



JOURNAL

Warren County Conservation Board

Winter 2020

Species Spotlight: Least Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

The least weasel is the smallest member of the weasel family, and the smallest carnivorous predator in the world. They weigh 1–3 ounces and are less than 10 inches in total length. They have a short tail that is less than a quarter of the head and body length. Least weasels are native to North America.

Least weasels are very adaptable and thrive in many different habitats, both above and below ground. Their long tubular bodies are easily maneuvered through leaf litter, underground tunnels, and tunnels through the snow. They do not dig their own dens, but instead use abandoned dens. Least weasels are solitary except during breeding season.



Least weasels are highly predatory, voracious carnivores. They must eat regularly to avoid starvation since they are so small, and have limited abilities to store fat. They can consume over 50% of their body weight every day, and even more during winter months. Since weasels often will take down prey larger than themselves, they will cache their food to eat later. Least weasels are specialized rodent predators and rely mostly on rodents for food. However, they are opportunistic feeders and will dine on carrion if presented. Their main diet includes lemmings, voles and mice, but will also eat bird eggs, lizards, amphibians, small fish, and invertebrates.

The abundance of prey has a large impact on litter sizes for least weasels. They typically will have 1–2 litters a year, and average 4–5 young, called kits. In a good year they can have up to 15 offspring in a litter. Least weasels are most susceptible to predation as juveniles in the nest. Predators of least weasel kits are mostly foxes and snakes, while owls, hawks, eagles, and larger weasel species eat adults.

A fun fact about least weasels in the northern parts of their range, is that their fur color changes depending on the season. In the summer these weasels are brown with whitish bellies, throats, and feet. However, in the winter their fur turns entirely white. Least weasels further south remain brown all year round.



Meet A Member

Retirement Announcement: Jim Priebe

Please help us wish Jim the best as he enjoys his retirement from the Warren County Conservation Board after 30 years. Below are his retirement remarks.

Certain moments cause one to pause and reflect. This is most certainly one such.

Friday, October 2, 2020 was my last day as Director of the Warren County Conservation Board. I have been part of the WCCB staff since July 1990 and a part of Iowa's County Conservation system since January 1985.

My years in Warren County have provided me blessings for which I thank my Lord every day. Professionally, I have been part of so many great projects — large and small — aimed at providing recreational, educational, and natural resource opportunities for the citizens of Warren County and its visitors. Personally, I cannot imagine a better place to have raised my family. I am eternally grateful for the flexibility which allowed me to be part of the events that shaped their lives.

Have there been bumps? Of course. Lots of them. I do not think any of us go through a career, let alone life, without lots of bumps. Simply put, they are not important.



It seems reasonable to take time to list the good things that have happened here during the last thirty plus years. I have done some of that for myself. I am especially pleased with the WCCB's current — and my final — project: the James I & Geraldine A Middleswart Lodge. Middleswart Lodge is a bit of most of the things that make Iowa's County Conservation system so unique and strong: responsive to local need and desire, a collaboration between a public entity and a citizen who wanted to give back to her childhood home (thank you, Phyllis Middleswart Geyer, for having the vision to make your community better and for placing your trust in the WCCB and in me — I cannot begin to tell you what that means), the amazing talents of the WCCB Staff and Board Members that are bringing that vision to life in such fantastic ways, and private contractors who went beyond the requirements of their contracts to help make the Lodge even better. Other than speaking of the WCCB's latest, I will not dwell on projects in which I may have had a small hand. Instead, I wish to use my final soap box address on something more important — relationships.

I have been blessed beyond measure with good people. The Warren County Conservation Board is a group of five county citizens, appointed by the Board of Supervisors, who serve without compensation; they serve because they care. It has been my pleasure to work under so many committed volunteers.

Meet A Member



Retirement Announcement Cont'd

The Warren County Board of Supervisors, of course an elected body, controls the county funding used by the Conservation Board. While sometimes challenging, and never giving Conservation all the funding requested, I have found the Supervisors to be appreciative and supportive of the efforts of the Conservation Board. The staff of the Supervisors have always been rewarding to work with.

