



# Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2014 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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## Jester Park Conservation Center Ready to Reshape Environmental Education in Polk County



It has been a busy and exciting time putting the complete details together for the Jester Park Conservation Center's final designs and plans. Conservation staff has been meeting regularly with consultants to discuss and determine all of the Center's needs from footings to carpet to shingles and everything in between. Landscaping, site utilities, construction materials, educational displays & programming, facility operations, and partnership opportunities are just a few of the many weekly discussion topics that take place.

Fundraising for the Conservation Center has proven to be a successful and encouraging endeavor over the past several months. In working through the Vision Iowa Community Attraction and

Tourism (CAT) granting process, staff has gained financial support from many local municipalities, corporations, foundations, and numerous groups and individuals. We have also gained excellent exposure and community support for this exciting regional facility.

In addition to securing a \$970,000 Vision Iowa CAT grant, we have received major financial contributions from the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, Principal, Bob Jester, Casey's, and Scheels. Staff continues to contact local groups

....continued on page 2



Bond updates pages 4-5

## Jester Park Conservation Center continued...

and corporations that may be interested in facility sponsorships. If you or your company is interested in hearing more about the Conservation Center and potentially making a donation or becoming a sponsor, please contact Director Dennis Parker at 515-323-5300. Donations can be made on-line at [www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org/JesterParkCC](http://www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org/JesterParkCC).

While fundraising efforts will continue over the next several months to secure the final dollars needed for completing this project, enough funding is in place to begin construction yet this fall. The Conservation Board will advertise for construction bids and select general contractor by fall. We anticipate a late September or early October groundbreaking. A facility grand opening is hopeful by the spring of 2016.

Once constructed, this Center is expected to serve more than 800,000 visitors annually. Environmental education program attendance should triple within five years of the Center's inception. While our programming already reaches large numbers of people, the need for programming continues to grow. As the state's leader of environmental education in the most populated county, we are the only metropolitan area that does not have a dedicated Conservation Center.

Despite Jester Park's increasing significance as a community resource and tourist attraction; a dedicated facility to welcome visitors and promote public health, provide year-round educational and outdoor recreational programming, and showcase interpretive exhibits does not presently exist. The Jester Park Conservation Center, immersed in its natural environment, will serve as a discovery portal where people of all ages can actively experience Iowa's natural heritage. Polk County's environmental education programming will reach a broader audience providing much needed educational and recreational experiences.



*Indoor classrooms on the lower level*



*Outdoor equipment rental on the lower level*



*Amphitheater on the plaza*



*Main level exhibit area*

## High School Students Improve Water Quality in Polk County



*Lincoln High School students spread compost at Easter Lake Park to prevent runoff into the lake and help the soil filter pollutants.*

When it rains—and it has rained a lot recently—where does that water go and what does it carry downstream? Students from six Polk County high schools investigated those questions with Polk County Conservation naturalists this spring through classroom programs and field trips to local parks. They examined a watershed—an area of land that drains to a river, lake, or wetland—their neighborhood impacts. They learned that their community’s use of land in their watershed affects water quality.

More than 250 students waded into local streams and ponds to help Polk County Conservation staff monitor water quality and implement projects to improve watershed health. Polk County Conservation naturalists also reached over 400 students through watershed classroom programs. Participating schools included Lincoln, Roosevelt, Hoover, Valley, and North Polk High Schools, as well as Central Campus. Student data will be submitted to the public IOWATER Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring database to build a picture of water quality at their field trip site over time.

The project gave high school students an opportunity to engage with local conservation issues and make a difference in a nearby park. For example, during their watershed experience, Lincoln High School investigated the Easter Lake watershed. In the classroom,

students learned how paved surfaces and compacted yards in their urban watershed prevent water from soaking into the soil where it would be naturally filtered. Stormwater runs off into small streams with greater speed and volume, eroding stream banks and washing more sediment into the lake. Grass clippings, excess fertilizer, and pet waste carried in stormwater runoff can cause algae to overgrow in the lake. While on their field trip, students tested the water quality through chemical and biological sampling. They also completed soil quality restoration at the park. That means, thanks to their hard work, 108,608 gallons of rainwater will be filtered by the soil before reaching Easter Lake!

