

Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2015 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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Renovations to Easter Lake Beginning in 2015

Many years of planning and partnerships has resulted in significant improvements that will be coming to Easter Lake beginning in the summer of 2015. Guided by the Easter Lake Watershed Plan that was developed in the fall of 2012, Polk County Conservation, in cooperation with the IA DNR, City of Des Moines, Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District, IA Department of Ag. & Land Stewardship, NRCS, Center for Ag. & Rural Development, and several advisory and neighborhood groups have joined forces to address the problems in the watershed and begin restoring the lake.

Attracting nearly 400,000 visitors each year, Easter Lake Park has been a great recreational resource to central Iowa since its creation in 1967. Easter Lake is fed by Yeader Creek which is part of a 6,380-acre watershed that stretches across Des Moines from the airport east to the lake. Over the last several years this popular 178-acre lake has faced diminishing water quality as development in the area has increased. The lake currently suffers from poor water clarity, algal blooms, high sedimentation rates, low oxygen concentrations, and a poor fishery.

In response to the lake's water quality problems, project partners completed research to identify pollutant sources, locate priority areas, and develop a plan of action to provide guidance and outline goals for the restoration project.



Photo by Robert Hoffman

Goals:

- Improve water quality throughout the watershed by implementing management practices
- Reconnect local residents and visitors with the natural amenities of Easter Lake and its surroundings
- Educate the public about water quality and watersheds and how their actions impact our water resources
- Increase aquatic health and the aesthetic value of Easter Lake

The restoration process will begin in 2015 with spillway and fish rearing pond renovation, Yeader Creek stabilization work, and the installation of dredge piping. Since the lake's creation in 1967, it has lost nearly

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Bond updates on page 2

The Latest

Regular Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

LAND PROTECTION

- PCC obtained a new property NE of Elkhart/West of the Skunk River on 160 acres. It consists of the bottom of an old lake, floods regularly, and intersects five different drainage ways. This valuable acquisition will provide great wildlife habitat and water quality benefits.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

- IA DNR planning grants have been awarded to the Walnut, Spring, Camp, and Mud Creek Watershed Management Authorities. Polk County Conservation will be heavily involved in leading these water quality initiatives in the coming years.

TRAILS

- Expansion of hard surface trail connections throughout the county are progressing along. Phase II of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail is expected to reach completion by Spring of 2015. This section of trail will provide for a safe off road connection for trail users linking Ewing Park to Easter Lake Park. Also, the Chichaqua Valley Trail Connector is anticipated to open by spring of 2015. This new section of trail connects Bondurant to Des Moines and ties into the Gay Lea Wilson Trail which provides trail connection from Ankeny to Altoona through Pleasant Hill.

PARKS

Fort Des Moines Park

- Water quality has improved drastically at the Fort Des Moines pond thanks to renovation efforts. The pond now boasts three feet of visibility throughout.
- Redevelopment of the park continues as projects press on. Expansion of the trail system throughout the park, pond access enhancements, and construction of an outdoor classroom are anticipated for 2015.

Thomas Mitchell Park

- Pond and park improvements have been completed. Park visitors may now enjoy a variety of amenities from accessible fishing piers, shade structures, improved accessibility into and over Camp Creek by way of limestone pavers and a new vehicular crossing.
- A new acquisition along the Camp Creek greenway/waterway will enable us to continue important streambank stabilization and habitat protection.

Jester Park

- The Jester Park Playscape implemented a new water source to supply this feature. Rather than re-circulated water flowing through the system, fresh water was supplied and drained daily through a new well.
- The 2014 camping season saw the opening of four rental cabins, as well as an electrical upgrade to the 28 sites in Campground #2.



- Next on the park's agenda is on-going planning, design, and fundraising for the Jester Park Conservation Center which will serve as a gateway for outdoor recreation and conservation education in Polk County.

Yellow Banks Park

- Dam reconstruction has been completed giving park users much better access to the pond. Additional watershed improvements are in motion. This park will see more enhancements in 2015.
- A 5-acre property adjacent to the Yellow Banks entrance has been secured for future use and park buffering.

Brown's Woods

- Brown's Woods is proud to offer 4.5 miles of natural hiking trails in a convenient urban setting. Also in place is a new parking lot and coming soon is a vault restroom that will be operational by the spring of 2015. On-going natural area maintenance continues throughout this woodland as part of the Water and Land Legacy referendum.

