

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT
2013-2014



Staff:

Patrice Petersen-Keys - Environmental Education Coordinator

Heidi Anderson – Naturalist

Joe Boyles – Naturalist

Lori Foresman-Kirpes – Naturalist

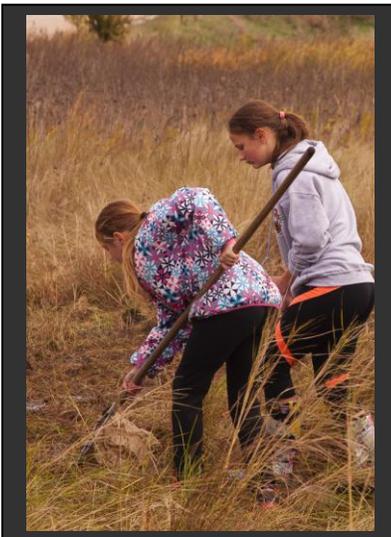
Lewis Major – Naturalist

Rebekah Beall – Seasonal Naturalist

YEAR AT A GLANCE

From July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, the environmental education staff connected with various audiences for a total of 41,907 hours.

	Programs	Participants	Hours of Programming	Contact Hours
School	1,150	22,454	365	27,235
Family	82	3,242	88	774
Adult	63	2,251	284	7,875
Youth	248	5,775	150	4,681
Camps	5	59	114	1,342
Totals	1,548	33,781	1,003	41,907



West Des Moines students have fun exploring Engeldinger Marsh.

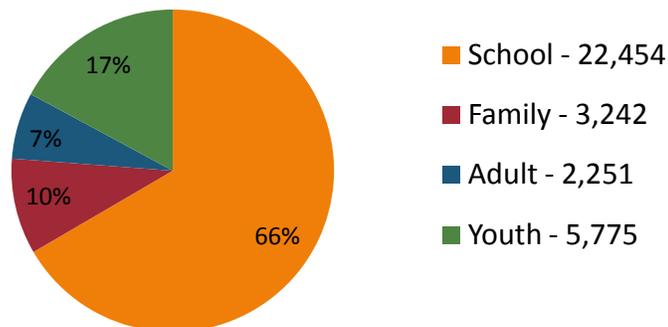
Contact hours are figured by adding together the amount of time each individual spends with a naturalist

Example: If a two hour program has 10 participants, the contact hours equal 20.

More contact hours provide a higher impact. More time with program participants has greater value than having more participants.

