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Discover a New View on the High Trestle Trail at the Grand Celebration



Celebrate Central Iowa as “The World Capital of Trails” on Saturday, April 30, 2011! After seven years of development, the complete 25-mile long High Trestle Trail will finally open to the public with a Grand Celebration.

All towns along the trail will provide activities throughout the day in celebration of this formal grand opening. Food, music, art displays, exhibits, games, and tours are just a few things to look forward to. Most activities will take place between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Bikers and walkers are welcome to travel the whole 25 miles from Ankeny to Woodward or pick a shorter route between a few of the towns. Visitors that don't want to use the trail that day can simply visit the communities of Ankeny, Sheldahl, Slater, Madrid and Woodward to see what they have to offer. Just be sure you visit the highlight of the trail which is the ½ mile long, 13-story high art bridge that spans across the Des Moines River between Madrid and Woodward.

Details about the event will be published online as they are finalized at www.hightrestletrail.info. Community “passports” will be available prior to the event to help guide you along the trail and through the towns.

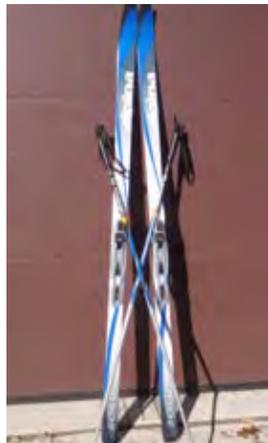


Rental Skis and Snowshoes Available

Interested in trying cross-country skiing or snowshoeing this winter? If so, consider renting a pair from Polk County Conservation. We have 30 sets of snowshoes and cross-country skis, including ski boots and poles for education classes and rental. The equipment is sized mainly for adults. Equipment can be reserved in advance by calling (515) 323-5300. Equipment must be picked up and dropped off at Jester Park during normal business hours, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Polk County Conservation is also offering several opportunities for people to learn how to cross-country ski and snowshoe. See pages 6-7 for information on classes.

- Cross-Country Ski Rental:
- Skis, boots, poles.....\$8/day
- Snowshoe Rental:
- Snowshoes only.....\$7/day



Where Can I Ski?

Whether you are an avid skier or just a beginner, there are several great places to cross-country ski in Central Iowa. You will find groomed cross-country ski trails in Jester Park, Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Raccoon River Park in West Des Moines, and Big Creek State Park. Of course you can break your own ski trail just about anywhere in most public parks.

Trails in Polk County parks will be groomed after a snowfall over six inches. A groomed trail is maintained with a groomer and tracksetter pulled by a snowmobile. The groomer packs down the snow and the tracksetter makes a track for cross-country skiers to ski in. Walkers, runners, and bicyclists are asked not to recreate on groomed trails.

Visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org to view trails maps for Jester Park and Chichaqua.

Thomas Mitchell Park Pond Draining Update

For more than a year, PCC has been trying to drain the pond at Thomas Mitchell Park as part of a major restoration project. Thanks to a dry fall, the pond is now nearly drained. More than 27,000 cubic yards of sediment has accumulated in the bottom of the pond. If that soil was spread out over 10 acres it would be 20 inches deep.

Before dredging can take place, four sediment basins need to be installed. These sediment basins will catch sediment from the park and surrounding property. The sediment basins should be completed by the end of 2010. The pond will most likely be dredged in the spring or summer of 2011.

Park Packs

Nature themed park packs are available for a two week check-out for free. Themes include: Birds, Trees, Insects, Animals of Iowa, Geology, Life in a Pond, Wildflowers & Plants, Animals of the Night, Prairies, and Outdoor Skills.

Contact Lori at (515) 323-5380 or lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov

2010 Great Outdoors Fund Friends Celebration

The Great Outdoors Fund hosted their annual Friends Celebration on Friday, September 17th, at the Jester Park Lodge. The event was tremendously successful. All 250 available tickets were pre-sold prior to the night of the event with many new GOF friends in attendance. The weather was beautiful, the food delicious, and the auctions, raffles, and games were entertaining. Event highlights included selling 33 bus stipends for school field trips and 50 at-risk youth equestrian camp scholarships.