Easter Lake Park

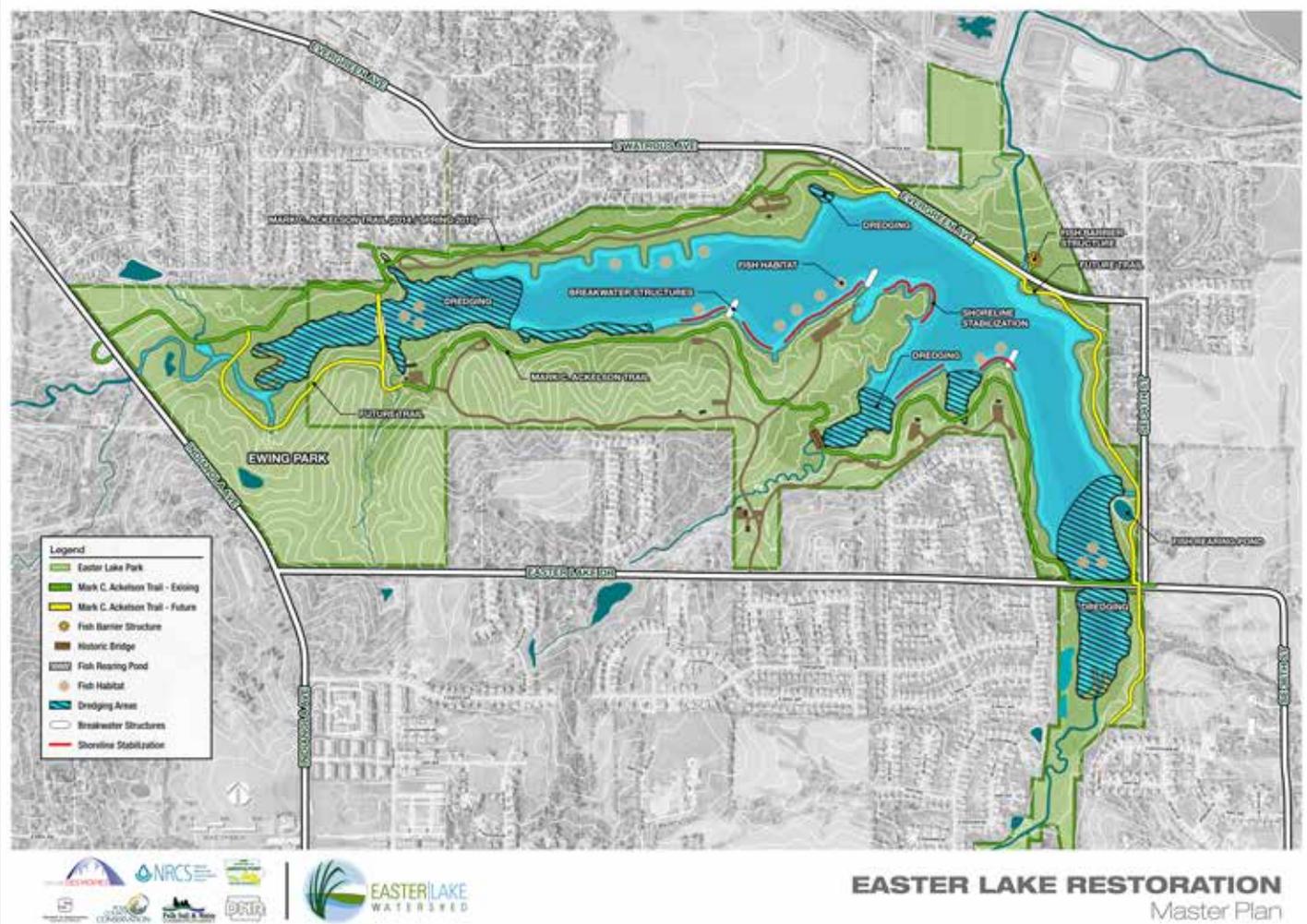
- The Easter Lake Watershed Restoration project sits at the top of Polk County Conservation's priority list for 2015 and beyond. A timeline has been established for restoration work in Easter Lake and Yeader Creek that is expected to take place from 2015-2018. Refer to the front page story for more detailed information about this significant water quality project.
- In an effort to improve water quality, rain gardens and a bioretention cell will be constructed as a part of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail Phase II. These features will aid in filtration of water runoff from parking lots before entering the lake.



Example of a rain garden built in the Easter Lake Watershed

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

- A new master plan for CBG will roll out in 2015. This plan will address future planning for this regionally significant conservation area that consists of more than 8,000 acres.



Renovations at Easter Lake...

30% of its volume as a result of siltation. Sediment washing in from the watershed has filled the lake.

Hydraulic dredging will remove this deposited sediment from the lake bottom, increase lake depth, and provide multiple recreation benefits for the public. A hydraulic dredge floats on the water and excavates and pumps the material through a temporary pipeline to an offsite location. This dredge acts like a floating vacuum cleaner that can remove sediment very precisely. It is a very unobtrusive method that does not disturb the shoreline and only requires one trip to put the dredge in the water and one trip out when the project is complete.

