

Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2014 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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Reservations Open for Cabins at Jester on December 10

Construction on the four modern rental cabins at Jester Park will be completed this spring. Each cabin has a two-story walk-out floor plan. One larger cabin has two bedrooms and sleeps eight people while the other three cabins have one bedroom and sleep six people. Amenities of each include a full kitchen (with refrigerator, range, microwave, coffee maker, toaster, dining area, limited pots and pans, cooking utensils, table service), restroom with shower, gas fireplace, front porch, barbecue grill, back deck overlooking the timber, and a communal fire pit.



Rental Information

- Cabins will be open to renters on Memorial Day weekend
- \$80-110 per night; two consecutive night minimum
- Maximum stay is 14 nights
- Cabins available to rent year round
- Reservations may be made up to two years in advance at www.mycountyparks.com

Jester Park is Polk County Conservation's oldest and most popular regional destination spot. More than 350,000 annual visitors enjoy the many attractions that this 1,800-acre park provides. A master plan was developed for the park in 2009. Ranking high on the recommendation list was the construction of rental cabins that would provide park users with affordable and scenic overnight accommodations that offer many modern day comforts. Passage of the Polk County Water and Land Legacy

bond referendum in November of 2012 has allowed us to move forward with this priority project.

Groups can stay, unplug and reconnect with family and friends. Polk County Conservation does not provide Wi-Fi or televisions, but instead encourages guests to experience the natural areas surrounding the cabins.

The cabin site was carefully selected for its beautiful woodland setting and close proximity to many recreational amenities and environmental education programming opportunities. The cabins are nestled in a woodland adjacent to Two Dam Pond. This 2.8 acre pond is a popular fishing spot and public programming site. An accessible

...continued on page 3



Bond updates pages 2-3

The Latest

Regular Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

LAND PROTECTION

Three additional properties will be owned and managed by PCC by the end of winter – 22 acres adjoining Yellow Banks Park and two others totaling 100 acres at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt on the north side of the park.

TRAILS

Gay Lea Wilson Trail

A grand opening event was held on October 30, 2013, to celebrate the newest connections from Des Moines to Ankeny that have now been completed. See page 5 for more details.

Mark C. Ackelson Trail

Phase I is now complete for the Easter Lake trail. Phase II's trail construction will begin in the spring of 2014.



New bridge in place along Mark C. Ackelson Trail

Many restroom facilities have also been improved along our trails. The High Trestle Trail Oasis, Easter Lake's Shelter #4, Great Western Trailhead, and the Chichaqua viewing platform all now have vault toilets installed.

PARKS

Brown's Woods

A new trailhead parking lot was constructed in the fall to provide safe access to Brown's Woods for vehicles and buses. In addition, expansion of the trail network has begun and will continue into 2014. This spring, new restrooms and a drinking fountain will enhance this new park access.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

A Master Plan open house was held on October 24, 2013, to discuss the future of Polk County's largest park. Watch our website for the latest updates.

The Highway 65 Wildlife Viewing structure and parking lot are now complete. Interpretive information is being designed and will be installed this spring when a grand opening is held. Keep an eye on our website for details about this event.



Easter Lake Park

In addition to coordinating funding sources, Easter Lake watershed partners are working to get the design and engineering plans for restoration of the lake. This will include in-lake dredging and the installation of siltation dikes.

Fort Des Moines Park

The water levels in the pond have been drawn down in order to begin restoration. Lake dredging, the installation of stabilization structures, and wetland construction began in the fall of 2013.

Jester Park

Cabins

Construction continues on the four modern cabins across from Two Dam Pond. We anticipate this work to be completed early next year in time for a springtime grand opening. The cabins will be available to rent beginning Memorial Weekend 2014.

Campground #2

This campground is currently undergoing electric upgrades and site improvements. It will re-open for the 2014 season with 28 new electric sites.

Conservation Center

The designs for the Conservation Center were on display at an open house on September 12, 2013. Plans and designs are currently being finalized. Grading and shaping of a new entrance roadway took place this fall, but the entry road is not yet active. We are looking for outside funding to supplement bond dollars to make this project a success.



Front view sketch of the conservation center

Maintenance Building

Construction of the new equipment maintenance building was completed in the fall. The existing building near the golf course will be removed, and the site will eventually house the new Jester Park Conservation Center.

