

# Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2012 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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## Polk County's Water and Land Legacy Bond

The Polk County Conservation Board has passed a resolution asking the Board of Supervisors to refer a bond referendum to the November 6th, 2012, ballot in the amount of \$50 million for the purposes of funding park and trail improvements, land acquisition and conservation measures including lakes, rivers and stream improvements within Polk County. If voters pass this measure, it would cost the average household in Polk County approximately \$9 per year if all bonds were issued immediately based on current rates.

The growth of Polk County demands a need for parks, trails, and natural areas as identified in The Tomorrow Plan, Capitol Crossroads, and many other local and regional planning efforts. A \$50 million bond referendum spread out over 20 years would fund acquisitions to protect sensitive areas, connect greenways, buffer parks, improve water quality and reduce flooding in Polk County. It would also enhance accessible outdoor recreation, conservation education, and complete trail connections that would connect communities and encourage healthy lifestyles.

The use of these funds will be executed and guided by existing master plans and capital improvement plans of the Polk County Conservation Board. Expenditures will be open to the public and audited to assure that funds are used wisely and public benefits are maximized. As with current funds made available to the Conservation Board, these funds will be leveraged with other communities and local agencies, continuing partnerships to enhance and protect the natural environment.

...continued on page 2



### What you could see 20 years from now...

- Clean drinking water for your children and grandchildren
- Improved water quality in our lakes, ponds, and streams
- Abundant wildlife to view and enjoy
- Connected communities by means of trails and greenways
- Revitalized parks and amenities
- Outdoor recreation and education opportunities for all ages and abilities
- Active and healthy youth and adults
- Adequate green space for future generations

## Bond Referendum Q & As

Polk County's Water and Land Legacy Bond continued from page 1...

### How much will this cost me/my family each year?

If all of the \$50 million in bonds were issued next year it is estimated that the cost for an individual or household living within a \$100,000 house would be approximately \$9 per year or 75 cents per month based on current bond rates. Bonds will only be issued periodically as needed to complete projects which will result in a reduced cost to property owners. The cost will be reflected in an increase to the county property tax levy.

### How many years will I pay this increased property tax?

The proposed bonding would allow for repayment of the bonds in 20 years or less. If the bonds are paid off prior to the 20 years the increase in property tax would end.



Water quality improvement

### What types of projects will be funded?

The majority of the funds will go towards projects that help improve water quality, protect natural areas, enhance wildlife habitat, improve parks, complete trail connections, and provide environmental education opportunities for children and adults. Projects will be evaluated by the County Conservation Board and will be guided by existing comprehensive plans and park master plans that have received public feedback and support.

### Will the funds be able to be used for other purposes?

No, bonding rules require that funds only be used for the purposes authorized in the measure which include improvements and land acquisition to protect water quality, conservation of natural areas, improving facilities for recreation and constructing trails. The funds would not be available for salaries or annual operations and maintenance expenses.

### Will I see improvements in my community?

The proposed improvements to the county park and trail systems will serve most communities within Polk County. The protection and enhancements of the rivers, lakes and streams within Polk County will benefit all communities and users of these resources.



photo by Lee Navin

Wildlife habitat protection

### Who receives and implements the funding?

Polk County will issue the bonds and make the funds available to the Polk County Conservation Board for the proposed purposes. The Polk County Conservation Board will be charged with evaluating and selecting projects and spending the funds from the bonds.

