

# Big Island e w s

[www.bisawpa.org](http://www.bisawpa.org)

*A newsletter dedicated to the preservation of Big Island, Rock Island County, Illinois*

*Fall 2018*



## Rock River Trail 320 Mile Bike Ride

On a rainy day in June cyclists Dan Libman of Oregon, IL and Carl Nelson from DeKalb, IL set out from the beginning of the Rock River Trail at the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area in Theresa, Wisconsin. They were the first to cycle 320 miles to end of the trail at the historic confluence of the Rock River, Mississippi River, and Hennepin Canal on Big Island. The two made the journey in five days. BISAWPA Vice President, Dean Mathias and Ray Morrison of Blue Grass met the two riders in Osborn (east of Cleveland) to guide the pair to the end of the trail. Dean also serves as the Rock Island County representative of the Rock River Trail Initiative. As they cycled into Lock 32 from the primitive trail, the riders first noticed a big yellow tent. They

were met by a small welcoming committee organized by the Big Island Soil & Water Preservation Association, where lunch was provided.

Dean Mathias presented the riders with Rock River Trail 320 mile patches for successfully completing the challenge. Ashley Gomez from the Milan Chamber of Commerce presented the riders "Milan" jackets. Randy Wlaskolich, BISAWPA President, welcomed the riders and gave them "Bike Big Island" frisbees.

The two then posed for photos at one of the signs BISAWPA erected at the beginning of the trail last year. "We hope others will follow and make the journey," said Randy Wlaskolich. "We'll leave the light on and put up the yellow tent."



Above: Cyclists Carl Nelson (left) and Dan Libman rode all 320 miles of the Rock River Trail, from Horicon Marsh in Theresa, Wisconsin to the trail's end on Big Island, at the confluence of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers, and Hennepin Canal. At right: Dean Mathias discusses the historic ride with the cyclists.



### *Xstream Cleanup*

Come join us on **October 27th** from 9:00 - 11:00 am for our annual Xstream Cleanup at Lock 32 and the primitive trail. Meet at the Hennepin Canal Lock 31 picnic shelter. You can sign up to attend and select your t-shirt size by going to our website at [bisawpa.org](http://bisawpa.org). Lunch will be provided. Hope to see many of you there!





## It Takes a Village (or should we say . . . Township)

Blackhawk Township has had our back for many years. We have them to thank for keeping our township roads in tip top shape, mowing, and removing snow in the winter. One job they probably didn't expect was removing a boat from Canal Road. On a recent road cleaning day, the crew discovered an abandoned boat. It appeared some energetic types dropped the boat off and tied it to a tree. Perhaps they

thought it would float away if the road flooded. Blackhawk Road Commissioner, Bruce Stickell said "This has got to be the biggest trash pickup on Canal Road ever. No job is too big or too small; we do it all!"

In addition to mowing and maintaining the Township roads, Bruce and his crew continually remove old tires and trash. Thanks Bruce and Rick for keeping Big Island lookin' good!



*Blackhawk Road Commissioner, Bruce Stickell stands next to an abandoned boat he and his crew removed from Canal Road.*

## Pollinator Prairie Garden Signs

BISAWPA members Mike DeSchinckel and Randy Wlaskolich erected signs at the Hennepin Canal Parkway, Lock 31 and Pollinator Prairie Garden. The signs were designed by Becky Buckrop, University of Illinois Extension, and purchased through a grant from Exelon.

The garden is a huge success with BISAWPA member Ethan Sierens who raises butterflies every year. He said, "The best place to let my butterflies go is in the Pollinator Garden at Lock 31."

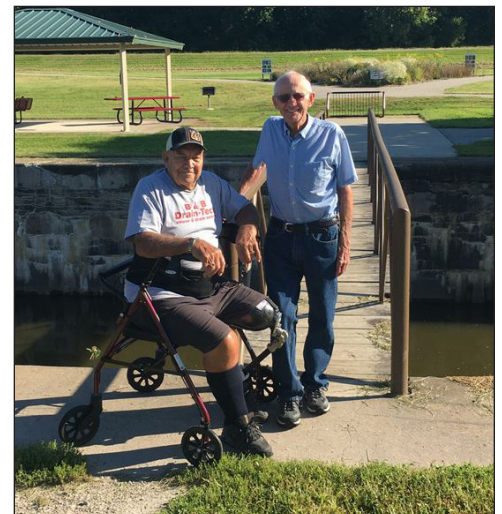


## Keeping it Local at Lock 31

"Keep it local." That's what Charles "Chick" Cole, President of the Pythian Castle Corporation along with Jerry Wilson, Treasurer, told us when discussing the many years the Knights of Pythias and Pythian Sisters have donated to the Milan community. They are now happy to partner with us to work on Phase 3 of our Hennepin Canal Lock 31 project on Big Island. Phase 3 involves construction of a 10 foot concrete entrance to a handicap bridge and concrete pad for the portable toilet. These good folks from the Knights of Pythias Lodge 477 in Milan and Pythian

Sisters 254 are donating the concrete and guard railing caps for the project.

Donating to local projects is nothing new for these two and their fellow members. Chick and Jerry have both been around awhile. They reminisced about joining the organization together when they were 18 years old while attending the national convention in 1957 in New York City. That's a lot of years helping others! Throughout the years recipients of their generosity have been many, including the Milan Santa Fund, Blackhawk Fire Protection District, Milan Legion Baseball and Milan Fireworks.



*Knights of Pythian members "Chick" Cole and Jerry Wilson check out Lock 31. Donations from the organization are helping with future improvements.*