Other schools cut invasive species to reduce erosion along waterways and completed water quality monitoring projects at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt and Water Works Park. Polk County Conservation and partners will continue high school watershed field trips in future years. Grant funds to reimburse bus and substitute teacher costs remain available for the fall.

A Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program grant funded this project. Supporting organizations include Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, Des Moines Water Works, Metro Waste Authority, Great Outdoors Foundation, and IOWATER.

# The Latest

## Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

Here's a look at many of the bond projects we've completed or are currently in progress.

Easter Lake Park



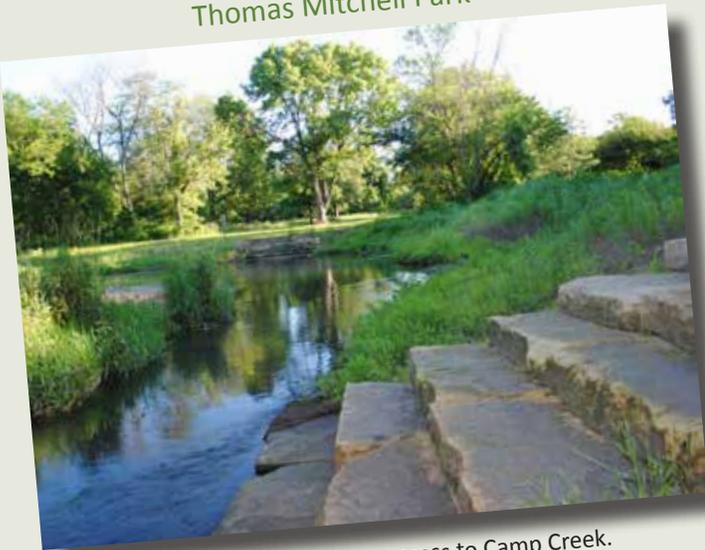
Mark C. Ackelson Trail around the south side is complete. Construction has begun on the north side.

Thomas Mitchell Park



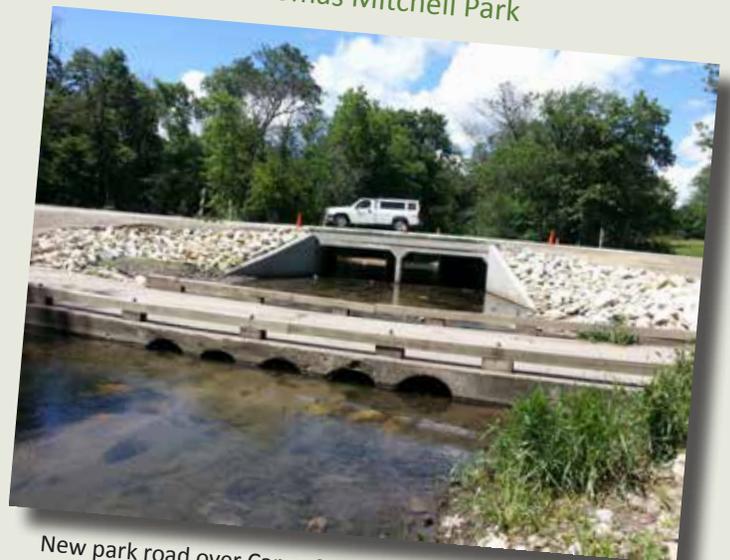
Accessible fishing pier near recently installed fish habitat.

Thomas Mitchell Park



Limestone pavers allow access to Camp Creek.

Thomas Mitchell Park



New park road over Camp Creek allows vehicles to safely cross while the old road bed provides recreational access to the creek.