Two Dam Pond

Restoration work to the pond has been completed. An accessible trail, fishing pier, canoe/kayak launch as well as a shed for rental equipment have also been completed. We hope to have adequate water levels for a grand opening in the spring. Until that time comes, we ask that the public not use the pond amenities.

Thomas Mitchell Park

Construction of an accessible trail around the pond and fishing piers began in the fall. Work has also begun at the Camp Creek crossing to reduce the steep grade and to provide a recreational access point to the creek for visitors.



Yellow Banks

The water level in the pond has been lowered to allow work to begin on the dam. The outlet and overflow structures will be replaced, and the top of the dam will be lowered eight feet to improve access to the water.

Cabins continued...

canoe/kayak access, fishing pier, and hiking trail around the pond will provide safe and healthy outdoor activities for people of all ages and abilities. Within short walking distance, cabin users will stumble upon a secluded bird blind, elk and bison wildlife exhibit, and an innovative natural playscape. There are also many exciting places to explore while hiking on the nature trails in the park.

Jester Park and the Saylorville Lake region is a goldmine for outdoor recreation. Premier picnicking, boating, beach use, interpretive programming, hiking, cycling, golfing, and horseback riding are just a handful of the many opportunities that await cabin visitors.

Online bookings can be made at www.mycountyparks.com after December 10. More details can be found by visiting Polk County Conservation's website: www.leadingyououtdoors.org. A grand opening event will take place in May to celebrate the completion of the cabins and the restoration of Two Dam Pond.



A look inside one of the unfinished cabins - October 2013

Thank you to the Great Outdoors Foundation

Polk County Conservation would like to extend a special thank you to the Great Outdoors Foundation Board for committing money for the following projects in 2013:

- Rental and educational canoes
- Greater Des Moines Area Pocket Trails Map
- School Bus Field Trip Scholarships
- At-Risk Horse Camp Scholarships
- Polk County Conservation Book Worms Program sponsor
- REAP/CEP Watershed Education grant (for high school science classes)
- Outdoor Explorers Kits for youth
- Iowa Outdoor Expo Doug Wood Concert Sponsor

Polk County Conservation is proud to partner with the Great Outdoors Foundation in support of quality outdoor recreation, environmental education, and natural resource protection projects and services. Without their support, many of these valuable projects would not be possible. To learn more about the Great Outdoors Foundation and to become a "Friend", go to www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org.



Get Registered. Get Outside. Get Healthy.

The Iowa DNR welcomes you to Healthy & Happy Outdoors (H2O) and PCC is excited to help promote it! Get connected to Iowa outdoor destinations and recreational activities for a healthier life through their website. H2O supports the Governor's Healthiest State Initiative, helping Iowans improve mental and physical health through outdoor recreation.

Here's How It Works: After you register in H2O at www.iowadnr.gov/Recreation/HealthyHappyOutdoors, you can begin to record your outdoor activities in Iowa parks and recreational areas. Each recorded activity counts as an entry into a prize drawing for outdoor gear. The more outdoor activities you participate in, the more chances you have to win. Give it a try in Polk County and throughout the state.



Deanne Mundt Fills New Position

Congratulations are in order for Deanne Mundt who recently accepted the Equestrian Program Specialist position. Deanne has worked for the Jester Park Equestrian Center since 2006 and in her new role she will be working full-time to develop and coordinate programs including the Therapeutic Riding Program, At-Risk Youth Program, and various other programs.



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 or Pinterest, and subscribe to our YouTube channel and blog page. We also email a monthly e-newsletter with timely program information and park news.



Polk County Conservation Book Worms

Join our new book club with Polk County Conservation Naturalist, Heidi Anderson, for an engaging discussion once a month. We'll focus on books about human observations and interactions with our natural world.

January 30 – Winter World by Bernd Heinrich

February 27 – Red-tails in Love: A Wildlife Drama in Central Park by Marie Winn

March 27 – The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating by Elisabeth Tova Bailey

Come to one or all three! Thanks to a donation from the Great Outdoors Foundation, the first five people to sign up for each session will receive a FREE book.

Cafe Diem, 2005 S Ankeny Blvd. Suite 800, Ankeny - 7:00 p.m.

Fee: \$5 per session, includes drinks and cookies

Registration deadline is the Monday before each meeting

Register at www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Questions email: heidi.anderson@polkcountyiowa.gov



Sneak preview

What's in store for 2014...