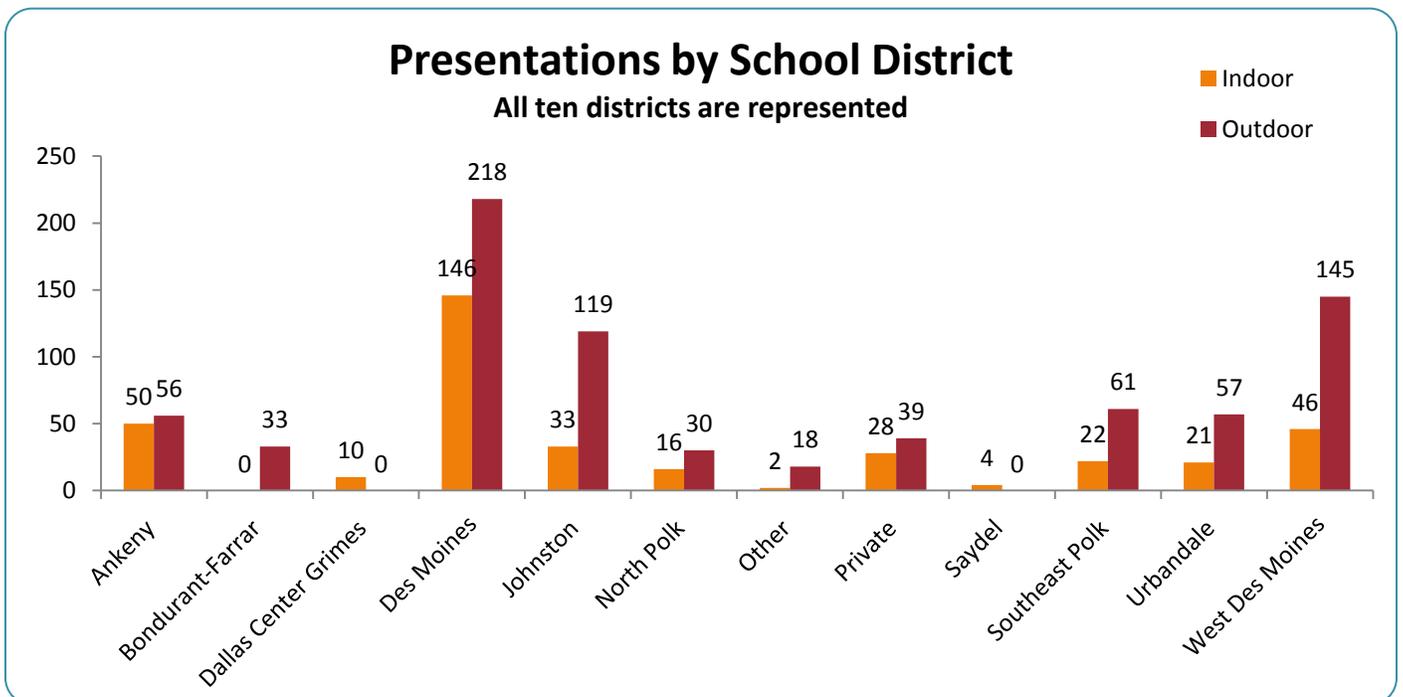
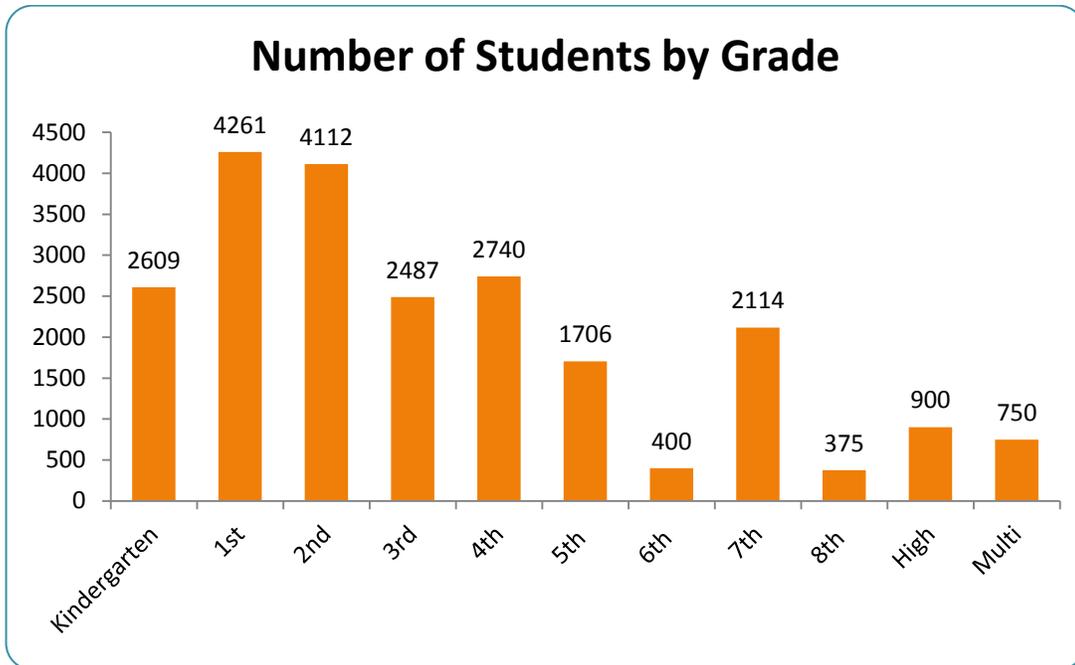
"The staff is very knowledgeable and gives great information. They have a lot of patience and make things easy for fourth graders to understand." - Fourth grade teacher at Olmstead Elementary, Urbandale.