More noticeable and invasive restoration work will begin in early 2017 when the lake is drained to complete shoreline stabilization and fish rehabilitation. Some portions of the eroded shoreline will be pulled back and rock-lined along the water's edge to prevent wave erosion. Other areas will be stabilized with natural vegetation. Reconstruction of the shoreline will provide additional high quality fish habitat and better public access to the lake. Improved

aquatic habitat and renovated fishery will drastically improve fishing success at Easter Lake. The boat ramp will be closed and park shelters will be first come, first serve only in 2017. The lake will begin to fill back up again during the winter and spring of 2017-2018 and fish restocking will take place.

Throughout this entire process, a series of rainscaping practices such as rain gardens, permeable pavers, and soil quality restoration, along with public education focused on fertilizer usage, rain barrel benefits, invasive species control, and native landscaping will supplement the restoration work that is happening in Easter Lake and in the watershed.

Project partners have incorporated multiple funding sources into lake and watershed improvements, as well as a new trail system that will further connect local residents to the natural amenities of Easter Lake and Ewing Parks. Please visit our website at www.leadingyououtdoors.org for the most up-to-date information about this project in the coming years.



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) 323-5339. 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**



Equestrian Center Volunteers Needed

Do you love horses and have some time to volunteer at the Jester Park Equestrian Center? We specifically need volunteers for the therapeutic riding program, helping with pony rides, cleaning stalls and helping with special events and camps. Volunteers must be 18 and over to help with the horses (therapy, pony rides). Basic barn chores and some special events can be assisted by minors over 14 years of age with parental consent. Horse experience is great, but we love having volunteers that are willing to learn.

For more information, contact Shellie Carmoney at (515) 999-2818 email: shellie.carmoney@polkcountyiowa.gov

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 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 Interim Director:

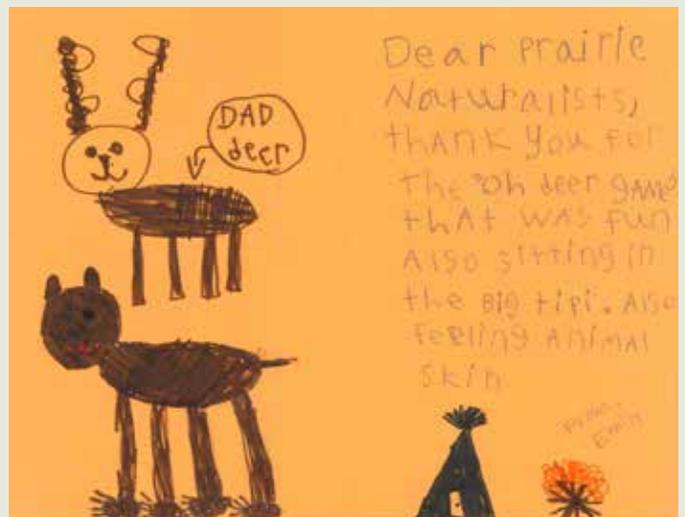
Rich Leopold

Thank You Notes from Students

We receive many kind thank you notes from youth we see on field trips and classroom programs. They truly make us smile and we enjoy reading all of them! Here are a few:



PCC Naturalists led **61** field trips in
 September and October with **4,500** students!



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 2014:

- Rental and educational canoes
- Polk County Conservation Book Worms Program Sponsor
- Greater Des Moines Area Pocket Trails Map
- School Bus Field Trip Scholarships
- At-Risk Horse Camp Scholarships
- Friend of Polk County's Water and Land Legacy Program/Event Tent
- Eagle Scout Match – wildlife viewing deck at Carney Marsh
- Guide by Cell Audio Tour Program
- Amazing Place Eco-Challenge

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.



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

Friday, January 2 from 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 waterproof boots. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 30. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

Ice Fishing Clinic

Saturday, January 10 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #5

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.

Owl Prowl

Friday, January 16 from 5:30-6:30 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.

Program Information & Registration:
www.leadingyououtdoors.org or (515) 323-5300

Snowshoe Hike

Saturday, January 17 from 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at pond parking lot

See description for January 2nd Snowshoe Hike. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 14. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

Fossils of Iowa

Saturday, January 17 from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Did dinosaurs or woolly mammoths ever live in Iowa? Come find out what kinds of ancient life used to here by examining some real fossils.

Cosmic Connections

Saturday, January 17 from 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

We will compare and contrast the planets in our solar system using 3D sized models. We'll also participate in an activity that demonstrates how close the sun and planets are to one another.

Indoor Kayaking Basics

Saturday, January 24 or Sunday, January 25 from 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. *Sign up for the January 24 or 25 class.* Pre-registration is required; deadline is January 16. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

Book Worms

Thursday, January 29 from 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 *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 26. Fee: \$5, includes coffee and cookies. Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation.

Cross-Country Ski Basics

Saturday, January 31 from 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 28. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).

Hog Wild Winter Hike

Sunday, February 1 from 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.