Brown's Woods Trailhead

The final touches will be completed at Brown's Woods on the expanded hiking trail system and enhanced trailhead. This new park access will include new restrooms, drinking fountain, and an interpretive kiosk. Keep an eye on our website for grand opening details.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Master Plan

A master plan for Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt will be completed and Board approved in early 2014. This plan will guide future improvements and expansion within the Greenbelt. Polk County Conservation would like to thank the public for their input into the planning process.

Fort Des Moines Pond Improvements

Polk County Conservation will complete pond improvements that began in November of 2013. This will improve water quality, fisheries health, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Four Mile Creek Greenbelt Bank Stabilization

Stream bank stabilization projects will continue within the existing Four Mile Creek Greenbelt to reduce the erosion, improve water quality, protect existing wildlife habitat and infrastructure, and enhance recreational opportunities.

Jester Park Conservation Center

Construction will begin on the long-awaited Conservation Center. The Center's upper level will be home to Polk County Conservation headquarters where the public can have immediate access to staff, resources, and interpretive areas. The lower level will serve as an educational staging area for science, arts, history, and a gateway to the great outdoors.

Land Acquisitions and Protection

Staff will continue to work with landowners to acquire key properties adjacent to PCC parks and trails with the intent to enhance and maintain significant natural areas for wildlife and the public.

Mark C. Ackelson Trail- Phase II

Trail construction will begin on Phase II of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail in Easter Lake Park. This phase begins at the west end of the lake at Indianola Avenue and follows the north shore eastward to Evergreen Avenue for approximately two miles.

Thomas Mitchell Camp Creek Stabilization and Crossing

The stabilization of Camp Creek and the crossing improvements are anticipated to be completed in 2014. The shared pedestrian and vehicular low water crossing will be separated, allowing park users to access the moving stream without having to worry about traffic.

Yellow Banks Dam Repair

The dam is being reshaped to improve maintenance and improve access to the pond. Several needed amenities will come to this portion of the park once repair work has been completed.

Trail Connection Now Open!

The Gay Lea Wilson Trail Connection Grand Opening was held on October 30th at Carney Marsh in Ankeny. The event celebrated the newly constructed trail connection between Ankeny to Des Moines. Despite poor weather, around 50 people attended to hear Gay Lea Wilson and local dignitaries speak.

This connection links the Ankeny trail system with Des Moines/Pleasant Hill/Altoona trail systems and provides a route for commuters between the east side of Des Moines and Ankeny. It establishes a connection to the Chichaqua Valley Trail, which connects to Bondurant and Jasper County. Additionally, it will enhance the Central Iowa Trail Network and create new opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Also completed as part of this project, was the much needed stabilization of two lengths of the creek along the Four Mile Greenbelt.

Passage of the Polk County Water and Land Legacy bond referendum in November of 2012 has allowed us to move forward with many priority projects such as the Gay Lea Wilson Trail Connection. This project was in partnership with Polk County Conservation, the City of Des Moines, and the City of Ankeny.



Gay Lea Wilson at her namesake Trail Connection Grand Opening

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 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.

PROGRAMS

Snowshoe Hike

Saturday, January 11 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet near pond &

Saturday, January 11 @ 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #1

Learn how easy and fun snowshoeing can be while experiencing the great outdoors. Wear warm waterproof boots. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 9. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

Ice Fishing Clinic

Saturday, January 11 @ 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Jester Park Golf Course pond near maintenance shed

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

Teeth, Claws, and Camouflage

Saturday, January 18 @ 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Examine how teeth, claws, and camouflage help animals survive during this hands-on program. We'll discuss the many adaptations that animals have for surviving in their environment.

Bites, Stings, and Venomous Things

Saturday, January 18 @

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge



What do water moccasins and poison oak have in common? They don't exist! At least not in Iowa. Come learn the truths and myths that surround some of Iowa's poisonous plants and venomous wildlife.

Owl Prowl

Friday, January 24 @ 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Yellow Banks Park, tent camping area

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

Cross-Country Ski Basics

Saturday, January 25 @ 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge, WDM

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on the trails. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will be discussed before we head outside. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 22. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).

Ice Fishing Clinic

Saturday, January 25 @ 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet in pond parking lot

See description for January 11th Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.