To receive this newsletter electronically, email:  
[polk\\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov)



### Fort Des Moines Park



The pond is filling back up after being dredged. Concrete support beams have been poured on the peninsula for a future deck.

### Brown's Woods



A new parking lot has been installed, in cooperation with the City of West Des Moines, to handle vehicular and bus parking and provide safe access to Brown's Woods. New hiking trails from the parking lot connect visitors to the existing trail system.

### Yellow Banks Park



The pond was lowered six to eight feet so that outlet and overflow structures could be installed. The top of the dam will be lowered eight feet so park users can gain improved access to the water.

### Jester Park



Four new rental cabins have been a popular getaway retreat for park visitors.



## Shellie Carmoney, EQ Program Specialist

Shellie Carmoney hails from the state of Michigan and joined our staff as the Equestrian Program Specialist at the Jester Park Equestrian Center. Shellie brings extensive experience to her new position. Her background includes program design, herd management, staff development, volunteer support and program horse selection and training. She has a background in therapeutic riding and is a Master Instructor and serves as Clinic Staff through the Certified Horsemanship Association. Shellie enjoys sharing her passion for horses with others and designing horsemanship programs that are safe, fun and effective for riders of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.



## Nick Gordon, Natural Resource Technician

Nick Gordon started his position of Natural Resource Technician in June. Previously he worked as a Tree Care Foreman for five years at a prestigious tree company in West Des Moines. He brings a passion for the outdoors and an appreciation of nature.

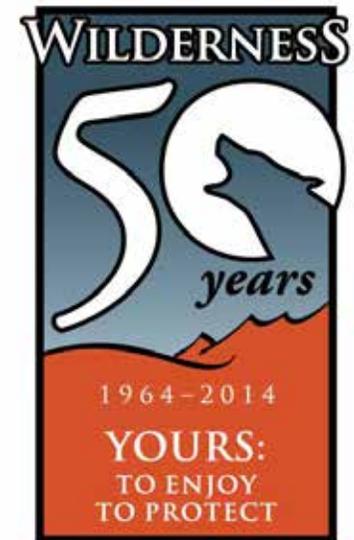
## Wilderness has its roots in Iowa...

Fifty years ago in 1964 President, Lyndon B. Johnson, signed the Wilderness Act into law. This one of a kind law established that Americans would have roadless tracts of land preserved for future generations to explore. Today the system encompasses a 110 million acres in over 750 wilderness areas throughout the U.S. An Iowa native, Aldo Leopold, is considered the father of the Wilderness Act and the land ethic. His passion and perseverance helped ensure the passage of this law. A definition of wilderness is: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

President, Lyndon B. Johnson said in 1964: *"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."*

Iowa is one of six states that does not have any designated wilderness areas. We have more roads per capita than any other state and only a small percentage of Iowa is in public ownership. And yet, we still have areas where we can find wildness, where we can unplug, relax, rejuvenate and reflect. What is your wild place? Celebrate your wild place and celebrate the 110 million acres of Wilderness areas throughout the United States of America.

Join us on Tuesday, September 2nd at 6:30 p.m. for a celebration of wildness and the 50 year anniversary of the Wilderness Act at the Jester Park Lodge. See page 7 for more details.



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.

## Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act

**Tuesday, September 2 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m.**  
Jester Park Lodge

What is your wild place? Where do you go to be re-energized, unplug and be alone in nature? Chris Adkins, Naturalist for Dallas County Conservation will start the conversation on wilderness. Special guest presenter Dallas Chief Eagle, Champion hoop dancer, will demonstrate traditional Lakota hoop dance. He will engage the audience via dance and story to view our position in nature and our relationship to nature.

## Wild Night Life & Hike

**Friday, September 5 @ 7:30-9:00 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. Afterwards enjoy eating s'mores around the campfire. **Pre-registration required;** deadline is September 3. Fee: \$5.