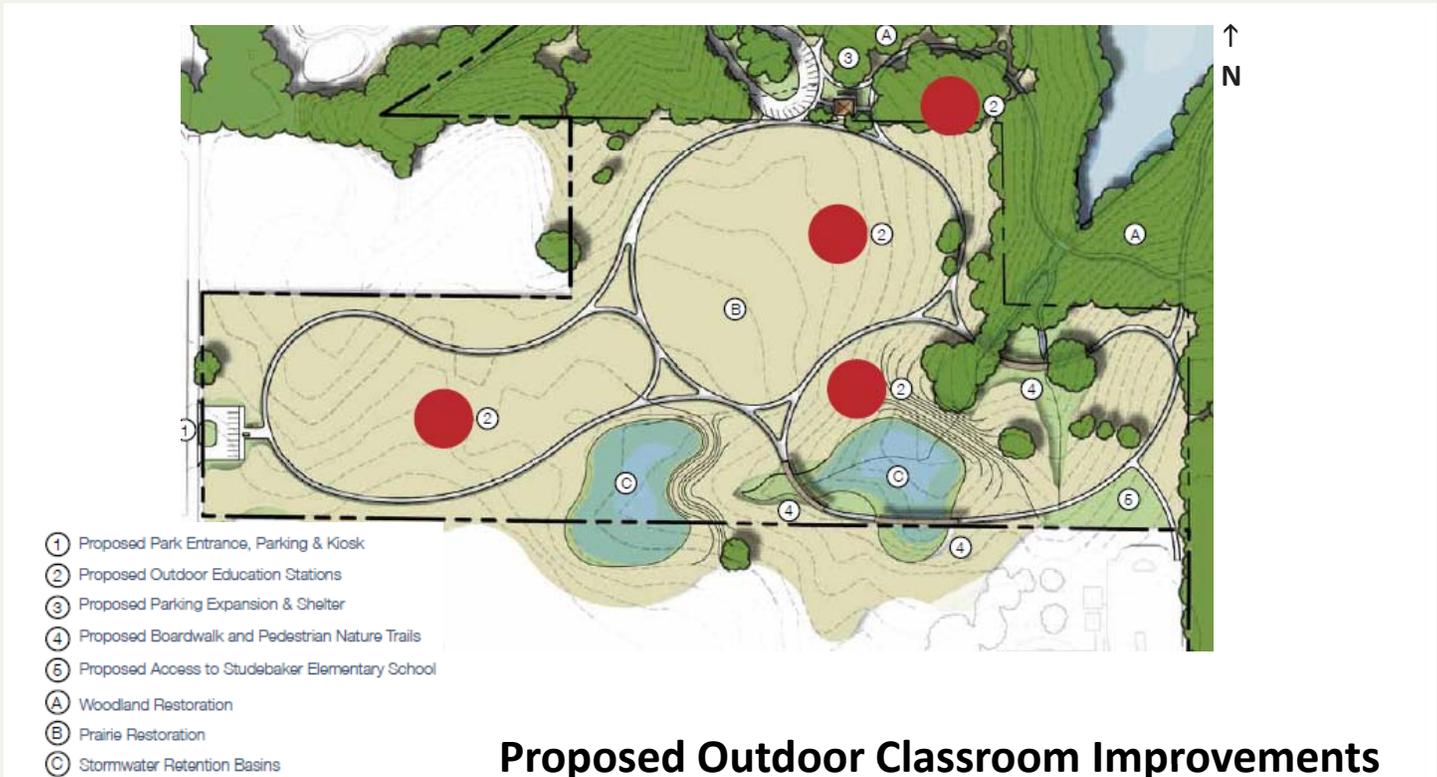
### How will they be held accountable?

All expenditures will be subject to an annual independent audit. Proposed and completed projects will be available to the public on the Conservation Board's website and included as part of their annual report.



Outdoor recreation and education opportunities

## PCC Begins Outdoor Classroom Project with Des Moines Public Schools



### Proposed Outdoor Classroom Improvements

This fall an 18.5-acre piece of ground in between Fort Des Moines Park and Studebaker Elementary will begin its transformation into an innovative Outdoor Classroom that will serve three adjacent Des Moines Public Schools and the surrounding community.

The Outdoor Classroom concept took shape a few years ago when PCC was involved in planning efforts associated with the South Des Moines Superblock Project. The tract of land north of Studebaker Elementary and east of McCombs Middle School and the Central Campus greenhouses lent itself well to an outdoor learning environment for students of all ages. Studies show that spending time outdoors contributes to improved physical wellness, enhanced imagination and attention spans, decreased aggression, and boosted classroom performance.

