The historic Horn’s Ferry Bridge—located down river from the Lake Red Rock dam—has long provided a place for birdwatchers to observe eagles and other amazing creatures year round. The bridge will soon have new professional, interpretive signage thanks to several grants written by Marla Mertz, Marion County Naturalist, on behalf of the Marion County Conservation Board (MCCB). The grants, which were awarded earlier this year, will give the public insight to many of the wildlife species and habitat needs of the Des Moines River Corridor.

The bridge, Marion County’s first wagon bridge over the Des Moines River, is unique for bird viewing because much of the river corridor holds historic roost sites for wintering Bald Eagles, as well as occasional nesting locations for year round residents. This includes the Gladys Black Eagle Refuge which is located across the river from the bridge. Many other, unique, water loving birds can also be viewed in different seasons of the year such as Osprey and Trumpeter Swans.

The bridge was built in 1881 and became a pivotal link in the county’s commercial and transportation network development. In 1992, 300 feet of the bridge folded into the river and the remaining section now continues to serve as an observation vantage point to view the array of wildlife diversity that utilizes the river.

According to Horn’s Ferry Hideaway, prior to the bridge, a ferry was operated at this location by Elias Horn who came to Iowa in 1869. Horn bought a small plot of land on the south side of the river and obtained a license to operate a ferry. His flat-bottomed ferry boat carried cattle (5 cents a head), teams of horses and wagons (25 cents), sheep and hogs (3 cents a head), and household goods. Thus, the name Horn’s Ferry Bridge.

Today, thousands of people visit Horn’s Ferry, the Volksweg Trail and the scenic offerings surrounding the Des Moines River annually. Photographers, birders, hikers, tour busses, school events and many other walks of life visit this bridge as a birding observation destination stop.
The Green Scene is a tip sheet developed by the Marion County Extension Office to inform people of horticulture events, problems, and interesting ideas. Let us know if you want to be added to our mailing list. Some issues are also available at www.extension.iastate.edu/marion/. This material has been prepared Karen Ackley, Agriculture Program Assistant. If you have questions, please contact the office at (641) 842-2014.

Sincerely, Dale R. Miller, County Extension Education Director

Dragoons first explored what is now the Marion County area in 1835. These soldiers patrolled the Red Rock Line from 1842 to 1845. This line extended north and south through much of Iowa and was named after the town of Red Rock which was located on the shores of the Des Moines River. After 1845, settlers were allowed west of the Red Rock Line. Identify where this sign is and win a Marion County Best of Show Calendar. Email or call your answer to kackley@iastate.edu or 641-842-2014.

The 2014 full color Marion County calendars are now in! Earlier this year Marion County Extension and the Marion County Development Commission joined together to sponsor the third annual Marion County Photo contest. The contest was open to all amateur photographers. Each person could submit up to 10 photographs. They could be all in one category or split between several. Categories included scenic, wildlife, and people having fun. All photos had to be taken in Marion County.

Now photographs from the contest have been used to create a new 2014 Best of Show calendar. Photographs were selected based on contest results, resolution, and seasonal appropriateness. The 13-month calendar is available at the Marion County ISU Extension Office and Iowa State Bank in Knoxville. Cost is $5. Carole Rowland’s Best of Show winning photograph is the calendar’s cover (see above).

The 2014 Photo Contest is now open to all amateur photographers. For more information about the contest or calendar, contact Karen Ackley at 641-842-2014 or kackley@iastate.edu.

Learn to Keep Bees...

Beekeeping classes will be held in Marion County this winter. Classes will meet Tuesday evenings beginning January 21-March 4 at 6:30 pm at the Marion County Extension office, 210 N. Iowa Street, Knoxville. Cost for the seven classes is $35.

For more information, or to enroll, call Craig Greene at 641-842-2112. Young people are encouraged to attend. This project is supported in part by Marion County Extension, Mahaska County Extension, and Back to Basics Bee Club.

Win a Prize—Where Is This?

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