Mammals of Iowa

Tuesday, February 3 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Jester Park Lodge

From big to small, mammals are an amazing group of animals. Join us as we learn about Iowa's mammals, including where they live and what they eat.

Ice Fishing Clinic

Sunday, February 8 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Thomas Mitchell Park, meet in pond parking lot

See description for January 10th Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.

Sweetheart Snowshoe Hike

Saturday, February 14 from 1:00-2:30 and 3:30-5:00 p.m.
Jester Park, Camp Area 5

Looking for something a little different to do with your sweetheart? Come learn how to snowshoe while exploring the great outdoors. A fire and refreshments will make this hike extra special. Wear warm boots that can get wet. *Sign up for the 1:00 or 3:30 class.* Pre-registration required; deadline is February 12. Fee: \$20/couple (includes snowshoes.)

Cross-Country Ski Basics

Saturday, February 21 from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Chichaqua Longhouse

See description for January 31st class. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required, deadline is February 18. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).

Ice Fishing Clinic

Saturday, February 21 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

See description for January 10th Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.

Indoor Kayaking Basics

Saturday, February 21 or Sunday, February 22 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Urbandale Public Pool, 7201 Aurora Ave., Urbandale

See description for January 24th class. *Sign up for the February 21 or 22 class.* Pre-registration is required; deadline is February 13. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

Bald Eagle Watch

Sunday, February 22 from 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.

Book Worms

Thursday, February 26 from 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 *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* by Terry Tempest Williams. Pre-registration required; deadline is February 23. Fee: \$5, includes coffee and cookies. Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation.

Salamander Stories

Tuesday, March 3 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Jester Park Lodge

Amphibian or reptile...lizard or frog...how would you describe a salamander? Learn how to identify a salamander and find out what's special about this secretive animal. Plus you'll get a chance to meet a live tiger salamander.

Rain Barrel Workshop

Saturday, March 14 from 9:00-10:00 a.m. and 10:00-11:00 a.m.
Easter Lake Park, meet in 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. All materials and tools will be provided. Make sure you are able to transport your barrel back to your home after the workshop. *Sign up for the 9:00 or 10:00 class.* Pre-registration required; deadline is March 9. Fee: \$50.

Survivor Day Camp

Tuesday, March 17 from 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 10. Ages 10-12 years. Fee: \$30.

Reptiles of Iowa

Wednesday, March 18 from 10:30-11:30 a.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.

Bug Bonanza

Wednesday, March 18 from 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Bees that dance, butterflies that migrate, spiders that get down and dance! Come check these out and much more in a bugtastic afternoon. Learn some amazing information about bugs, test your skills as a bug, and make a buggy craft!

Wild Night Life & Hike

Wednesday, March 18 from 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 13. Fee: \$5.

Archery Basics

Tuesday, March 24 from 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 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 March 17. Ages 12 and up. Fee: \$5.

Book Worms

Thursday, March 26 from 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 *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. Pre-registration required; deadline is March 20. Fee: \$5, includes coffee and cookies. Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation.

Journey to the Southern Islands

Tuesday, April 7 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Join writer/photographer Ty Smedes for this slide presentation and lecture, as he takes us on a voyage to the bottom of the world. We'll leave the southern most city in the world (Ushuaia) aboard the converted Polish ice-breaker *Ortelius* – now an expedition ship - and will journey to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island, The Shetland Islands (including Elephant Island), and the Antarctic peninsula. During the tour, we will leave the ship by zodiac, to explore southern shores, teaming with nesting albatross and myriad numbers of water birds, including penguins of many species, and mammals - including southern fur seals, elephant seal, and leopard seal. Marvel at the colorful ice formations, as we explore the shoreline of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Retreat into Nature

Sunday, April 12 from 12:30-4:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Come spend time in renewal, education and discovery in a beautiful natural setting. Activities will include gentle yoga (chair yoga will be an option), meditation, writing/drawing and connecting to nature. Pre-registration is required; deadline is April 8. Minimum age 16. Fee: \$40.

Wild Night Life & Hike

Friday, April 17 from 8:00-10:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

See description for March 18th Wild Night Life & Hike. Pre-registration is required; deadline is April 22. Fee: \$5.

Geocaching 101

Saturday, April 18 from 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Yellow Banks Park, Shelter #1

Never heard of geocaching or always wanted to give it a try? Geocaching is a high-tech scavenger hunt using GPS. Come learn the basics and try finding several geocaches hidden just for you at Yellow Banks Park. Pre-registration required; deadline is April 10. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5.

Spring Wildflower Hike

Saturday, April 25 from 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.

Sandhill Crane Bus Trip

March 28-29

Kearney, Nebraska

Join us on a trip to the Platte River near Kearney, Nebraska, to view the migration of nearly 500,000 sandhill cranes. These large birds fill the skies, fields, and river valley as they stop to eat and rest on their long migration northward. We'll get off the bus to view cranes at Fort Kearny State Park and the Rowe Sanctuary. We will also visit the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument while in the Kearney area.