“With an outdoor classroom literally outside our back door, Studebaker students will now have more exposure to the natural environment surrounding our building. It’s exciting to know that our students, teachers, and community will have the chance to experience nature without having to travel. The outdoor classroom will be beneficial to all students and used across all academic areas (math, science, reading, art, music, PE).” Brian J. Crook, Studebaker Elementary Principal

This proposed concept was incorporated into master planning efforts conducted by PCC in 2011. It was strongly supported during community input and school faculty meetings. The Fort Des Moines Park Master Plan was adopted by the Conservation Board in January of 2012. Just six months later in July, the Des Moines Public School Board voted unanimously to transfer this property to PCC and grant an easement access along Chaffee Road that would be used by schools and the public as an entrance and parking lot.

Key features of the outdoor classroom include:

- Nature trail connection from both access points behind Studebaker Elementary and on Chaffee Road to the park and throughout the outdoor classroom
- Natural resource establishment of new prairie and storm water retention basins used for pond life studies
- New shelter and parking expansion near the south park boundary that brings the public to the back of the park and allows them to use the proposed expansion
- Natural outdoor amphitheater seating venue for education programs and special events

Renovations beginning this fall include parking lot construction off Chaffee Road, trail connections to this parking lot and to Studebaker Elementary, and natural resource restoration efforts.



### PCC Board Member Mowry-Hadden Resigns

After six and a half years of service, Tina Mowry-Hadden resigned from the Polk County Conservation Board. The Board presented her a plaque in appreciation for her dedication during that time. While on the Board, Tina was passionate about the development of master plans for Thomas Mitchell and Yellow Banks Parks, creation of the Jester Park Natural Playscape, public environmental education and programming, and working with staff to develop the Family of Parks advertising/marketing campaign. Tina is pictured with Polk County Board of Supervisor, Tom Hockensmith and PCCB Interim Chair Jim Cataldo.



### Sara Kurovski Welcomed to the PCC Board

Polk County Conservation Board welcomed its newest board member, Sara Kurovski, at the July board meeting. Sara was raised in Des Moines and grew up visiting Jester, Easter Lake, and Fort Des Moines Parks with her family. Sara currently works for Metro Waste Authority as an Operations Program Manager and is in charge of compliance. Water quality and interconnected trail systems are passions of hers. Sara and her husband reside in Pleasant Hill. They have a 14-month old and are expecting a baby in December. She enjoys outdoor photography, walking, hiking, biking, and fishing.

## Jester Park Two Dam Pond Project Update

Work continues at Two Dam Pond in Jester Park. The pond has been drained and the dredging has been completed. Footings will be placed this fall for the fishing pier, canoe access, and the foot bridge. The accessible trail around the pond has been cleared and boardwalk installation will begin this fall.



Dredging in progress at Two Dam Pond

## Staying connected with PCC is easier now than ever!

PCC is embracing social media to help us stay connected with you! Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and subscribe to our YouTube channel. We also email a monthly e-newsletter with timely program information and park news. Send us an email at [pccb\\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov) and ask to be added to the monthly email list.



Find us on:

[Twitter.com/PolkCCB](https://twitter.com/PolkCCB)

[Facebook.com/PolkCountyConservation](https://facebook.com/PolkCountyConservation)

[Youtube.com/PolkCoConservation](https://youtube.com/PolkCoConservation)

## Rental Skis and Snowshoes Available

The first snow will be here before we know it. If you'd like to try cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, consider renting a pair from us. Equipment can be reserved in advance by calling (515) 323-5300. Cross-country skis: \$8/day and snowshoes: \$7/day.

## Repair of the Storm Damaged Chichaqua Valley Trail

Trail enthusiasts are anxious for the repairs to be finished and the Chichaqua Valley Trail (CVT) to be reopened. The recent purchase of the abandoned rail line between Bondurant and Des Moines by the Polk County Conservation Board and the potential to extend the trail into the Metro area adds to the excitement.

We will reopen the trail as soon as the project is completed and the trail is safe to travel. Be sure to check our website for status on the trail around the end of August. Seeing the changing fall foliage along the CVT from a bicycle seat should be, once again, a fun family event.

## No Fishing at the Thomas Mitchell Pond



A few of the bluegill relocated to TM pond

The Thomas Mitchell Pond has been posted as “no fishing” so we can reestablish the fish population. Some fish have been relocated from Easter Lake (bluegill & bass) so they can spawn this year. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) stocked largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish this summer. There are very few fish of keep-able size in the pond and no fishing reduces chances of damaging spawning fish. PCC along with the IDNR is anticipating opening the pond to public fishing starting in the spring of 2013. Thank you for your patience and cooperation during this time.

