



Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2015 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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Older, Wiser,

Livelier, Seniors

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Richard Leopold Appointed as New Polk CC Director

The Polk County Conservation Board selected Richard A. Leopold as the new Director at their February 11th, board meeting. Mr. Leopold has served as the Deputy and Interim Director since the spring of 2013.

“We are very excited to announce the appointment of Richard Leopold as our new Director for Polk County Conservation. As Deputy and Interim Director, Richard has already displayed drive and commitment to Polk County Conservation and the community. We believe he will continue to be a strong leader as we move forward with Polk County Water and Land Legacy projects,” affirmed Connie Johnson, Board Chairperson.

Prior to his employment with Polk County, most notably Richard was the Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources from 2007 to 2010 within Governor Chet Culver’s cabinet. Following the Iowa DNR, he served as the Assistant Regional Director for Science Applications of the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Prior to joining Polk County Conservation, he was the Director of Dickinson County Conservation Board in northwest Iowa.

Over his career, he has held a variety of biologist, naturalist, and administrative positions within the Iowa Environmental Council, U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Minnesota and Iowa Departments of Natural Resources and served as the coordinator for IOWATER, Iowa’s statewide volunteer water-quality monitoring program.

He has provided leadership and direction for high-priority science activities, including climate change, adaptive resources management, and landscape conservation. Under his tenure, he has



led efforts of greatly expanded and stricter water quality standards in Iowa, coordinating the early organization of the natural resources funding ballot initiative that became known as I-WILL (Iowa’s Water and Land Legacy,) and strongly advocated and created policy to establish Iowa as a leader in wind energy and bio-fuels.

Richard holds a Master of Science in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University. He obtained undergraduate degrees in biology from Minnesota State University and natural resources technology from Central Lakes College in Brainerd, Minnesota. He is currently serving on the Board of Directors for Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa, and is the current president of the Iowa Wildlife Federation.

“I am excited and humbled to work with the board, staff, and our many partners for such a noble cause. We have much work ahead of us, and I am confident in our ability to accomplish our mission of quality outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation of our natural resources,” stated Leopold.



Message from the Director: To Articulate a Vision...

As the recently appointed Director of Polk County Conservation, I know part of my job is to “articulate a vision;” to capture our mission and translate it into actual action and operations on the ground. How does one approach this tall order?

Polk County Conservation was established in 1956. Since its humble beginnings, it has grown to managing over 14,000 acres of land and some of central Iowa’s most-beloved trails. We have offered thousands of environmental education programs, and hosted multitudes of campers, hikers, hunters, paddlers, birders, picnickers, anglers, horse riders, cross-country skiers, the list goes on. It is a feel-good story without end, with benefits that include education, public health, an improved environment, and enhanced quality-of-life.

Within organizations, it is often said that “our employees are our greatest asset.” By that measure, Polk County Conservation is outstanding. When I joined the team almost two years ago, our average employee years-on-the-job was over 16 years! In this era of people often moving around, we have the staying power of dedicated and well-trained professionals.

Or maybe the strongest vision is to focus on the core word of “conservation.” Last Friday I watched a family of river otters playing in a stream within Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Their family frolic has been made possible by our “family” working on land protection, water quality, public education, and natural resources restoration. It is empowering, yet humbling, to be the stewards of the land held in public trust by our organization.

As your new Director, I look forward to serving you and our combined legacy, supported by our mission of “quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long-term protection of Polk County’s natural heritage.” - Richard Leopold

Conservation Corps to Work in Polk County Parks

Polk County Conservation has contracted with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa to secure a crew for approximately nine months to perform restoration duties on PCC land. The crew consists of six members that come to us with a vast array of skills and licenses. The members will be certified to apply herbicides, work on prescribed fire and operate chain saws and most hand tools associated with restoration.

PCC staff is excited about working with the Conservation Corps and have previous experience with the group. Last year the crew was instrumental in establishing the expanded trail system at Brown’s Woods while removing invasive plants in the process. They have also assisted in stream bank restoration, trail maintenance and overall enhancement of PCC areas.

Staff has developed a long list of projects for the Corps and some of the tasks will include trail building, fire line establishment and prescribed fire, invasive species removal, native seed harvest and processing, installation of rain gardens, reforestation, and numerous timber stand improvement projects. Additionally, the crew will assist with various Environmental Education, Community Outreach programs and participate in public service venues.



The Conservation Corps will be working in varying capacities in our parks this season and the public should notice a vast improvement in our natural areas. If you have time, stop and let them know that you appreciate the work they are doing to improve our natural resources. As we move forward with the season we will keep you informed of all the good things they are completing for Polk County Conservation.



The Latest

Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

LAND PROTECTION

- PCC is working with our partners to develop and create wildlife habitat on several recent acquisitions.
- A portion of the newly acquired land near Thomas Mitchell will be reforested with native trees suitable to the soils and slopes.
- The new Chichaqua Bottoms acquisition will be restored this season and will include multiple shallow water wetland basins and over 130 acres of replanted sedge meadow/wet soil plantings.
- PCC is also acquiring a small addition to Yellow Banks Park which will allow us to address a severe erosion problem that is affecting the water quality of our existing pond.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

- IOWATER is Iowa's citizen volunteer water monitoring program. Citizens are trained to conduct basic water chemical, physical and biological measurements. Currently there are 20 PCC staff that have participated in the IOWATER training. Beginning this spring, staff will regularly monitor approximately 50 sites along creeks and streams within Polk County. The data collected will help establish a baseline for water quality health in those water bodies.

