



Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2012 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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Grand Opening of the Jester Park Elk and Bison Plaza

Polk County Conservation is pleased to announce the completion of the Jester Park Elk and Bison Educational Plaza. Join us on Wednesday, May 23, at Jester Park Shelter #6 to celebrate the grand opening of this new and exciting project. The ceremony will begin at 10:00 a.m. and is open to the public.

The Elk and Bison Exhibit was opened to the public in 1960. While funds are annually budgeted for the care of the animals and to maintain infrastructure, few improvements have been made to the area in the last 50 years. That is, until now.

“I can’t wait to utilize this area with school groups in the coming months! This plaza is long overdue and will finally provide a gathering place for people of all ages to view and learn about elk and bison.”

-Heidi Anderson, PCC Naturalist

Improvements to this historic mega-fauna exhibit include an accessible observation deck, educational displays, spotting scopes, high quality art components, and an inviting viewing and picnic area. Come be one of the first to experience what is sure to become one of Jester Park’s most popular amenities.

Enjoy refreshments and view the displays and art pieces as guest speakers acknowledge those who made it possible. The ceremony will conclude with the unveiling of the amazing centerpiece of



the entire plaza. Afterwards, Polk County staff will give tours of the exhibit and present a hands-on elk and bison program with authentic items rarely seen by the general public. We hope you will join us to celebrate the opening of the Jester Park Elk and Bison Educational Plaza and take the opportunity to learn more about these amazing animals that once roamed across our state.

Funding for this project was made possible through the generosity of The Land and Water Conservation Fund, Great Outdoors Fund, Polk County Board of Supervisors, Walmart, Metro Waste Authority, and the Paula Timmermen Endowment.

Follow the construction of the exhibit on our Facebook page. View numerous photos and catch a glimpse of the artwork.

Exciting Improvements Slated for Jester Park

Spring means different things to different people but for Polk County Conservation (PCC) it is always a time of reflection. We look back on the past season and look forward with anticipation to the upcoming season. This spring will be an extremely exciting and busy time for PCC staff because of the numerous improvements planned in Jester Park.

PCC has been very successful in obtaining funds to improve access, water quality, fishing and other recreational amenities in Jester Park. Three grants have recently been awarded to PCC from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, DNR Fish Habitat Stamp Fund, and the DOT Federal Highway Fund. PCC will leverage these grants with staff time, money, and expertise to provide the users of our park system with many unique opportunities.

In the area known as Two-Dam Pond, recreational opportunities will be added to Jester Park that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. These opportunities include a hiking trail with a bridge, fishing pier, canoe access, and parking improvements.

A one-acre wetland, dredging, and grade stabilization structures will be constructed to help improve Two Dam Pond's water quality and expand our ability to provide interpretive and environmental educational opportunities at the site. Improvements include parking spurs adjacent to the main park road that will create access to the accessible fishing pier and canoe ramp.

Equestrian users will benefit from an improved trail system that will focus on access and trail sustainability. Approximately 3½ miles of trails in the upland wooded areas will be graded and surfaced to extend the use season and allow for more permanent access. Throughout the trail system, rolling grade dips and other features will be installed to remove the water from the trail. Culverts will also be installed and armored to provide additional drainage.

PCC understands that our park users may experience some inconvenience during the upcoming season. Our goal is to finish the equestrian trail system by July with the remaining work finished in the fall/winter of 2012.



Two Dam Pond at Jester Park

Look for QR Codes in Polk County Parks



Conservation is utilizing technology to enhance your experience while exploring Polk County parks. Bring your smart phone and scan the QR Codes located on various signs throughout the parks and trails. QR codes are short for quick response codes. The small symbol looks like a bar code and allows individuals with smart phones to scan the QR symbol. The scanned QR code links to a web page, video or picture giving the park visitor expanded information.

Many of the QR codes will be located on Guide by Cell signs. Guide by Cell is a cell phone audio tour offered in our parks and trails sponsored by the Great Outdoors Fund. Examples of what you might see or hear include: videos of osprey banding at Jester Park or kayaking at Chichaqua; park and trail maps; and additional information about bison and elk at Jester Park.