Indoor Kayaking Basics

Saturday, February 1 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Urbandale Public Pool, 7201 Aurora Ave., Urbandale

Got a case of cabin fever? Let's go kayaking on a cold winter day! Learn the basics of recreational kayaking from a PCC naturalist in the comfort of a heated indoor pool. Participants will learn about types of kayaks, equipment, techniques, self rescues, and have a chance to practice skills on the water. Dress to get wet and bring a towel and a dry change of clothes. All equipment is provided. Pre-registration is required; deadline is January 24. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Hog Wild Winter Hike

Sunday, February 2 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Brown's Woods

Join us on a peaceful winter hike as we focus on what animals do to survive winter. We'll discuss how the groundhog is a master of hibernation and even get the chance to see how good we are at surviving hibernation.

Tricky Tracks

Tuesday, February 4 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Have you seen all of the animals that live in the woods or in your neighborhood? Come to this program and learn how to identify the signs that animals leave behind.

Fly-Tying Workshop

Tuesday, February 4 @ 6:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

If you have always wanted to learn how to tie your own flies for fly fishing, now is your chance. Learn the differences between wet and dry flies, streamers, bucktails, nymphs, and when to use them. Participants will learn how to tie a wooly bugger and a nymph. Presented by Central Iowa Fly Fishers. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 31. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10.

Cross-Country Ski Basics

Saturday, February 8 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

See description for January 25th class. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required, deadline is February 5. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).

Do More Outdoors

Sunday, February 9 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Come enjoy the great outdoors this winter and have fun playing in the snow. Ongoing activities include snowshoeing, cross country skiing (for ages 12 and older), and winter hikes. There will be plenty of snowy fun like snow painting and sculpturing, too. Indoor programming will include topics like keeping safe and warm in the winter and how to make a winter survival kit. Event will be canceled without snow. Co-sponsored by Unity Point Health Des Moines.

Ice Fishing Clinic

Sunday, February 9 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

See description for January 11th Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.

Owl Prowl

Friday, February 21 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

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

Antler Shed Hunt

Saturday, February 22 @ 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park Shop



Come learn about different types of antlers and horns. We'll also share some tips on finding shed antlers. After our discussion we'll head outside to find sheds that have been hidden around the park shop and trails. Dress warmly!



Bald Eagle Watch

Sunday, February 23 @ 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Saylorville Lake and Jester Park Lodge

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

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Unhuggable Animals

Tuesday, March 4 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Explore the truth about snakes, spiders, and other animals we find difficult to love.

Indoor Kayaking Basics

Saturday, March 8 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Urbandale Public Pool, 7201 Aurora Ave., Urbandale

See description for January 26th Indoor Kayaking Basics.

Pre-registration is required; deadline is February 28. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

Basket Weaving

Sunday, March 9 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

We will be creating a willow basket with woven handles, inserts, etc, approx 10-12" square. This simple process teaches the fundamentals of identifying & gathering willows, construction, and weaving as well as a variety of decorative techniques. No previous experience needed.

Participants should dress for outdoor gathering of their willow materials. Participants will need to bring: a small hammer, sharp anvil pruning shears, and small wire cutters. Nails will be supplied. Pre-registration required; deadline is March 3. Fee: \$45.



Rock Me

Wednesday, March 19 @ 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Come learn the "hard" facts about Iowa's rocks, minerals, and fossils. We'll discuss how sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous rocks are formed. We'll even learn how rocks "talk" to us. Then join us at 1:00 as we Rock On, exploring how these rocks tell us the story of Iowa.

Rock On

Wednesday, March 19 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Discover how rocks tell us the geological history of our state, how it was formed, and why it looks the way it does today. We'll be revealing some of Iowa's oldest and best kept secrets.

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Wild Night Life & Hike

Thursday, March 20 @ 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

Join PCC naturalists for a campfire program about the wild night life in Jester Park. A short hike will follow as we search for some of these nocturnal animals. Afterward enjoy eating s'mores around the campfire. Pre-registration required; deadline is March 18. Fee: \$5.

Survivor Day Camp

Friday, March 21 @ 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Jester Park Equestrian Center

Campers will have fun learning and staying active. Activities will include archery, fishing skills, geocaching, and survival skills. Students will make their own lunch over a fire they help build. Activities will take place both indoors and out. Pre-registration required; deadline is March 14. Ages 10-12 years. Fee: \$30.