In January 2010, the Friends of the Great Outdoors membership program was launched. To date, the following people and businesses are Friends:

Corporate Friends (\$1,000+):

Brick Gentry Law Firm
Growing Green Communities
Iowa Health Des Moines
Hubbell Realty
Jester Insurance Services
Knapp Properties
Landscapes By Design
MidAmerican Energy
Next Step Incorporated
RDG Planning & Design
Scheels
Shive-Hattery
Snyder & Associates



Guests mingle on the Lodge deck enjoying appetizers, drinks, games, and the view.

Family Friends (\$100+):

Rob Davis & Pat Boddy
Capitol City Equipment
Carol Ann Carlson & Mark Lowman
Joseph Jr. & Sheryl Corfits
Rusty & Shannon Doner
Carl & Marcene Grant
Jim and Ellen Hubbell
John & Mary Keck
Ian & Danielle Lin

Family Friends (\$100+):

Steve and Deb Lindner
Matthew & Wendy Markmann
Chris and Gail McCarthy
Alan & Deane McPherson
James & Deborah Miller
Dennis and Becky Parker
Michael & Ann Richards
Todd and Faye Senne
Spain Family Farm
James Spevak
Rick and Nan Tollackson
James & Barbara Youngblood

Individual Friends (\$50+):

Margaret M. Cooper
Carylann Mucha
Dawn O'Conner
Dick and Nelda Sampel
Jeff and Kelli Schulz
Terry F. Simpson
Sherrilynn Stewart
Daniel and Sandra Verhasselt
Jay Vonderhaar

Thanks for your support!

Consider becoming a Great Outdoors Fund Friend today! See page 15 for an application form.



Outdoors Dan emcees the live auction to a packed house.

Flooding Impacts on PCC Parks and Trails

During the summer of 2010, almost all of PCC parks and trails suffered some kind of damage due to flooding along the Des Moines and Skunk Rivers.

The most heavily damaged parks were Thomas Mitchell, Jester and the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Nearly all of Chichaqua was impacted by the flood water. The Chichaqua Valley Trail had 27 washouts in 3 ½ miles while some sections of the trail were completely washed away. Serious damage to the Chichaqua Longhouse, campground, maintenance shops, residence, dikes and roads occurred. Flood debris and siltation removal, additional erosion controls, and culvert repairs were needed at many other parks and trails.

Some repairs have been made but more will take place in 2011. Major repair of areas such as the Chichaqua Valley Trail will be long term projects. PCC staff is working with FEMA representatives, State of Iowa representatives, and the Polk County Board of Supervisors to determine reimbursable costs for these damages. Please be patient with us during this process.



This is just one of the sections of the Chichaqua Valley Trail that washed away during the August floods. The washout is about 100 feet across and 20 feet deep.

Master Planning Update

The Polk County Conservation Board will approve master plans for Thomas Mitchell and Yellow Banks Parks in January of 2011. These plans will provide long-range vision for approximately 20 years. The staff and Board would like to thank the public for their comments and suggestions. To view these plans, visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org.

Next on the master plan circuit is Fort Des Moines Park. In 2011, staff will proceed with the development of a master plan for this park. Fort Des Moines Park is located on SE 5th Street, south of Army Post Road. This 117-acre park has been a cavalry post, an officer training camp, Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) training center, US Army Reserve Center, and landfill site until the 1960’s. In the late 1960’s, Lady Bird Johnson promoted the Legacy of Parks program by giving federal property to local governments for parks. Polk County Conservation Board acquired Fort Des Moines Park through this program in October 1972. Its centerpiece is a deep 14-acre lake, but the park also features; two picnic shelters, children’s playground, nature trails, and arboretum.

If you would like to be involved with the Fort Des Moines Park master planning process, please contact Kami Rankin at 515-323-5363 or email kami.rankin@polkcountyiowa.gov.

Mission Statement

Polk County Conservation Board’s mission is to provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long-term protection of Polk County’s natural heritage.

Heidi Anderson, Editor and Naturalist

The Nature News is a free publication produced three times a year. If you are not currently on the mailing list and wish to have a copy sent directly to your home or business, call the Polk County Conservation Office, Monday-Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at 515-323-5300 or email pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov. It is also available on-line at www.leadingyououtdoors.org.

Going Green

Quick, cheap, and easy ways to conserve and save

Recycling, handcrafting, buying locally and giving experiences as gifts are all easy and fun ways to have an environmentally friendly holiday.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

- Wrap gifts using recycled or salvaged material, like colorful cotton fabric or pages from old magazines.
- Reuse gift bags over and over.
- Instead of buying a brand new book or CD, search for one in good condition at a second hand bookstore.
- Looking for gifts for kids? Visit a consignment shop to buy gently used toys.