Earth Day in the Junction on Sunday, April 22

From 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. at Valley Junction, West Des Moines

- 5K Run/Walk beginning at 11:00 a.m.
- The Children's Fun Run will begin at 12:00 p.m.
- The Hybrid Mileage Contest will take place at 12:30 pm
- Enjoy live music of Brian Joens from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and Mary McAdams from 12:30-2:30 p.m.
- Educational programs with live raptors of SOAR from noon to 3:00 p.m.
- Hands on art including making a reusable shopping bag
- Visit the Fire Safety House from Blank Children's Hospital

For more information, visit www.earthddayinthejunction.com





Pledge Your Support for Children's Programs!

Birdies for Charity is a fundraising program designed to give participants an opportunity to generate contributions based on the number of "birdies" made by Champion Tour players during the 2012 Principal Charity Classic. The Great Outdoors Fund is a participating non-profit organization that will receive 100% of their collected donations and in turn use these donations to fund school bus field trips to local parks, horse camp scholarships for at-risk youth, playgrounds and outdoor recreation equipment. With 879 birdies made in last year's tournament, Birdies for Charity raised nearly \$173,000 for local organizations serving area youth programs.

Pledges must be made by June 3rd, 2012. Pledge forms can be found in the Polk County Conservation Office in Jester Park or at the Jester Park Golf Course Clubhouse. Online pledges can be made at www.principalcharityclassic.com/birdies-for-charity. Pledges of two (2) cents or more are required for each birdie made.

The Principal Charity Classic is an annual Champions Tour event held at Glen Oaks Country Club in West Des Moines. This year's Tour takes place from May 29th-June 3rd. In the past five years, The Principal Charity Classic has distributed \$3 million to local non-profit organizations supporting children. To learn more about the Great Outdoors Fund, check out their website at www.greatoutdoorsfund.org.

The Tomorrow Plan

This comprehensive planning process continues with the goal of completing the plan in February 2013. The Tomorrow Plan will provide a guide for future sustainable development for the greater Des Moines area. This 20-month effort (launched in September 2011) involves all 17 communities, 4 counties and a whole host of businesses, non-profits, and other institutions in Central Iowa. The Plan will propose ideas for a vibrant and enduring future, considering social, economic, and environmental factors. The public is encouraged to stay abreast of opportunities to become involved in the process by following the Tomorrow Plan website: www.thetomorrowplan.com. Future public meetings and speakers are planned as well as continuing opportunities to participate and provide feedback on-line.

Jester Park Amphitheater "Jazzy" Grand Opening Set for July 5th

Troop 888, more specifically Eagle Scout Weston Hirschauer, from West Des Moines have been hard at work throughout the past year designing and constructing a new amphitheater at Jester Park. A feature of the Jester Park Master Plan, the amphitheater is nestled in the perfect hillside setting east of the lower showerhouse and across the road from the playground. Two tiers of block wall provide the seating structure, along with a stage and arbor that accommodate a speaker or performer. The site does have electricity. Donations for the amphitheater came from Rhino Materials, Lounsbury Landscaping, Steve Blout, Abe Pauley, Tim Marean, the Valley High School Football Team, and the Great Outdoors Fund.

The amphitheater is the perfect site for public programs and music events. Polk County Conservation and the Great Outdoors Fund will be partnering to host a Grand Opening Celebration on Thursday, July 5th, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The public is invited to a Metro Arts Jazz in July concert with music provided by the Java Jews. Beginning at 5:30 p.m., delicious food and drink from the Master Griller, Picket Fence Creamery, and Snus Hill Winery will be available for purchase. Local artists will have items on display for purchase. Kids activities will also be offered. Music begins promptly at 6:30 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs. We hope you can join us for this holiday event.



View of the amphitheater stage

New Wildlife Area and Trail

Polk County Conservation recently acquired two new areas, Eagle Roost Wildlife Area and Oralabor Gateway Trail. Eagle Roost is a 357-acre wildlife area found west of Yellow Banks Park along Hwy 65. Access is somewhat restricted due to private land ownership, road closures, and floodplain management. Primary recreation activities include wildlife viewing and hunting.