TRAILS

- Phase II of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail on the north side of the lake will be completed this summer.
- The Grand Opening of the Chichaqua Valley Trail Connector between Mally's Park and Bondurant will be celebrated on Saturday, April 25th in the communities of Berwick, Bondurant, Mingo, Ira, and Baxter. Festivities begin by 7 a.m. in Berwick and continue throughout the day in all of the communities. See page 5 for more specific details about this special day.

PARKS

Fort Des Moines Park

- Significant improvements will begin in Fort Des Moines Park this summer. Look for the outdoor classroom to take shape in the form of nature trails, gathering areas, interpretive signage, and prairie establishment. Trail enhancement will also take place within the park around the restored pond. Access to the pond will be improved at the peninsula area and on the northeast side of the pond where fishing and boating amenities are expected to be constructed. Shelter upgrades will also benefit park users.

Jester Park

- On the heels of a fundraising feasibility study, the Conservation Board will embark on a capital campaign to raise



the remaining dollars needed to begin construction of the Jester Park Conservation Center. Planning and design for interpretive education inside and outside of the building will continue throughout the year under the guidance of Split Rock Studios out of Minnesota.

Yellow Banks Park

- Now that the pond dam has been lowered, the time has come to improve access to the pond through trails, a boat ramp, and fishing jetties. The top of the dam will see improved parking, restrooms, a large shelter, and a small shelter for picnics. Additional new features and improvements within the park will include a vault restroom in the tent campground, an improved hiking trail system, water and electric shelter upgrades, watershed and bank stabilization in the pond, adjacent gullies, and timbered land upstream from the pond.

Brown's Woods

- The final touches on the new Brown's Woods trailhead and parking lot will be completed by summer. This includes a new vault restroom and drinking fountain. The new entrance to Brown's Woods will lead hikers to more than four miles of scenic woodland trails.

Easter Lake Park

- Long awaited restoration work in Yeader Creek and Easter Lake will begin this summer. Spillway and fish rearing pond construction, Yeader Creek stabilization work, and dredge piping installation will be the first projects that are addressed. Woodland restoration and park/neighborhood rainscaping practices will continue throughout the duration of this multi-year restoration process.

Lance Northway Joins the PCC Board



Welcome to our newest Polk County Conservation Board Member, Lance Northway! Lance was appointed to the Board at their January meeting and is looking forward to serving our community. He grew up in eastern Polk County and still resides there today with his wife and two daughters. A graduate of the University of Northern Iowa,

Lance began his career as a Chemistry teacher at SE Polk Schools. He has spent the last 15 years in technical sales.

New Faces at Polk County Conservation

Travis Maak



Travis Maak began his employment as a Natural Resource Technician in March. Previously, Travis spent the summer of 2014 working as a seasonal technician. In this position, he gained useful knowledge and skills in the natural resources field. Spending his free time hunting and fishing (and cheering on the Cyclones) helped develop a passion for the outdoors which led to his education in Forestry within

the College of Natural Resources Ecology and Management at Iowa State University.

Kelsey Fremann



Kelsey Freeman accepted the position of Riding Instructor in January. Kelsey has been an Assistant Riding Instructor at JPEC since January of 2014 and ran the summer camp program last year. She is a CHA certified Instructor of Riders with Disabilities at Jester Park Equestrian Center. She teaches horsemanship to students of all abilities, and helps run some of the other programs at JPEC such as the Hope from Horses

program. Kelsey also has a passion for the outdoors and earned her degree in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University. She grew up volunteering at nature centers and is excited that she now gets to combine her love of nature and horses! When Kelsey isn't at work, she enjoys spending time with her fiancé, Kyle, and their dog and cat!



TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT! WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17

JESTER PARK GOLF COURSE

Check-in 11:00 a.m.
Shotgun Start Noon

JESTER PARK LODGE

Social Time 5:00 p.m.
Dinner 5:30 p.m.



- Join the Great Outdoors Foundation for an exciting day of golf! Make your **BEST SHOT** count toward **funding programs for our youth and surrounding community.**
- Space is limited to 36 teams – first to pay will play! You may select your own foursome or be assigned to one. Participants receive range balls, lunch, golf, a cart, and dinner.

Sign up and pay on-line at www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org



GRAND OPENING

April 25

BERWICK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
7-10 AM: Kick-off Breakfast

MALLY'S PARK
10 AM: Ribbon-Cutting
8 & 9 AM: Yoga in the Park
8-10 AM: Bike helmet fittings/Give-a-way
8-10 AM: Bike Tune-ups
Fire Truck on display

Other activities at the following locations:

DEPOT TRAILHEAD - Bondurant
FOUNDER'S IRISH PUB - Bondurant
GREENCASTLE TAVERN - Mingo
COMMUNITY CENTER - Ira
CADILLAC JACK'S - Baxter

Grand Opening Trail Guides available at:

Berwick Post Office • Founder's Irish Pub • Baxter City Hall • Bondurant City Hall • Greencastle Tavern • Cadillac Jack's • Jack Bucklin Auto Parts

These free booklets will provide detailed event information, sponsors, maps, and community attractions.

25 MILES OF FUN!

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 information is available by visiting: www.leadingyououtdoors.org or by calling our administrative office at: (515) 323-5300, Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- 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 or other extreme weather conditions such as wind, cold, or 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.