Reptiles of Iowa

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

Jester Park Lodge

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

Earth Day Invasive Species Removal

Tuesday, April 22 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Location TBA

Join Polk County Conservation staff to celebrate Earth Day (April 22) with an invasive species removal project in one of our local parks. Check our website at www.leadingyououtdoors.org for the location when details become available.

Wild Night Life & Hike

Friday, April 25 @ 8:00-10:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

See description for March 20th Wild Night Life & Hike. Pre-registration is required; deadline is April 24. Fee: \$5.

Spring Wildflower Hike

Saturday, April 26 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet in pond parking lot

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

Master Conservationist

Tuesdays, April 1 - May 13

This course will cover a variety of topics related to Iowa's natural resources and environmental health. Participants will acquire tools that will help them lead a life that contributes to sustainability. Those who attend the series are eligible to become certified as Master Conservationists through Iowa State University Extension.

To become a Master Conservationist you need to:

- Have an interest in conservation and environmental issues
- Attend hands-on training sessions
- Provide 32 hours of volunteer efforts
- Have a willingness to learn and share ideas

Course topics will include Iowa's physical environment, ecological principles and techniques, wildlife diversity, woodlands, prairies, wetlands, sustainable agriculture and land use, energy and waste reduction, and water quality.

The course will be held on seven consecutive Tuesday nights, April 1 - May 13 from 6:00 - 9:30 p.m. and May 17 from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Classes will be held in various locations including the Jester Park Lodge, Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, and Des Moines Water Works.

The Master Conservationist program is limited to 30 participants. The registration fee is \$70. Registration deadline is March 25.



Bus Trips

2014 Motorcoach Eco-discovery trips are in the planning stages and will be posted on-line in mid-February. Stay tuned for trips venturing to all corners of the state with day trips beginning in April and going through October. See you on the bus!

Lori Foresman-Kirpes, Trip Planner.

Kayaking Trips

The following kayaking trips are in the planning stages and will be posted on-line in mid-February: Niobrara River Kayak Trip on June 4-8 and St. Croix River Kayak Trip on July 9-12.



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, Geocaching, and Outdoor Skills.

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



Rental Skis and Snowshoes Available

Interested in trying cross-country skiing or snowshoeing this winter? If so, consider renting a pair from Polk County Conservation. Cross-country skis are sized mainly for adults. Snowshoes are sized for adults and children, with a weight range of 40-250 pounds. Equipment can be reserved in advance by calling (515) 323-5300. Equipment must be picked up and dropped off at Jester Park during normal office hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Cross-country ski rental (includes skis, boots, poles): **\$8/day**

Snowshoe rental (snowshoes only): **\$7/day**

Junior Naturalist Camp

June 9-12 and June 30-July 3

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

Ages: 10-11 years

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

- Fee: \$120
- Registration deadline is May 27
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



Jr. Naturalist campers showing off their crayfish

Water Wonders Camp

June 16-19

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

Ages 8-9 years

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

- Fee: \$120
- Registration deadline is June 2
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

Discovery Camp

July 14-17

9:00-11:30 a.m.

Age: 6-7 years

This camp is all about animals! Learn about the basic animal groups: insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. There will be plenty of games, live animals, snacks, and more!

- Fee: \$60
- Registration deadline is June 23
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter #5

Camp Details: These day camps are designed to encourage hands-on learning through outdoor explorations, activities, games, crafts, and more. Camps will be led by naturalists. These camps fill up fast, so register early!



Water Wonders campers exploring the creek

**Camp Registration opens on March 3 at 8:00 a.m. on www.leadingyououtdoors.org
You will not be able to register before this date!**

Due to popularity of our camps, your child may only attend each camp one time.

The Many Hands of Our Volunteers

In 2013, volunteers made a huge impact in and around Polk County Conservation's family of parks. Loads of volunteers participated in co-sponsored events like the Trash Bash, River Run Garbage Grab, Do More Outdoors, Four Mile Creek Sweep, and the Special Olympics Iowa equestrian events.

A variety of corporate partners, including Wells Fargo, Nationwide Insurance, Liberty Mutual, and Cargill Milling worked hard throughout Polk County's parks and trails clearing litter, painting, removing invasive species, and planting natives. Students from DMACC, Dowling, Johnston, and Valley High schools, as well as the Saydel Eagles Nest Program all deserve a mention for their hard work throughout the park system. Eagle Scouts completed numerous projects throughout the year installing bat houses, walk-in camp sites at Jester Park, a new outdoor classroom at Brown's Woods, and clearing invasive species.

