

# Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2015 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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## It's Time to Celebrate Pollinators!

In November of 2014, Polk County Conservation received a Resource Enhancement and Protection - Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) Grant to educate people about the importance of pollinators and what we can do to aid in their survival.

Iowa pollinator species include native bees as well as honey bees, beetles, flies, and butterflies. These insects are an important factor within our food systems. Without their pollinating magic, we wouldn't have foods such as strawberries, melons, cherries, apples, chocolate and coffee! They also are responsible for many of the blooms we cherish each year in our gardens.

Populations of pollinator species have been in decline in recent years due to many factors. Honey bees are suffering from Colony Collapse Disorder, and many others are suffering due to loss of habitat. Simply stated, there are not enough host plants or nectar plants to sustain their populations.

With our grant we are hoping to remedy some of this. We are encouraging the public to grow plants that pollinator species can use. They need host plants on which to lay their eggs, as well as nectar plants to get their food. Some plants, like milkweed, pull double duty. Monarch butterflies will lay their eggs on them, as well as use the flowers as a nectar source.

If you are interested in growing plants for pollinators, a good rule of thumb is to either go with native plants or heirloom varieties. Native plants are suited for our environment. Heirloom varieties of annuals, such as zinnias, actually provide more nectar. In some of the "fancier" varieties of plants, the nectar producing organs have been sacrificed to create more petals. Also, be sure to purchase plants that have not



Artist, Ryk Weiss, helps a child fill the insect hotel at Easter Lake during the Pollination Celebration event

been treated with certain insecticides that can be harmful to all insects. When in doubt, ask your plant provider.

We have reached over 600 people and handed out over 800 pollinator friendly plants at our programs this spring and summer, and will now be handing out seed packets throughout the rest of the year. You can get these free seed packets at any of our upcoming pollinator programs. They are marked with the REAP logo in the programming section of the newsletter. For more information, contact Beth Waage at 515-323-5339.

We hope to see you at these programs, and out in your yards, planting away to help our pollinators!



## *Message from the Director: Because the Money Matters...*

As a trained ecologist, I am baffled (and sometimes frustrated) with how much of my time relates to money. The reason is because money matters. A lot.

This year in the state legislature, the Iowa Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Fund (also known as Iowa Water and Land Legacy or I-WILL) received some forward movement. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have versions that will carry into next year's legislative session. If you recall, in 2010 I-WILL passed a referendum to be added to the state constitution by 62% - a higher percentage than any single statewide elected official received!

In 2012, Polk County residents voted on a different type of natural resources funding, a bond referendum called Polk County Water and Land Legacy (PCWLL,) which passed by an astounding 72% of voters. You have been seeing some of the "early wins" in our trails, parks, and waterways. I thought it would be illustrative to highlight an exceptional success story of this type of funding.

The Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in northeastern Polk County is known for high quality restored grasslands and wetlands. Since its inception nearly 60 years ago, it has grown dramatically to be one of the premier wildlife areas in Iowa, now over 8,000 acres. Dozens of unusual to rare plants and animals such as Sandhill Cranes, turtles such as Ornate Box and Blandings, Plains Pocket Mouse, Western Prairie Fringed Orchid, and Sand Puccoon now call the area home. It is truly an oasis in the agricultural Iowa landscape. We and our partners have invested major funds in the reconstruction of wetlands, return of native plant populations, and the development of high quality wildlife habitat.

A few months ago, we became aware of the sale of a small parcel of land (27 acres) within an "inholding," a piece of land surrounded by Chichaqua Bottoms. A local gentleman, Shaymus Smith, was interested in starting a small cattle feedlot and thought this land was going to serve that purpose well. We were concerned because the land is quite sandy and erodible, and a small stream running through the land feeds a major wetland that had cost millions to restore. The potential for a serious impact to water quality and wildlife habitat was real.

We got in touch with Shaymus immediately and asked if we could talk about his plans. He readily agreed, and Loren Lown (one of our long-time staff and Chichaqua hero) and I met with Shaymus and his brother Shadam to discuss the plans. After a half-hour of talking about things four guys standing alongside a gravel road talk about, we got down to discussing the proposed feedlot. Shaymus described his plans, which included good conservation methods such as fencing cattle from the stream. We then described the type of soil and location of the stream/wetland that made it almost inevitable for feedlot runoff to reach the water.

We had a dilemma. Shaymus and his brother have great respect for the outdoors, hunting and fishing at Chichaqua since they were kids. They also had a desire to start a livestock operation, and land prices are high anywhere close to the Des Moines Metro. Loren and I were able to negotiate a land purchase, with PCWLL bond funds, right there and then on the dusty roadside. We got to a place where Shaymus could hopefully find another piece of ground that wasn't so environmentally sensitive to start his operation. And Chichaqua acquired a key piece of land protecting water quality, forever. A win-win for conservation and animal agriculture, thanks to the availability of PCWLL monies.

The PCWLL bond allowed us to move quickly and decisively, working hand-in-hand with a local landowner, to acquire the land and to protect the public investment at this signature park. To repeat, this type of action could not have happened without the flexibility of the bonding funds that allow us to act quickly and decisively.

Sustainable natural resource funding benefits our communities and state in so many ways. Water quality, outdoor recreation, tourism, conservation, sustainable agriculture, and environmental education all benefit our families and communities, as well as investment in our future. This spending results in an amazing payback for dollars spent. Polk County is benefitting in many ways from PCWLL, and it is our firm belief that our state needs I-WILL! We all need to advocate for sustainable funding into our shared future, because money matters.

