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#### **HOURS OF OPERATION:**

Mon - Fri | 9 am - 4 pm Saturday | 10 am - 4 pm Sunday & Open Holidays | Noon - 4 pm Closed Sunday | DEC - FEB

JESTER PARK
OUTDOOR RECREATION &
WELLNESS CENTER

**SUMMER HOURS:** (Memorial Day - Labor Day)

Thurs - Sat | 10 am - 4 pm

Sunday, Memorial Day, & Labor Day | Noon - 4 pm

FALL & WINTER HOURS: (until May 28, 2024)

aturday | 10 am - 4 pm

Sunday & Open Holidays | Noon - 4 pm

Closed Sunday | DEC - FEB

Open extended hours when 6" of snow on ground for skiing and snowshoeing.

#### **HOLIDAYS CLOSED:**

Presidents' Day

Easter Day

Veterans Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

New Year's Dav

Polk County Conservation strives to host inclusive, accessible events and meetings that enable all individuals to participate. If you anticipate needing a modification due to a disability or have questions about accessibility, please contact us at 515-323-5300 or pccb\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov.

# RESISTING / TO FALL THE URGE / DORMANT

It's easy this time of year to feel almost pulled toward soft couches and glowing screens. You even hear the little voice in your head say, "There's nothing to do in winter anyway." But that little voice is wrong. There is so much to do outside in lowa's winter months that will provide a deeper understanding of our local ecosystems and keep you stronger and healthier.

Though some of Polk County's native trees and flowers are falling dormant, you don't have to. As our cold season marches on, I invite you to move with it.

Join a group hike or snowshoe lesson with Polk County Conservation's team of naturalists. Explore a new trail or park. Take up ice fishing (more on that in the pages ahead). Or simply sit, watch and listen to the incredible birds that are fully active in winter. Each of these activities provides you the opportunity to embark on a mini-adventure and return energized and with lungs full of fresh air.

I promise you that staff at Polk County Conservation will be right there with you. We have a long to-do list that will be tackled over the winter months. We'll be busy improving our timbered areas, grooming snow-covered recreation trails, leading winter recreation events, and preparing for two new parks to open in the spring. So, let's make a pact and refuse to hibernate. It's time to embrace winter recreation together.

See you on the trails!

Restand a. Legald |

Richard Leopold Director Polk County Conservation



# THRILLS, CHILLS, & Gills

Ice fishing is a great way to take advantage of the cooler months and enjoy the great outdoors. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned pro, Polk County has resources for you to have a safe and satisfying experience.

# **SAFETY TIPS:**

# USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM:

Fellow anglers can help you to determine ice thickness, call for help in an emergency, and get pictures of you and your biggest catch.



# MEASURE ICE THICKNESS:

A minimum of four inches of clear ice is best. Pay attention to elements that deteriorate ice, such as logs or rocks, and nearby currents or streams. Ice that appears cloudy indicates thawing and refreezing and is not



# UTILIZE SAFETY EQUIPMENT:

Ice fishers should wear life jackets, especially early and late in the season when ice is more apt to break. Ice cleats and appropriate winter gear will keep you warm and prevent you from slipping on the ice.



#### **FIND THE RIGHT SPOT:**

Yellow Banks Pond, Easter Lake, Fort Des Moines Park, and Discovery Pond are all great areas for winter fishing. Be sure to stay off Saylorville Lake. The dam can open and lower the water level, creating a dangerous void under the ice.



#### COMMON

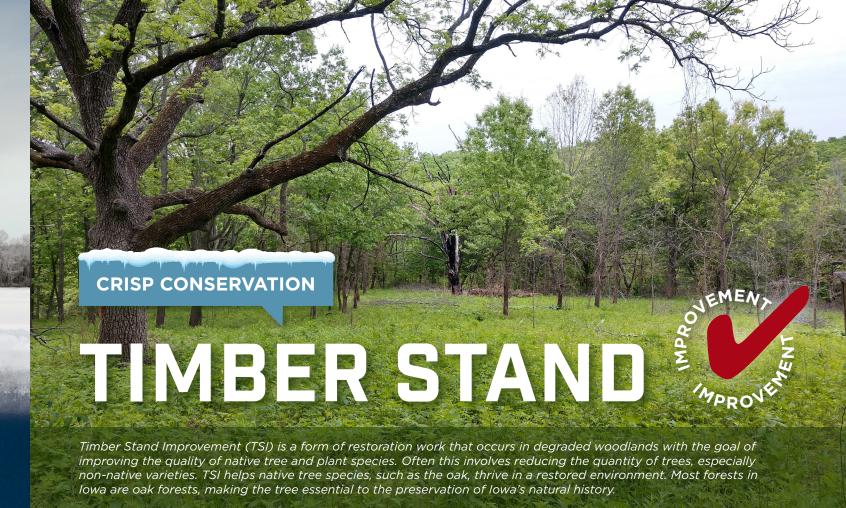
- Bluegills
- Crappies
- Sunfish
- Perch