## Catfishing Basics

**Thursday, September 18 @ 6:00-9:00 p.m.**  
Yellow Banks Park, meet at boat ramp

Have you always wanted to catch a flat head or channel cat? In this hands-on class you'll learn about catfish biology, what and when they eat, where to find them, and more. After the program, we'll go out on a sand bar and fish for catfish. Bait, hooks, and sinkers will be provided. Bring a fishing pole if you have one, bug spray, chair or bucket to sit on, and flashlight or lantern. Participants 16 years and older must have a valid fishing license. Pre-registration is required; deadline is September 12. Fee: \$5.

## Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day

**Saturday, September 20 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**  
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Area 3

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).

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

**Saturday, October 11 @ 5:00-11:00 a.m. \*date change from September 27**

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Shop

Would your child like to experience the thrill of waterfowl hunting? This mentored hunt in a controlled waterfowl hunting area at Chichaqua can provide this opportunity. Start the morning with a "hunter's breakfast" in the shop. Youth will be placed in groups of two and teamed with an experienced waterfowl hunter and a conservation officer to serve as mentors. Mentors will provide the dogs, decoys, calling skills and guidance. Youth need to provide their own gun, ammunition, and waders (PCC will provide if youth do not have them.) Pre-registration required; deadline is October 11. Fee: \$10. This hunt is for youth ages 12-15 only. Youth must have completed hunter education class and attended a Waterfowl Fun Field Day.

## Iowa Outdoor Expo

**Saturday, September 27 @ 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.**  
**Sunday, September 28 @ 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**  
Des Moines Izaak Walton League

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

## Stargazing

Friday, October 3 @ 7:00-8:30 p.m.  
Yellow Banks Park, Shelter #1

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

## Amazing Place Eco Challenge

Sunday, October 5 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Do you enjoy watching "The Amazing Race"? Have you dreamed of participating in daunting mental and physical challenges in exotic locations? Do you fantasize about spending the prize money the winners receive? Well wish no more and sign up for "The Amazing Place Eco Challenge" at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. This family-oriented event is designed to challenge participating teams in a variety of ways. Teams of two to six players\* will canoe, geocache, eat exotic cuisine, be tested on their knowledge of Iowa wildlife, find their way through a prairie maze and just plain have a blast working their way through a series of outdoor-oriented challenges.



Teams need to begin their challenge no later than 3 pm (to insure 5 pm finish). Events begin at the Longhouse. Advance registration at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com) is strongly recommended. Those who do pre-register will receive an incredibly cool "Amazing Place" bandana. Cost is \$5 per team. Don't forget to include your team's name when you register – be creative! Teams that complete the challenge by the 5 pm deadline will be entered in a drawing for \$100 cash grand prize. Need not be present to win. Teams are encouraged to bring water bottles, bug spray and sunblock. Long pants and closed toe shoes suggested. Refreshments will be provided to finishers.

Hayrack tours for early finishers and non-participants will run at 3:00, 3:40 and 4:20 pm. Tours will highlight the diversity of plants and animals that use Chichaqua Bottoms and ongoing restoration efforts on this 8,000 acre wildlife area.

\*Families with more than six members (parents and children) may participate as a single team. Event sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation.



## Spiders

Tuesday, October 7 @ 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.

## Fall Colors Hike

Saturday, October 18, 1:00-2:00 p.m.  
Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at pond parking lot

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

## Owl Prowl

Friday, October 24 @ 6:00-7:30 p.m.  
Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at pond parking lot

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

## Walk for Wildlife

Saturday, October 25 @ 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

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

## Going Batty

Tuesday, October 28 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
East Side Library, 2559 Hubbell, Des Moines

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.

## Bird Conservation in Northeast Iowa

Wednesday, November 5 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
Jester Park Lodge

For the past 33 years, Jon Stravers, Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge - Bird Conservation Coordinator, has specialized

in monitoring Red-shouldered Hawks, Bald Eagles and Cerulean Warblers along the Mississippi River. He'll share his finding, stories and pictures of these fascinating birds.