*Richard Leopold*



## The Latest

### Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

#### TRAILS

- Plans are in the works for a trail connection coming into Mally's Park off the Chichaqua Valley Trail to make both the park and trail more accessible. This will also provide trail users with easier access to restroom facilities. Completion is anticipated by early fall.
- A trail extension to provide an all-weather connection between the Great Western Trail and the Bill Riley Trail will soon be underway. This ADA accessible section will run 1.25 miles from the parking lot south of George Flagg Pkwy to 30th St.
- Phase II of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail around Easter Lake is now complete and open to the public. This section encompasses approximately 1.75 miles of paved trail on the north side of the lake from Ewing Park to Evergreen Avenue providing safe trail use off the park road as well as improved trail access to adjacent neighborhoods. Phase III is expected to begin in 2017 dependent upon progress within the larger restoration project in Easter Lake.

#### PARKS

##### Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

- A new information entry kiosk and interpretive signage has been installed at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt on the west side of US Highway 65/330 just north of Bondurant and the South Skunk River.



- A Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Master Plan Public Open House is scheduled for Tuesday, September 8th, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. in the Longhouse. The Open House will consist of a presentation of the final draft of the CBG Master Plan and include time for feedback from the public for this 8,000 acre wildlife area.

##### Brown's Woods

- Head out to Brown's Woods and enjoy the new trail amenities including a vault restroom, drinking fountain, information kiosk and trailhead! New wayfinding signs offering easier navigation of the trail system will soon be in place.

##### Easter Lake Park

- Restoration in Easter Lake is almost underway. 2015 will see work on the spillway and fish rearing structure on the east side of the lake. A sediment basin is to be constructed yet this year to the west of the covered bridge. A dredging contract will be awarded this year as well. The dredging contractor will likely bring in the dredge piping this fall.

##### Fort Des Moines Park

- Proposed improvements at Fort Des Moines Park include new shelters, flush restrooms, peninsula trail/boardwalk/shade structures, improved trail system and bridges, boat ramp and fishing access, and an outdoor classroom. Projects will be in full swing by fall of 2015.
- Fishing has now opened in response to drastically improved water quality at Fort Des Moines following dredging and pond restoration work. Please note that the presence of larger fish will be minimal as we allow time for growth. Access to certain areas of the pond may be restricted at times due to upcoming park improvements.

##### Yellow Banks Park

- Exciting improvements at Yellow Banks Park are on the heels of projects at Fort Des Moines Park. Stay tuned, information about specific Yellow Banks Park amenities will be available in the next issue of Nature News!

##### Jester Park

- Final fundraising efforts are in full force for the Jester Park Conservation Center. In response to public input, Polk County Conservation is reworking the final floor plans. PCC is taking this feedback into consideration as we gear up for raising the remaining funds by the end of 2016. The next newsletter will unveil the final plans and announce the launch of a public support campaign for the Center.

#### LAND PROTECTION

- In partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a 240 acre property acquisition at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt is being restored to native habitat during the fall of 2015. Wetlands and germinating prairie will greet wildlife when they return next spring.
- Thanks to swift, decisive action coupled with the ease of available natural resources funding through the Polk County Water and Land Legacy Bond, an ecologically sensitive 27-acre in-holding property within Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt is now officially a part of this important reconstructed area. Read the Director's Message on page 2 for more details.

## New Faces at Polk County Conservation

### Doug Romig, Deputy Director



Deputy Director, Douglas C. Romig began his employment with PCC on May 26, 2015. Doug comes to PCC with over 25 years of experience within the City of Des Moines in Parks and Recreation and Housing Services. As the City's Recreation and Park's Manager over a 20-year career, Doug oversaw an \$18 million operating budget and coordinated park maintenance, building management, cemeteries, golf, community centers, aquatics, beach operations and sports programming. For the past 5-years, Doug served as Housing Services Director overseeing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Public Housing, Section 8 Rental Assistance and U.S. Health and Human Services Community Action Agency operations.

Doug's professional background and administrative capabilities, lend themselves well in advancing Polk County Conservation mission: To provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long term protection of Polk County's natural heritage.

Doug grew up in Sioux City, Iowa, and graduated from East High School in 1985.

He attended Iowa State University where he obtained his bachelor's degree in Leisure Studies with an emphasis in Community and Therapeutic Recreation, completing work-studies with the Ankeny Recreation Department, Iowa Special Olympics and Iowa Methodist Medical Center. Doug served on the Iowa Parks and Recreation Association Board and belonged to the National Recreation and Parks Association as a member and presenter at national conferences.

Doug is married to Deana Quick-Romig a 3rd grade teacher for the Urbandale School District (Webster Elementary) and has three children; Kyra Jacobson (24 - Agri-Access (Husband - Patrick)), granddaughter Anna Grace (8-weeks); Jordan (20 - Junior at San Diego State University) and Madisen (20 - Junior at Iowa State University).

### Clarke Johnson, Parks Superintendent



Parks Superintendent, Clarke Johnson began his employment with PCC on May 26, 2015. Clarke was hired to manage and direct the day-to-day operations of Polk County parks, recreational facilities, trails, greenways, wildlife and recreational areas. This will include establishing overall operating standards consistent with PCCB's mission and strategic plans.