The other County Departments — elected and appointed — have consistently supported Conservation in any way they could. Legal assistance, inter-departmental partnerships, providing support services for administrative duties, helping distribute materials to the public, borrowing equipment for short-term projects, providing safety services, and so many other things. I can only hope that Conservation reciprocated when it had the chance.

The private conservation groups that have supported the WCCB through the years have been amazing. Without the support and expert assistance of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Warren County would have far fewer public lands for its citizens to enjoy. INHF had a hand in the acquisition or development of the Annett Nature Center Park and the Nature Center itself, Woodland Mounds Preserve, Rolling Thunder Prairie, Grant Park, both the Great Western and Summerset Trails, Bank Swallow Bend, and more. Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Whitetails Unlimited, and the Nature Conservancy have all supported the WCCB through the years, helping with land acquisition and programming. The Warren County Izaak Walton League has been a steady and trusted partner for longer than I have been in Warren County.

The Friends of Warren County Conservation have been steadfast and true supporters of the WCCB and all things in environmental education. Volunteers and donors through the years have helped create many more opportunities than the WCCB could have by itself.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, through state level staff and — especially — staff stationed in Warren County have provided valuable partnerships.

Professionally, I am most grateful to the WCCB Staff. Seeing their passion and collaborating with them through the years has been a joy. Because of their skills the Warren County Conservation Board has been able to create many opportunities and build new facilities for the people of Warren County that would not otherwise have been possible. Their long-term commitments to these projects shines bright in the high quality of the recreational opportunities they have created.

Personally, I have been supported by so many that I cannot even begin to list them. You know who you are, and you have my gratitude. I would, however, like thank the most important of this group — my family. Raymond (RJ) & Jorden have been both participants and volunteers in WCCB programs, and I was blessed by them on both sides of that coin. I am so very proud of the adults they have become and how they care for the people around them. That they both come home to hunt, fish, or just hang out is the best. I now get to teach some of those things to my grandchild, and I happily look forward to those days. To my wife, Ronda, I cannot even begin to express my gratitude for her positive impact in my career and in my life. That she is with me as we start our next chapter, whatever it brings, makes all the difference.

It is my sincere hope that whoever is chosen to take up the reins of the Warren County Conservation Board gets your support and leads the program to unprecedented heights.

Godspeed,

Jim Priebe



Events

Snow Shoe Hikes for the Season:

Snowshoe Hike @ Annett Nature Center

Saturday, January 9th | 1:00 p.m. | ANC

Snowshoe Hike @ Pickard Park

Saturday, January 16th | 1:00 p.m. | Pickard Park

Snowshoe Hike @ Pickard Park

Saturday, February 13th | 1:00 p.m. | Pickard Park

Snowshoe Hike @ Annett Nature Center

Saturday, February 20th | 1:00 p.m. | ANC

Bundle up and explore the trails on snowshoes. Snowshoeing is a great way to stay fit during the winter. We will provide general instructions and snowshoes. Dress for winter weather and wear warm boots. This event will be cancelled if there is not enough snow, there must be at least 4 inches of snow on the trails. Please register so we can have your snowshoes ready.

Please indicate your height and weight, so we can determine snowshoe size. (This information is confidential) Children must be accompanied by an adult. Please see registration pages at www.warrencb.org/events for deadlines to sign up.

January

Zoom Take & Make Snowman

Saturday, January 23rd | 1:00 p.m. | Virtual

Lets talk snow! Sign up for this program to learn a little bit about snow, and make your very own snowman. After you register we will email you to set up a time to pick up materials the week before the program. Then, hop on zoom with us to learn about snow and get a walk through of how to make the craft!

This program is geared towards children or families. There is a \$5 materials fee. For registration, please use the number of bookings as the number of craft kit materials you will require. Register by Wednesday, January 20th.

Full Moon Hike

Thursday, January 28th | 7:00 p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Exploring the outdoors at night is an exciting experience. Night hiking during a full moon is even more exceptional! Join a Warren County Conservation Board naturalist for a night hike and explore the great outdoors in a different light! We will discuss how animals adjust and thrive in low-light conditions and compare that to human night vision. Families and children are welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

This program is free, but please register by Tuesday, January 26th.