Oralabor Gateway Trail is a 4.25 mile trail that safely connects the north end of the Gay Lea Wilson Trail to the Neal Smith Trail south of Ankeny. It also provides an important connection to the High Trestle Trail by the Ankeny City Trails. For maps of each of these areas, go to leadingyououtdoors.org.

Trail Tales

Polk County Conservation (PCC) has been a leader in the development and management of trails for many years. We have everything from foot paths and paved multi-use trails within our park system. Dozens of miles of trails offer the opportunity for healthy exercise, nature study, and serve as an alternative transportation method. The most recently completed trail is the Oralabor Gateway Trail between the Neal Smith Trail and Glenbrooke Park in Ankeny.



PCC is an active partner in the design and construction of trails with other agencies and private groups to develop new trail options; trail connections that will help make the Central Iowa Trail System a functional reality. Some of the projects “on the drawing board” are the Chichaqua Valley Trail (CVT) connector, a new section of the Gay Lea Wilson Trail between Des Moines and Ankeny, and the first phase of the Easter Lake Trail.

The CVT connector will be built on the abandoned Union Pacific rail line between Bondurant and Des Moines. The old right-of-way passes through scenic eastern Polk County and Mally’s Park. When completed it will connect the CVT to the Gay Lea Wilson extension. Polk County currently holds title to the land and has approximately 50% of the capital needed to construct the trail.

A new portion of the Gay Lea Wilson Trail between Aurora Ave in Des Moines and 54th Ave near Berwick should be constructed this year with the remaining section completed as funding becomes available.

Polk County and the City of Des Moines are working together to construct the first phase of the Easter Lake Trail. The two agencies have nearly enough funding to begin the first phase which will connect Ewing Park with Easter Lake Park. The trail will parallel the banks of the lake between the park roads in Easter Lake and Indianola Road in Ewing Park. The plans call for a water crossing on the western arm of the lake and a trail will pass through some of the nicest woodland in Polk County. When completed, the trail will travel more than five miles around a beautiful lake and connect the two parks (in excess of 800 acres) to the neighborhoods surrounding them.

One cannot talk about trails unless you also talk about the necessity of maintaining them once they are built. Modern trail building, done with quality materials, ensures that trail infrastructure and surfacing will last for many years with proper maintenance. However, seasonal maintenance must still be done and occasionally weather events will damage a trail so severely that it must be rebuilt. The Chichaqua Valley Trail, between the Bondurant trail head and the town of Valeria in Jasper County suffered widespread damage in 2010 when a thunderstorm that dumped 10+ inches of rain in the narrow watershed. The resulting flood caused the washout of many miles of the trail bed which had been in place since the late 1800’s. Dangerous conditions have forced the closure of that section since the event.

Polk and Jasper County, with the assistance of FEMA, will be repairing the trail in 2012. The project will cost in excess of \$800,000 and take the majority of the construction season. We anticipate a fall reopening.

PCC is working to develop and maintain a quality trail system to serve the citizens of Polk County; a trail system that connects community to community and those communities to our parks and the natural world.

Bald Eagles Nesting at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Our national symbol continues to make a dramatic comeback from the brink of extinction. Just 25 years ago, the first pair of nesting bald eagles were recorded in Iowa since the early 1900’s. Today, there are over 250 nesting pairs scattered around the state. Several nests have popped up in Polk County.

For the fourth consecutive year, there is a pair of bald eagles nesting along the Skunk River at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. After two failed attempts in 2009 and 2010, the pair successfully raised two eaglets in 2011. This spring has the adults sitting tight on their large, stick nest indicating they have laid eggs and are incubating.

Keep your eyes focused on the large cottonwood trees next to the river and look for a very large pile of sticks. If you locate the nest, keep your distance and view the birds with binoculars or a spotting scope. They are very sensitive to human disturbance and are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



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.