PROGRAMS

Create an Edible Landscape

Saturday, May 2 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Northwest Community Center, 5110 Franklin Ave., DM

Would you like to learn how to create beautiful, low-maintenance urban landscapes that:

- Yield an abundance of organic food
- Build soil
- Prevent erosion
- Clean water and air
- Support beneficial insects and birds
- Sequester carbon



We invite you to attend this introduction to edible landscape design presented by Melissa Sharapova, Backyard Abundance Ecological Designer and Educator. Through engaging, fun, hands-on activities, you will learn how humans can create delightful urban landscapes that benefit people and our local environment while yielding an abundance of food. Top edible, medicinal, and native plants will be shared and discussed. An overview of public and private projects undertaken by Backyard Abundance in the Iowa City area will be used as examples. Several handouts will be available. We will also be providing free pollinator friendly plants! Pre-registration required; deadline is April 29. Fee: \$5.

Fishing Basics

Saturday, May 2 @ 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

Learn the basics of fishing and have an opportunity to try and catch some fish from the shore of Easter Lake. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a 2015 Iowa fishing license. Bait and poles will be provided, but you're welcome to bring your own pole if you have one. Bring something to sit on.

Bees of Iowa

Tuesday, May 5 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge



State Apiarist, Andrew Joseph, will talk about what is happening in Iowa with honey bees and their beekeepers. Andrew will discuss exactly what a honey bee colony is and what they do. He will also cover the role of a beekeeper and the basics of beekeeping. We will have free pollinator friendly plants for participants to take home. Pre-registration required; deadline May 1. Free.

Kayak Basics

Thursday, May 14 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at pond parking lot

Learn the basics of recreational kayaking from a PCC naturalist. Participants will learn about types of kayaks, equipment, techniques, and have a chance to practice skills on the water. All equipment is provided. Pre-registration required; deadline is May 11. Minimum age 14. Fee: \$10.

Catch-n-Croakers

Friday, May 15 @ 8:00-9:30 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Learn to identify frogs by sight and sound before sloshing into the wetlands to catch these amazing creatures. Bring your own net and flashlight. Wear shoes that can get wet and muddy.

Music in the Park

Saturday, May 23 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Jester Park Amphitheater

Join us for Music in the Park with 'An Evening' - A Tribute to John Denver. The group came together with a shared interest in the music of the late John Denver. They have created a fun, memorable show featuring many of the greatest hits from John, as well as a few surprise treats along the way. Bring a lawn chair and a blanket to sit on.

Design your own Butterfly Garden

Tuesday, June 2 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge



In this hands on workshop, you will learn how to select native plants for the garden, design a planting map for your butterfly garden, and learn native plant garden management strategies that helps keep your neighbors happy with the results. We will have free pollinator friendly plants for participants to take home. Pre-registration required; deadline May 29. Free.

Kayak Basics

Tuesday, June 2 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #5

See description for May 14. Pre-registration required; deadline is May 29. Minimum age 14. Fee: \$10.

Dog Days

Thursday, June 4 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #1

With the dog days of summer just around the corner, come to the park to enjoy food and activities with your favorite furry friend. The evening will include games, contests and food all which can be enjoyed with your dog. Prizes will be awarded to the dog with the best costume, voice, and kisser as well as the wackiest pet trick and dog owner look alike. Sponsored by Polk Soil and Water Conservation District. All dogs must be on a six foot or shorter leash.

Senior Fishing Derby

Friday, June 5 @ 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

Senior Services of Polk County and PCC are hosting a fishing derby open to any person 60 and over. Fishing poles and bait will be provided but you are welcome to bring your own. Prizes will be awarded. A box lunch will be served to all registered participants. Registration deadline is May 29. To register, call 515-286-3536.

Princess Adventures

Tuesday, June 9 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #6

Do you know a little girl who loves princesses? Want to encourage her to dress up AND have fun exploring the outdoors at the same time? Girls ages 4-6 are invited to the park in "princess attire" (whatever that means to them). We will learn about a courageous woman from the past, participate in a nature activity, followed by a tea party with a snack. Pre-registration required; deadline is June 5. Fee: \$5.

Wild Night Life & Hike

Friday, June 12 @ 8:00-10:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

Join PCC naturalists for a campfire program about the wild night life in Jester Park. A short hike will follow as we search for some of these nocturnal animals. Afterward enjoy eating s'mores around the campfire. Pre-registration is required; deadline is June 10. Fee: \$5.

Pollination Celebration

Sunday, June 21 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Beach



Come out for an afternoon of pollinator fun! We will be building a giant insect hotel with artists Pam Dennis and Ryk Weiss from Flock 9 Studios in Ogden. We will also make take home insect hotels, go on insect hunts, fold origami insects and check out some cool butterflies! Our partners from the Blank Park Zoo and Reiman Gardens will be there as well!



Stand Up Paddling

Tuesday, June 30 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m. and 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Beach

Come on out and explore Easter Lake on a paddle board! Stand up paddling is the fastest growing sport in America. Why? Because it is easy to learn, tons of fun, and can be done on almost any body of water. Instruction and equipment provided. Sign-up for the 6:00 or 7:00 class. Pre-registration required; deadline June 26. Minimum age 13. Fee: \$5.