We're very much looking forward to another successful year with our outstanding team of volunteers. Their many hands truly make light work of every project and event they participate in. If you have been considering becoming a volunteer yourself, we encourage you to join our community! Take part in any of the events below, or get in touch with our Volunteer Coordinator at (515) 323-5280 to find a project to suit you or your group.

Carney Marsh Restoration

Sundays: January 5, February 2, March 2, April 6

11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Carney Marsh

Be a part of this restoration effort by coming along on any or all of the dates above. We will be removing undergrowth and invasive species.



DMACC students working at Carney Marsh in October

Jester Park Invasive Species Winter Round-up

Saturday, January 18 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Two Dam Pond at Jester Park

Your help is needed to restore our woodlands by removing honeysuckle and other invasive species. Meet us at 9:45 a.m. along the road, near the pines by Two Dam Pond (near Shelter #5).

Volunteer Appreciation Banquet

Sunday, March 16 @ 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Come join us at the Jester Park Lodge where we will highlight some of our volunteer projects and events from 2013. The evening will include a special program, catered dinner, and awards. Anyone who has volunteered 10 or more hours is invited to attend.

Brown's Woods Clean-up

Saturday, April 5 @ 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Brown's Woods

We'll meet at the new parking lot off Brown's Woods Drive. We are looking for co-sponsors for this event. No experience is necessary. All tools, equipment, and training are provided. It is recommended that participants dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear and clothing, and bring a refillable water bottle.



Wells Fargo volunteers removing a huge tire from Easter Lake



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*
- ___ **WHITE:** (\$1–\$100) *Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event*
- ___ **BRONZE:** (\$101–\$999) **SELECT ONE:** 2 complimentary tickets to the Friends Celebration **OR**
 A tax deductible letter
- ___ **SILVER:** (\$1,000–\$2,499) *4 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*
- ___ **GOLD:** (\$2,500–\$4,999) *6 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*
- ___ **PLATINUM:** (\$5,000 +) *8 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration
Name recognition at all events*



DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
January 4	3:00 p.m.	Ring in the New Year	Jester Park Equestrian Center
January 5	11:00 a.m.	Carney Marsh Restoration	Carney Marsh
January 7	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - World Food Prize	Jester Park Lodge
January 11	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Thomas Mitchell Park
January 11	12:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Jester Park
January 11	1:00 p.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Fort Des Moines Park
January 18	10:30 a.m.	Teeth, Claws, and Camouflage	Jester Park Lodge
January 18	1:00 p.m.	Bites, Stings, and Venomous Things	Jester Park Lodge
January 24	5:30 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Yellow Banks Park
January 25	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
January 25	12:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Thomas Mitchell Park
January 30	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
February 1	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Public Pool
February 2	1:00 p.m.	Hog Wild Winter Hike	Brown's Woods
February 4	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Wildlife of Eastern Africa	Jester Park Lodge
February 4	6:30 p.m.	Tricky Tracks	Jester Park Lodge
February 4	6:30 p.m.	Fly-Tying Workshop*	Jester Park Lodge
February 8	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 9	1:00 p.m.	Do More Outdoors	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 9	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Easter Lake Park
February 13-16		Sweetheart Sleigh Rides*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
February 21	6:00 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Jester Park
February 22	1:00 p.m.	Antler Shed Hunt	Thomas Mitchell Park
February 23	12:00 p.m.	Bald Eagle Watch	Saylorville Lake & Jester Park Lodge
February 27	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
March 4	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Climate Change is Now	Jester Park Lodge
March 4	6:30 p.m.	Unhuggable Animals	Jester Park Lodge
March 8	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Public Pool
March 9	1:00 p.m.	Basket Weaving*	Chichaqua Longhouse
March 16	5:00 p.m.	Volunteer Appreciation Banquet	Jester Park Lodge
March 18	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 19	10:30 a.m.	Rock Me	Jester Park Lodge
March 19	1:00 p.m.	Rock On	Jester Park Lodge
March 20	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 21	9:00 a.m.	Survivor Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 20	7:30 pm.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
March 27	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
April 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Immersed in Water	Jester Park Lodge
April 1	6:30 p.m.	Reptiles of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
April 5	9:00 a.m.	Brown's Woods Clean-up	Brown's Woods
April 19	11:00 a.m.	Spring Fling Family Fun	Jester Park Equestrian Center
April 22	6:00 p.m.	Earth Day Invasive Species Removal	TBA
April 25	8:00 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
April 26	1:00 p.m.	Spring Wildflower Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
April 27	12:00 p.m.	Trail Tune-Up Clinic	Jester Park Equestrian Center