- Fee: \$185; includes motorcoach transportation and lodging (double occupancy), Sunday continental breakfast, and admission fees
- Departure from the Living History Farms parking lot on Saturday at 7:00 a.m. and return on Sunday at 5:00 p.m.
- Minimum age 12
- Registration deadline is March 13, registration open now



More Eco-Bus Trips

2015 Motorcoach Eco-discovery trips are in the planning stages and will be posted on-line in mid-February. Registration will open on March 7 at 8:00 a.m. 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 Trip

The following kayaking trip is in the planning stages and will be posted on-line in mid-February: Buffalo River, Arkansas Kayak Trip on June 10-14. Registration will open on March 7 at 8:00 a.m.

Weekend Backpacking Trip

April 24-26

Yellow River State Forest, Harper's Ferry, Iowa

Always wanted to try backpacking, but may not have the gear or know where to go? Then join us as we explore the wooded bluffs and valleys of Yellow River State Forest in northeast Iowa. Yellow River State Forest's backpacking trails were featured in "Outside" magazine as the best place to hike in Iowa. There are over 25 miles of trails that wind through the forest. Degree of difficulty ranges from relatively easy to moderate. On Friday afternoon we'll drive up to the Yellow River State Forest campground, set up camp, cook supper, and get our backpacks ready for the next day. On Saturday we'll backpack 5-8 miles and 2-3 miles on Sunday. Afterward we'll enjoy lunch in Decorah at the Water Street Cafe and stop by Seed Savers Exchange, an organization that saves and shares heirloom garden seeds, before heading home. Participants must be in good physical condition and be able to hike several miles carrying a loaded backpack.

- Fee: \$95; includes backpacks, tents, stoves, meals, and transportation
- Participants need to provide sleeping bag, sleeping pad, personal items, and spending money for meals while traveling
- Departure from Jester Park at 1:00 pm on Friday and return by 6:00 pm on Sunday
- Minimum age is 18 and limited to 12 participants
- Registration deadline is April 10

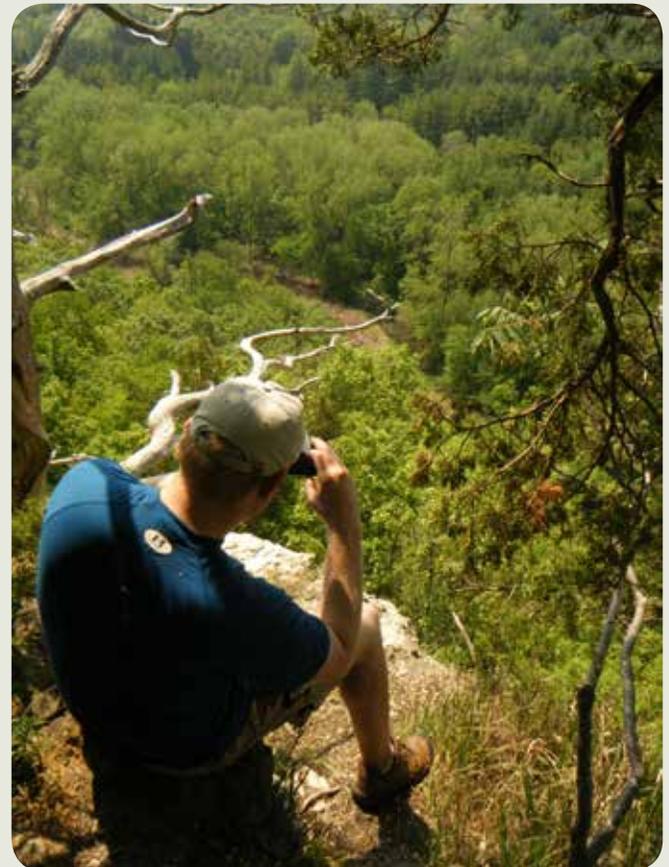


Photo by Darrin Siefken

Water Wonders Camp

June 8-11

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 May 25
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



Water Wonders campers in their shelter

Junior Naturalist Camp

June 15-18 and June 22-25

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 June 1
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



Jr. Naturalist campers successfully find a geocache

Discovery Camp

July 6-9

9:00-11:00 a.m.

Ages: 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 29
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter #5



Discovery campers listening during story time

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!

Camp Registration opens on February 28 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

The leaves have turned, frost has nipped our flowers and noses, migratory birds have settled into their warmer abodes and another year has since passed. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers who; over the course of 2014, helped make events such as the annual Trash Bash (DM Parks and Recreation), River Run Garbage Grab, Outdoor Expo and the Four Mile Creek Sweep a huge success. Thank you to the volunteers who helped with the inaugural running of The Amazing Place Eco Challenge, and the new Tacopocalypse Tuesday Trash Challenge. Teams of volunteers from Wells Fargo repaired trails at Jester Park, Navy Reserves helped clean up trash at Easter Lake, DMACC and members of the public continued monthly workdays at Carney Marsh, Grandview students and staff stormed Puccoon Prairie cutting back the encroaching Sumac and Dogwood--helping to preserve this unique sand prairie remnant.