## PCC Book Worms

**Thursday, November 6 @ 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Cafe Diem, 2005 S Ankeny Blvd. Suite 800, Ankeny**

Join our book club with PCC Naturalist, Heidi Anderson, for an engaging discussion once a month. This month we'll be discussing *The Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 3. Fee: \$5, includes coffee and cookies. Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation.

## Rain Barrel Workshop

**Saturday, November 8 @ 9:00-10:00 a.m.**

**Easter Lake Park Shop**

A short discussion about ways to collect and use runoff water will be held before participants construct their own 55-gallon rain barrel. It could be a great gift to give 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 October 31. Fee: \$50.

## Archery Basics

**Thursday, November 13 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park Equestrian Center**

This class will focus on form and safety, giving students basics that will get them safely shooting, and offer a general feel for archery. The class will cover eye dominance, archery safety rules, range rules, equipment, and proper shooting techniques - "basic steps" using a compound bow. The class is suitable for those with no experience, or those that may have shot before and need a refresher. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 10. Ages 12 and up. Fee: \$5.

## Winter Birds

**Tuesday, December 2 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

This presentation might make you the envy of the neighborhood. Learn all of the secrets to setting up a successful bird feeding station where you live. Birds you can attract, feeder types, food varieties, and placement in your yard will be a few of the topics discussed.

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

## PCC Book Worms

**Thursday, December 4 @ 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Cafe Diem, 2005 S Ankeny Blvd. Suite 800, Ankeny**

Join our book club with PCC Naturalist, Heidi Anderson, for an engaging discussion once a month. This month we'll be discussing *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 1. Fee: \$5, includes coffee and cookies. Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation.

## Animal Winter Survival

**Monday, December 29 @ 1:30-2:30 p.m.**

**Franklin Avenue Library, 5000 Franklin, Des Moines**

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

## Cross-Country Ski Basics

**Tuesday, December 30, 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 the trails. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will also be discussed. Class will be canceled without snow. Sign up for the 10:00 or 12:30 class. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 28. Minimum age 10. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles.) Smallest boot size available is men's 4 1/2 and women's 6.

## Snowshoe Hike

**Friday, January 2 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Easter Lake Park, Shelter #3**

Learn how easy and fun snowshoeing can be while experiencing the great outdoors. Wear warm boots. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 31. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

### 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

## 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.

### Wildlife Dynamics on Isle Royale

**September 2**

For 55 years scientists have been studying the moose/wolf/vegetation dynamics on Isle Royale, a large island national park in Lake Superior. For the last 25 years, Ron Eckoff has been volunteering for the study by hiking off trail on the wilderness island looking for moose bones. Ron will share pictures, video, and some of the research findings.

### Personal Adventures & Explorations of the Northwest Passage

**October 7**

David Thoreson shares his stories of three Arctic expeditions aboard small sailboats and the quest for the infamous Northwest Passage. In his 1994 passage attempt, the crew became trapped in the ice and barely escaped. In 2007, David and crew were successful in traveling along famed explorer Roald Amundsen's route and became the first American sailboat in history to accomplish this feat. In 2009, he was ice expert and documentary photographer on the scientifically-equipped, 64' s/v Ocean

Watch which accomplished the NW Passage from west to east. David became the only American sailor in history to transit the infamous passage in both directions.

### Bird Conservation in Northeast Iowa

**November 5 (This is a Wednesday due to Election Day)**

For the past 33 years, Jon Stravers, Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge Bird Conservation Coordinator, has specialized in monitoring Red-shouldered Hawks, Bald Eagles and Cerulean Warblers along the Mississippi River. He'll share his findings, stories and pictures of these fascinating birds.