Music in the Park

Saturday, July 4 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Jester Park Amphitheater

Join us for Music in the Park with Flying Pig Fiddle & Banjo. They play old-time southern Appalachian string band music on fiddles, banjo, washtub, washboard, pitchfork, fiddlesticks, feet, and more. Bring a lawn chair and blanket to sit on.

Insect Hotel Workshop

Saturday, July 11 @ 10:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse



Build an insect hotel to help attract pollinators to your garden. We will gather willows for the hotel structure and create the basic frame from simple willow work techniques. The form will be filled with various natural materials such as sticks, stones and layered bark to create dark private spaces insects find attractive. Pre-registration required; deadline is July 6. Fee: \$35.

Jazz in July

Friday, July 17 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2



Join in on an evening of food, fun, art and music. Food, beverages, and local arts will be available to purchase along with free nature programs and art activities. Our featured band, High Society Big Band, plays swinging jazz sounds of the Big Band era, performing compositions that span an entire century of music. Sponsored by Polk Soil and Water Conservation District.

Freshwater Mussels

Saturday, August 1 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #4

For something that looks like a living rock, mussels have a unique life cycle and interesting adaptations to the environment in which they live. This will be a mix of classroom and field sampling (weather permitting). Those who want to get in the water to look for mussels should come prepared to get wet. Come learn more!

Reptiles

Tuesday, August 4 @ 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Come and learn about Iowa's reptiles. We'll discuss the fears and myths that surround these scaly creatures people love to hate.

Don't Just Landscape...

RAINSCAPE!

Tuesday, August 4 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge



Rainscaping creates beautiful landscapes that manage water sustainably. Rain gardens, native landscaping, rainwater harvesting, permeable paving, and native turf are a few features you can incorporate on your own property to improve water quality and pollinator habitat. Do it yourself or hire a certified Rainscaper trained in the design and installation of rainscaping practices. Either way, this workshop will give you the knowledge you need to know to not just landscape, but rainscape! Pre-registration required; deadline is July 31. Free.

Polk County Conservation

11407 NW Jester Park Drive

Granger, Iowa 50109

515-323-5300

polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov

www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Follow us on:



Discover Your Parks

2:00-3:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist in one of our parks this summer for an afternoon of fun. Each program will start with a discussion followed by an activity. All ages are welcome.

- July 7** - Creek Walk @ Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #2
- July 9** - Wildlife Watching @ Carney Marsh
- July 14** - Marsh Stomp @ Engeldinger Marsh
- July 16** - Savanna Hike @ Yellow Banks Park
- July 21** - Insect Hunt @ Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #1
- July 23** - Creek Walk @ Mally's Park
- July 28** - Prairie Hike @ Chichaqua, meet at Longhouse
- July 30** - Bike Hike @ Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

More details about these programs can be found on www.leadingyououtdoors.org.

Nature Playdates

10:30-11:30 a.m.

Explore, discover and play in your local parks with a Polk County Naturalist. Meet families interested in getting their children outdoors for natural play and discovery. Wear appropriate clothes and shoes. We may be hiking, discovering life in a log or playing in the creek. This is a morning of adventure and discovery with curiosity being the most important ingredient.

- June 10** - Tyke Hike @ Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2
- June 24** - Fairy Houses @ Jester Park, Shelter #5
- July 8** - Life in a Log @ Jester Park Amphitheater
- July 22** - Creek Walk @ Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #2
- August 5** - Water Wonders @ Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #1

Nature's Story Hour

Noon-1:00 p.m.

Bring your picnic lunch, blanket and family for an hour of nature stories and activities with a PCC Naturalist. This family friendly program is free and all ages are welcome.

- June 3** - Birding Bonanza @ Jester Park, Shelter #6
- June 17** - Chipmy the Chipmunk @ Brown's Woods
- July 1** - Pollination Celebration @ Easter Lake, Shelter #4
- July 15** - Turtle Talk @ Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2
- July 29** - Talking Tails @ Jester Park, Shelter #3

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 Conservation Office at Jester Park or Raccoon River Nature Lodge to receive your Nature Friend Explorer Pack. One pack per child please.

May 4 - Planting a Rainbow at Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge

May 19 - Feathered Friends at Jester Park, Shelter #6

June 1 - Fishing at Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge

June 16 - Silly Salamander at Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2

July 7 - Woodland Walk at Southwoods Park, S. 59th St. & Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines

July 21 - Pollination Celebration at Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4

August 3 - Frog Hop at Meadowview Park, 642 Prairieview Dr., West Des Moines

August 18 - Water Wonders at Jester Park, Shelter #5

To register for Nature Friends programs, call the West Des Moines Parks and Recreation Office at (515) 222-3444 or visit www.wdm.iowa.gov. These programs are co-sponsored by the Des Moines Chapter of the Izaak Walton League and West Des Moines Parks and Recreation.



A family enjoys a picnic after a Nature Playdate

Central Iowa River Kayak Trips

Join us as we kayak down a river in central Iowa. Naturalists will guide participants down the river. Bring food and drink. Prior kayak experience is required.

May 9 - Middle Raccoon River

June 6 - Boone River

June 27 - Iowa River

Fee: \$35; includes transportation and kayaks. Departure from Jester Park at 8:00 a.m. and return by 5:00 p.m. Minimum age 16. Registration deadline is one week prior to each trip.