Give Handmade Gifts

- Use your crafty skills to make gifts for friends and family.
- If you like to cook, try making jam, cookies, pies, etc.
- If you're not comfortable making gifts or simply don't have time, buy products made locally. Buying gifts made by local artisans supports your local economy.

Share and Experience

- Many gifts given each holiday season end up buried in a closet by January and eventually end up in the landfill, but an experience will be remembered for a long time.
- Consider an afternoon of horseback riding, a massage or pedicure, tickets to a concert or play.
- Make a donation to a favorite 'cause' in the name of your friend or family member.

Ideas taken from: Green Christmas Ideas - Give Environmentally Friendly Gifts During the Holidays by Michelle Carchrae

More ideas can be found on the UNI Center for Energy and Environmental Education's ReclaimYourHolidays.org website. The CEEE has created this website with the hope that it will help inspire Iowans to focus on making the holidays more meaningful.

Jester Park Equestrian Center 2011 Calendar

Group Winter Riding Lessons

Group riding lessons are available for kids on Saturdays during the winter months. The cost is \$30 per lesson and they last one hour. Sign up early to reserve a spot! If you sign up for all five Saturdays, you get one free lesson! Dates and times are: Jan. 8, Feb. 12, Feb. 19, March 12, and March 26, at 10 a.m. for ages 8-10, and 1 p.m. for ages 11-14.

Winter Horse Camps

Camp activities include horse safety, care, grooming, saddling and basic riding skills (one hour lesson included). We will also be doing a horse craft, movie time and a horse-drawn wagon or sleigh ride. Register early as space is limited. Payment is due with registration. Campers must be at least 8 years old. Horses and equipment are provided; please bring your own lunch. Cost is \$50 per date. Dates are: Dec. 29, Jan. 17, and March 15, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Sweetheart Sleigh Rides for Valentine's Day

Treat your sweetie to a romantic horse-drawn sleigh or carriage ride in the woods. Sleighs accommodate up to four people. Rides will take place without snow using a horse-drawn carriage. February 11-20 from 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. by reservation. Cost is \$60 which includes the 45-minute ride, hot chocolate, candy, and a flower. Please call 515-999-2818 to reserve your time.



Jester Park Equestrian Center
11171 NW 103 Court
Granger, IA 50109
(515) 999-2818
www.jesterparkec.com

Electronic Newsletter

To save resources we would like to reduce the number of newsletters printed and mailed. If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please email:
pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov

Each year Polk County naturalists select a variety of programs we feel the public will enjoy. Our programs have been designed with you in mind, so they are both educational and fun.

- Program and event information is available by calling our administrative office at 515-323-5300, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. You can also visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org.
- Fees and registration are not required unless otherwise noted.
- Many programs are family-oriented and are designed so all ages can participate.
- Outdoor programs will be canceled if there is lightning, blizzard like conditions, or heavy rain.
- Programs are developed for beginners. No prior experience is required unless noted.
- Youth and adult groups such as church, scouts, and 4-H are always welcome.

Ice Fishing Clinic **January 8, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.** **Jester Park, Shelter #5**

Come and learn the basics of ice fishing and get some hands-on experience. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license. Bait and poles will be provided. Bring something to sit on and dress warmly. *All ages welcome.*

Owl Prowl **January 15, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.**

Yellow Banks Park, Tent Camping Area

Bundle up and join a naturalist for a campfire program to learn about owls. After a brief discussion about these flying predators of the night, we will go for a hike and learn how to call three different species of owls. *All ages welcome.*

Snowshoe Hike **January 22, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. and** **12:30 - 2:00 p.m.**

Chichaqua Longhouse

Learn how easy and fun snowshoeing can be while experiencing the great outdoors. Wear warm waterproof boots. *Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required, sign up for the 10 or 12:30 class; deadline is January 20. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).*



Do More Outdoors **January 23, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.** **Chichaqua Longhouse**

Come enjoy the great outdoors this winter and have fun playing in the snow. Ongoing activities include ice fishing, snow shoeing, cross country skiing (for teens and older), and dog sledding demonstrations. There will be plenty of snowy fun like snow painting and sculpturing too. Indoor programming will include topics like keeping safe and warm in the winter and how to make a winter survival kit as well as demonstrations and tasting of healthy winter cooking. Co-sponsored by Iowa Health Des Moines.