33,781 Total Program Participants



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

School programs are a major focus of the environmental education unit. We continue to work to align our classroom presentations and field trips with Iowa Core Science Standards. This allows teachers to justify a field trip experience. Classroom programs and field trips help students meet learning objectives while having fun.



“Other” includes home school groups and schools outside Polk County

SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

A total of 107 field trips, involving 682 programs and 7,685 students, were conducted during the 2013/14 school year. With some schools have difficulty with bus funding, the Great Outdoors Foundation provides a limited number of school bus scholarships. During the past year, 16 buses were funded allowing almost 1,000 students to experience Polk County Parks.



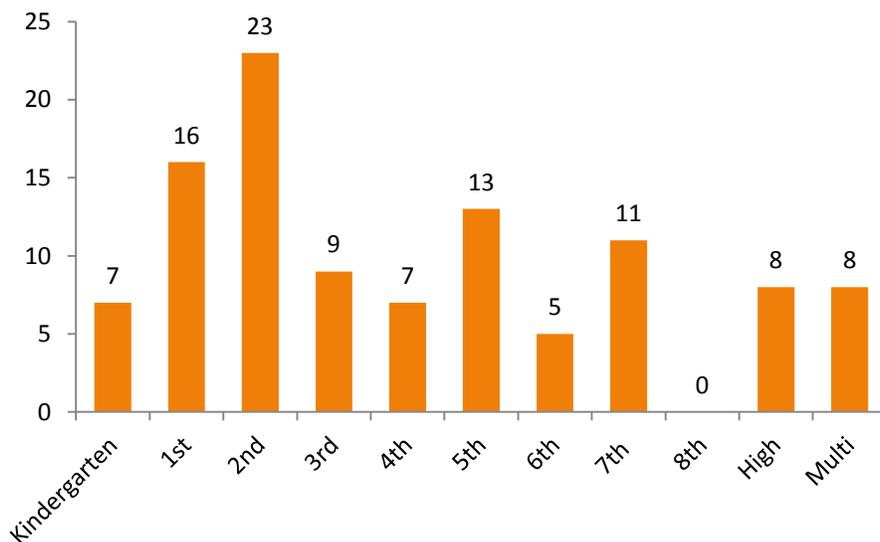
Jordan Creek students canoeing the oxbows at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

When asked, "What did you like best about your PCC program" one teacher 4th grade teacher commented: "Everything! We gain so much knowledge and it is such a wonderful way to actually see what we are learning! I refer to this field trip all year long back in the classroom! It is awesome!"

Students enjoy catching critters while on an Insect-themed field trip to Jester Park.



Number of Field Trips by Grade



PUBLIC PROGRAMS



An average of 50 people attend Nature's Story Hour

Family programs

- Presented eleven Nature's Story Hour and Nature Playdates in various PCC parks
- Co-sponsored Nature Friends, a parent/child program, with West Des Moines Park and Recreation and Des Moines Izaak Walton League
- Twenty youth became "Junior Naturalists" by attending multiple programs and doing independent nature activities
- Programs during spring and winter break are popular when families are spending time together

Youth programs

- Five, week-long summer camps connect youth to the outdoors through hands-on learning activities and adventures
- A day-long survival skills spring break camp teaches fire building, archery, and geocaching
- Eight "summer skill" programs helped engage 10-16 year olds in fun physical activities like canoeing, kayaking and geocaching.



Jr. Naturalist Summer Camp Participants

Adult programs

- Conducted Polk County Master Conservationist program. This 32-hour course introduces adults to Iowa conservation and natural resource issues.
- Continued growth of OWLS (Older Wiser Livelier Seniors) monthly program, average attendance is 80 people.
- Conducted seven eco-bus tours, for a total of 294 participants
- Led two outdoor skill paddling adventure trips. One on the St. Croix River in MN and the other on the Niobrara River in NE.
- Began "Book Worms" a monthly environmental book club.
- Hosted weekly music in the park at the Jester Park Amphitheater from Memorial to Labor Day.