Buffalo National River Kayak Trip

June 10-14

Harrison, Arkansas

Join Polk County Conservation naturalists on this five day adventure to Arkansas. Established in 1972, Buffalo National River flows freely for 135 miles and is one of the few remaining undammed rivers in the lower 48 states. Once you arrive, prepare to journey from running rapids to quiet pools while surrounded by massive bluffs as you cruise through the Ozark Mountains. We'll camp three nights along the river and paddle different sections of the river all three of the paddling days.

- Fee: \$400; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging, meals (except while traveling), most equipment, and fees.
- Departure from Jester Park at 7:00 a.m.
- Minimum age is 21 and limited to 10 participants who must have prior paddling experience and be in good physical condition.
- Participants need to provide tent, sleeping bags, personal items, cash for souvenirs and meals while traveling.

Upper Iowa River Canoeing Adventure

July 18-19

Bluffton, Iowa

Float past beautiful limestone bluffs as you take a two day canoe trip down the scenic Upper Iowa River in northeast Iowa. We will depart Saturday morning and head for Chimney Rock Campground, set up camp, and eat lunch before getting on the river. We will float about 3-4 hours, land at our campsite, have dinner, and share our adventures around the campfire with some tasty s'mores. The next day, we will break camp, eat breakfast, and float from our campsite about two hours down to Bluffton. Experienced and trained naturalists will

ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. Canoes, paddles, life jackets and most meals provided. This trip is co-sponsored by Story County Conservation.

- Fee: \$100; includes transportation (15 passenger van), camping fees, paddling gear, and all food except for meals while traveling.
- Depart from Jester Park at 6:45 a.m. and McFarland Park at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday and return late afternoon on Sunday.
- Participants need to provide tent, sleeping bag, personal items, and cash for meals while traveling.
- Minimum age is 18 and limited to 12 participants. Prior paddling experience is required and participants must be in good physical condition.
- Registration deadline is July 2.
- Trip registration opens on April 13 at 8:00 a.m.



Kayak the Niobrara River Trip

July 22-26

Valentine, Nebraska

Join Polk County Conservation and Story County Conservation naturalists on this five-day adventure to the sand hills of Nebraska. The Niobrara River is a National Wild and Scenic River, which offers spectacular paddling and scenery. We'll camp three nights along the banks of the river, and within a five minute walk to the spectacular Smith Falls, the largest waterfall in the state of Nebraska. We'll paddle three days on the river. Meals will be prepared for you by the campfire while you relax and take in the scenery. This trip is co-sponsored by Story County Conservation.

- Fee: \$400; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging, most equipment, and all food except two meals while traveling
- Departure from McFarland Park at 7:00 a.m. and Jester Park at 8:00 a.m.
- Minimum age 21 and must be in good physical condition
- Participants need to bring a tent, sleeping bag, personal items, cash for souvenirs, and meals while traveling
- Registration deadline is July 5
- Trip registration opens on April 13 at 8:00 a.m.



We are also offering several eco-bus trips:

- Iowa Made - May 27 - FULL
- Alpacas, Butterflies & Gardens - June 18 - FULL
- Summer Cruising - July 14
- Villages of Van Buren County - August 27 - FULL
- Stone City - September 17 - FULL
- Honey Creek/Lake Rathbun - October 13-14

See trip details on www.leadingyououtdoors.org

To register for a trip: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Water Wonders Camp

June 8-11

9:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Ages: 8-9 years

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 various Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$120
- Registration deadline is May 25
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



A Water Wonders camper showing off the crayfish she caught at Chichaqua

The following camps are full:

Jr. Naturalist Camp on June 15-18 & June 22-25
Discovery Camp on July 6-9

To register for a camp: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Summer Skills

Ages: 10-16 years

Summer is about having fun and playing outside. Join PCC naturalists as they introduce your child to some fun outdoor activities which can be enjoyed the rest of their lives. Come to one or sign-up for an entire series. All equipment will be provided. Pre-registration required. Fee: \$10.

Series 1

1:00-3:00 p.m. at Thomas Mitchell Park

June 15 - Canoeing
June 17 - Fishing
June 22 - Survival & Shelter Building
June 24 - Kayaking
June 29 - Archery
July 1 - Geocaching

Series 2

1:00-3:00 p.m. at Jester Park

June 16 - Canoeing
June 18 - Fishing
June 23 - Survival & Shelter Building
June 25 - Kayaking
June 30 - Archery
July 2 - Geocaching

Series 3

10:00 a.m.-Noon at Easter Lake Park

July 6 - Archery
July 8 - Canoeing
July 13 - Survival & Shelter Building
July 15 - Kayaking
July 20 - Fishing
July 22 - Geocaching

Series 4

10:00 a.m.-Noon at Jester Park

July 7 - Archery
July 9 - Canoeing
July 14 - Survival & Shelter Building
July 16 - Kayaking
July 21 - Fishing
July 23 - Geocaching

Polk County Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*
Connie Johnson, *Ankeny*
Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*
Lance Northway, *Runnells*
Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

Polk County Conservation Director:

Richard Leopold

2014 Volunteers of the Year

On March 8th, Polk County Conservation hosted the annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet at the Jester Park Lodge. The Banquet honored individuals with at least 10 hours and groups with over 25 cumulative hours of volunteering during 2014. Once again volunteers have turned out in great numbers. Over 2,500 volunteers gave more than 16,500 hours of volunteer service to Polk County Conservation! Special speaker Carl Kurtz shared his nature photos "A Year of Iowa Nature" followed by a catered dinner by Christiani's Catering.