Spring Wildflower Hike

May 5 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet in pond parking lot &

May 6 @ 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #5

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

Kayak Basics

May 12 @ 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Jester Park, meet near Shelter #5

Learn the basics of recreational kayaking from a PCC naturalist. Participants will learn about types of kayaks, equipment, techniques, and have a chance to practice skills on the water. All equipment is provided. Pre-registration required; deadline is May 4. Minimum age 15. Fee: \$10.

Canoe Basics

May 12 @ 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Jester Park, meet near Shelter #5

Participants will learn about types of canoes, equipment, techniques, and have a chance to practice skills on the water. All equipment is provided. Pre-registration required; deadline is May 4. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$5.

Catch-n-Croakers

May 18 @ 8:00-9:30 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Learn to identify frogs by sight and sound before sloshing into the wetlands to catch these amazing creatures. Bring your own net and flashlight. Wear shoes that can get wet and muddy.

Senior Fishing Derby

June 1 @ 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

Senior Services of Polk County and PCC are hosting a fishing derby open to any person 60 and over. Fishing poles and bait will be provided but you are welcome to bring your own. Prizes will be awarded. A box lunch will be served to all registered participants. Registration deadline is May 25. To register, call 515-286-3536.

Do More Outdoors

June 3 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelters #1 & #2

Looking for summer fun? Come learn how to canoe, fish and safely enjoy the summer sun. Educational programs will include intro to camping, water and boating safety, campfire building and safety, and healthy camping foods. Co-sponsored by Iowa Health Des Moines.

Pond Study

June 7 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #5

Splish, splash! Come discover what creatures live in and around this beautiful pond. All sampling equipment will be provided.

Kayak Basics

June 9 @ 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park, meet near Shelter #5

See description for May 12 Kayak Basics. Pre-registration required; deadline is June 1. Minimum age 15. Fee: \$10.

Fishing Basics

June 15 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Easter Lake, Shelter #1

Learn about the different kinds of fish in Iowa, fishing safety, and casting. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a 2012 Iowa fishing license. Bait and poles will be provided.

Wild Night Life & Hike

June 22 @ 8:30-10:00 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 is required;** deadline is June 20. Fee: \$5.

Willow Trellis Class

June 23 @ 10:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Pam Dennis and Ryk Weiss will lead the group in constructing a willow trellis. The fundamentals of construction will be taught, as well as identifying and gathering the willows. No previous experience needed. Participants need to bring: small bow saw, sharp anvil pruning shears and small hammer. Willow and nails will be supplied. Participants also need to bring a lunch and wear shoes that can get wet. Pre-registration required; deadline is June 15. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$50.



Campground Cooking

June 28 @ 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #2

Are you looking for some new recipes to try out on your next camping trip? Learn how to cook an entire meal, dessert, and snacks using Dutch ovens, roasting sticks, and foil packs. Recipes will be shared and everyone will get a chance to prepare and sample a variety of foods. Pre-registration required; deadline is June 21. Fee: \$10.

Metro Arts Jazz in July

July 5 @ 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Jester Park Amphitheater

Celebrate the 4th of July with the grand opening of the Jester Park Amphitheater. Join in on an evening of food, fun, art, and music. Food from the Master Griller, wine from Snus Hill Winery, ice cream from Picket Fence Creamery, and local arts will be available to purchase along with free nature programs and art activities. Our featured band, the Java Jews, play what they refer to as "highly-caffeinated" klezmer music. Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Fund.



Nature Photography

July 10 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Jester Park Lodge & July 12 @ 6:00 p.m. to sunset at Green Meadows West Prairie, Johnston

This class is targeted to digital SLR camera (digital cameras that utilize interchangeable lenses) users. Join local nature photographer, Ty Smedes, in a "hands-on" nature photography class. During the first evening we will cover equipment, basic digital camera and post-processing concepts, photographic technique, composition, and lighting, as it relates to wildlife, scenic, wildflower, and macro photography. The second evening will be "hands-on". Students will have the opportunity to perfect their technique in the field, photographing wildflowers. Instructor will assist students in improving technique. Pre-registration required; deadline is July 3. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$25.

Pond Study

July 13 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #5

Splish, splash! Come discover what creatures live in and around this beautiful pond. All sampling equipment will be provided.