Clarke graduated from Ohio State University with a major in Public Recreation and a minor in Natural Resources. Further studies included attending San Jose State in pursuit of a Masters Degree. Clarke then became the Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry for the City of Joplin, Missouri, and completed his Masters at Pittsburg State in Kansas where he also taught undergraduate recreation classes. He was also the Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, and continued to teach as an Adjunct Professor at Madison Area Technical College and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Clarke then worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Parks and Recreation to be the Superintendent of Lakeshore State Park and the Southeast Region Trail Manager. Following employment with the Wisconsin DNR, he worked with the City of Portage, Indiana, in collaboration with the National Park Service's Indiana Dunes and U.S. Steel to open the city's first public lakefront and environmental education center.

Before joining PCC he was the Executive Director of the Mill Creek Metro Park District serving Mahoning County, Ohio. Clarke has been active in State and National Parks and Recreation associations having been a presenter at a number of conferences.

## More New Faces

### Tanner Krum, Jester Park Equestrian Center Barn Supervisor



Tanner began his employment as the Jester Park Equestrian Center Barn Supervisor in May. He grew up in Van Meter, Iowa, and has worked around livestock on several farms where he gained experience managing cattle and horses. Tanner owns two horses and enjoys riding, team roping, and shoeing horses. In his spare time he enjoys hunting and rollerblading. Tanner loves being outside and overseeing operations in the JPEC barn. Stop by the Equestrian Center and say hello to Tanner!

## Chichaqua Bottom Greenbelt Master Plan Open House

**Tuesday, September 8th**  
**6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**  
**Chichaqua Longhouse, 8700 NE 126 Avenue, Maxwell**

The public is invited to an Open House to view and provide input on concepts and ideas associated with master planning for Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. A brief presentation of the plan will take place at 7:00 p.m. The format for the evening will be that of an Open House.

**Polk County Conservation Board Members:**  
 Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*  
 Connie Johnson, *Ankeny*  
 Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*  
 Lance Northway, *Runnells*  
 Mike Smith, *West Des Moines*

**Polk County Conservation Director:**  
 Richard Leopold

## The Great Outdoors Foundation Board of Directors Formally Invites You to the



**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 | 5:00 P.M.**  
**Jester Park Lodge | 11407 NW Jester Park Dr | Granger, IA**  
**\$50 PER PERSON | \$400 PER TABLE (SEATS 8)**

**PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE AT:**  
[www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org)  
*Pre-registration is required. Business Casual attire.*  
*For more information, call: 515.967.3895*

- 5:00 p.m.** Appetizers, Beer & Wine Tasting, Silent Auction, Raffles
- 6:30 p.m.** Dinner buffet catered by Christiani's
- 7:30 p.m.** Trivia Night Begins — Bring your friends to make a team!

**Great Outdoors Foundation Board Members:**  
 Pat Boddy | Joseph Corfits | Dan Cornelison | Liz Cox |  
 Cindy Elsbernd | Matthew Marckmann | Chris McCarthy |  
 Tony Murray | Bethany Wilcoxon



## 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.

**September 14** - Migration Sensation at *Raccoon River Park, 2500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines*

**September 29** - Falling Leaves at *Brown's Woods*

**October 5** - Fossil Dig at *Jester Park, Shelter #6 (starts at 6 p.m.)*

**October 20**- Spunky Spiders at *Quail Cove Park, 1515 S. 52nd Street, WDM (starts at 6 p.m.)*

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](http://www.wdm.iowa.gov). These programs are co-sponsored by the West Des Moines Parks and Recreation.



## Honey Creek-Lake Rathbun Overnight Bus Trip

October 13-14  
Moravia, Iowa

Journey to southern Iowa for an overnight escape at Honey Creek Resort. Fall foliage, a luncheon cruise on Lake Rathbun, a golf cart brigade, campfire stories and more await you on this two day trip to southern Iowa. On day one, we will see hay bale art in rural Iowa, tour Hunter's Tree Farm, sample Piper's Chocolates, enjoy lunch at the Slykuis Tea Room, and tour HyVee in Chariton. Upon arrival at Honey Creek Resort, participants will check into the hotel and have time to explore. Following supper at the hotel, we will have a presentation on the wildlife of Lake Rathbun followed by smores around the campfire.

Day two will begin with breakfast at the resort followed by a tour of the solar house. Then it is off to the award winning golf course for the "golf cart brigade". Lunch will be served aboard the J & K Houseboat as we enjoy a narrated cruise on beautiful Lake Rathbun.

- Fee: \$190/double occupancy or \$240 single occupancy; includes transportation, lodging, meals, and tour fees.
- Departing from Living History Farm SE Parking lot, Urbandale, IA at 7:30 a.m. on October 13.
- Registration deadline is September 14.



Participants enjoying the golf cart brigade through Honey Creek Resort Golf Course

Polk County Conservation

11407 NW Jester Park Drive

Granger, Iowa 50109

515-323-5300

[polk\\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov)

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

Follow us on:



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 visiting: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://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.
- No refunds will be given after the registration deadline.

## Pelicans in Iowa

**Tuesday, September 1 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

The American white pelicans are here! Come and learn about these amazing birds and their migration patterns.

## Music in the Park

**Saturday, September 5 @ 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Amphitheater**

The Big Joe Kinser band are purveyors of musical adventures in the realms of Western Swing, Outlaw & alt Country, Honky Tonk and Southern Rock. Powered by guitar, bass, drums, piano and fiddle the band will take you on an uptempo ride through old favorites and newer classics by everyone from Bob Wills to Dwight Yoakam, with a few of their self-penned numbers thrown in too. Come sit & listen or get up & dance! The Big Joe Kinser band will show you a big good time.