Volunteer of the Year

David Johnson has volunteered in numerous ways throughout the park system. He has been involved in a number of clean-ups and woodland and prairie restoration workdays.

He has repaired tools and run the brush mower in parks and along trails. David monitors the JP golf course bluebird trail and kestrel boxes. He has constructed and installed barn owl, bat, bluebird and kestrel boxes. He has also cleared and removed fence at Carney Marsh, JP lakeshore, and JP Equestrian Center. Several staff thought David was a seasonal employee because of the hours he has put in at Jester Park.



Volunteer Duo of the Year

Rogers Shell and **John Gersib** have worked hard to improve the success of the bluebird trail at Chichaqua. They relocated several boxes and "paired" others to discourage use by tree swallows and house wrens. They also

redesigned the box doors to make the boxes easier to check while monitoring. They installed improved predator guards to help limit nest loss to mammalian and reptilian predators.



Volunteer Team of the Year



Open Opportunities 4-H Club worked hard to raise funds, secure a grant and install brick pavers at the Jester Park Natural Playscape. The pavers provide a safe, level, and ADA accessible surface for children to creatively play.

Eagle Scout Project of the Year



Jacob Orr from Troop 44 installed dumpster surrounds in Jester Park. Jacob recruited volunteers, raised money to purchase all materials and supplies needed and held several workdays (without direct staff supervision) to install the dumpster surrounds.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

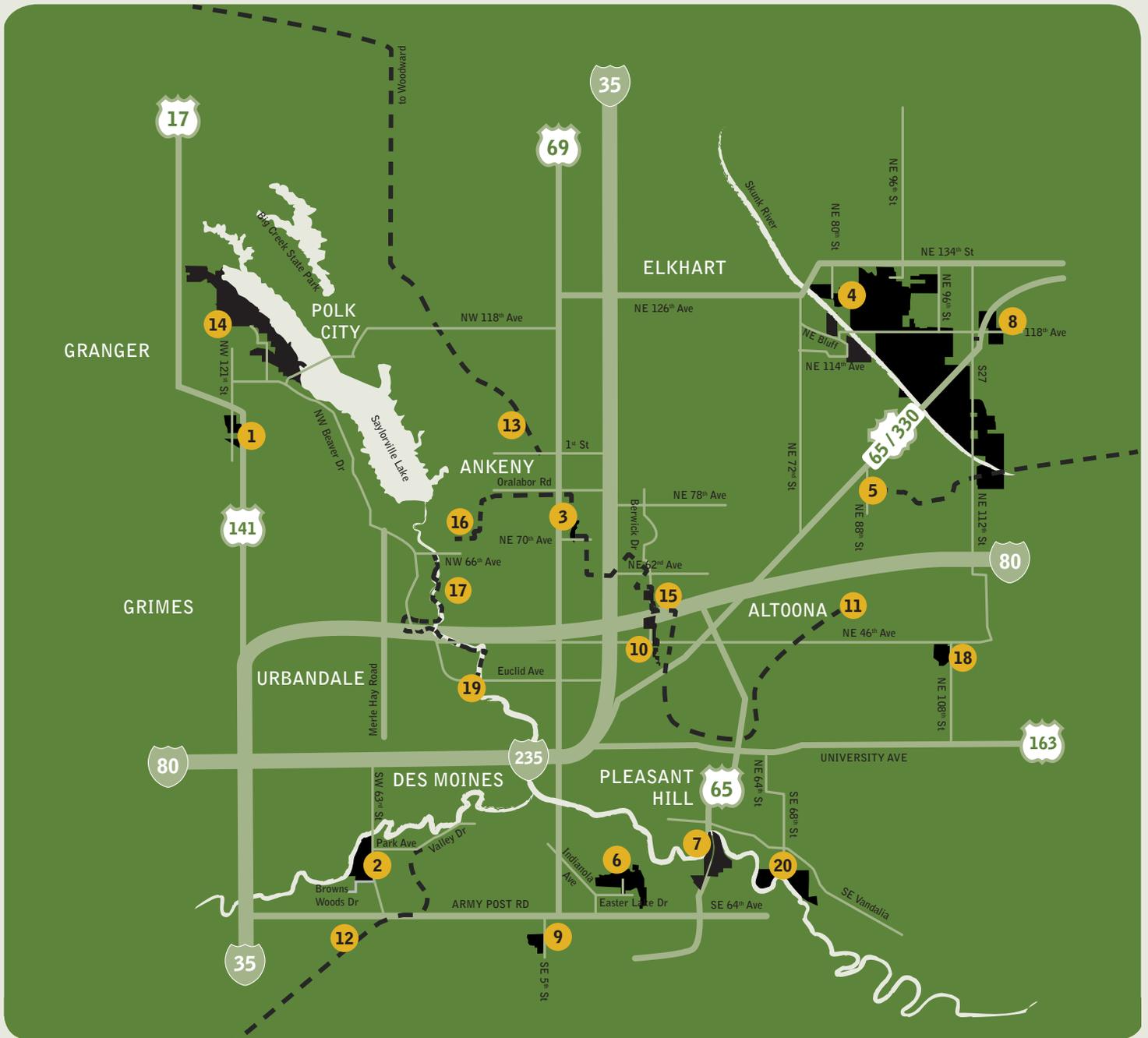
April 26 - Carney Marsh Invasive Species: 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Additional dates: June 14, July 12, August 9

May 9 - Residential Tree Program (Plant Some Shade): 7:30-11:30 a.m.