Incredible Insects

July 19 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #1

From ladybugs to butterflies, we'll explore the fascinating world of insects. The program will feature a large insect collection and an insect hunt. Nets will be provided.

Creek Walk

July 26 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #1

Take a walk and cool off as we explore and investigate life in an Iowa stream. Participants need to wear old clothes and shoes that are secure (no flip flops) and can get wet. Minimum age 5.

Reptiles

August 7 @ 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

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

Monarch Butterflies

August 25 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Learn about the amazing life cycle of the monarch butterfly. Then you will help researchers gather valuable data by catching and tagging butterflies. Nets will be provided.

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Princess Adventures

10:00-11:00 a.m.

Do you know a little girl who loves princesses? Want to encourage her to dress up AND have fun exploring the outdoors at the same time? Girls ages 4-6 are invited to the park in "princess attire" (whatever that means to them). We will learn about a courageous woman from the past, participate in a nature activity, followed by a tea party with a snack. **Fee: \$5/program.**

June 21 - All about Birds at *Jester Park, Shelter #6*

July 14 - Flowers and Fairies at *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4*

August 2 - Butterflies at *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #1*

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Nature Playdates

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Explore, discover and play in your local parks with a Polk County Naturalist. Meet families interested in getting their children outdoors for natural play and discovery. Wear appropriate clothes and shoes. We may be hiking, discovering life in a log or playing in the creek. This is a morning of adventure and discovery with curiosity being the most important ingredient.

June 13 - Pond Study at *Fort Des Moines Boat Ramp*

June 27 - Woodland Walk at *Jester Park, Shelter #5*

July 18 - Stream Walk at *Brown's Woods*

August 1 - Rock Hunt at *Jester Park, Shelter by the Lodge*

Nature's Story Hour

Noon-1:00 p.m.

Bring your picnic lunch, blanket and family for an hour of nature stories and activities with a PCC Naturalist. This family friendly program is free and all ages are welcome.

June 6 - Sunflower House at *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4*

June 20 - Critter Camouflage at *Jester Park, Shelter #3*

July 11 - Turtle Talk at *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4*

July 25 - Insect Safari at *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

August 8 - Giants of the Prairie at *Jester Park, Shelter #6*

Great Outdoors Fund Adventure Race (GOFAR)

October 7 @ Jester Park

Are you up for an adventure? Find a couple of other adventurous souls to make a team and try the GOFAR event. This multi-discipline endurance race will test just how adventurous you are. Go to greatoutdoorsfund.org to register and for race details.

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.

May 7 - It's Windy

at *Peony Park, 1100 63rd St., West Des Moines*

May 22 - Silly Salamander

at *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

June 5 - Geo the Geode

at *Jester Park, shelter by the Lodge*

June 18 - Frog Hop

at *Meadow View Park, 642 Prairieview Dr., WDM*

July 9 - Let's go Fishing

at *Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge, 2500 Grand Ave., WDM*

July 24 - Pond Study

at *Jester Park, Shelter #5*

August 13 - Turtle Talk

at *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4*

August 28 - Tyke Hike

at *Southwoods Park, S. 39th St. Mills Civic Parkway, WDM*

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



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, Outdoor Skills, and Geocaching.

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

Central Iowa River Kayak Trip

May 19, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Which way we'll float, we just don't know, but we'll definitely float. Due to fluctuating river levels, we'll decide what river to float the week prior. Naturalists will guide participants down the river. Bring food and drink. Prior kayak experience is required.

- Fee: \$35; includes transportation and kayaks
- Departure from Jester Park
- Minimum age 16
- Registration deadline is May 11

White Pole Road Bus Trip

May 24

Adair to Dexter, Iowa

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org.

Okoboji University Bus Trip

June 13-14, 7:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Okoboji, Iowa

Discover the uniqueness and beauty of northwest Iowa. Explore the Iowa Great Lakes region for a two day extravaganza. Take in the watery vistas of Lake Okoboji aboard the Queen II Excursion Boat, step back in time at the Maritime Museum, tour the new Dickinson County Nature Center, hike the trails, tour the state fish hatchery, enjoy an evening show at the Okoboji Summer Theatre, take time to explore and shop at Arnold's Park, and appreciate the cultural/artistic collection at the Pearson Lakes Art Center.