#### **TARGETS**

- Walleyes
- Largemouth Bass

#### **TROPHIES**

- Northerns
- Muskies



When the cold rolls in and the leaves fall, it signals the beginning of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) season for Polk County Conservation staff. Most TSI work takes place during wintertime in order to minimize the risk of harm to both people and the environment.

Winter work allows staff to minimize park-user exposure to the TSI process. This is critical because timber work is inherently risky given the use of heavy machinery and power tools, and the potential for falling debris.

Working on trees in the winter also prevents the spread of disease from plant to plant. Because native tree species are more susceptible to diseases like oak wilt during the summer months, doing TSI work during the winter helps limit plant infections.

TSI is an important conservation practice which aids in the restoration of lowa's natural environment. Without it, remaining woodland areas in the state will be choked out by invasive species such as honeysuckle. Polk County helps ensure the safety



of both the natural environment and people through its work.







# NO SNOW, NO PROBLEM.



Imagine the thrill of tubing down a giant hill with wind and moisture flying in your face — in the middle of July! That imagined future is becoming a reality in Des Moines. Polk County Conservation is preparing for the grand re-opening of Sleepy Hollow Sports Park which will include the largest all-season, turf-surface tubing hill in the world.

"I'm really excited for the opportunity this new feature brings to the community," said Jeff Condon, Leisure Services Manager for Polk County Conservation. "We're getting an upper hand on mother nature, offering winter sports in any weather — making the park more available for visitors."

The all-season turf surface, called Snowflex, is a multi-layered, impervious material that will be continuously lubricated with water to allow sports equipment to glide across when not covered in snow. With construction of the hill nearly complete, the hill is estimated to be more than 600 feet long and 50 thousand square feet total.

Sleepy Hollow to the community. Acquired in September of 2022, the park has been closed to perform needed assessments and repairs on the property and equipment, as well as install the Snowflex surface. Once the all-season tubing hill is up and running, Conservation's focus will shift to preparing for traditional snow-based recreation.

approach to re-introducing

Additionally, staff will be making decisions on remodeling the lodge facility, improving access, and expanding camping operations. Throughout this multi-year process, Polk County Conservation will continue to seek input from the surrounding community and winter-sports enthusiasts.

As plans for the grand re-opening of Sleepy Hollow are finalized, you'll be able to learn more at the website **SleepyHollowSportsPark.com** This is also where you'll be able to purchase tickets and get all your questions answered related to safety and park operations.

"We applaud Polk County Conservation for their creativity and fresh perspective on Sleepy Hollow. Thank you to the Polk County Board of Supervisors too for their support. This will be great for the local community and will also be a huge new attraction for visitors. In just one weekend, travelers from across the Midwest can skateboard at Lauridsen Skatepark one day, then tube down the hill at Sleepy Hollow the next," said Greg Edwards, President &

The planned rollout of winter sports in both warm and cold weather is part of Polk County Conservation's phased

CEO of Catch Des Moines.



#### **NEED-TO-KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:**

#### LOCATION:

4051 Dean Ave. Des Moines, IA 50317

#### **AGE REQUIREMENTS:**

3-6 years must be accompanied by an adult. 7+ years can tube solo.

#### COST:

\$14 per rider for a two-hour session. Fee includes lift access and tube rental.



04 JAN

#### **Toddler Tales - Animal Tracks**

10-10:30 am Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 2-5 | FREE | No registration required

06

#### Winter Tree Identification Hike

1-2:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 8+ | FREE | Register by Jan 5

13 JAN

#### **Winter Hike**

10-11 am Brown's Woods All ages | FREE | No registration required

JAN

#### Women in the Woods with Wine -Polk County Parks and Programs

7-9 pm | Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 21+ | \$15/person | Register by Jan 14

JAN

#### Story Tellabration - It is Snowing

10-10:30 am Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 2+ | FREE | No registration required

19

#### Family Fun Night at the ORWC

6-8 pm | No registration required Outdoor Rec & Wellness Center All Ages | \$5/ages 4+ | FREE/under age 4



Featuring



#### Dr. Paul Brooke

#### Meet Dr. Brooke @ OWLS January 2 | 11 am

Come join Dr. Paul Brooke and walk with pumas. As part of his most recent book, he photographed wild pumas in Pantagonia, Chile as well as a variety of other wildlife. Brooke will tell you about tracking the cats in the low Andes and watching them hunt guanacos, feed and care for their cubs.