## Monarch Tagging

**Wednesday, September 9 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park, Elk & Bison Plaza**



Come learn about one of the world's most talked about butterflies and what makes them so unique! We will also try our hand at catching and tagging monarchs as they migrate back to their winter home in Mexico. Come prepared to move around and have some fun! Extra parking available at Shelter #6.

## Stargazing

**Friday, September 11 @ 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, Shelter #1**

Turn your eyes to the sky to view the autumn constellations. Local astronomers will provide telescopes.

## Catfishing Basics

**Thursday, September 17 @ 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, meet at boat ramp**

Have you always wanted to catch a flat head or channel cat? In this hands-on class you'll learn about catfish biology, what and when they eat, where to find them, and more. After the program, we'll go out on a sand bar and fish for catfish. Bait, hooks, and sinkers will be provided. Bring a fishing pole if you have one, bug spray, chair or bucket to sit on, and flashlight or lantern. Participants 16 years and older must have a valid fishing license. Pre-registration is required; deadline is September 11. Fee: \$5.

## Monarch Tagging

**Saturday, September 19 @ 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.**

**Chichaqua Longhouse**



Come learn about one of the world's most talked about butterflies and what makes them so unique! We will also try our hand at catching and tagging monarchs as they migrate back to their winter home in Mexico. We will also be looking for milkweed that has ripened so we can collect the seed and plant more habitat for monarch butterflies!

## Butterfly Festival

**Sunday, September 20 @ 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.**

**Blank Park Zoo**



Join us for the second annual Monarch Festival at the Zoo. We will have meet and greets with local butterfly and bee experts, crafts and activities for kids, puppet shows and a "Bug Parade" where kids can dress up as their favorite insect. This year's event will be themed around the astonishing monarch migration to Mexico. Take home a free seed packet to start your own butterfly sanctuary in your yard!

## Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day

**Saturday, September 26 @ 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse**

Come learn the basics of waterfowl hunting while having lots of fun. Sessions will include dog training, calling, decoy setup, waterfowl identification, gun and blind safety, rules and regulations, and waterfowl ecology. Youth will also shoot clay "ducks" on our trap range. Door prizes and snacks provided. Partners of this event include: Ducks Unlimited, Iowa DNR, and Mid Iowa Retrievers. Pre-registration encouraged. Fee: \$5. Ages 6-18 (youth must be accompanied by an adult).

## Iowa Outdoor Expo

**Saturday, September 26 @ 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, September 27 @ 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**Des Moines Izaak Walton League**

Try your skills at canoeing, kayaking, archery, fishing, trap shooting, BB Guns, geocaching and much more. Free family event. Visit [www.iowadnr.gov/expo](http://www.iowadnr.gov/expo) for more information.

## Dem Bones

**Tuesday, October 6 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**



Explore the differences between bird, mammal, fish, and reptile bones. We'll also look at insects and exoskeletons as an alternative to bones. We'll try to figure out how bones are put together and the similarities between human bones and other animal bones.

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

**Saturday, October 10 @ 5:00 - 11:00 a.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse**

Would your child like to experience the thrill of waterfowl hunting? This mentored hunt in a controlled waterfowl hunting area at Chichaqua can provide this opportunity. Start the morning with a "hunter's breakfast" in the shop. Youth will be placed in groups of two and teamed with an experienced waterfowl hunter and a conservation officer to serve as mentors. Mentors will provide the dogs, decoys, calling skills and guidance. Youth need to provide their own gun, ammunition, and waders (PCC will provide if youth do not have them.) Pre-registration required; deadline is October 2. Fee: \$10. This hunt is for youth ages 12-15 only. Youth must have completed hunter education class and attended a Waterfowl Fun Field Day.

## Walk For Wildlife

**Saturday, October 10 @ 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse**

Enjoy a family walk through the park or extend your trip with a 5 or 10-kilometer Volkssport walk. You can also try geocaching along your walk, GPS units will be available. Girl Scouts of America are also invited to take part in the day, there will be a number of badge requirement activities available. It's almost Halloween; wear a costume that allows you to walk. Walkers can start anytime between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored by the Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association. \$2 registration fee payable at the event. Pets on a 6-foot leash are welcome.

Program Registration: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

## Fall Frenzy

**Sunday, October 11 @ 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

**Walker Johnston Park (Giovannetti Community Shelter)**

Bring your family for a day of fall fun! Come explore Walker Johnston Park and all the amenities it has to offer. We will have a scavenger hunt, outdoor games, crafts, and live critters. This event is hosted by Polk County Conservation, UCANN, and Urbandale Parks and Recreation.



## Fall Hike

**Saturday, October 17 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

**Brown's Woods**

Come enjoy the season! A naturalist will lead a nature hike through the woods and explain the brilliance of fall colors.

## Owl Prowl

**Friday, October 23 @ 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, tent camping area**

Join a naturalist for a lively campfire program to learn about owls. After a discussion about these flying predators of the night, we will go for a hike and learn how to call three different owl species.

## Geocache Pumpkin Hunt

**Saturday, October 24 @ 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

**Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #2**

Join a naturalist to learn how to use a GPS, then go search the woods to find some pumpkins, collecting prizes and candy along the way! Be sure to keep an eye out for bats along the way that are worth special prizes. Space is limited, so register early. Pre-registration required; deadline is October 19. Fee: \$5 per collector (any child ages 3-14).