Administration Office at Jester Park
11407 NW Jester Park Dr.
Granger, Iowa 50109
515-323-5300
pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov
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. The cost of the catered lunch from The Radish is \$9.00. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

World Food Prize

Tuesday, January 7

The World Food Prize, internationally recognized as the “Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture”, was founded by Iowa’s greatest hero and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Dr. Norman Borlaug. Catherine Swoboda of the World Food Prize Foundation will provide an overview of the creation and 27-year history of the World Food Prize, including information about World Food Prize laureates, the global reach and local impact of the Foundation’s work, and what the World Food Prize is doing to inspire the next generation of leaders in the fight against hunger.

Wildlife of Tanzania, Kenya, & Rwanda

Tuesday, February 4

Wes and Karen Ritchie spent the month of February 2013 on a photographic safari to Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa. They will share their pictures and stories of mammals, birds and mountain gorillas.



Wes Ritchie will recount his incredible close encounter with this male mountain gorilla. Photo by Wes Ritchie.

Climate Change is Now: Stories from a Natural Resources Steward

Tuesday, March 4

Speaking of climate change in public often brings up conversation of policy and political issues. For a natural resources professional, it is all about science and the ecological effects of what is changing. In this program, Polk County Conservation Deputy Director and former Iowa DNR Director Rich Leopold will share some of his personal stories of changes in our natural world, exploring some of the “ripples in the pond” from changes in our climate. Stories will include topics as far-ranging as floods and snakes, fish and corn mold, and armadillos and prairie chickens!

Immersed in Water

Tuesday, April 1

Bill Stowe, CEO and General Manager of Des Moines Water Works, will emphasize the central role water has in each of our lives, beginning before birth and throughout our entire lives, at individual, community and economic levels. Special attention will be placed on water as a vital component in our economic development, history as a city and our community’s future. An appreciation for the challenges faced in both water quality and quantity will underscore the active role each of us as individuals can play in promoting greater stewardship of water in its many forms. Participants will be encouraged to be both better informed consumers of water and also more engaged actors in the discussions necessary to improve our water resources as a community.

Polk County Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*
Sara Kurovski, *Pleasant Hill*
Connie Johnson, *Ankeny*
Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*
Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

Polk County Conservation Director:

Dennis Parker



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

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JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR:

Ring in the New Year

Saturday, January 4 @ 3:00-8:00 p.m.

Bring the family out for winter sleigh rides, a bonfire, snowman building contest, and more. Ring in the new year with us!

Sweetheart Sleigh Rides

February 13 - 16 by reservation only

Celebrate Valentine's Day with a romantic sleigh ride. \$30/ couple, up to four people per sleigh. Completing the ride is a romantic package with hot chocolate, candy, and a flower for your lady. Get outdoors and feel the love at the Equestrian Center this Valentine's Day!

Winter Sleigh Rides

December-April (when it snows)

Sleigh rides for groups of up to six people. \$10/per person for a 45-minute ride through the snow-covered trails of Jester Park. By reservation when the snow lands.

Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp

March 18 & 20, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Bring the kids out for some horsey fun this spring. Day Camps will include safety training, horsemanship skills, riding lessons, wagon rides, and keepsake crafts. Camps are by reservation and are \$60/session.

Driving Clinic

Saturday, March 22 @ 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Come and learn the basics of horse-drawn wagon and team driving. This clinic will cover basic harnessing and driving techniques. Actual driving training will take place as well. Beginners and auditors are welcome! \$30/person.

Spring Fling Family Fun

Saturday, April 19 @ 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Spring is in the air! Come and enjoy this coming season at the Equestrian Center. Bounce house, carnival games, pony rides (\$5), wagon rides (\$5), and fun for all ages.

Trail Tune-up Clinic

Sunday, April 27 @ 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Trail ride season is just around the corner. Bring yourself and your horse to a trail ride tune up clinic. Clinic will include despooping, common trail issues, trail first aid, and a trail obstacle course. \$50/person.



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