### River Critters & Wildlife

**December 2**

Paddling Iowa rivers since the age of 12, Dr. Jim Pease is a wildlife and interpretive specialist who will help you find and understand the wildlife along Iowa's rivers. From birds and mammals to trees and shrubs, Jim knows them and knows how to help you understand them and their relationship with the river.

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

### 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.

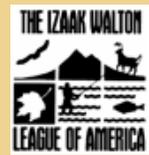
**September 8** - Tyke Hike at *Brown's Woods*

**September 23** - Nutty Squirrels at *Legion Park, 4th and Vine St., WDM*

**October 6** - Migration Sensations at *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

**October 28**- Going Batty at *Quail Cove Park, 1515 S. 52nd Street, WDM*

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



## Volunteer News & Opportunities

This spring and summer has proved to be extremely busy, even with the wet start. Volunteers from Liberty Mutual Insurance and Wells Fargo helped water seal/stain the Jester Park Cabins. Wells Fargo volunteers also helped plant trees at Fort Des Moines Park and pull garlic mustard at Brown's Woods and then again clearing invasive species. Nationwide volunteers helped spread gravel on the new ADA accessible hiking trail at Brown's Woods and pull garlic mustard. Volunteers from Sheltered Reality painted picnic tables and shelters at Easter Lake, John Deere employees helped clean up flood debris at Jester Park, while and Urbandale Parks and Recreation kids helped sanitize Campground #2 grills in prep to re-open. DMACC ES students have also continued their monthly restoration efforts at Carney Marsh. Also; thank you to St. Theresa's Home Missions and 4-H groups who spent a week helping at Jester Park installing a paver kit, pruning trails and picking up litter.

Bluebird and Kestrel Trail Stewards are busy counting nesting information; while Trail Ambassadors are racking up the miles while reporting trail conditions, trail users and keeping the trails clean. Park Stewards are busy with woodland and prairie restoration efforts, and making a noticeable difference. Eagle scouts David Lamison worked on removing invasive species in an assigned area near the Jester Park cabins, Jacob Orr installed privacy style fencing around two dumpsters at Jester Park and Mitch O'Meara installed therapeutic riding stations along one of the horse trails at JPEC. Numerous other Eagle Scout projects are underway e.g. at Jester Park: walk-in campsites, overlook benches and hitching posts along hiking trails, redemption bottle and can storage building, council fire ring and benches. Additional projects include; a wetland causeway, ADA accessible Wildlife Viewing Deck, benches at trail heads and clearing brush/invasive species to open lake views.



*Liberty Mutual Insurance and Wells Fargo employees staining the JP cabins.*

### Volunteer Appreciation Paddle and Picnic

What would we do without our amazing team of volunteers?! Last year alone, 14,000 hours were put into conservation efforts in Polk County. From Trail Ambassadors to Park Stewards, Bluebird Trail Monitors to Boy Scouts, the thousands upon thousands of hours put into our parks and trails deserves to be celebrated! Please join us on Sunday, September 7, at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt to explore the Skunk River Oxbows by canoe or kayak. Afterwards, gather at the Longhouse for a potluck style picnic. Polk County Conservation will be grilling up brats and burgers - bring a side to share with your fellow volunteers!

Refrigeration is available in the longhouse if needed. PCC will offer 30 boats available on a first come, first serve basis or you are welcome to bring your own. Not a paddler? Chichaqua also offers great hiking and birding opportunities. RSVP to reserve your spot today! Contact Pat Spain at [pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov) or 515-323-5280. Paddle float starts at 2:30, followed by the picnic at 4:30.

### VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

#### Annual Des Moines River Run Garbage Grab

**Friday, August 22 @ 8:00 a.m. (end times vary by location)**

Volunteers can choose from many locations to either clean up land based trails by foot or bike, or choose to clean up the Des Moines and Raccoon River Water Trails by power boat, canoe or kayak. Polk County Conservation will be hosting the Sycamore Access. Register at [www.riverstewards.org](http://www.riverstewards.org).

