org

Whiterock Conservancy is a Non Profit Land Trust

Whiterock Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) organization which has a mission to **connect people with our landscape**.

Whiterock needs your help in supporting our day-to-day land conservation and restoration mission as well as providing unique and low-cost, low-impact outdoor programs for people of all ages. We are also conducting a special capital campaign to raise \$900,000 to build an extraordinary 35-mile soft (natural) trail system that will provide far greater public access to Whiterock's landscapes.



Please make a donation to Whiterock today. Tax-deductible donations can be made on-line at (look for the **Donate Now** button) www.whiterockconservancy.org or mailed to Whiterock Conservancy, 1390 Hwy 141, Coon Rapids, IA 50058.

If you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically, please let us know at april@whiterockconservancy.org.



1390 Highway 141
Coon Rapids, IA 50058