



Leading you Outdoors

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2012-2013



Staff:

Patrice Petersen-Keys - Environmental Education Coordinator

Heidi Anderson – Naturalist

Joe Boyles – Naturalist

Lori Foresman-Kirpes – Naturalist

Lewis Major – Naturalist

Rebekah Beall – Seasonal Naturalist

YEAR AT A GLANCE

During FY 2012-13, the environmental education staff connected with various audiences for a total of 43,145 hours.

	Programs	Participants	Hours of Programming	Contact Hours
School	1,125	23,006	364	26,531
Family	81	3,391	75	3,197
Adult	66	2,407	280	8,238
Youth	197	4,019	134	3,911
Camps	5	69	136	1,268
Totals	1,474	32,892	989	43,145

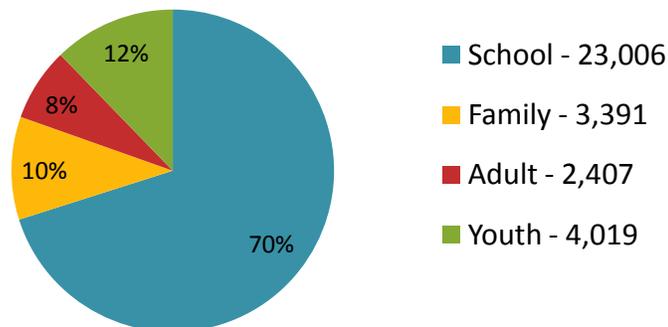


Hands on learning

Summer camps provide a great way to spend quality time connecting youth to the outdoors. A variety of camps offer opportunities for youth ages 6-14.

I just wanted to say how much my son enjoyed your camp and how welcome you made all the kids feel. We did LOTS of activities this summer but I would have to say this was on top of our list for my son. It was educational and a fun week for him. - Hope Paine

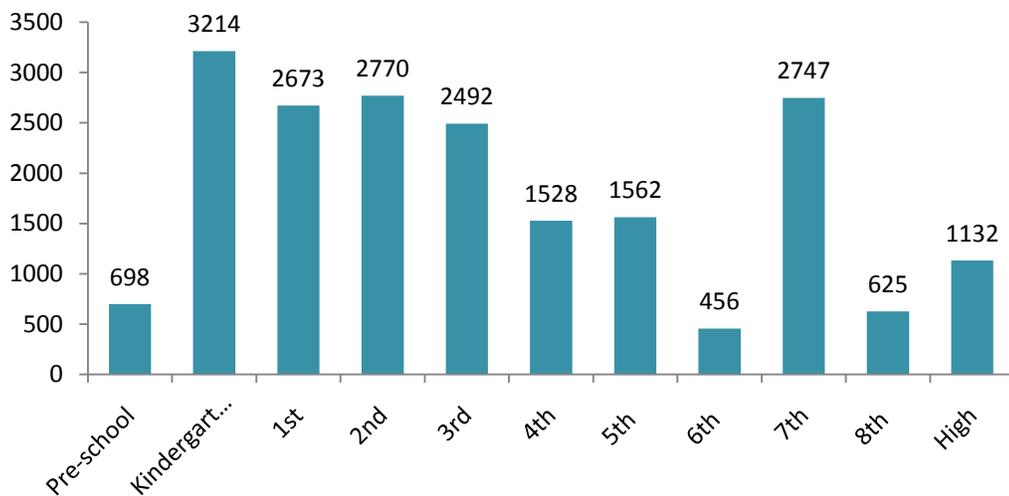
32,892 Total Program Participants



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

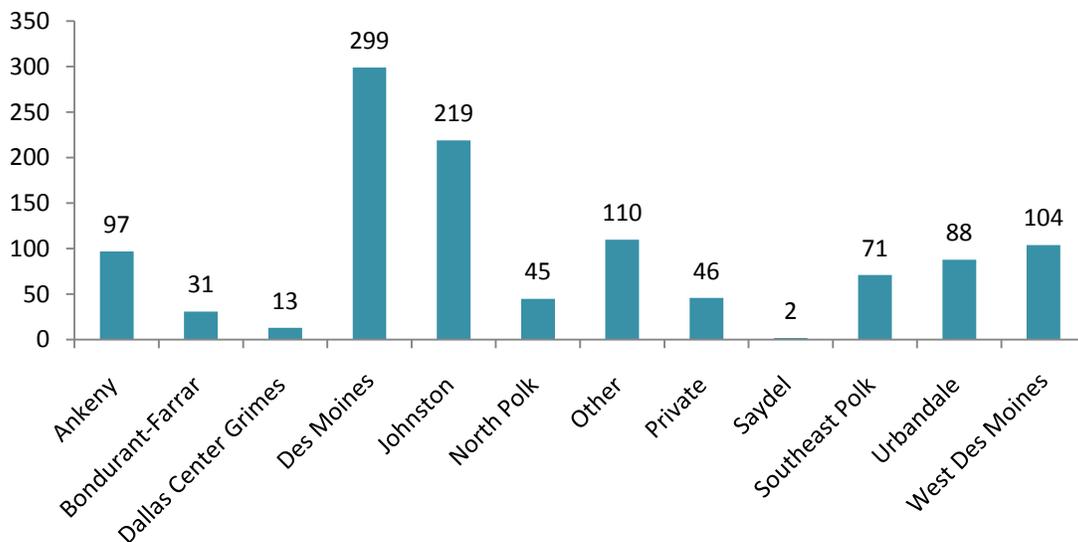
School programs are a major focus of our educational program. During the past year, we have worked to align our classroom programs and field trips with Iowa Core Science Standards. This allows teachers to more easily justify a field trip experience. In the past 5 years, we have placed a greater emphasis on getting middle and high school students into the outdoors. Seventh grade is currently the third largest grade level we program for.