Cross-Country Skiing Basics **January 29, 10:00 a.m. - Noon**

Raccoon River Nature Lodge, WDM

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on the lakeshore trail. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will be discussed before we practice our new skills on the trails. This class is co-sponsored by West Des Moines Parks and Recreation. *Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 27. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).*

Hog Wild

February 1, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. **West Des Moines Public Library**

Iowa is known for its hogs, but there is more than one kind of “hog” in Iowa. Come get “hog wild” with a Polk County Conservation naturalist as we discuss the ground hog. *All ages welcome.*

To register for a program, go to www.mycountyparks.com

Snowshoe Hike

February 5, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #3

and

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet near pond parking lot

See description for January 22 Snowshoe Hike program. Sign up for the 10:00 or 2:00 class. *Class will be cancelled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is February 3. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).*

Winter Hike

February 5, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Brown's Woods, meet in parking lot

All the leaves are gone and the sky is gray, so join us for a walk on a winter day. Search for mammal tracks and learn how animals survive the winter. *All ages welcome.*

Ice Fishing Clinic

February 6, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

See description for January 8 Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.



Willow Basket Workshop

February 12, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Learn how to create and build a willow basket, approx 10-12" square. This simple process teaches the fundamentals of construction, as well as a variety of decorative techniques. No previous experience needed. Participants will need to bring: a small hammer, sharp anvil pruning shears, and small wire cutters. Willow and nails will be supplied. Participants also need to bring a lunch. *Pre-registration required; deadline is February 4. Fee: \$50.*

Tricky Tracks

February 12, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Have you seen all of the animals that live in the woods or in your neighborhood? Come to this program and you'll learn how to find the signs

that tell you without having to see them. *All ages welcome.*



Iowa Endangered Species

February 12, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Did you know Iowa is home to over 80 endangered and threatened animal species? Come and learn about some of these rare animals. We'll also talk about the factors that cause animals to become an endangered species. *All ages welcome.*

Cross-Country Skiing Basics

February 26, 10:00 a.m. - Noon

Chichaqua Longhouse

See description for January 29 class. *Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is February 24. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).*

Ice Fishing Clinic

February 26, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Fort Des Moines Park, boat ramp

See description for January 8 Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.

Bald Eagle Watch

February 27, Noon - 4:00 p.m.

Saylorville Lake and Jester Park Lodge

Stop by the Saylorville Visitors Center to learn about our national symbol, the bald eagle. Then venture out to different areas around the lake to observe them in their natural setting. The Jester Park Lodge will be hosting "Spirit", a live eagle used for education. Hourly programs starting at 1:00 p.m. will give you a close look at this amazing species. *All ages welcome.*

Turkey Hunting Basics

March 1, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Learn how to overcome the challenges of turkey hunting. Wild turkey biology, hunting equipment, and hunting techniques will be discussed. *Pre-registration required; deadline is February 25. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$5.*

Spring Fling

March 15

Jester Park Lodge

**Reptiles from 10:30-11:30 a.m. and
Mammal Mania from 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

Come for one, or stay for both. Bring a sack lunch and enjoy a spring picnic or eat inside the Lodge. Wear your hiking shoes to explore the great park trails before or after the programs. *All ages welcome.*

Wild Night Life & Hike

March 15, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

Sit down around a campfire and learn about the wild night life in Jester Park. A short hike will follow as we search for some of these nocturnal animals. *All ages welcome.*

Nature's Stories, Songs, and More

March 17, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

West Des Moines Public Library

Are you looking for some great stories and fun songs to share with your family? Join a Polk County naturalist for a morning of fun with your child. *All ages welcome.*

Rain Barrel Workshop

March 19, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. and

11:00 a.m. - Noon

Easter Lake Park Shop

Did you know that 50% of the pollution in our lakes and rivers is washed in by storm water? One way to slow down storm water runoff is to install a rain barrel. A short discussion about ways to collect and use runoff water will be held before participants construct their own rain barrel. All materials and tools will be provided. Make sure you are able to transport your 55-gallon barrel back to your home after the workshop. *Pre-registration required; deadline is March 11. Sign up for the 9:00 or 11:00 class. Fee: \$50.*