January 2 - April 28, 2024



19 JAN

#### Chakra Alignment Meditation - Part 1

6-7:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 12+ | \$15/person | Register by Jan 17

20 JAN

#### **Global Migration -**Wandering Albatross

10:30 am-Noon | Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required

20 **JAN** 

#### **Get Nutty with Squirrels**

1-2 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required

#### **Iowa Archeology and Artifacts**

10:30 am-Noon | Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 10+ (with adult) FREE | No registration required

**JAN** 

#### **Reflections on Experiencing Shinrin** Yoku in Japan

11 am-Noon | Jester Park Nature Center Ages 12+ | \$5/person | Register by Jan 25

27 JAN

#### **Critter Club**

1-2:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required

OI FEB

#### **Toddler Tales - Little Cloud**

10-10:30 am Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 2-5 | FREE | No registration required

02 FEB

#### Chakra Alignment Meditation - Part 2

6-7:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages 12+ | \$15/person | Register by Jan 31

03 FEB

#### **Winter Hike**

10:30 am-Noon & 12:30-2 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required

09 FEB

#### **Snowshoeing & Shinrin Yoku Retreat**

1-2 pm Outdoor Rec & Wellness Center Ages: 16+ | \$30/person | Register by Feb 2



## mindfulness & movement

**JAN 10, FEB 12, MAR 5, APR 9 Jester Park Nature Center** 6:30-7:30 pm

Ages: 12+ | \$15/person Registration required





# **GUIDED TRAIL RIDES**

**STARTING JUNE 14** 

Jester Park Equestrian Center Fri & Sat | 9:30 am, 11 am, 2 pm Ages: 8+ | \$75/rider Registration required

09

#### **Nature Center After Dark:** Starry Night

6-7 pm | Jester Park All ages | FREE | No registration required

10

#### **Owl You Need is Love**

10:30 am-11:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 5+ | FREE | No registration required

IO

#### **Critter Club**

1-2:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required

П

#### **Chinese New Year**

10:30 am-Noon Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | Register by Feb 9

FEB

#### **Sweetheart Night Hike**

6:30-7:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 18+ | \$5/person | Register by Feb 10 FEB

#### **Sustainability Series**

6:30-7:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 12+ | FREE | Register by Feb 13

FEB

#### **Winter Survival**

1-2:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | Register by Feb 16

20 **FEB** 

#### Women in the Woods with Wine -Archery and Axes

7-9 pm | Outdoor Rec & Wellness Center Ages: 21+ | \$15/person | Register by Feb 18



## **SPRING BREAK** Morch 4-18

Sneaky little leprechauns have hidden 10 special shamrocks on the trails around Jester Park Nature Center.

See how many you can spot, snap a picture, and share your photos with us on Facebook or Instagram!

Share your adventure on Instagram with us @PolkCountyConservation by hashtagging #JPShamrocks, or post your photos on our Facebook wall.

**2I** FEB

#### Story Tellabration - Owl Moon

10-10:30 am Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 2+ | FREE | No registration required

24

#### **Winter Hike**

1-2 pm & 2:30-3:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | Register by Feb 23

24 FEB

#### **Antler Shed Hunt**

1-2:30 pm Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #1 All ages | FREE | No registration required

07

#### **Toddler Tales - Salamanders**

10-10:30 am Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 2-5 | FREE | No registration required

08

#### **Night Hike**

6-7:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 5+ | \$5/person | Register by Mar 7









Take the opportunity to rent our beautiful arena at The Jester Park Equestrian Center. It serves a variety of uses ranging from collegiate horse shows and dog shows, to a weekend destination for day trail-riders. The indoor complex measures 120' x 240' with a 100' x 200' riding surface.

We provide pull-out bleachers for 200 spectators, a climate controlled conference room, full-use kitchen and over-head heaters on the north end of the arena. Use of the stall barn is another amenity, with thirty 10x10 stalls and two 10x20 extra large stalls.

Scan to learn more:



09 MAR

#### **Mammal Mania**

10:30 am-Noon Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required



#### **Hurray for Herps!**

10-11 am Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required



JAN 25, FEB 22, MAR 15 | 11:00 AM **APR 15** | 1:00 PM

Jester Park Equestrian Center FREE | All ages (with an adult)

Enjoy pony-themed stories followed by a pony meet & greet!