John Deere employees removing flood debris along the Jester Park equestrian trails.



September marked the first annual Volunteer Appreciation Paddle and Picnic day. Volunteers both long-standing and new enjoyed an afternoon paddling the oxbows of Chichaqua while PCC fired up the grill.

Stewards, Nest Box Monitors and Adopt-A-Park Sponsors Needed!

Do you have a favorite park, trail or natural area? Do you want to be more involved and volunteer your time? We will train, equip and help you remove invasive species, pick up litter and monitor trails, help restore natural areas and collect prairie seed (to name a few). You can recruit your own volunteers, plan your own workdays, work at your own pace and only complete duties you feel comfortable performing.

On-going Volunteer Opportunities

Jester Park Equestrian Center: therapeutic riding program, helping with pony rides, cleaning stalls and helping with special events and camps.

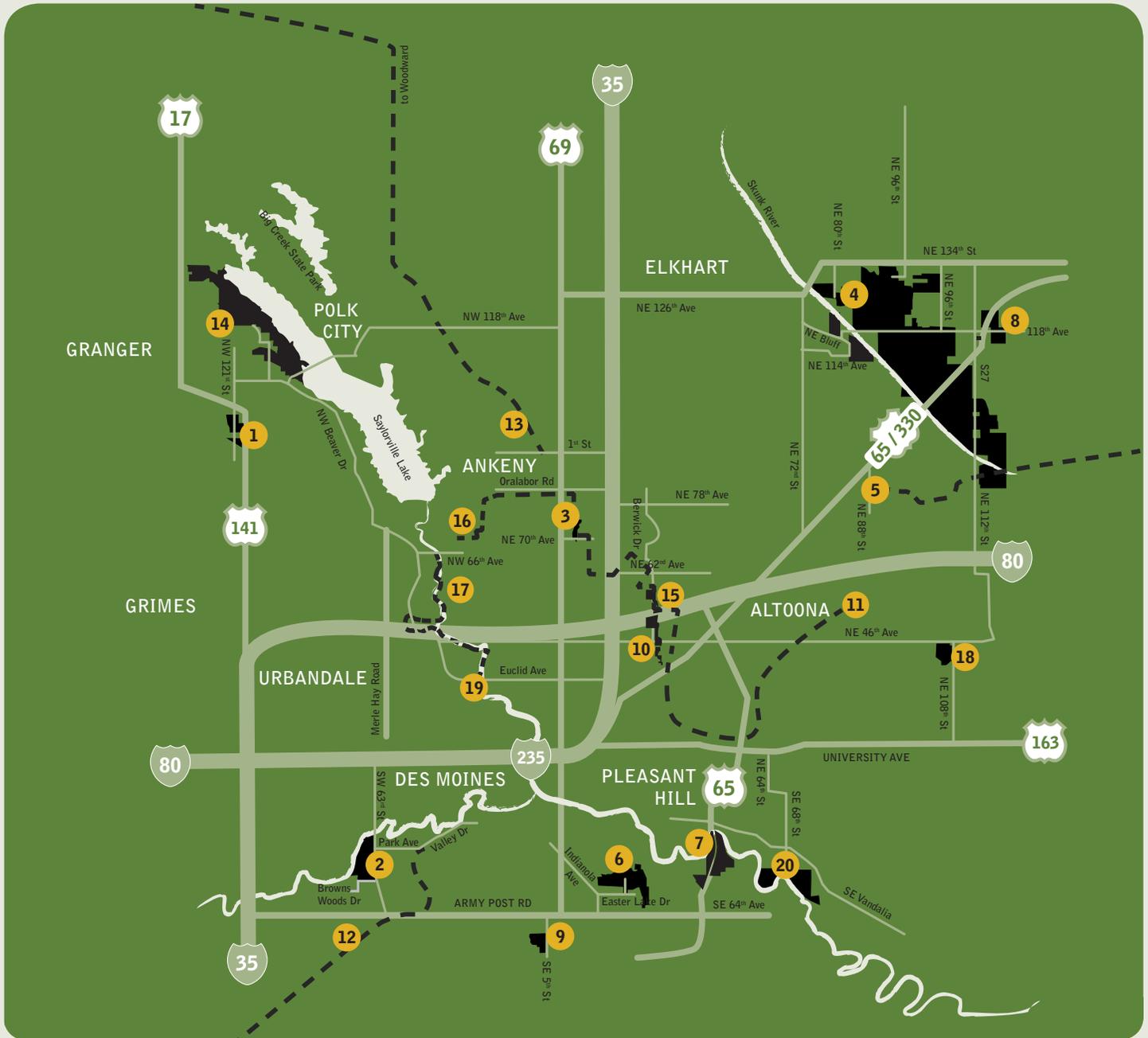
General tasks throughout our parks, trails and natural areas: trail clearing and maintenance, conducting park and shoreline clean-ups, harvesting prairie seeds, invasive species removal, planting trees, cleaning out fire rings, mulching trees, stream clean-ups and several annual special events.