Stargazing

March 25, 8:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Jester Park Golf Course Clubhouse

Turn your eyes to the sky to view the constellations Orion, the Big and Little Dippers, Cassiopeia, and more. Local astronomers will provide telescopes. *All ages welcome.*

How Iowa Was Made

April 5, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Come learn the "hard" basic facts about Iowa's rocks, minerals and fossils. Then discover how rocks tell us the geological history of our state, how it was formed and why it looks the way it does today. *All ages welcome.*

Create a Backyard Habitat

April 5, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Learn how to take care of your piece of the planet for your own peace of mind, and increase habitat in the process. Landscape your yard the natural way with Iowa-friendly native plants. Inger Lamb with Prairie Landscapes of Iowa will present this program. *Pre-registration required; deadline is April 1. Fee: \$5.*

I Grew It Myself - A Guide to Growing Healthy Vegetables

April 7, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Northwest Community Center

Think you can't grow your own chemical free vegetables? Don't have time? Don't have the space? Don't have the energy to start? Learn how to grow your own healthy vegetables from beginning to end. And, best of all, without a lot of work, worry or chemicals. Topics covered will be soil preparation, companion planting, easy weed control, controlling diseases and insects, small space ideas, harvesting tips, clean-up and simple rules for composting. *Pre-registration required; deadline is March 31. Fee: \$10.*

To register for a program, go to www.mycountyparks.com

Geocaching Hike

April 9, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Chichaqua Longhouse

Learn how to use a GPS unit to find hidden treasures, called geocaches, at Chichaqua. GPS units will be available for use at this program. *Pre-registration required; deadline is April 6. Fee: \$5.*

Earth Day & Arbor Day Tree Planting

April 22, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Easter Lake Park

Celebrate Earth Day and Arbor Day at Easter Lake Park. Give back to the environment, beautify a public area, and celebrate the many benefits of trees by assisting Polk County Conservation staff plant trees in the park. You'll learn the proper techniques for planting trees and then get hands-on experience placing them in the ground. All materials provided. Take the north/beach entrance off Evergreen Dr. and follow the signs to the tree planting location. *All ages welcome.*

High Trestle Trail Grand Celebration

April 30, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Special events will be held in all five towns along the trail. For more details, see front page or visit www.hightrestletrail.info.

Rain Barrel Workshop

April 30, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Easter Lake Park Shop

See description for March 19 rain barrel workshop. *Pre-registration required; deadline is April 22. Fee: \$50.*

Wildflower Hike

April 30, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at
pond parking lot

Enjoy a beautiful spring day as we hike through the woods to view and identify the dazzling display of spring wildflowers. *All ages welcome.*

Nature Friends

Preschoolers Exploring Nature
3-5-year olds with an adult
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist in a nature adventure! We will explore a different nature topic each evening through stories, sharing time, guided exploration, and art activities. Snacks will be provided.

Fee: \$7/program

Participate in a Park Passport Program. Attend five different programs, each located at a different park and receive a Nature Friend Explorer Pack. Participants must record program name, location and date with the speaker's initials on their passport. Turn the passport in at the Jester Park Office or Raccoon River Nature Lodge in West Des Moines to receive your Nature Friend Explorer Pack. One pack per child please.

March 1 - Possum Pockets at Jester Park Lodge

March 21 - It's for the Birds at Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge

April 5 - Animal Tales at Jester Park Lodge (6:00 - 7:00 p.m.)

April 18 - Super Snakes at Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge



Des Moines

These programs are co-sponsored by the Des Moines Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, Polk County Conservation, and West Des Moines Parks and Recreation. To register for Nature Friends, please call the West Des Moines Parks and Recreation office at (515) 222-3444 or register online at www.wdm-ia.com.

Polk County Conservation

Board Members

Tom Levis, West Des Moines
Michelle McEnany, Urbandale
Tina Mowry-Hadden, Altoona
Mike Smith, Des Moines
Barry Vosler, Des Moines



Printed on recycled paper

Water Wonders Camp

June 20 - 23

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ages 8 - 9 years

**Meeting location: Jester Park,
Shelter by Lodge**

Come and get your feet wet as we discover all we can about water. We'll compare ponds, rivers, lakes, and wetlands plus the animals that live in them. Daily field trips will take us to other Polk County parks.

*Fee: \$100. Registration deadline is June 10.
Limited to 12 campers.*



A camper looks in his net for tadpoles during a pond study.