## Metro Arts Jazz in July at New Jester Park Amphitheater



Java Jews performs on July 5 at the Jester Park Amphitheater

## Upgraded Trails at Jester Park Equestrian Center

This summer the trails around the Jester Park Equestrian Center received a face lift. Approximately 3 ½ miles of trails in the upland woodland were graded to extend the use season and add for more permanent access. Culverts were installed and armored to provide additional drainage from the trail.



Enjoying a trail ride on the newly improved trail system

## Throw your spare change into...Chichaqua's Wishing "Well"

In the early 1970's, Polk County Conservation (PCC) proposed the creation of an area that would provide a high-quality waterfowl hunting experience just a stone's throw from the largest city in Iowa. Construction of a controlled marsh and the birth of the controlled waterfowl hunting program at Chichaqua Bottoms followed shortly. Much has changed since those early years, but much has remained the same. Unfortunately, one of the 40 year old wells is failing and we need your help to drill and install a new one.

Despite a five-year pattern of extremely heavy precipitation, output for one of the two wells (west) at the controlled marsh has been declining. Recent well maintenance efforts have yielded little or no improvement in its performance. Well professionals have advised that over time, fine materials clog the gravel pack surrounding the well casing and impede the flow of water to the column pipe where it can be pumped out. Redevelopment can mitigate this problem for some time, but eventually, the buildup resists even the best methods.

PCC is initiating a fundraising project to defray the expense of drilling a new well to replace the west well at the controlled marsh. We are hoping to raise sufficient funds to offset the entire cost of drilling and furnishing a new well (\$30,000) and complete this project by July of 2013. If we are not successful in raising the necessary capital to replace the well, we plan to use funds to leverage grant dollars. We anticipate that this will, however, delay project completion significantly.

**For more information contact:**  
Doug Sheeley, Natural Resource Supervisor  
515-249-2515  
doug.sheeley@polkcountyiowa.gov



**Contributions can be mailed to:**  
Polk County Conservation  
c/o Chichaqua Well Fund  
11407 NW Jester Park Drive  
Granger, IA 50109

Credit cards will also be accepted by calling 515-323-5300.



## Mally's Park Fall Open House

October 5 @ 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Mally's Park, 5792 NE BERWICK DR., Berwick

Join us for a celebratory open house at Mally's Park in Berwick on Friday, October 5. We will treat you to a picnic supper and showcase many new amenities that have been added to Mally's Park during the past year such as a new picnic shelter and playground. Guided hikes will take guests on a park tour where you can see some of the creek improvements that have taken place and where the new Chichaqua Valley Trail Connector will intersect through the park in the coming years. Children can enjoy the new playground and participate in hands-on nature activities. A brief appreciation ceremony will take place at 6 p.m. Remarks will be made by Polk County Board of Supervisor, Tom Hockensmith. Guests are encouraged to come and go. Bring lawn chairs if you would like to stay for awhile and listen to some live music.

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.

## Monarch Tagging

**September 4 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

What lives only eight months, migrates over 2,000 miles, and spends the winter in Mexico? It's the monarch butterfly. Learn about their amazing life cycle and how and why monarchs are tagged.

## Wild Night Life & Hike

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

**Thomas Mitchell Park, pond parking lot**

Join naturalists for a campfire program about the wild night life in Thomas Mitchell 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 required**; deadline is September 4. Fee: \$5.

## A-mazing Prairie Festival

**September 9 @ 12:00-5:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

Gather the entire family and challenge yourself to a giant tall grass prairie maze. You don't have to have a corn field to build a maze. Iowa's native tall grass prairie is the perfect medium to create a large scale puzzle for you to solve. A walk through this maze will not only challenge your navigation and problem-solving skills, but will educate you about our natural heritage as well. A

"kiddie" maze will be available for young adventurers. Free canoe floats (if water conditions are favorable), dog training demos, a raptor release, kids crafts, live music, guided hayrack tours and many other family activities will happen throughout the day. Food from The Master Griller will be available for purchase. So, join us for a day of free fun and celebration at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt.