If any of these activities sound like something you would like to take part in, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (515) 323-5280, or pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS & EVENTS:

- January 24 - Jester Park Invasive Species Round-up at Shelter #5: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- February 8 - Carney Marsh Restoration: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- March 1 - Carney Marsh Restoration: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- March 8 - Volunteer Appreciation Banquet at Jester Park Lodge: 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact: Pat Spain at (515) 323-5280 or pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov



1. Beaver Creek Greenbelt
2. Brown's Woods
3. Carney Marsh
4. Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
5. Chichaqua Valley Trail
6. Easter Lake Park
7. Eagle Roost Wildlife Area
8. Engeldinger Marsh
9. Fort Des Moines Park
10. Four Mile Creek Greenbelt

11. Gay Lea Wilson Trail
12. Great Western Trail
13. High Trestle Trail
14. Jester Park
15. Mally's Weh Weh Neh Kee Park
16. Oralabor Gateway Trail
17. Sycamore Trail
18. Thomas Mitchell Park
19. Trestle to Trestle Trail
20. Yellow Banks Park

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
(over age 55) *Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event*

___ **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
January 2	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park
January 6	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Peregrine Falcons	Jester Park Lodge
January 10	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Jester Park
January 16	5:30 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Jester Park
January 17	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Thomas Mitchell Park
January 17	10:30 a.m.	Fossils of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
January 17	1:00 p.m.	Cosmic Connections	Jester Park Lodge
January 24	10:00 a.m.	Pleasure Driving Clinic*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
January 24	10:00 a.m.	Jester Park Invasive Species Round-up	Jester Park
January 24	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Pool
January 25	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Pool
January 29	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
January 31	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Raccoon River Park, West Des Moines
February 1	1:00 p.m.	Hog Wild Winter Hike	Brown's Woods
February 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - J. Sterling Morton	Jester Park Lodge
February 3	6:30 p.m.	Mammals of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
February 8	11:00 a.m.	Carney Marsh Restoration	Carney Marsh
February 8	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Thomas Mitchell Park
February 14	1:00 p.m.	Sweetheart Snowshoe Hike*	Jester Park
February 14	3:30 p.m.	Sweetheart Snowshoe Hike*	Jester Park
February 21	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 21	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Easter Lake Park
February 21	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Pool
February 22	12:00 p.m.	Bald Eagle Watch	Jester Park Lodge & Saylorville Lake
February 22	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Pool
February 26	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
March 1	11:00 a.m.	Carney Marsh Restoration	Carney Marsh
March 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Aldo Leopold	Jester Park Lodge
March 3	6:30 p.m.	Silly Salamanders	Jester Park Lodge
March 7	3:00 p.m.	Horse Owner Seminar	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 8	5:00 p.m.	Volunteer Appreciation Banquet	Jester Park Lodge
March 14	9:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park Shop
March 14	10:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park Shop
March 16	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 17	9:00 a.m.	Survivor Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 18	10:30 a.m.	Reptiles of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
March 18	1:00 p.m.	Bug Bonanza	Jester Park Lodge
March 18	7:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
March 19	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 20	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 24	6:30 p.m.	Indoor Archery Basics*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 26	7:00 p.m.	Book Worms*	Cafe Diem, Ankeny
March 28-29		Sandhill Crane Trip*	Kearney, Nebraska
April 4	1:00 p.m.	Spring Open House	Jester Park Equestrian Center
April 7	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Journey to the Southern Islands	Jester Park Lodge
April 7	6:30 p.m.	Journey to the Southern Islands	Jester Park Lodge
April 12	12:30 p.m.	Retreat into Nature*	Jester Park Lodge
April 17	8:00 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
April 18	10:00 a.m.	Geocaching 101*	Yellow Banks Park
April 24-26		Yellow River Backpacking Trip*	Harpers Ferry, Iowa
April 25	1:00 p.m.	Wildflower Hike*	Thomas Mitchell Park
April 26	10:00 a.m.	Trail Tune-Up Clinic	Jester Park Equestrian Center

OWLS

(Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors)

Looking for an excuse to get out of the house, make some new friends, enjoy a good meal, and learn about the exciting world of nature? Then join us! These programs are held the first Tuesday of each month. The nature program will start at

11:00 a.m. at the Jester Park Lodge. An optional luncheon follows the program at noon in which pre-registration is required. Call 515-323-5300 to register. The cost of the catered lunch from The Radish is \$10.00.

Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

Peregrine Falcons in Iowa

January 6

Pat Schlarbaum with the Iowa DNR has had the opportunity to link Peregrine Falcons with quite a number of environmentalists, falconers, and citizens to return these birds to Iowa skies. From first reintroduction attempts in 1989, to assisting falcon releases at historic cliff locations in 1998-2000, it has been an exciting rejuvenation for this species. In 2009 they were removed from Iowa's Endangered Species list.



Peregrine Falcon Photo by Lowell Washburn

The Life and Times of J. Sterling Morton

February 3

This two-act living history program introduces the audience to the life of J. Sterling Morton, from his birth in New York to his death in Nebraska City. Within five years after his arrival at Bellevue, Morton was twice elected to the Territorial Legislature, appointed Clerk of Supreme Court, became Territorial Secretary and was made acting Governor at the age of 26. The founder of Arbor Day would later become secretary of agriculture. Draper lends insight into Morton's failures and successes. This program is sponsored by Humanities of Iowa.

Aldo Leopold: Roots of the 'Land Ethic' in Iowa

March 3

Join Steve Brower as he shares the life and times of Aldo Leopold. Leopold, born and raised in Burlington had an uncommon childhood that greatly influenced his career and the evolution of his 'Land Ethic' philosophy. Many of his essays and articles reflect on youthful discoveries made in the rocky ravines and bottomland woods around his home and nearby Illinois. Leopold's parents and grandparents encouraged young Aldo to find connections with nature through studies in the humanities - literature, music and art, that emerged in his great book A Sand County Almanac in 1949. Recognized as the Father of the Wilderness System and Wildlife Management, he was the first to suggest an ecological approach to conservation planning during his years with the Forest Service. And during his years in Wisconsin he began the first prairie restoration in the country in 1935.

Journey to the Southern Islands

April 7

Join writer/photographer Ty Smedes for this slide presentation and lecture, as he takes us on a voyage to the bottom of the world. We'll leave the southernmost city in the world (Ushuaia) aboard the converted Polish ice-breaker Ortelius - now an expedition ship - and will journey to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island, The Shetland Islands (including Elephant Island), and the Antarctic peninsula. During this month-long tour, we will leave the ship by zodiac, to explore southern shores, teaming with nesting albatross and myriad numbers of water birds, including penguins of many species, and mammals - including southern fur seals, elephant seal, and leopard seal. We will retrace much of explorer Earnest Shackleton's historic ill-fated 1914 journey to South Georgia Island, to save his crew - marooned on Elephant Island. And we will marvel at the stunning and colorful ice formations, as we explore the shoreline of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Jester Park Administration Office
 11407 NW Jester Park Dr.
 Granger, Iowa 50109
 515-323-5300
pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov
www.leadingyououtdoors.org



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

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JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR: (More events listed on-line)

Winter Sleigh Rides

December-April (when the snow falls)

Sleigh rides for groups up to 6 people. \$10/person for a 45-minute ride thru the snow-covered trails of Jester Park. By reservation when the snow lands.

Pleasure Driving Clinic

January 24 from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Interested in what horses have to offer in the area of driving? Come out and join us for a beginner-friendly clinic on the basics of pleasure driving. Learn how to properly harness and ground drive, as well as take a spin in our driving cart with experienced instructors. Fee: \$20/person. Registration required by January 15.

Sweetheart Sleigh Rides

February 12-16 by reservation only

Celebrate Valentine's Day with a romantic sleigh ride. \$30/ Couple, up to 4 people per sleigh. Completing the ride is a romantic package with hot chocolate, candy, and a flower for your sweetheart. Come outdoors and feel the love at the JPEC this Valentine's Day!

"Tiny Tots" Spring Session

February 21-March 29

Saturday or Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 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 progres-

sive riding lessons. Over six weekly lessons, riders will develop confidence, hand/eye coordination and balance as they play games on horseback in classes taught by patient, experienced instructors. 2:1 instructor ratio and assistants for each student. Registration required. Fee: \$40/class or \$200/full session.

Horse Owner Seminar

March 7 from 3:00-6:00 p.m.

Come out to JPEC for an educational seminar on horse care, health, and upkeep. Talk to knowledgeable industry spokespeople on topics such as: horse training, what to feed your horse for your activity level, veterinary care, farrier needs, and how to transition from a horse enthusiast to a educated horse owner. Fee: \$10/person.

Spring Break Camps

March 16, 19, and 20 from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Spring break is here! Are the kids going stir crazy in the house? Bring them out for some horsey fun over the spring break holiday. Camps will include safety training, horsemanship skills, riding lesson, wagon ride, and nature hike. Camps are by reservation and are \$60/session.



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