- Fee: \$170/person double occupancy or \$225/person single occupancy; includes transportation, meals, hotel room, and tour fees
- Departure from Living History Farms SE parking lot off Hickman Road in Urbandale.
- Registration deadline is May 13



Queen II Excursion

Canoe and Cache on the Des Moines River

June 30, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Meet at Harriett Street boat ramp, just off NE 14th St.

Join us as we canoe and geocache down the Des Moines River. We'll start at Harriett Street and paddle down to Yellow Banks Park for a total of 10.25 miles. Geocaches will be hidden along the river and at Yellow Banks Park for you to find. Previous

paddling experience is required. GPS units will be available for check-out. Bring food and drink.

A limited number of canoes are available from Polk County Conservation for \$15/person. Register on-line for a spot in a canoe. You are welcome to bring your own canoe or kayak, email Heidi at Heidi.anderson@polkcountyiowa.gov to let us know.

- Fee: \$15/person for canoe registration; FREE if you bring your own canoe or kayak
- Minimum age 10
- Canoe registration deadline is June 22

Paddle the Niobrara Trip

July 7-11, 7:00 a.m. departure

Valentine, Nebraska

Join Polk County Conservation naturalists on this five-day adventure to the sandhills of Nebraska. The Niobrara River is a National Wild and Scenic River, which offers spectacular paddling and scenery. We'll camp three nights along the banks of the river, and within a five minute walk to the spectacular Smith Falls, the largest waterfall in the state of Nebraska. We'll paddle two days on the river. You can choose to paddle a canoe or kayak. All paddling equipment is provided. We'll spend the third day visiting Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge and Ashfall Fossil Beds. Meals will be prepared for you by the campfire while you relax and take in the scenery.

- Fee: \$250; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging, most equipment, and all food except two meals while traveling
- Departure from Jester Park
- Minimum age 21 and in good physical condition
- Participants need to bring a tent, sleeping bag, personal items, cash for souvenirs, and meals while traveling
- Registration deadline is June 22

Music Man & Frank Lloyd Wright Bus Trip

July 18, 7:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Mason City, Iowa

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org.

On Safari Bus Trip

August 28, 6:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

Omaha, Iowa

This trip is currently full. To be added to a waiting list, visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org.

To register for a trip: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Tour the Black Hills

September 12-16

Rapid City, South Dakota

Polk County Conservation naturalists will lead you on an action-packed trip to the Black Hills in South Dakota. We will visit Custer State Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, and Mammoth Site of Hot Springs. We'll stay in a nearby hotel each night for a good night's rest to prepare us for the following days activities.

- Fee: \$390; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging (double occupancy), all entrance fees, and two meals each day.
- Departure from Jester Park
- Minimum age 21 and in good physical condition
- Participants need to bring personal items and clothes for varying weather conditions
- Registration deadline is August 31

Lavendar & Loess Bus Trip

September 18, 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Missouri Valley, Iowa

Venture with Polk County Conservation to the Loess Hills. Breathe in the fresh relaxing scent of lavender fields in the hills of Missouri Valley. Taste artisan cheeses from fresh goat's milk at the Honey Creek Creamery. Climb a 45-foot observation lookout tower at the Hitchcock Nature Center. View the scenic loess hills at the Harrison County Historical Village. Enjoy touring the first aronia berry farm in the country and sampling wines from their tasting room. End the day at Small's Fruit Farm/apple orchard with a piece of pie and ice cream. Bring your camera, comfortable walking shoes and curiosity for a fun-filled day discovering eco-tourism & alternative agriculture.



Viewing Tower

- Fee: \$65; includes, motorcoach transportation, lunch and tour fees
- Departure from Living History Farms SE Parking lot off of Hickman Rd in Urbandale
- Registration deadline is September 4



Hitchcock Nature Center

Planned Giving

You can make a difference with the charitable dollars you invest in our community. The Community Foundation helps donors connect with causes they are passionate about, create personal legacies and meaningfully give back. The Community Foundation provides expert advice, professional management of charitable dollars, maximum tax savings and strong connections to hundreds of local charities including the Great Outdoors Fund which helps fund many Polk County Conservation programs and projects.