## Stargazing

**September 14 @ 8:00-9:30 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

**September 20 @ 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. Registration deadline is September 14. Fee: \$5.

## Iowa Outdoor Expo

**September 22 @ 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

**September 23 @ 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.desmoinesikes.com](http://www.desmoinesikes.com) for more information.

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

## Spiders

**October 2 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

What has eight eyes, fangs, and spins silk? Spiders, of course! Discuss the fears and myths about these eight legged animals.

## Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day

**October 6 @ 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).

## Great Outdoors Fund Adventure Race (GOFAR)

**October 7 @ 6:00 a.m.**

**Jester Park, Campground #4**

Are you feeling like an adventure? Find a couple of other adventurous souls to make a team and try the first ever Great Outdoors Fund Adventure Race (GOFAR) event. Challenge yourself and your teammates to navigate approximately 50 miles by foot, bike, and canoe in one day of fun and adventure. All funds generated by the race will go to support the work of the Great Outdoors Fund. This event is co-sponsored by Scheels All Sports. Go to [www.greatoutdoorsfund.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsfund.org) to register and get race details. The first 25 teams of three to register will have the opportunity to participate.

## Giants of the Prairie

**October 11 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park, Elk & Bison Educational Plaza near Shelter #6**

Bison and elk were two of the largest animals to ever roam across Iowa. What happened to them and where did they go? Visit the new Jester Park Elk & Bison Educational Plaza as a naturalist walks you through the exhibit and shares the history of these giants of the prairie.

## Walk for Wildlife

**October 13 @ 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park, Shelter #3**

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. Walkers can start anytime between 8:00 and 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored by the Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association. \$2 registration fee payable at the event. Past Walk for Wildlife t-shirts and food will be for sale. Pets on a 6-foot leash are welcome.

## Fall Colors Hike

**October 13, 2:00-3:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park, Shelter #5**

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

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

**October 14 @ 5:15 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

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 Longhouse. 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.) Registration deadline is October 8. Fee: \$10. This hunt is for youth ages 12-15 only. Youth must have completed hunter education class and attended a field day.

## Do More Outdoors

**October 14 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.**

**Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelters #1 and #2**

Looking for some fun this fall? Come play outside! Learn how to kayak (must be 12 or older) and geocache. Enjoy a woodland hike, discover pond life, join in on some family friendly games, and learn how to stay safe in the outdoors. To learn more go to [www.domoreoutdoorsiowa.com](http://www.domoreoutdoorsiowa.com). Co-sponsored by Iowa Health - Des Moines.

## Going Batty

**October 25 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

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

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.

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

## Prairie Hike

**November 3 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Jester Park, Shelter #5**

Discover why fall is one of the best seasons to take a hike through the prairie. Learn about the unique plants and animals that live there.

## Owls of Iowa

**November 13 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

Come and learn to identify several Iowa species of owls by their appearance and distinctive calls. We will discuss how adaptations enable them to be good nocturnal predators. A live owl will be part of the program.

## Geocaching 101

**November 17 @ 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park Equestrian Center**

Never heard of geocaching or always wanted to give it a try? Geocaching is a high tech scavenger hunt using a GPS. Come learn the basics and try finding several geocaches hidden just for you in Jester Park. Pre-registration is required; deadline is November 9. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5.

## Rain Barrel Workshop

**December 1 @ 9:00-10:00 a.m. and 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Jester Park Shop**

A short discussion about ways to collect and use runoff water will be held before participants construct their own 33-gallon rain barrel. It's a great size for beginner rain barrel users or a perfect size to give as a gift this holiday season. All materials and tools will be provided. Make sure you are able to transport your barrel back to your home after the workshop. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 21. Sign up for the 9:00 or 10:00 class. Fee: \$50.

## Decorate a Tree for Wildlife

**December 4 @ 6:30-8:00 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.

## Snowshoe Hike

**December 26 @ 1:00-2:30 p.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 21. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

## Cross-Country Ski Basics

**December 27, 10:00 a.m. – Noon & 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse**

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on beautiful woodland trails. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will be discussed before we practice our new skills on the trails. Class will be canceled without snow. Sign up for the 10:00 or 12:30 class. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 26. Minimum age 10. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles.) Smallest boot size available is men's 4 1/2 and women's 6.