## Going Batty

**Thursday, October 29 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Kirkendall Library, 1210 NW Prairie Ridge Dr., Ankeny**

Are they blind? Do they really suck blood and turn into vampires? Come learn the truth about this "grossly" misunderstood animal. Learn how to deal with them when they become an unwanted houseguest and find out what you can do to help protect this beneficial species.

## Pooches in the Park

**Saturday, October 31 @ 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.**

**Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2**

Join us for a howling good time with your canine companion! We'll start with a short one-mile hike enjoying the new Mark C. Ackelson Trail. We will finish our hike with refreshments and treats for all and a doggie costume contest. All pooches must be on a 6-foot leash (maximum).

## Monarch Day of the Dead

**Sunday, November 1 @ 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

Karen Phelps has been to the monarch butterflies wintering grounds in Mexico twice to witness the mass numbers of butterflies as they overwinter in the Oyamel Fir trees. Come listen to her talk about her amazing experience. We will also have crafts for the children to work on in a different room, so bring the whole family!



## Self Care & Balance in Nature

**Sunday, November 8 @ 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

Many of our days are filled with work commitments, family obligations and running from place to place. Come spend a few hours making time for yourself in a beautiful natural setting. We will share tips and resources to help find balance and make room for self-care in your busy life. There will be time to reflect, explore and discover practical ways that can support your shift from crazy to calm. Co-sponsored with the Heartland Wellbeing Institute. Pre-registration required; registration deadline November 4. Minimum age is 16. Fee: \$25.

## Barrel Birdhouses

**Saturday, November 14 @ 10:00 a.m. - Noon**

**Jester Park Construction Shop**

Join a Polk County Conservation Naturalist and build a home for one of your favorite backyard animals. You'll be given a plastic fifteen gallon barrel and any other supplies. From there, you can make a wood duck house, an owl abode, a purple martin manor, a bat bungalow, a squirrel studio or a plant tower. Barrel dimensions are 14" diameter X 26" tall. Bring your ideas and we'll make them happen. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 6. Fee: \$10.



## Native American History Day

**Saturday, November 14 @ 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, Tent Camping Area**

Join us as we celebrate the history of Native Americans at Yellow Banks Park. Get hands on experience constructing a tipi and try your hand at throwing an atlatl. Don't know what and atlatl is? Join us and find out. Authentic artifacts collected from the area and rarely seen by the public will be interpreted. The artifacts span over twelve thousand years of history and represent four different cultures. We'll also take a short hike to the last remaining burial mound in the park. This event is free and all ages are welcomed.



## Soap Making

**Saturday, November 21 @ 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

With recent interest in more "natural" lifestyles, the art of soap making is gaining popularity. Let Mitchell County Natu-



ralist, Chelsea Ewen, help you discover the history, chemistry, process, and benefits of making your own homemade soap. The best part of this class is customizing and taking home your own unique soap! Whether using it as gifts or for personal use, you're sure to be hooked on your first batch! Pre-registration required; deadline is November 13. Fee: \$15.

## Decorate a Tree for Wildlife

**Tuesday, December 1 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

Share the holiday season by making outdoor decorations and/or birdfeeders for wildlife to enjoy. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 27. Fee: \$5.

## Tricky Tracks

**Monday, December 28 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**Altoona Library, 700 8th St. SW**

**Monday, December 28 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

**West Des Moines Library, 4000 Mills Civic Parkway**

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 identify the signs that animals leave behind.

## Animal Winter Survival

**Tuesday, December 29 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**Urbandale Library, 3520 86th St.**

**Tuesday, December 29 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

**East Side Library, 2559 Hubbell Ave., Des Moines**

How do animals survive the winter? Learn about the different strategies animals use to survive through a long cold Iowa winter.

## Iowa's Rocks & Minerals

**Wednesday, December 30 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**Polk City Library, 1500 W. Broadway**

**Wednesday, December 30 @ 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.**

**South Side Library, 1111 Porter Ave., Des Moines**

Come learn the "hard" basic facts about Iowa's rocks and minerals. We'll also discuss how sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rocks are formed. We'll even learn how rocks "talk" to us.

## Snowshoe Hike

**Thursday, December 31 @ 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

**Easter Lake Park, Shelter #3**

Learn how easy and fun snowshoeing can be while experiencing the great outdoors. Wear warm boots. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 29. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

Program Registration: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

## 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. Call (515) 323-5300 to register for lunch. The cost of the catered lunch is \$10. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

### History of the Iowa County Conservation Board System

**Tuesday, September 1**

Tom Hazelton serves as the CEO of Iowa's County Conservation Board System, and suspiciously - was born within days of the county conservation bill being signed into law?! Hmmm? His nearly 40-year career in county conservation yields a unique perspective on the history, expansion and success of 99-county system. Join Tom as he waltzes you through a bit of the history and early structure, then on to the incredible statewide presence that it has become. A portion of the presentation will focus on the economic impact that not only the Polk County Conservation Board provides to the local economies - but the broader impact made on Iowa's economy, workforce development, and quality of life! Tom artfully blends hundreds of beautiful photographs amongst statistics and stories to provide you with an especially informative experience.