The Community Foundation works with individual donors, families, businesses and organizations to establish endowment funds that will benefit the community forever.

Support causes that are important to you by establishing a charitable fund at the Community Foundation. To get started, contact Sheila Kinman at 515-447-4207.

Community Foundation funds provide many benefits

- You recommend grants to your favorite charities. Gifts from your fund will be made in your name or the name you choose for your fund.
- You receive immediate tax benefits, but can give over time.
- Your assets grow through investment, allowing you to give more.
- You can establish an endowment as a legacy that will support the community in perpetuity.

By giving to the Great Outdoors Endowment through the Community Foundation, you are enabling Polk County Conservation to expand conservation and environmental education programs.

Polk County Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*
Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*
Michelle McEnany, *Urbandale*
Tina Mowry-Hadden, *Altoona*
Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

Polk County Conservation Director:

Dennis Parker

Junior Naturalist Camp

June 4 - 7 and June 11 - 14 (FULL)

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 4-day 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 other Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$100
- Registration deadline is May 14
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



Water Wonders Camp

June 25 - 28 (FULL) and July 23 - 26

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

Ages 8 - 9 yrs

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 other Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$100.
- Registration deadline is July 9
- Limited to 12 campers.
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

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!

To register for a camp: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Paddle Camp 1

June 18 - 21

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

Ages: 12 years and up

Campers will learn the necessary skills and techniques to safely canoe and kayak. Students will then get the opportunity to apply their new skills during a daylong river trip led by naturalists trained by the American Canoe Association. This camp will be physically demanding and challenging in a safe and supervised environment.

- Fee: \$100
- Registration deadline is June 4
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

Paddle Camp 2

July 17 - 20

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

Ages: 12 years and up

Campers will apply the skills and techniques learned in Paddle Camp 1 to navigate down a variety of rivers. Four unique central Iowa rivers will be explored, each one becoming more technical and challenging. Each trip will be led by experienced American Canoe Association Certified Polk County naturalists. This camp will be physically demanding and challenging in a safe and supervised environment. Participants must complete Paddle Camp 1 to be eligible for this camp!

- Fee: \$100
- Registration deadline is July 3
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



2011 Paddle Camp

2011 Volunteers of the Year

We had more than 100 guests in attendance for our volunteer banquet held on Sunday, March 4, at the Jester Park Lodge highlighting volunteer efforts in 2011. Ty Smedes was the special speaker, and gave a presentation about the process of making his new book "The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles". In 2011, over 1,500 volunteers gave 10,500+ hours of service to Polk County Conservation. That is \$175,000+ in value last year according to the Independent Sector's value of volunteer hours in Iowa. Thank you volunteers!

Volunteer of the Year



Chris McCarthy volunteers for countless programs and special events every year. He is an original member of the PCC Advisory Committee. Chris is also heavily involved with the Great Outdoors Fund. He helps connect GOF to the health industry to emphasize the benefits of being healthy outdoors and is currently chair of the Adventure Race committee at Jester Park in the fall of 2012. In his spare time, Chris puts his photography talents to good use in our areas and events. He donates the images to PCC so we can use them in our outreach materials.

Eagle Scout Project of the Year



Weston Hirschauer had a strong interest in the construction of the Jester Park Amphitheater as an Eagle Scout project. The project was broken down into manageable phases; of which, Boy Scout Troop 888 agreed to adopt the project and encourage their up-coming Eagle Scout Candidates to complete each phase. Weston's contributions include a wide and varying list that goes beyond in-kind labor. One of the pivotal donations was securing a sizable amount of landscape block totaling over \$3,600 from Rhino Materials, which included on-site delivery.

Volunteer Group of the Year



The **Garcia family** has volunteered at Jester Park Equestrian Center (JPEC) since the facility has been county-operated. They have always been there to fix, organize or build whatever needs to be done.