Junior Naturalist Camp

June 27 - 30

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 10 - 11 years

**Meeting location: Jester Park,
Shelter by Lodge**

Do you know a child who loves the outdoors? Campers will spend the week fishing, canoeing, hiking, geocaching and more while exploring the outdoors. Campers will also learn how to use a compass, build a fire, and cook a snack over a fire. On the last day of camp, campers will become official Iowa Junior Naturalists and receive a badge and certificate. Daily field trips will take us to other Polk County parks.

*Fee: \$100. Registration deadline is June 17.
Limited to 12 campers.*



Paddling Camp

July 11 - 14

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 12 - 14 years

**Meeting location: Jester Park,
Shelter by the Lodge**

Participants will learn the necessary skills and techniques to safely canoe and kayak. Students will then get the opportunity to apply their new skills during a daylong river trip led by naturalists trained by the American Canoe Association. This camp will be physically demanding and challenging in a safe and supervised environment.

Fee: \$100. Registration deadline is July 1. Limited to 12 campers.



“Articipant” Camp

July 19 - 21

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 8-12 years

Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter #5

“ARTicipant”: (noun) one who participates in an art and nature camp. “Articipants” will explore the relationship between art and nature by gathering and using natural items from three unique Iowa habitats, woodland, prairie, and wetland, to create works of art. This approach not only allows children to be creative and artistic, but also teaches them about the natural sciences as they investigate the connections of art in nature. This three day hands-on camp will conclude by working as a team of artists to plan, design, and create a lasting natural art piece at the Jester Park Playscape teaching the students the importance and benefits of public art. “Articipants” should have an interest in the arts and nature.

Fee: \$75. Registration deadline is July 1. Limited to 12 campers.

**To register for a camp, go to
www.mycountyparks.com**

Camp Details: These day camps are designed to encourage hands-on learning through outdoor explorations, activities, games, crafts, and more. Camps will be led by naturalists. Campers are asked to bring a water bottle and sack lunch everyday. Afternoon snacks will be provided.

Winter Adventure Trip

March 9 - 13

Ely, Minnesota

Got the winter blues? This trip is full of both adventure and relaxation. Experience an adventure of a lifetime by spending a full day of dog sledding! Experienced guides will lead our trip into the wilderness, teaching you how to harness your dogs and steer the sled. The extensive training of both dogs and staff contributes to a safe and comfortable sled dog experience. During this five-day trip you will have an opportunity to cross country ski on groomed trails, and explore the wilderness by snowshoe. We will also get an introduction to wolf research techniques by spending several hours tracking wolves on snowshoes. Instruction and equipment will be available.

Fee: \$600; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging, rental fees, most meals, and dog sledding. Departure from Jester Park. Participants must be 21 years or older and will need to provide personal items and money for meals while traveling. Registration deadline is February 11.

Sandhill Crane Trip

March 26 - 27

Kearney, Nebraska

Join us on a trip to the Platte River near Kearney, Nebraska to view the migration of nearly 500,000 sandhill cranes. These large birds fill the skies, fields, and river valley as they stop to eat and rest on their long migration northward. We'll get off the bus to view cranes at Fort Kearny State Park and the Rowe Sanctuary. We will also visit the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument while in the Kearney area.

Fee: \$135; includes motorcoach transportation and lodging (double occupancy), Sunday continental breakfast, and admission fees. Departure from the Living History Farms parking lot on Saturday at 7:00 a.m. and return on Sunday at 5:00 p.m. Minimum age 12. Registration deadline is March 11.

To register for a trip, go to
www.mycountyparks.com

Prairie Chicken Viewing

April 8 - 9

Mt. Ayr, Iowa

Join us for a chance to see wild prairie chickens at Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area in southern Iowa. According to Iowa DNR Wildlife biologist Chad Paup, "This is our only public prairie chicken booming ground and there's nothing else like it anywhere in Iowa...Iowans can come and be virtually guaranteed the chance to observe and hear wild prairie chickens as they display and conduct their annual spring ritual." We'll drive down the night before, stay at a hotel, and rise before the sun to get in place for the best viewing of the prairie chickens. We'll provide spotting scopes and binoculars.

Fee: \$75; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging (double occupancy), and continental breakfast. Departure from Living History Farms parking lot at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, and return by noon on Saturday. Participant limit is 12. Registration deadline is April 1.