Number of Students by Grade



Total Presentations by School District

All ten districts are represented



"Other" includes home school groups and schools outside Polk County

SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

During field trips, students take part in hands-on learning. Older students may participate in invasive species removal while younger students enjoy discovering what “creatures” live in a pond or under a log.



Students have fun while helping remove invasive species.

Hands down best field trip my kids have ever been on! We went a year ago and still talk about it. Thank you PCC for being so awesome, putting in the work to make all of your education programs amazing.

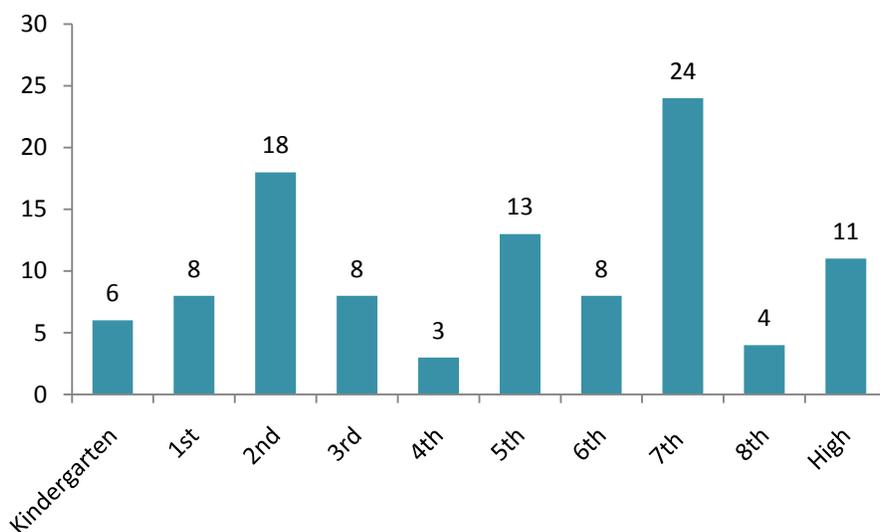
– Gillian Landers Wilder



Catching critters is a great way to learn about habitats and water quality.

A total of 103 field trips, involving 688 programs and 8,242 students, were conducted during the 2012/13 school year. Naturalists provided the largest number of field trips to 7th grade students. All major Polk County Conservation parks were used for programming, with Jester Park used most frequently.

Number of Field Trips by Grade



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

We offer a wide variety of public (open to everyone) programs.



Hikes are popular for all ages.

Family programs

72 family public programs were offered in FY 12/13. Family programs are usually free. Some programs take place indoors like spiders, mammals of Iowa, or animal winter survival. Other programs include exploration and discovery and take place in our parks and trails. These programs may be a nature hike, stargazing, or owl prowl. Over the years, our Night Hikes have become increasingly popular sometimes exceeding 300 people! To provide a better experience, we decided to limit program attendance and charge a small fee. The quantity of people attending the program decreased but the quality increased.

Adult programs

Many of these programs involve teaching an outdoor skill. Warm weather programs include canoeing, geocaching, and kayaking. Winter programming includes snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and kayaking in a heated pool! Many participants want to play outdoors but don't know how. Polk County Conservation is one of the few organizations in the Des Moines Metro Area that provides these services.



Adult kayaking classes are held year round.

Special Public Programming

- Continued growth of OWLS (Older Wiser Livelier Seniors) monthly program
- Conducted seven eco-bus tours, each with a waiting list
- Led two outdoor skill adventure trips for adults
- Presented nine Nature's Story Hour and Nature Playdates in various PCC parks
- Hosted weekly music in the park at the Jester Park Amphitheater from Memorial to Labor Day
- Co-sponsored Nature Friends, parent/child program, with West Des Moines Park and Recreation and Des Moines Izaak Walton League



Bus trip participants enjoyed their visit to Madison County.

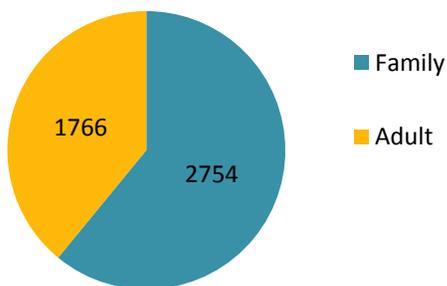
PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Special Events

2,667 people attended special events. These events often involve partnerships and have multiple programs taking place at one time. Event partners are in parentheses.