## Animal Winter Survival

**December 28 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

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

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

## Wild Night Life & Hike

**December 28 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park, Camp Area 5**

Join 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 required;** deadline is December 26. Fee: \$5.

### Polk County

#### Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*

Sara Kurovski, *Pleasant Hill*

Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*

Michelle McEnany, *Urbandale*

Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

### Polk County

#### Conservation Director:

Dennis Parker

## 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 10** - Migration Madness  
*at Jester Park, Shelter #6*

**September 25** - Leaf it to Us!  
*at Pearson Park, 1256 19th St., WDM*

**October 15** - Nutty Squirrels  
*at Brown's Woods*

**October 30** - Going Batty  
*at Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge, 2500 Grand Ave., WDM*

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



## Park Packs

**Nature-Themed Backpacks**  
**Free two-week checkout**

These backpacks come with a field guide and a variety of activities and fun facts to assist in the discovery of a specific nature topic. Themes include: Birds, Trees, Insects, Animals of Iowa, Geology, Life in a Pond, Wildflowers & Plants, Animals of the Night, Outdoor Skills, and Geocaching.

For more information, contact Lori at: (515) 323-5380 or email: [lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov)

To register for a trip: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

## Tour the Black Hills

**September 12-16**  
**Rapid City, South Dakota**

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org).

## Lavendar & Loess Bus Trip

**September 18, 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.**  
**Missouri Valley, Iowa**

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org).

## Villages of Van Buren Bus Trip

**October 4, 7:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m.**  
**Keosauqua, Iowa**

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org).

## Mystery River Kayak Trip

**October 6, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

Which way we'll flow, we just don't know, but we'll definitely float. The river will remain secret until the morning of the trip. Naturalists will guide participants down the river. Bring food and drink. Prior kayak experience is required.

- Fee: \$35; includes transportation and kayaks
- Departure from Jester Park
- Minimum age 16
- Registration deadline is September 28



## Picket Fence to High Trestle Trail Fall Tour

**October 16, 8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.**  
**Woodward & Madrid, Iowa**

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org).

## Volunteer News & Opportunities

Thank you to our volunteers who have been active during the extreme summer heat! Stewards and assistant volunteers have been plugging away removing invasive species at various parks. They continue to make a huge difference in the battle against honeysuckle, multi-flora rose, garlic mustard and other invasives. We enjoyed working with Pioneer Hi-Bred, Farrell's Extreme Body Shaping, Wells Fargo, Principal Financial, AmeriCorps and Bloomfield United Methodist Church that held workdays in our parks. Projects have ranged from conducting park and roadside clean-ups, invasive species removal, cleaning out and painting fire rings, pruning brush along trails and other trail maintenance projects.

Webelos Pack 63 from Altoona attended a wood duck program and then constructed nest boxes to be used at various locations throughout PCC areas. Eagle Scout candidates and members from Greater DM Habitat for Humanity completed the first phases of the new Jester Park Amphitheater. Scouts have also completed two of five planned walk-in campsites at Jester Park. Walk-in campsites at Yellow Banks are being improved as part of an Eagle Scout project as well. Volunteer activities at the Jester Park Equestrian Center include helping with pony rides, cleaning stalls, assisting with special events, the At-Risk Program and the Exceptional Riders Program (therapeutic riding).



Webelos Pack 63 from Altoona constructed wood duck boxes to be placed in various Polk County Parks



Walk-in campsite at Jester Park constructed by Boy Scout, David Lass

### VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

#### Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Seed Harvest

**September 1 @ 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

##### Sand Hill Prairie

Volunteers will help collect prairie seeds from native plants such as: Rattlesnake Master, Gray-headed Cone Flower, Prairie Cinquefoil, Rose Hips, Wild Bergamot, Purple Prairie Clover, Tick Trefoil and Little Bluestem. Contact Pat Spain to register.