RVing Iowa Style at

Winnebago Industries

May 25, 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Forest City, Iowa

Kick off the camping season touring the largest RV manufacturer plant in Iowa and viewing the new RV models. Eat lunch at the historic Waldorf College campus then tour downtown Forest City. Step back into the past at the Mansion Museum and view the tractors and farm equipment of days gone by at the Heritage Park. End our day exploring Pilot Knob State Park, one of the oldest state parks in Iowa.

Fee: \$55; includes motorcoach transportation, lunch, and tour fees. Departure from the parking lot by Bonanza Family Restaurant at 5029 NE 14th Street in Des Moines. Registration deadline is May 11.

Canoe/Kayak the Niobrara River

June 11 - 15

Niobrara National Scenic River,
Nebraska



See www.leadingyououtdoors.org for details.

Heavy rain and widespread flooding affected numerous volunteer opportunities in 2010. Events such as the River Run Garbage Grab and Prairie Festival were canceled due to high water or flooding, and the Four Mile Creek Sweep was canceled due to rain. Several Eagle Scout projects were also delayed, but the dry fall enabled many scouts to complete their projects. This fall many students from Johnston High School, St. Pius Middle School and Drake University completed service learning hours.

Some of our annual volunteer projects include trail clearing and maintenance, therapeutic riding program assistants, helping with pony rides, cleaning stalls, conducting park and shoreline clean-ups, harvesting prairie seed, invasive species removal, planting trees, cleaning out fire rings, mulching trees, stream clean-ups and several annual special events like Earth Day, River Run Garbage Grab and the A-mazing Prairie Festival. If any of these activities sound like something you would like to take part in, please contact Pat Spain at (515) 323-5280, or pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov.

Save the Date!

Invasive Species Workday

January 15, 9:45 a.m. - Noon

Jester Park, meet at the front entrance

Your help is needed to restore our woodlands by removing honeysuckle and other invasives. Please meet at the entrance to Jester Park at 9:45 a.m. Dress according to weather, wear sturdy boots and bring gloves. Light refreshments will be served. Tools will be supplied.

Volunteer Appreciation Banquet

March 6, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Come join us at the Jester Park Lodge where we will highlight some of our volunteer projects and events from 2010. Nature and Wildlife Photographer Ty Smedes will present a program about Bald Eagles. Anyone who has volunteered 10 hours (or more) is invited to attend. Please contact Pat Spain to confirm your hours.

Brown's Woods Clean-up

April 16, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Families, youth groups and scouting organizations welcome! Lunch will be provided by The Huntmaster's Club following the event. Meet at the parking lot off Brown's Woods Dr. Please contact Pat Spain to confirm your attendance which will ensure adequate lunch counts.



Eagle Scout Colton Cornwell installed a bike rack along the High Trestle Trail made out of an old rail line found along the trail.



Drake students saw timber for the chipper. Students cut down and removed timber from a savanna at Jester Park.

Watch for the next issue of Nature News to read about some great volunteer opportunities and events coming up in 2011 for all ages and abilities.



- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Beaver Creek Greenbelt | 10. Gay Lea Wilson Trail |
| 2. Brown's Woods | 11. Great Western Trail |
| 3. Carney Marsh | 12. High Trestle Trail |
| 4. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt | 13. Jester Park |
| 5. Chichaqua Valley Trail | 14. Mally's Weh Weh Neh Kee Park |
| 6. Easter Lake Park | 15. Sycamore Trail |
| 7. Engeldinger Marsh | 16. Thomas Mitchell Park |
| 8. Fort Des Moines Park | 17. Trestle to Trestle Trail |
| 9. Four Mile Creek Greenbelt | 18. Yellow Banks Park |