- Metro Arts Jazz in July at Jester Park (Metro Arts)
- Amazing Prairie Festival at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
- Iowa Outdoor Expo at Des Moines Izaak Walton League (Iowa DNR and Des Moines Izaak Walton League)
- Youth Waterfowl Fun Day at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt (Iowa DNR and Ducks Unlimited)
- Walk for Wildlife at Jester Park (Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association)
- Do More Outdoors at Thomas Mitchell and Easter Lake Park (Unity Point Health – Des Moines)
- Bald Eagle Watch at Jester Park/Saylorville Lake (Army Corps of Engineers – Saylorville Lake)
- Senior Fishing Derby at Easter Lake Park (Polk County Senior Services)
- Earth Day in the Junction at Valley Junction (Historic Valley Junction Foundation and City of West Des Moines)
- Des Moines River Float (Des Moines Parks and Recreation and Central Iowa Paddlers)

**Public Program
Attendance - 4,520
people total**



Participants learn about camping at the summer Do More Outdoors Program.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Social Media

Social media allows us an easy way to stay connected to the public. New this year was the addition of Twitter, Pinterest, and the PCC Blog. The data below reflects the ever increasing number of methods and users.

- Twitter followers - 158
- Facebook followers – 1,146
- Pinterest followers - 113
- E-Newsletter subscribers – 7,123
- YouTube total views – 1,092
- Blog, average monthly read - 411
- Guide by Cell, prompts dialed – 3,493
- Guide by Cell, new dialers – 2,070
- QR (Quick Response) code views - 480



Example of QR code, scan to see video of Jester Park Osprey.



Foresman-Kirpes receiving tourism award

Awards and Recognitions

- Lori Foresman-Kirpes, Naturalist, was recognized as an Individual Friend of Tourism award winner by The Iowa Tourism Office and the Travel Federation of Iowa for her efforts with park interpretation and eco-bus tour leadership.
- Iowa Tourism Award nomination for the Jester Park Elk and Bison Educational Plaza and Natural Playscape complex
- Outstanding Print Media Award from IAN (Iowa Association of Naturalists)/ICEC (Iowa Conservation Education Coalition) for Nature News - 2012

Special Projects

- Maintain and update 56 Guide by Cell messages and 22 QR codes
- Provide 11 Park Packs for free check out to families and youth groups
- Produce 12 Do More Outdoors videos with financial support from Unity Point Health – Des Moines
- Write bi-monthly Ask the Naturalist news columns in the Bull's Eye Newspaper and Polk County Senior Bulletin
- Jester Park Natural Playscape and Elk/Bison Education Plaza maintenance
- Jester Park bird blind maintenance
- Edit Nature News

*This was our first Park Pack & opening it was like Christmas. Our family went on a couple bird watching hikes and stopped to draw birds. We went to the park behind the art center and sat in the viewing area in wetland. –
The Stacy's*

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Conferences Presentation:

- Iowa Parks and Recreation Annual Statewide Conference on “Nature programming in the Parks”
- Iowa Tourism Annual Statewide Conference on promoting destination areas in the Polk County Conservation Park System
- National Association for Interpretation, Region V Workshop on the Jester Park Educational Plaza
- Iowa Association of Naturalist Workshop on Sharpening your Fundraising Skills

Outreach

- 28 ICN (Iowa Communications Network) presentations viewed by 2,143 students across the state
- Orienteering and survival presentations at OJ (Outdoor Journey) for Girls. This program introduces 12-15 year old girls to outdoor skills
- Taught a variety of outdoor skills at BOW (Becoming an Outdoors Woman) for the past 20 years
- “Mysteries of the Castle” at the Salisbury House, a family friendly day filled with education and fun
- Iowa State University “Taking the Road Less Traveled” on careers in conservation sponsored by the Women in Science and Engineering
- Assisted nine local libraries with reading programs
- Spoke about PCC parks and programs to Ray Society (promotes lifelong learning)
- Sponsored the Polk County Master River Stewards program



Teaching fire building at a BOW survival skills class

Media Relations

- IPTV featured the 2012 “Lavender and Loess” motor coach trip on “Iowa Simple Pleasures”
- IPTV featured Jester Park and the Natural Playscape on “Iowa Simple Pleasures” and “Iowa Outdoors”
- WHO-TV – Meagan Reuther’s “Green Hour” featured playing outdoors and Polk County Conservation Park Packs
- Promoted Polk County Conservation parks and programs on WHO Radio “Sportsmen Notebook”
- City Spotlight with Mayor Frank Cownie promoting PCC parks, trails and the Water and Land Legacy Bond

Grants Received

- A LAWCON (Land and Water Conservation Fund) grant for \$120,000 was awarded for the Fort Des Moines Park Outdoor Classroom