May 16 - Puccoon Prairie Restoration: 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

May 19 - Taco Ride Trash Challenge on the Great Western Trail: 4:30-7:30 p.m.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact: Pat Spain at (515) 323-5280 or pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov



1. Beaver Creek Greenbelt
2. Brown's Woods
3. Carney Marsh
4. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
5. Chichaqua Valley Trail
6. Easter Lake Park
7. Eagle Roost Wildlife Area
8. Engeldinger Marsh
9. Fort Des Moines Park
10. Four Mile Creek Greenbelt

11. Gay Lea Wilson Trail
12. Great Western Trail
13. High Trestle Trail
14. Jester Park
15. Mally's Weh Weh Neh Kee Park
16. Oralabor Gateway Trail
17. Sycamore Trail
18. Thomas Mitchell Park
19. Trestle to Trestle Trail
20. Yellow Banks Park

BE A FRIEND OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOUNDATION



Pledge your support today for high quality, healthy living for Greater Polk County through expanded open space, restored landscapes, and greater recreation and outdoor education opportunities.

FRIENDS ENJOY:

- Having your name published in the Great Outdoors Foundation Annual Report
- Receiving all current *Great Outdoors Foundation* and *Polk County Conservation* news and information
- Participating in special programs, tours and events designed exclusively for our Friends
- An invitation to the Annual *Friends Celebration* Banquet

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY, ZIP: _____

DAYTIME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

FRIENDS LEVELS:

- ___ **KIDS:** \$25 *Receive a Birthday Card, Name recognition at our Friends Celebration*
- ___ **SENIOR CITIZENS:** \$50 *Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event*
(over age 55)
- ___ **INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY:** \$100 *Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event*

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS:

- ___ **BRONZE:** \$500 *2 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*
- ___ **SILVER:** \$1,000 *4 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*
- ___ **GOLD:** \$2,500 *6 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*
- ___ **PLATINUM:** \$5,000 and up *8 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*



DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
May 2	10:00 a.m.	Create and Edible Landscape*	Northwest Community Center
May 2	1:00 p.m.	Fishing Basics	Easter Lake Park
May 4	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park
May 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Floating Through History	Jester Park Lodge
May 5	6:30 p.m.	Bees of Iowa*	Jester Park Lodge
May 9	8:00 a.m.	Middle Raccoon River Kayak Trip*	Central Iowa
May 14	6:30 p.m.	Kayak Basics*	Thomas Mitchell Park
May 15	8:00 p.m.	Catch-n-Croakers	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
May 16	10:00 a.m.	Puccoon Prairie Restoration*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
May 19	4:30 p.m.	Taco Ride Trash Challenge*	Great Western Trail
May 19	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
May 23	6:30 p.m.	Music in the Park	Jester Park
May 27	7:00 a.m.	Iowa Made Bus Trip*	Cedar Falls, Iowa
June 1	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park
June 2	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Planting Natives in Butterfly Garden	Jester Park Lodge
June 2	6:30 p.m.	Design your own Butterfly Garden*	Jester Park Lodge
June 2	6:30 p.m.	Kayak Basics*	Jester Park
June 3	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Jester Park
June 4	6:00 p.m.	Dog Days	Easter Lake Park
June 5	9:00 a.m.	Senior Fishing Derby	Easter Lake Park
June 6	8:00 a.m.	Boone River Kayak Trip*	Central Iowa
June 8-11	9:00 a.m.	Water Wonders Camp*	Jester Park
June 9	10:00 a.m.	Princess Adventures*	Jester Park
June 10-14	7:00 a.m.	Buffalo River Kayak Trip*	Harrison, Arkansas
June 10	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Fort Des Moines Park
June 12	8:00 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike	Jester Park
June 15-18	9:00 a.m.	Jr. Naturalist Camp*	Jester Park
June 15	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 16	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Jester Park
June 16	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Fort Des Moines Park
June 17	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Brown's Woods
June 17	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Fishing*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 18	7:30 a.m.	Alpacas, Butterflies & Gardens Bus Trip*	Ames, Iowa
June 18	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Fishing*	Jester Park
June 21	1:00 p.m.	Pollination Celebration	Easter Lake Park
June 22-25	9:00 a.m.	Jr. Naturalist Camp*	Jester Park
June 22	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Survival & Shelter Bld.*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 23	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Survival & Shelter Bld.*	Jester Park
June 24	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Jester Park
June 24	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 25	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Jester Park
June 27	8:00 a.m.	Iowa River Kayak Trip*	Central Iowa
June 29	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 30	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Jester Park
June 30	6:00 p.m.	Stand Up Paddling*	Easter Lake Park
June 30	7:00 p.m.	Stand Up Paddling*	Easter Lake Park
July 1	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Easter Lake Park
July 1	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Thomas Mitchell Park
July 2	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Jester Park
July 4	6:30 p.m.	Music in the Park	Jester Park
July 6-9	9:00 a.m.	Discovery Camp*	Jester Park
July 6	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Easter Lake Park
July 7	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Jester Park
July 7	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Grass Between the Rails	Jester Park Lodge
July 7	2:00 p.m.	Creek Walk	Thomas Mitchell Park