2011 Nature Programs and Trips

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity (*pre-registration required)</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 4	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Women's Army Corps	Jester Park Lodge
January 8	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Jester Park
January 15	10:00 a.m.	Invasive Species Roundup	Jester Park
January 15	5:30 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Yellow Banks Park
January 22	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Chichaqua Longhouse
January 22	1:00 p.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Chichaqua Longhouse
January 23	1:00 p.m.	Do More Outdoors	Chichaqua Longhouse
January 29	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Raccoon River Park
February 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Wind Energy in Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
February 1	6:00 p.m.	Hog Wild	West Des Moines Library
February 5	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park
February 5	1:00 p.m.	Winter Hike	Brown's Woods
February 5	2:00 p.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Thomas Mitchell Park
February 6	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Easter Lake Park
February 12	9:00 a.m.	Willow Basket Workshop*	Jester Park Lodge
February 12	10:30 a.m.	Tricky Tracks	Jester Park Lodge
February 12	12:30 p.m.	Iowa's Endangered Species	Jester Park Lodge
February 26	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 26	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Fort Des Moines Park
February 27	12:00 p.m.	Bald Eagle Watch	Jester Park and Saylorville
March 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Monarch Butterfly Preserve	Jester Park Lodge
March 1	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park Lodge
March 1	6:00 p.m.	Turkey Hunting Basics*	Jester Park Lodge
March 9-13		Winter Adventure Trip*	Ely, Minnesota
March 15	10:30 a.m.	Reptiles	Jester Park Lodge
March 15	1:00 p.m.	Mammals	Jester Park Lodge
March 15	7:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life and Hike	Jester Park
March 17	10:00 a.m.	Nature's Stories, Songs & More	West Des Moines Library
March 19	9:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Easter Lake Park
March 19	11:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Easter Lake Park
March 21	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
March 25	7:30 p.m.	Stargazing	Jester Park Golf Course Clubhouse
March 26-27		Sandhill Crane Trip*	Kearney, Nebraska
April 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Buffalo Bill	Jester Park Lodge
April 5	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park Lodge
April 5	6:30 p.m.	How Iowa Was Made	Jester Park Lodge
April 5	7:30 p.m.	Create a Backyard Habitat*	Jester Park Lodge
April 7	6:30 p.m.	Growing Healthy Veggies*	Northwest Community Center
April 8-9		Prairie Chicken Viewing*	Mt. Ayr, Iowa
April 9	10:00 a.m.	Geocaching Hike*	Chichaqua Longhouse
April 16	9:00 a.m.	Brown's Woods Clean-up	Brown's Woods
April 18	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
April 22	6:00 p.m.	Earth Day & Arbor Day Tree Planting	Easter Lake Park
April 30	10:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Easter Lake Park
April 30	1:00 p.m.	Wildflower Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
April 30	10:00 a.m.	High Trestle Trail Grand Celebration	High Trestle Trail

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- ◆ Be put on the mailing list to receive current GOF and PCC news and information
- ◆ Participate in special programs, tours & events designed exclusively for our Friends
 - ◆ Be invited to the annual 'Friend of the Great Outdoors' banquet
 - ◆ Support conservation and recreation projects in your own backyard

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Looking for an excuse to get out of the house, make some new friends, enjoy a good meal and learn about the exciting world of nature? Then join us! These programs are held the first Tuesday of each month. The nature program will start at 11:00 a.m. at the Jester Park Lodge. An optional luncheon follows the program at noon in which pre-registration is required. The cost of the catered lunch is \$8.00 and pre-registration is required. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program. To register for lunch, go to www.mycountyparks.com.

Women's Army Corps Experience at Fort Des Moines January 4

Amanda Pirog, Education Assistant for the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center, will speak about the Women's Army Corps Experience at Fort Des Moines. The first group of female officers in the Army received their commissions at Fort Des Moines between 1942 and 1945.

Wind Energy in Iowa February 1

Have you ever wondered about all the wind turbines dotting Iowa's landscape? If you have wondered how they work, where the electricity goes, or what the inside of a wind turbine looks like, this is your chance to get your questions answered. Stephanie Simonson from MidAmerican Energy will discuss wind energy in Iowa, how wind turbines work, energy storage, and will share some pictures of wind turbines under construction.

A Visit to the Monarch Butterfly Preserve in Mexico March 1

In March 2010, Iowa residents Linda & Robert Scarth, were among a group which traveled with Bill Calvert, one of the scientists who first documented the monarch butterfly colony locations in Mexico in the 1970s. They also visited archeological, cultural and environmental sites on the way to the preserves - putting the experience into the context of life in Michoacan, Mexico.

Remembering Iowa's Buffalo Bill April 5

William F. Cody (1846-1917), better known as "Buffalo Bill," was born near Le Claire, Iowa. By the end of his life, he had become what some have called "the most famous American in the world". This talk is an overview of Cody's life, both tragic and heroic. This program is sponsored by Humanities of Iowa.