Jewell of the Prairie Bus Trip participants took a pontoon ride at Rock Creek State Park.

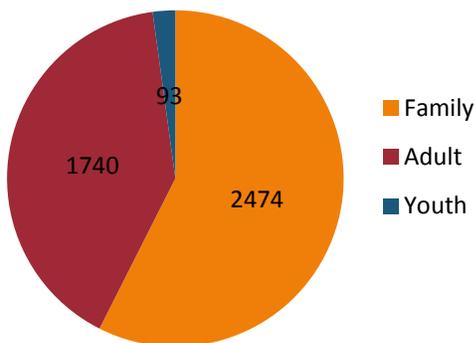
PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Special Events

2,124 people attended special events. These events often involve partnerships and have multiple programs taking place at one time. Event partners are in parentheses.

- Discover Chichaqua 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 Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt (Unity Point Health – Des Moines)
- Urbandale Snow Day at Lions Park (City of Urbandale)
- Bald Eagle Watch at Jester Park/Saylorville Lake (Army Corps of Engineers – Saylorville Lake, Iowa DNR and Dallas CCB)
- Easter Lake Watershed Kickoff at Easter Lake Park (Polk Soil and Water Conservation District)
- Senior Fishing Derby at Easter Lake Park (Polk County Senior Services)

Public Programs Attendance - 4,307



Habitat discovery booth at the Iowa Outdoor Expo.



Visitors enjoy looking for eagles at the Bald Eagle Watch.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Social Media

Social media is an easy and effective way to connect to the public. The data below reflects the ever increasing number of methods and users.

- Twitter followers - 262
- Facebook followers – 1,445
- Pinterest followers - 179
- E-Newsletter subscribers – 7,763
- YouTube total views – 2,367
- Blog, average monthly read - 679
- Guide by Cell, prompts dialed – 2,872
- Guide by Cell, new dialers – 1,673
- QR (Quick Response) code views - 199



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

Special Projects

- Maintain and update 56 Guide by Cell messages and 12 QR codes
- Provide 11 Park Packs for free check out to families and youth groups
- 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
- Produce Nature News three times a year and mailed to 6,500 recipients
- Jester Park Conservation Center fundraising and interpretive display planning



Lincoln High School students learning about water quality while spreading compost at Easter Lake Park.

Grants Received

- Received \$20,170 for a Resource Enhancement and Protect/Conservation Education Program (REAP/CEP) grant titled “Discover Your Watershed”. The grant ranked first out of eleven other grants. It was praised by the review board for the great partnerships, working with high school students and for the place based education.
- Received \$103,436 for a Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LAWCON) grant to develop newly donated Fort Des Moines property into an outdoor classroom. New features will include, prairie planting, walking trails, wildlife viewing stations, and shelter.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Outreach

- 12 ICN (Iowa Communications Network) presentations viewed by 1,025 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
- Bat presentation at “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
- Presented programs to eight local libraries assisting with their reading programs
- Provided programming opportunities to local civic and professional organizations
- Epic Iowa Road Trip sponsored by the Iowa Tourism and the Department of Economic Development - visited Jester Park and toured the Elk/Bison Exhibit and the new Cabins. The group also traveled via horse drawn wagon to the High Trestle Trail Bridge. Polk County Conservation was part of a select group to be included in the tour throughout the state of Iowa



The nine-day Epic Iowa Road Trip showcased more than 60 destinations while traveling nearly 2,100 miles

Media Relations

- Promoted Do More Outdoors event at Chichaqua on Great Day KCWI-TV
- Interview with Van and Bonnie from WHO-Radio and KCCI-TV about recreational activities at Jester Park
- The Des Moines Register featured a story on the Owl Prowl public program in February and periodic cicadas in June
- Interview with IPTV - Iowa Outdoors and WHO-TV about the periodic cicadas
- Promoted the Jester Park cabin grand opening on WOI-TV
- Edited four television commercials promoting outdoor recreation. This was a joint promotional campaign with Mills Fleet and Farm