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
July 7	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Southwoods
July 8	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Easter Lake Park
July 8	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Jester Park
July 9	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Jester Park
July 9	2:00 p.m.	Wildlife Watching	Carney Marsh
July 11	10:30 a.m.	Insect Hotel Workshop*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
July 13	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Survival & Shelter Bld.*	Easter Lake Park
July 14	8:00 a.m.	Summer Cruising Bus Trip*	Iowa Falls, Iowa
July 14	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Survival & Shelter Bld.*	Jester Park
July 14	2:00 p.m.	Marsh Stomp	Engeldinger Marsh
July 15	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Easter Lake Park
July 15	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Fort Des Moines Park
July 16	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Jester Park
July 16	2:00 p.m.	Savanna Hike	Yellow Banks Park
July 17	6:00 p.m.	Jazz in July	Easter Lake Park
July 18-19	6:45 a.m.	Upper Iowa River Canoe Trip*	Bluffton, Iowa
July 20	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Fishing*	Easter Lake Park
July 21	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Fishing*	Jester Park
July 21	2:00 p.m.	Insect Hunt	Fort Des Moines Park
July 21	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Easter Lake Park
July 22-26	8:00 a.m.	Paddle the Niobara River Trip*	Valentine, Nebraska
July 22	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Easter Lake Park
July 22	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Thomas Mitchell Park
July 23	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Jester Park
July 23	2:00 p.m.	Creek Walk	Mally's Park
July 28	2:00 p.m.	Prairie Hike	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
July 29	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Jester Park
July 30	2:00 p.m.	Bike Hike	Easter Lake Park

JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR: (More events listed on-line)

Week-long Riding Camps

Monday thru Friday from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

- June 8-12: Introduction to Horses, Beginner Riding Camp
- June 15-19: Circus, Circus, Beginner Riding Camp
- June 22-26: Hit the Trails, Intermediate Riding Camp
- July 13-17: Fairy Tails, Beginner Riding Camp
- July 27-31: Horsin' Around, Beginner Riding Camp
- August 3-7: Horses and the Natural Word, Beginner Riding Camp

Half Day Riding Camps

Tuesday - Thursday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon

- June 29-July 1: Tiny Tots-Pony Power, Young Riders Riding Camp
- July 20-22: Tiny Tots-Fairy Princess, Young Riders Riding Camp
- August 10-12: Let's Go to the Fair, Beginner Riding Camp

Trail & Pony Rides

Guided trail rides will start on Saturday, May 23. Children need to be 8 years old and accompanied by an adult to ride. This year's rides will have some new features such as interactive nature rides and themed rides. The price is \$30 for a one hour guided ride. Groups of up to 12 riders are accepted. Riders can make a reservation by calling 515-999-2818. Pony rides occur daily from 10 am - 4 pm throughout the summer.

Specialty Camps

- June 12-13: Adult Riding Camp, 5-8 p.m.
- July 10-11: Twosome Camp - 2 day parent/child camp

Trail Ride Campouts

June 27, July 25, August 1

Come out for a old-fashioned campout. Riders will enjoy a scenic trail ride by the lake, followed by overnight rustic camping filled with campfire food, stories, and songs. A hike to explore the "nature of the night" will also be a part of the fun. Campers will wake up to a hearty breakfast before saddling up for another scenic morning ride back to the stables. Fee: \$75.

Fall Open House

August 29 from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Bring the family out to explore what the JPEC is all about! Featuring driving demonstrations, lesson demos, horse grooming sessions, and much more.



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

www.jesterparkec.com



Polk County Conservation
 11407 NW Jester Park Dr.
 Granger, IA 50109

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OWLS

(Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors)

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 by The Radish is \$10. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

Floating Through History

Tuesday, May 5

During a 25-year career with the Des Moines Register, from 1972-1997, Larry Stone traveled throughout Iowa, sharing stories and photos of the state's natural treasures. This program is not just for paddlers, this is an entertaining look at the natural and cultural resources that canoeists, visitors, and residents may experience along our waterways. This program is funded through Humanities of Iowa.

Why Plant Native in Butterfly Gardens

Tuesday, June 2

Jim Kessler, has been active in native plant gardening, prairie restoration, and native planting management for 40 years. His program will focus on how both urban and rural native plantings can increase wildlife habitat, increase struggling migratory songbird populations, and can reverse the current rapid decline in insect pollinators, including honeybees and monarchs. His presentation will be illustrated with photographs taken on the property he and his wife, Kathy, live on south of Grinnell.

To register for lunch: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Grass Between the Rails

Tuesday, July 7

Denny Rehder has been a musician all his life. He has combined that ability with his love of Iowa history to produce "Grass Between the Rails," a celebration of Iowa's railroad heritage in words and original music. His songs cover the gamut of Iowa railroad history from the race for Council Bluffs to the Burlington Zephyr. Through his music, he visits the worst wreck ever, Iowa's best-known railroad hero, the road through Paradise, the one elephant circus and his family's ties to the Illinois Central. This program is funded through Humanities of Iowa.

The Bears of Katmai

Tuesday, August 4

Katmai National Park on the Alaska Peninsula is well known as the "go to" place to see coastal brown bears. While many fear bears, and rightly so, it's possible to share the space and get along with them too. Nature photographer, Craig Meyers, will introduce you to the bears and other wildlife of Katmai, and share why the bears aren't always the vicious killers we hear about.