#### A-Mazing Prairie Festival

**September 9 @ 12:00- 5:00 p.m.**

##### Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Volunteers can choose to help at the information center, help children with crafts, direct visitors at the 14-acre maze or help organize hayrack rides. Contact Pat Spain to register.

#### Four Mile Creek Clean-up

**September 15 @ 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

##### Mally's Weh-Weh-Neh-Kee Park in Berwick

Your help is needed to pull tires out of the creek, beautify the park and natural areas. Please wear waders or shoes that can get muddy. Contact Pat Spain to register.

#### Outdoor Expo

**September 22, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.**

**September 23, 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. To volunteer, please contact Lori Foresman-Kirpes at (515) 323-5380, or [lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov).

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

THE GREAT OUTDOORS FUND  
WWW.GREATOUTDOORSFUND.ORG

# Be a Friend of the Great Outdoors

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.

## By becoming a friend, you will...

- ◆ Have your name published in the Great Outdoors Fund Annual Report and Polk County Conservation Nature News Newsletter
- ◆ Be put on the mailing list to receive current GOF and PCC news and information
- ◆ Participate in special programs, tours & events designed exclusively for our Friends
  - ◆ Be invited to the annual 'Friend of the Great Outdoors' banquet
  - ◆ Support conservation and recreation projects in your own backyard

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Kids: \_\_\_\_ (\$25)    White: \_\_\_\_ (\$1 to \$100)    Bronze: \_\_\_\_ (\$101 -\$999)

Silver: \_\_\_\_ (\$1000 - \$2499)    Gold : \_\_\_\_ (\$2500-\$4999)    Platinum: \_\_\_\_ (\$5000+)

Great Outdoors Fund • PO Box 8071 • Des Moines IA 50301 • Phone 515.967.3895 • Fax 515.323.5354

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
September 1	10:00 a.m.	Chichaqua Seed Harvest	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 4	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - New Stories from an Old House	Jester Park Lodge
September 4	6:30 p.m.	Monarch Tagging	Jester Park Lodge
September 7	7:30 p.m.	Wild Life & Night Hike*	Thomas Mitchell Park
September 9	12:00 p.m.	A-mazing Prairie Festival	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 10	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
September 12-16		Black Hills Trip*	Rapid City, South Dakota
September 14	8:00 p.m.	Stargazing	Yellow Banks Park
September 15	9:00 a.m.	Four Mile Creek Sweep	Mally's Park
September 18	7:00 a.m.	Lavendar & Loess Bus Tour*	Western Iowa
September 20	6:00 p.m.	Catfishing Basics*	Yellow Banks Park
September 25	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Pearson Park
October 2	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Iowa: Portrait of the Land	Jester Park Lodge
October 2	6:30 p.m.	Spiders	Jester Park Lodge
October 4	7:00 a.m.	Villages of Van Buren Bus Tour*	Keosauqua, Iowa
October 6	8:00 a.m.	Mystery River Kayak Trip*	Central Iowa
October 6	1:00 p.m.	Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 7	6:00 a.m.	GOFAR*	Jester Park
October 11	6:00 p.m.	Giants of the Prairie	Jester Park
October 13	8:00 a.m.	Walk for Wildlife	Jester Park
October 13	2:00 p.m.	Fall Colors Hike	Jester Park
October 14	5:15 a.m.	Youth Waterfowl Hunt*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 14	1:00 p.m.	Do More Outdoors	Thomas Mitchell
October 15	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Brown's Woods
October 16	8:00 a.m.	Picket Fences to Temples Bus Tour*	Central Iowa
October 25	6:30 p.m.	Going Batty	West Des Moines Library
October 30	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
November 3	10:00 a.m.	Prairie Hike	Jester Park
November 13	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - We Treat it Right	Jester Park Lodge
November 13	6:30 p.m.	Owls of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
November 17	10:30 a.m.	Geocaching 101*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 1	9:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
December 1	10:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
December 4	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Natural Resource Management	Jester Park Lodge
December 4	6:30 p.m.	Decorate a Tree for Wildlife*	Jester Park Lodge
December 26	1:00 p.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park
December 27	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
December 27	12:30 p.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
December 28	10:00 a.m.	Winter Animal Survival	West Des Moines Library
December 28	6:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park

## Partner with the Iowa Wildlife Center!

The 501(c)3 nonprofit Iowa Wildlife Center (IWC) is building a wildlife hospital and education center on their 75-acres of land in Boone County near Ledges State Park. The ripple effects from the good IWC will accomplish for both wildlife and people will reach and benefit all of Iowa, and is already benefitting the Des Moines area!