#### **Critter Club**

10-11:30 am Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required



#### Moths vs. Butterflies

10-11 am Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | Register by Mar 12 MAR

#### Women in the Woods with Wine -Jump into Spring

7-9 pm | Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 21+ | \$15/person | Register by Mar 17



#### Family Fun Night at the ORWC

6-8 pm | No registration required Outdoor Rec & Wellness Center All Ages | \$5/ages 4+ | FREE/under age 4



#### **Rain Barrel Workshop**

9-10 am | Outdoor Rec & Wellness Center Ages: 12+ (with adult) \$50/person | *Register by Mar 15* 



#### **Geocache Egg Hunt**

12:30 am-2 pm Thomas Mitchell Park, Pond Parking lot Ages: 5-14 | \$5/person | Register by Mar 15



#### Holi: Celebration of Colors & Spring

12:30 am-2 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | Register by Mar 22



#### **Sustainability Series**

6:30-7:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 12+ | FREE | Register by Apr 1



#### **Nature Center After Dark:** Hawaiian Luau

6-7 pm | Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required



#### **Global Migrations - African Sardines**

10:30 am-Noon Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required



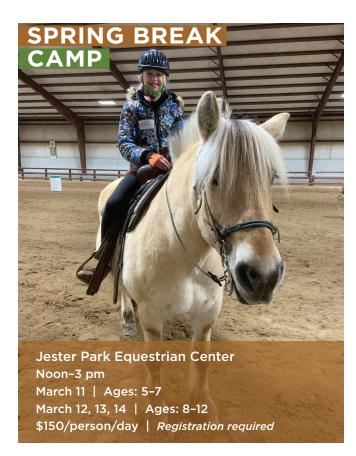
#### Shinrin Yoku - Forest Bathing

1:30-3:30 pm Brown's Woods Ages: 12+ | \$15/person | Register by Apr 11



#### Women in the Woods with Wine -Light the Night

7-9 pm | Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 21+ | \$15/person | Register by Apr 14





Grades: K-5 | FREE | Jester Park Nature Center

Registration opens one month prior. register by one day prior

#### 10-11 am & 1-2 pm:

JAN 5: Rock On! - Geology

**FEB 2:** Winter Birds MAR 1: Botany

#### 10-11:30 am & 1-2:30 pm:

JAN 19: The Tundra FEB 23: The Ocean MAR 22: The Rainforest

APR 12: The Desert





11 am - Noon | Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 12+ | FREE | No registration required

JAN 2: "Walk with the Pumas" Art Show

FEB 6: Mongolia - "Land of the Nomadic Eagle Hunters"

MAR 5: Secrets of the Underground

APR 2: African Wildlife Adventures



**NATURE CAMPS:** 

registration opens MAR 7

Story Tellabration - April Showers

10-10:30 am

Jester Park Nature Center Ages: 2+ | FREE | No registration required

20 APR **Introduction to Watercolor Class** 

10:30-3:30 pm Jester Park Nature Center Ages 16+ | \$45/person | Register by Apr 5

20 APR **Secrets of the Underground** 

1-1:45 pm Jester Park Nature Center All ages | FREE | No registration required APR

**Hike for Health** 

9:30-10:30 am Jester Park Nature Center

Ages 10+ | FREE | Register by Apr 20

**APR** 

Kites and the Science of Flight

10:30-11:30 am Jester Park Nature Center All ages | \$10/person | No registration required

APR

Wildflower Hike

1-2:30 pm Thomas Mitchell Park, Pond Parking Lot All ages | FREE | No registration required



# VOLUNTEER

### JOIN OUR REWARDING PROGRAM!

Connect with the Polk County Conservation Volunteer Program to become a meaningful part of our community, caring for local parks and trails. Whether you're passionate about protecting wildlife or restoring native ecosystems, preserving the natural world is a collective responsibility and we have opportunities for you to make a positive impact.

TAKE ACTION!

Sign up for our e-Newsletter to stay up-to-date on the latest volunteer events and opportunities this spring. Scan the QR code or visit us at: bit.ly/PCCVolunteerE-News



#### **GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY**

and learn about conservation-minded early spring garden maintenance.



#### PROTECT OUR FORESTS

Help us by removing invasive plants and promote native trees and wildflowers.



#### **EARTH MONTH**

Celebrate with us by joining one of the many opportunities offered in April.