February

Zoom Take & Make: Beaver Home

Friday, February 5th | 5:00 p.m. | Virtual

Hang out with a naturalist to learn about beavers and their homes and then make a beaver home of your very own. After you register we will email you to set up a time to pick up materials, then hop on zoom to learn about these 4 legged engineers, and get instructions on building the craft.

This is best suited for younger elementary. There's a \$5 materials fee. Register by Wednesday, February 3rd.

Hidden Hearts Hike

Monday, February 8th– Friday, February 21st |

McVay Trail, Indianola

Join WCCB and Indianola Parks and Recreation for a hike-when-you-please event. Hike along the McVay Trail in Indianola and see if you can find 50 hidden hearts. The hearts are all different sizes and colors.

Please leave the hearts in the location that you find them for others to enjoy. There will be a sign at each end of the trail to show where it starts and finishes. This event is geared for the whole family. The hearts will be along the trail February 8–21, 2021. Share your photos on Facebook or Instagram! #hiddenheartshike



Owl Prowl With Kelly McKay

Tuesday, February 16th | 7:00 p.m. | Annett

Nature Center

Join us for a twist on our annual owl prowling at the Annett Nature Center! We will have a guest speaker here to talk about owls and then lead us on a nice evening hike.

This workshop will be conducted by Kelly McKay (BioEco Research and Monitoring Center), with assistance from Mark Roberts (Clinton County Conservation) and Brian Ritter (Nahant Marsh Education Center). Funding for this workshop was provided by the Resource Enhancement and Protection – Conservation Education Program (REAP – CEP).

For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrencb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.



March

2022 ANC/Shelter Rentals

Monday, March 1st | 8 a.m.

Bookings for the Annett Nature Center and the Lester Davison Memorial Pavillion can be made beginning on March 1st, 2021. Please call 515-961-6169 to request information or to make a reservation.

2021 Day Camp Registration

Wednesday March 3rd | 8:00 p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Naturalists lead summer camps that encourage children to explore and enjoy nature up close. Parents may register children for camp beginning Wednesday, March 3rd at 8:00 a.m. Registration is limited and on a first-come, first-served basis. To register, come to the Annett Nature Center or call us at (515) 961-6169. Because of limited enrollment, children can attend each camp only once. More camp details are available on our website: www.warrencb.org/education/daycamps

Rain Barrel Workshop

Saturday March 6th | 9:00 a.m. | Annett Nature Center

Participants will learn the benefits of rain barrels, how to collect water, and make a rain barrel. You will be provided with all the tools and instructions to make your own rain barrel for your yard. Please make sure that your vehicle can transport the finished large barrel. The cost is \$50 per barrel. Space is limited to 15 participants. Registration is required by March 4, 2021 so we can provide enough materials.

Geocaching 101

Saturday March 13th | 1:00 p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Looking for a fun new outdoor hobby? Want to participate in our county-wide Geocaching Adventure? Come discover the fun and excitement of geocaching, the high tech outdoor scavenger hunt that uses a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit! Join a WCCB naturalist for a beginner course to learn about geocaching and how to use a GPS unit. Registration required by March 11th.

Zoom Take & Make: Rainsticks

Tuesday March 16th | 6:30 p.m. | Virtual

Join us virtually to learn about rainsticks! Then make your very own rainstick. After you register we will email you for materials pickup. Then, hop on zoom to learn about rainsticks, maybe we'll even start a rainstorm!

This program is best suited for kids in upper elementary. There's a \$5 materials fee. Register by Sunday, March 14th.

Eat Your Yard: Edible Landscaping

Thursday March 25th | TBA p.m. | Annett Nature Center

We have been working for our yards for years. Now it is time to make our yards work for us! Join Warren County Conservation in hosting Beth Waage, an avid gardener and nature lover who earned her Permaculture Design Certificate in 2015. Learn how to put in place a more edible landscape, with an emphasis on plants that our suited to our climate. There will be time to answer questions and design your own landscape, so bring your creativity and culinary needs!

Registration required by March 22nd.



Night Hike

Saturday March 27th | 7:30 p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Join a WCCB naturalist to explore the trails at night. We will learn about Iowa's nocturnal animals as we hike.