### Travels in Nepal

**Tuesday, October 6**

Join Ray and Margaret Harden as they share pictures and stories of their recent trip to Nepal. Nepal is called the "Top of the World", as it has eight of the world's ten tallest mountain peaks. They were lucky to see this beautiful country and interesting culture before the earthquake in April of 2015. Many of the ancient buildings and monuments they saw in Kathmandu and the World Heritage Site of Durbar Square are now rubble. Their trip included incredible wildlife viewing, history and adventure.

### Bird Nests - A Tour of Avian Architecture and Hidden Treasures

**Tuesday, November 3**

Learning how to carefully spot and identify nests is a challenge welcomed by a growing number of experienced and beginning birders alike. From huge platform nests located high in trees to neatly woven cup nests hidden in the grass,

the amazing diversity of nests nearly matches the diversity of the birds themselves. Join Iowa DNR biologist Bruce Ehresman as he discusses nest sites, nest types, and nest materials of birds in Iowa and beyond. Bruce will show how this information can help a keen observer determine the type of bird that made a particular nest - and how important those nesting aspects are to a bird's life cycle. In addition to photos, he will bring in various examples of nests for first-hand views. Bruce participated in both of Iowa's Breeding Bird Atlases, during which time he spent several thousand hours locating nests across the state. He is excited to share what he has learned with others who appreciate wildlife.



Red-eyed vireo with nest and young

### Emerald Ash Borer: It is in Iowa. Now what?

**Tuesday, December 1**

Tivon Feeley, Forest Health Program Leader, with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will discuss the presence of emerald ash borer (EAB), an exotic, destructive insect of ash trees, which is spreading in Iowa. You will learn:

- How to identify an ash tree
- How to identify EAB
- Signs of EAB infestation
- EAB Management Options
- How spread of EAB is being restricted
- Ash Tree replacement options

To register for lunch visit [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) or call (515) 323-5300.

## EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

## Volunteer Appreciation Paddle & Picnic

**Sunday, September 20 @ noon - 4:00 p.m.**  
**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

What would we do without our amazing team of volunteers?! Last year alone, 16,000 hours were put into conservation efforts in Polk County. The thousands upon thousands of hours put into our parks and trails deserves to be celebrated! Please join us to explore the Skunk River oxbows by canoe or kayak. Gather at the Longhouse for a potluck style picnic. Polk County Conservation will be grilling up brats and burgers - bring a side to share with your fellow volunteers! Refrigeration is available in the longhouse if needed. Potluck starts at noon followed by float.

PCC will offer 30 boats available on a first come, first serve basis or you are welcome to bring your own. Not a paddler? Chichaqua also offers great hiking and birding opportunities. Contact Pat Spain to reserve your spot today at [pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov) or 515-323-5280.

## Outdoor Expo

**Saturday, September 26, 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.**  
**Sunday, September 27, 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**  
**Des Moines Izaak Walton League**

Volunteers are needed to help staff the PCC booth, assist with fishing, archery, canoeing/kayaking, parking, general information booth. Volunteers will be assigned four hour shifts. To volunteer, please contact Lori Foresman-Kirpes at (515) 323-5380, or [lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov).

## Four Mile Creek Sweep

**Sunday, October 4 @ 11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**  
**Mally's Park, Berwick**

Strap on your boots and waders and get muddy with the Conservation team! In an effort to improve water quality, we will be sweeping Four Mile Creek for tires and other debris as well as clean up litter in and around Mally's Park. Participants should dress for the weather, bring work gloves and wear appropriate shoes for water or shore-based efforts (old shoes, rubber boots or waders). Be sure to bring along a refillable water bottle. Meet at Mally's Park at 11:30 a.m. for lunch provided by the National Environmental Education Foundation. For more information about this event, please contact Pat Spain at [pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov) or (515) 323-5280.

To volunteer, please contact: Pat Spain at (515) 323-5280 or [pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov)

## Carney Marsh Restoration

**Sundays: October 11 and November 8 @ 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**Carney Marsh, Ankeny**

A DMACC crew of Environmental Science students and staff have committed to volunteering one Sunday of every month for the rest of the year at Carney Marsh. Be a part of this restoration effort by coming along on any or all of the dates above. No experience is necessary, and equipment is provided. Dress for the weather and bring appropriate shoes or boots, and a refillable water bottle. Please confirm date and time with Pat Spain at 515-323-5280 prior to attending. Event will be cancelled in the event of heavy rain or lightning.

## Moonlight Seed Harvest

**Saturday, October 24 @ 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.**  
**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, meet at Youth Camp Area**

Join us if you dare for a spooktacular moonlight seed harvest followed by a bonfire s'more cookout! More details to come - check the online calendar of events at [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) for further information as October approaches!