#### Tacopocalypse Trash Challenge

**Tuesday, September 16**

(details TBA)

Contact Pat Spain for more information.

Sponsored by INHF, WCCB and PCC

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

#### Outdoor Expo

**September 27, 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.**

**September 28, 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).

#### Residential Tree Program (Plant Some Shade)

**Saturday, October 4 @ 7:30-11:30 a.m.**

To volunteer, please contact Mark Dungan at [mark.dungan@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:mark.dungan@polkcountyiowa.gov) or (515) 323-5358. Refreshments provided.



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beaver Creek Greenbelt</li> <li>2. Brown's Woods</li> <li>3. Carney Marsh</li> <li>4. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt</li> <li>5. Chichaqua Valley Trail</li> <li>6. Easter Lake Park</li> <li>7. Eagle Roost Wildlife Area</li> <li>8. Engeldinger Marsh</li> <li>9. Fort Des Moines Park</li> <li>10. Four Mile Creek Greenbelt</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Gay Lea Wilson Trail</li> <li>12. Great Western Trail</li> <li>13. High Trestle Trail</li> <li>14. Jester Park</li> <li>15. Mally's Weh Weh Neh Kee Park</li> <li>16. Oralabor Gateway Trail</li> <li>17. Sycamore Trail</li> <li>18. Thomas Mitchell Park</li> <li>19. Trestle to Trestle Trail</li> <li>20. Yellow Banks Park</li> </ol> |
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# BE A FRIEND OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

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

## FRIENDS ENJOY:

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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

## FRIENDS LEVELS:

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

### CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS:

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



DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
September 2	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Wildlife Dynamics on Isle Royale	Jester Park Lodge
September 2	6:30 p.m.	50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act	Jester Park Lodge
September 5	7:30 p.m.	Night Hike	Jester Park
September 6	1:00 p.m.	Back to School Open House	Jester Park Equestrian Center
September 8	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Brown's Woods
September 12	8:00 p.m.	Stargazing	Yellow Banks Park
September 16	TBA	Tacopocalypse Trash Challenge	TBA
September 18	6:00 p.m.	Catfishing Basics*	Yellow Banks Park
September 20	1:00 p.m.	Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 23	7:00 a.m.	Applefest Bus Tour*	Nebraska City, NE
September 23	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Legion Park, West Des Moines
October 3	7:00 p.m.	Stargazing	Yellow Banks Park
October 5	1:00 p.m.	Amazing Place Eco Challenge*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 6	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Fort Des Moines Park
October 7	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Adventures of the NW Passage	Jester Park Lodge
October 7	6:30 p.m.	Spiders	Jester Park Lodge
October 8-9	7:30 a.m.	Decorah Discovery Bus Tour*	Decorah, Iowa
October 11	5:00 a.m.	Youth Waterfowl Hunt*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 18	1:00 p.m.	Fall Colors Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
October 24	6:00 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Thomas Mitchell Park
October 25	9:00 a.m.	Walk for Wildlife	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 15	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
October 28	6:30 p.m.	Going Batty	East Side Library
October 28	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Quail Cove Park, West Des Moines
October 30	4:00 p.m.	JPEC "Spook-tacular"	Jester Park Equestrian Center
October 31	4:00 p.m.	JPEC "Spook-tacular"	Jester Park Equestrian Center
November 1	4:00 p.m.	JPEC "Spook-tacular"	Jester Park Equestrian Center
November 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Bird Conservation in NE Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
November 5	6:30 p.m.	Bird Conservation in NE Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
November 6	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
November 8	9:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
November 13	6:30 p.m.	Archery Basics*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
November 22	10:00 a.m.	Fall Festival Family Fun Event	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 2	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - River Critters and Wild Life	Jester Park Lodge
December 2	6:30 p.m.	Winter Birds	Jester Park Lodge
December 4	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
December 13	11:00 a.m.	Pony Express to Santa	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 20	11:00 a.m.	Pony Express to Santa	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 21	11:00 a.m.	Pony Express to Santa	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 29	1:30 p.m.	Winter Animal Survival	South Side Library
December 30	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
December 30	12:30 p.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
January 2	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park