The whole family is welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Register by March 25th.

Constellation Geocaching Adventure Begins

Thursday, April 1st | 8 a.m.

Grab your GPS, your hiking boots, and get ready to explore! Find all 25 geocaches and collect the trading cards, April 1, 2021 through November 1, 2021. There are 25 Constellation Geocaching Adventure Caches hidden in county, state, and city parks around Warren County. Your challenge is to explore parks and find them all using a GPS.

For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrencb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.



Join Us! Become a Friend of Warren County Conservation in 2021

Pledge your support today for high quality, healthy living for Warren County through greater recreation and outdoor education opportunities, new and improved facilities, restored landscapes, and extended open space. In addition to supporting our important work, Friends of Warren County Conservation receive the following additional benefits:

- You receive half price rental of the Annett Nature Center once a year at the Benefactor Level
- You are put on the mailing list to receive current Warren County Conservation newsletters
- You support conservation and recreation projects in your own backyard



2021 Friends of Warren County Conservation Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Company _____

Phone _____

Email _____

You can support the Friends of Warren County Conservation at a variety of membership levels by selecting one of the following:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership - \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to volunteer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joint/Family Membership - \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contact me about donating property |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor Membership - \$50 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate/Business Membership - \$100 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership - \$1000 or more | |

Thank You



Thank You!

Thank you to our amazing group of volunteers, we couldn't do it without you!

Make & Take Family Day

Sue, Joviee, and Phia Wilson
DeAnn Carlson
Wyatt Klein
Bree Tenges

Candy Cane Hike

Barb Ripperger
Mallory Wells

Prairie Picnic: Friends of Warren County Conservation Board Members

Steve Derman
Donna Fink
Monty Freeman
Judy Hendricks
Karen Johlas-Szalkowski
Mark Kickbush
John Krogmeier
Carla Kuehl-Purdum
Blair Lawson
Lisa Neidermayer
Veronica O'Hern
Ashley Vanderflugh

Prairie Picnic

Putney Auction
All of the Auction bidders
Kitchen Collage
Donita Petersen
Ted Lare Garden Center
Jeff & Marlys Sowers
Bob & Jackie Sarasio
Lori Freeman
Steve Weaver
Thiesens – Indianola
McCoy True Value
Kathy Krogmeier
Iowa Native Trees & Shrubs
Casey's–Indianola
Lana Shop
Kevin Brown
Milo Meat Locker
Wild Birds Unlimited
Blank Park Zoo
Matthew Card
Honey Hollow Apiary & Gardens
Back Road Brewery
Fiss
Summerset Winery

West Hill Brewing
Jenkins Garden Market
The Compost Pile
Debbie Chapman
Cyndy Jeffries
Janice Purdum
Chris & Nicole Swisher–
Market Masters
Chris Cole Gardens
Ace Hendricks
Kathy Magrude
Crimson Anchor Coffee
Roasters
Pageturners Bookstore
Kay Whipple
Troy & Tammy Randall



Winter Family Bucket List



- * Choose a tree to decorate with natural items for the wildlife in the area.
- * Play snowball tag.
- * Paint snow graffiti with food coloring and water in your backyard.
- * Go snowshoeing.
- * Follow someone (or something) else's tracks.
- * Fly a kite.
- * Listen for owls.
- * Leave a message or art in the snow for someone else to find.
- * Build a snow fort.
- * Make a birdfeeder. (DIY feeders or pinecones rolled in pb and seeds!)
- * Build a snowman, or snow-animal.
- * Have a family winter photography competition.
- * Make and go on a winter scavenger hunt.



Winter 2021

Warren County Conservation Board



The Warren County Conservation Board manages over 2,200 acres of land for the benefit of its citizens. Visitors can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities on areas being conserved for this generation and generations to come.

Subscribe to *Three Rivers Journal* via email! Reduce waste and get frequent updates on programs, parks, & projects:



wccb@warrencb.org



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Ace Hendricks, Vice-President
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Ryan McPherren, Conservation Technician
Karen Johlas-Szalkowski, Naturalist II
Kelsey Longnecker, Naturalist I

The Warren County Conservation Board does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Warren County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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