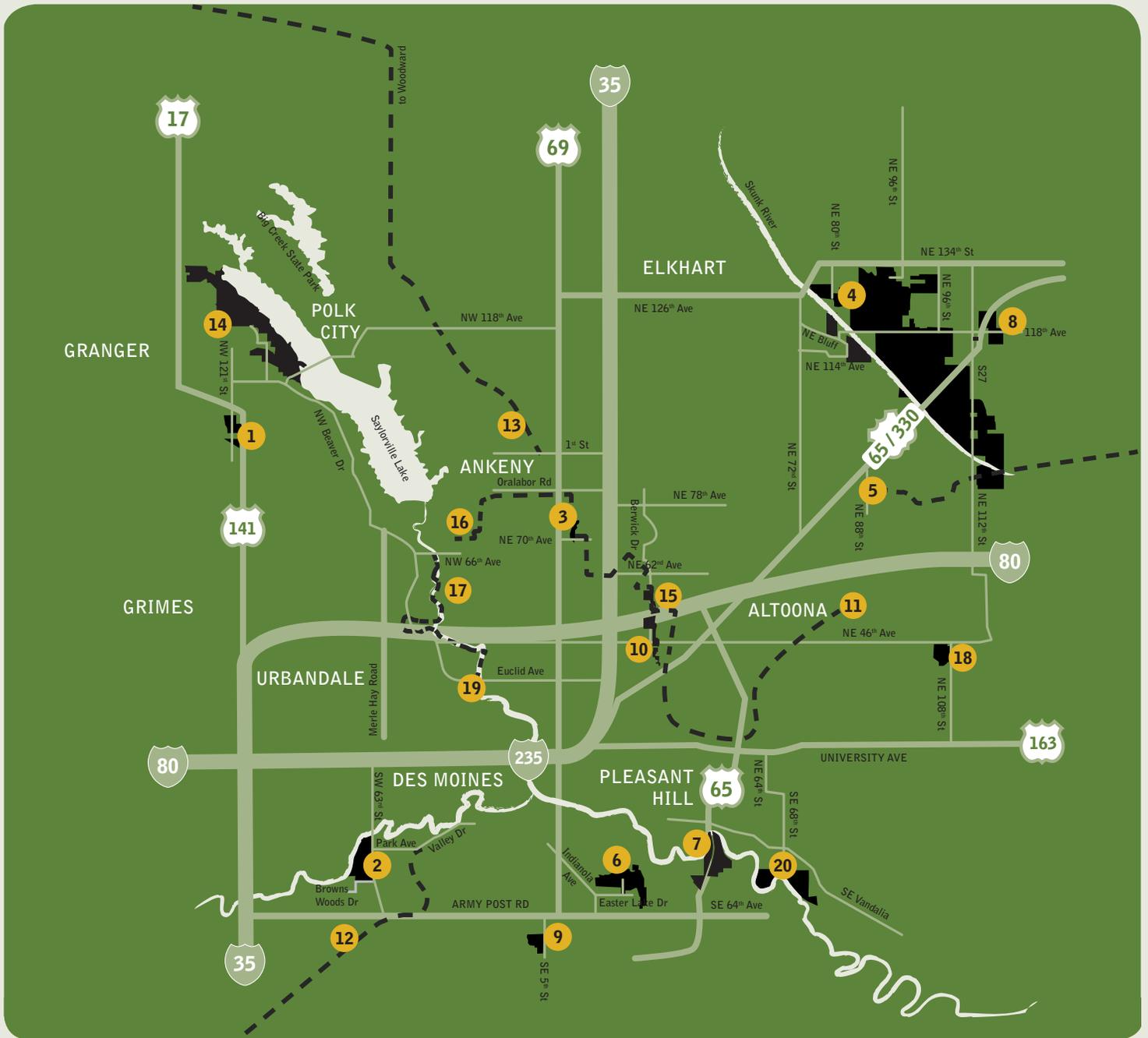
## Invasive Species Roundup

**Saturday, December 5 @ 10:00 a.m. - noon**  
**Jester Park, Shelter #5**

Your help is needed to restore our woodlands by removing honeysuckle and other invasive species. Meet us at 9:45 a.m. at Shelter #5. All supplies are provided. Dress for the weather and bring appropriate shoes or boots and a water bottle.



Volunteers helping out at the Four Mile Creek Sweep in 2014



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
September 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - History of IACCB System	Jester Park Lodge
September 1	6:30 p.m.	Pelicans in Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
September 5	6:30 p.m.	Music in the Park	Jester Park
September 8	6:30 p.m.	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Open House	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 9	6:30 p.m.	Monarch Tagging	Jester Park
September 11	7:30 p.m.	Stargazing	Yellow Banks Park
September 14	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park
September 17	7:30 a.m.	Stone City Bus Tour*	Anamosa, Iowa
September 17	6:00 p.m.	Catfishing Basics*	Yellow Banks Park
September 19	9:00 a.m.	Monarch Tagging	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 20	12:00 p.m.	Butterfly Festival	Blank Park Zoo
September 20	12:00 p.m.	Volunteer Appreciation Paddle and Picnic	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 26	9:00 a.m.	Iowa Outdoor Expo	Des Moines Izaak Walton League
September 26	1:00 p.m.	Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 27	10:00 a.m.	Iowa Outdoor Expo	Des Moines Izaak Walton League
September 29	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Brown's Woods
October 4	11:30 a.m.	Four Mile Creek Sweep*	Mally's Park
October 5	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
October 6	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Travels in Nepal	Jester Park Lodge
October 6	6:30 p.m.	Dem Bones	Jester Park Lodge
October 10	5:00 a.m.	Mentored Waterfowl Hunt*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 10	9:00 a.m.	Walk for Wildlife	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 11	11:00 a.m.	Carney Marsh Restoration	Carney Marsh
October 11	1:00 p.m.	Fall Frenzy	Walker Johnson Park
October 13-14	7:30 a.m.	Honey Creek Bus Trip*	Moravia, Iowa
October 17	1:00 p.m.	Fall Hike	Brown's Woods
October 20	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Quail Cove Park
October 23	6:00 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Yellow Banks Park
October 24	1:00 p.m.	Geocache Pumpkin Hunt*	Thomas Mitchell Park
October 24	6:00 p.m.	Moonlight Seed Harvest	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 29	6:30 p.m.	Going Batty	Kirkendall Library
October 31	1:00 p.m.	Pooches in the Park	Easter Lake Park
November 1	1:00 p.m.	Monarch Day of the Dead	Jester Park Lodge
November 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Bird Nests	Jester Park Lodge
November 8	11:00 a.m.	Carney Marsh Restoration	Carney Marsh
November 8	1:00 p.m.	Self Care & Balance in Nature*	Jester Park Lodge
November 14	10:00 a.m.	Barrel Birdhouses*	Jester Park
November 14	1:00 p.m.	Native American History Day	Yellow Banks Park
November 21	10:00 a.m.	Soap Making*	Jester Park Lodge
December 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Emerald Ash Borer	Jester Park Lodge
December 1	6:30 p.m.	Decorate a Tree for Wildlife*	Jester Park Lodge
December 5	10:00 a.m.	Invasive Species Round Up	Jester Park
December 28	11:00 a.m.	Tricky Tracks	Altoona Library
December 28	1:00 p.m.	Tricky Tracks	West Des Moines Library
December 29	11:00 a.m.	Animal Winter Preparation	Urbandale Library
December 29	1:00 p.m.	Animal Winter Preparation	East Side Library
December 30	11:00 a.m.	Iowa's Rocks & Minerals	Polk City Library
December 30	1:30 p.m.	Iowa's Rocks & Minerals	South Side Library
December 31	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park

## JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR

## Guided Trail Rides

**September - October, Fridays-Sundays**

Enjoy a scenic guided trail ride along the lakeshore at Jester Park. Rides are one hour long for ages 8 and over, Tuesday-Sunday. Rides are beginner friendly. Due to high demand, reservations are preferred. Cost: \$35/per person.

## Fall Wagon Rides

**September - November, by reservation**

Celebrate the changing of the seasons with a horse-drawn wagon ride on Saylorville Lake. Come outdoors and enjoy nature at the Jester Park Equestrian Center this fall. Rides are one hour and \$10/per person for groups up to 35.

## Time to Ride: Labor Day Festival

**Monday, September 7 from 11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

JPEC is proud to announce participation in the "Time to Ride" program. Offering unique opportunities to learn about horses, and experience them for the first time. Event is open to the public and free of charge.

## Trail Ride Campout

**Saturday, September 26**

Come out for an 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.

## Tiny Tots Fall Session

**September 26 - October 24, offering classes: Thursday-Sunday from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

"Tiny Tots" is designed to prepare riders ages 5 - 8 years of age to transition from those hand-led pony rides to more progressive riding lessons. Over weekly lessons for 6 weeks- riders will develop confidence, hand/eye coordination and balance as they play games on horseback in structured classes taught by patient, experienced instructors. 2:1 instructor ratio and assistants for each student. Registration required. Cost: \$40/class or \$200/full session.

## Time to Ride: Grand Finale

**Sunday, September 27 from 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.**

JPEC is proud to announce participation in the "Time to Ride" program. Offering unique opportunities to learn about horses, and experience them for the first time. There will be pony rides, wagon rides, barn tours, and grooming sessions. The event is free of charge and open to the general public.

## JPEC "Spook-tacular"

**October 29-30 from 4:00 - 9:00 p.m. and October 31 from 12:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

Come out and enjoy a night of Halloween fun. Trick or Treating, face painting, a "haunted" hike, hay rack rides, costumed pony rides, and games for the whole family. Costumes are encouraged and loved! Cost: \$10/per person over 5 years of age.

## Fall Game/Fun Show

**Sunday, November 7 from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

JPEC will be hosting a Fall Game/Fun Show to area equestrians. Show will include classes for youth to adult. Classes will be \$5/class and include: barrels, poles, costume class, leadline, trails, egg and spoon, flag races, and much more. Open to the public to come out and watch as well.

## Pony Express to Santa

**December 12, 13, 19, and 20 from 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Bring your child out to enjoy a winter wonderland aboard our ponies and end the trip with a visit to see Santa. Decorate stockings, enjoy Christmas carols on a sleigh ride, and much more! \$20/child, and sleigh rides additional \$5/per person.

## Winter Sleigh Rides

**December thru April, when the snow falls**

Sleigh rides for groups up to 6 people. \$10/per person for a 45-minute ride thru the snow-covered trails of the Jester Park. By reservation when the snow lands. JPEC is open through the holidays for family sleigh rides. Please call 515-999-2818 for more information.

## JPEC Birthday Parties

**By Reservation, Fridays thru Sundays**

Come celebrate your special day with the horses and staff at JPEC! We offer multiple package options that include pony rides, room rental, wagon rides, horse grooming sessions, and crafts. We also offer themed party décor and setup. Reservations required, please call for more information.



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

[www.jesterparke.com](http://www.jesterparke.com)



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

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## Polk County Conservation by the Numbers

Fiscal Year July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

**31,358** people attended a PCC environmental educational program

**75,455** people camped in a PCC park

Over **2,500** volunteers gave more than **16,500** hours of volunteer service



**1,678** people stayed in the Jester Park Cabins and were occupied on average **206** days of the year



Total Park Visitation\*  
**1,750,000+**

\*PCC is unable to accurately calculate total park visitation from traffic counters. The estimated visitation total of 1,750,000 people reflect only those parks equipped with counters or alternative ways for tracking visitation