Once the hospital and education center is built and fully operational, IWC will fulfill its mission to provide professional rehabilitation of native wildlife, teach about conservation and train others to provide skilled help to injured wildlife.

So far in 2012, IWC staff and volunteers rehabilitated and released bats, birds, a painted turtle, and offered wildlife guidance and referrals to over a hundred people across the state through phone calls and on-line inquiries. Many of those instances included working and networking with other licensed wildlife rehabilitators in central Iowa and the Animal Rescue League of Iowa. IWC also receives excellent guidance and support from Loren Lown, Polk County Conservation Natural Resource Specialist, who serves the IWC as a steering committee member.

Please become a partner and supporter of IWC! Visit [iowawildlifecenter.org](http://iowawildlifecenter.org) to learn more. Donations can be made through their website or by sending a check to IWC, 328 Main Street, Suite 208, Ames, IA 50010. And "like" us on Facebook so that you can follow our progress and join our events!



IWC participated in the Iowa Prairie Network's Central Region winter meeting in January 2011. IWC's Marlene Ehresman is in the foreground visiting with Linda and Robert Scarth

### JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR:

#### Special Olympics

**September 15 @ 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

Come cheer on these special equestrian athletes!

#### Fall Halloween Event

**October 27 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. & 12:30-2:00 p.m.**

Come walk through our Little Goblins Haunted Trail, take a pony ride in the indoor arena, or take a wagon ride on the trails. No reservations are needed. Wagon and pony rides are \$5 each.

#### Snowball Express to Santa

**December 8 & 15 @ 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.**

Children ride a pony through a winter wonderland to get their picture taken with Santa, make a holiday photo frame, and enjoy hot chocolate and cookies.

Fee: \$20 per child. No reservations are necessary. Sleigh or wagon rides are available for an additional \$5 per person.

#### Winter Horse Camp

**December 27 @ 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

During this one day camp, activities include horse safety & care, grooming & saddling, basic riding skills (1 hour lesson included), crafts, movie time, and a horse drawn wagon or sleigh ride. Children must be 8 years old. Fee: \$60. Call to register.

#### Trail Ride Incentive Program

It's really simple and free! Log your trail hours on Jester trails from April 1 to October 31. Turn in your hours for prizes at and Old Fashioned Horse Show and BBQ on **November 4** (you don't have to be present to win). More details will be posted on the website when they are available.



Jester Park  
Equestrian Center  
11171 NW 103 Court  
Granger, IA 50109  
(515) 999-2818  
[www.jesterparkec.com](http://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 is \$9.00. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

### “New Stories from an Old House”

**September 4**

Learn the fascinating story of the Salisbury House and the history of the family that built it. Many in central Iowa grew up hearing that Edith and Carl Weeks moved this entire house from England to a hilltop in Des Moines. Join Salisbury House & Gardens Curator, Leo Landis to discover the true stories about the home and the people who lived there from 1926 to 1953.

### Iowa: Portrait of the Land

**October 2**

Based on Larry Stone’s award-winning Earth Year 2000 book for the Iowa DNR, “Portrait” is a reminder to Iowans of the rich history of their natural resources, with an appeal for protecting that heritage.

### We Treat it Right!

**November 13**

How does our water get cleaned? The treatment of water is a fascinating process. Take a virtual tour of Des Moines Water Works and the Wastewater Reclamation Facility to find out all it takes to get our water cleaned.

### Natural Resource Management

**December 4**

Natural resource management...can we improve on Mother Nature? Probably not, but Polk County Conservation can mimic some natural processes. Mark Dungan, PCC Natural Resources Manager, will discuss conservation and restoration techniques we use to keep the natural areas “natural”. Come learn about the use of fire, timber stand improvement, and the ramifications of no management as a management philosophy.

To register for lunch: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)