Polk County Conservation  
 11407 NW Jester Park Drive  
 Granger, Iowa 50109  
 515-323-5300  
[polk\\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov)  
[www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)  
 Follow us on:



## JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR

## Guided Trail Rides

**Until November 16, Tuesday - Sunday at 10:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 4:00 p.m., and 5:30 p.m.**

Enjoy a scenic guided trail ride along the lakeshore at Jester Park. Rides are one hour long for ages 8 and over. Rides are walking trail rides and are beginner friendly. Due to high demand, reservations are preferred. Cost: \$30.00/per person.

## Back to School Open House

**September 6 from 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

Bring the family out to explore what Jester Park Equestrian Center is all about! Featuring driving demonstrations, Lesson demos, horse grooming sessions, and much more. Refreshments provided and a free event for the family.

## Fall Wagon Rides

**September 22 - November 30, by reservation**

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

## Tiny Tots Fall Session

**September 11 - October 19**

**Offering Classes: Thursday-Sunday from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

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

## JPEC "Spook-tacular"

**October 30-November 1, nightly from 4:00-9:00 p.m.**

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

## Fall Festival Family Fun Event

**November 22 from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

Fall is here! Come and enjoy the coming season at the JPEC. Crafts, carnival games, pony rides, wagon rides, and fun for all ages. Cost: \$5/activity station.

## Pony Express to Santa

**December 13, 20, and 21 from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

Bring your child out to enjoy a winter wonderland aboard our ponies and end the trip with a visit to see Santa. Decorate

stockings, enjoy Christmas carols on a sleigh ride, and much more! \$20/child, and sleigh rides additional \$5/per person.

## Winter Break Camps

**December 22, 23, 26, and 29 from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

Need to do some last minute shopping? Are your kid's going stir crazy in the house? Bring them out for some horsey fun over the holiday season. Winter camps will include safety training, horsemanship skills, a riding lesson, wagon/sleigh ride, and a holiday keepsake craft. Camps are by reservation and are \$60/session.

## Winter Sleigh Rides

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

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

## Jester Park Therapeutic Riding Program

**Monday- Fridays, by appointment**

JPEC is pleased to announce openings in our therapeutic riding program. We offer therapy lessons to persons with physical, emotional, and social disabilities, in a safe setting with experienced instructors. We are now enrolling for the fall- please call and speak with our Program Specialist for more information and a registration packet.

## Weekly Riding Lessons

**English and Western, ages 8 and up**

Taught by qualified and experienced instructors, our goal is to provide a positive atmosphere that fosters horsemanship "from the ground up". Lessons are \$35/hour for group lessons and \$40/hour for private lessons. Call for more information.

## JPEC Birthday Parties

**By Reservation, Fridays thru Sundays**

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



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



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

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## Plant Some Shade Fall Tree Program

Residential customers of MidAmerican Energy in central Iowa can reduce future energy use and at the same time landscape their homes through Plant some shade®, an expanded tree-planting program. Plant some shade enables MidAmerican Energy's central Iowa residential customers to purchase up to two, three to eight-foot landscape trees for just \$30 each. Approximately 500 high-quality trees are available on a first-come, first-ordered basis. Tree species available can be found online. Advance orders for Plant some shade are required online only at [www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org) beginning mid to late August. Orders will be accepted until all trees have been sold. Trees will be available for pickup at the Hoover State Office Building south parking lot, located at the intersection of S.E. 14th and E. Court Avenue in Des Moines between 8:30 and 11 a.m. on Saturday, October 4.



The crew of staff and volunteers that helped with the tree distribution