# SUMMER CAMPS 20 24

#### **EQUESTRIAN CENTER CAMP:** registration opens FEB 1



Jr. Horse **Adventures Camp** 9 am-Noon \$500/kid/session

#### **Sessions:**

- June 3-6
- June 17
- June 18



**Adventures Camp** 9 am-Noon \$500/kid/session

#### **Sessions:**

- June 10-13
- June 24-27
- July 8-11
- July 15-18
- July 22-25 • July 29 - Aug 1
- Aug 5-8



**June 6-7** Noisy Nature: \$40 9-11:30 am

#### June 10-14

Nature Explorers: \$100 9-11:30 am

#### June 25-27

Wild Kratts: \$60 Session 1: 9-11:30am Session 2: 1-3:30pm

#### July 11-12

Noisy Nature: \$40 9-11:30 am



June 17-18

Nature Discovery: \$90 9 am-3:30 pm

#### June 20-21

Buggin' Out: \$40 9-11:30 am

#### **July 1-3**

Dinosaur Discovery: \$135 | 9 am-3:30 pm

#### July 17-18

Nature Discovery: \$90 9-11:30 am

Aug 1-2

\$90

Night at the

Nature Center:

• Thurs: 4pm-Fri:

9am (Overnight!)



#### **July 15-17**

Junior Naturalist: Junior Naturalist: \$135 9 am-3:30 pm

# Explorations:

\$135 9 am-3:30 pm

June 10-12

July 10-12

Ocean

9 am-3:30 pm

\$135

July 23-24 Botany Camp:

9 am-3:30 pm

#### June 12-14 River Rats: \$90

9 am-3:30 pm

#### June 17-18 Shooting

Camp: \$90 9 am-3:30 pm

## June 20

Survival: \$45 9 am-3:30 pm

#### July 18

Survival: \$45 9 am-3:30 pm

#### **July 22-23**

Shooting Camp: \$90 9 am-3:30 pm

#### July 24-26

Pathfinders Experience: \$150

• Wed: 9am-3:30pm

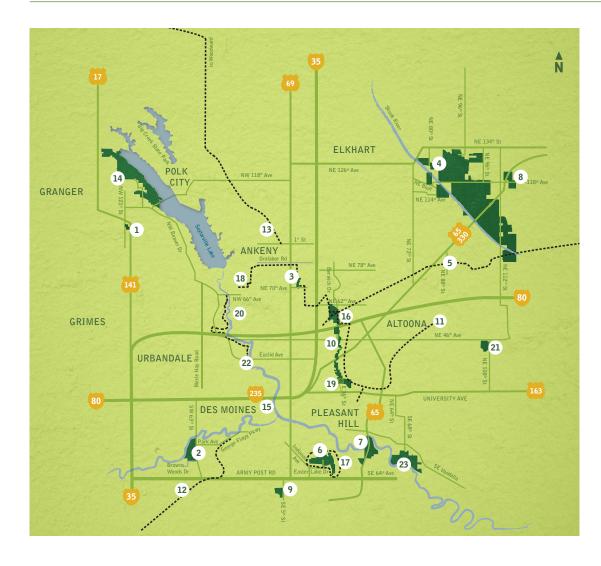
• Thurs: 9am-Fri: 11am (Overnight!)



To learn more about Polk County Conservation summer camps, visit: bit.ly/pcc-summer-camps For information about Jester Park Equestrian Center Camps, visit: bit.ly/ec-summer-camps Enjoy 50% off for Nature Pass holders. See if you qualify by visiting: bit.ly/PCCNaturePass

CONSERVATION

NONPROFIT ORG. U.S. POSTAGE PAID AMES, IA PERMIT NO. 14





- 1. Beaver Creek Greenbelt
- 2. Brown's Woods
- 3. Carney Marsh
- 4. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
- 5. Chichagua Valley Trail
- 6. Easter Lake Park
- 7. Eagle Roost Wildlife Area
- 8. Engeldinger Marsh
- 9. Fort Des Moines Park
- 10. Fourmile Creek Greenway
- 11. Gay Lea Wilson Trail
- 12. Great Western Trail
- 13. High Trestle Trail
- 14. Jester Park
- 15. Lauridsen Skatepark
- 16. Mally's Park
- 17. Mark C. Ackelson Trail
- 18. Oralabor Gateway Trail
- 19. Strasser Woods State Preserve
- 20. Sycamore Trails
- 21. Thomas Mitchell Park
- 22. Trestle to Trestle Trail
- 23. Yellow Banks Park