They assist with special events, even providing decorations for the Halloween and Christmas event. Dianna has organized the kitchen and planted flowers, both enhancing the operation of JPEC. Nadine assists wherever she is asked; her biggest contribution is unselfishly allowing us to use her pony, Snowball, for therapy and lessons.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

- April 20 - Trash Bash in the Greater Des Moines Metro area
- April 22 - Earth Day in the Junction at West Des Moines Valley Junction
- April 22 - Earth Day/Arbor Day Tree Planting at Chichaqua
- May 5 - Residential Tree Program tree pick up at Hoover State Office Building parking lot

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



- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 |
|--|---|

THE GREAT OUTDOORS FUND
WWW.GREATOUTDOORSFUND.ORG

Be a Friend of the Great Outdoors

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.

By becoming a friend, you will...

- ◆ Have your name published in The Great Outdoors Fund Annual Report and Polk County Conservation Nature News Newsletter
- ◆ Be put on the mailing list to receive current GOF and PCC news and information
- ◆ Participate in special programs, tours & events designed exclusively for our Friends
 - ◆ Be invited to the annual 'Friend of the Great Outdoors' banquet
 - ◆ Support conservation and recreation projects in your own backyard

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City, Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Individual (annual): _____ \$50 Family (annual): _____ \$100 Corporate: _____

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
May 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Brazil	Jester Park Lodge
May 5	1:00 p.m.	Wildflower Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
May 6	1:00 p.m.	Wildflower Hike	Jester Park
May 7	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Peony Park
May 12	9:00 a.m.	Kayak Basics*	Jester Park
May 12	12:00 p.m.	Canoe Basics*	Jester Park
May 18	8:00 p.m.	Catch-n-Croakers	Chichaqua Longhouse
May 19	8:00 a.m.	Central Iowa River Kayak Trip*	Central Iowa
May 22	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Fort Des Moines Park
May 23	10:00 a.m.	Grand Opening of Elk/Bison Exhibit	Jester Park
May 24	8:30 a.m.	White Pole Road/Bonnie & Clyde Bus Trip*	Adair, Iowa
June 1	9:00 a.m.	Senior Fishing Derby	Easter Lake Park
June 3	1:00 p.m.	Do More Outdoors	Easter Lake Park
June 4-7	9:00 a.m.	Jr. Naturalist Camp I*	Jester Park Lodge
June 5	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
June 6	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Easter Lake Park
June 7	6:30 p.m.	Pond Study	Jester Park
June 9	9:30 a.m.	Kayak Basics*	Jester Park
June 11-14	9:00 a.m.	Jr. Naturalist Camp II*	Jester Park
June 12	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Recycling the MWA Way	Jester Park Lodge
June 13-14	7:30 a.m.	Okoboji University Bus Tour*	Okoboji, Iowa
June 13	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Fort Des Moines Park
June 15	6:30 p.m.	Fishing Basics	Easter Lake Park
June 18-21	9:00 a.m.	Paddle Camp I*	Jester Park
June 18	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Meadowview Park
June 20	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Jester Park
June 21	10:00 a.m.	Princess Adventures*	Jester Park
June 22	8:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
June 23	10:00 a.m.	Willow Trellis Class*	Chichaqua Longhouse
June 25-28	9:00 a.m.	Water Wonders Camp I*	Jester Park
June 27	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Jester Park
June 28	6:00 p.m.	Outdoor Cooking*	Jester Park
June 30	8:00 a.m.	Canoe & Cache*	Des Moines River
July 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - A Sight to See	Jester Park Lodge
July 5	5:30 p.m.	Metro Arts Jazz in July	Jester Park
July 7-11	7:00 a.m.	Paddle the Niobrara River*	Valentine, Nebraska
July 9	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
July 10&12	6:30 p.m.	Nature Photography*	Jester Park Lodge
July 11	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Easter Lake Park
July 13	6:30 p.m.	Pond Study	Jester Park
July 14	10:00 a.m.	Princess Adventures*	Easter Lake Park
July 17-20	9:00 a.m.	Paddle Camp II*	Jester Park
July 18	7:00 a.m.	Music Man Bus Tour*	Mason City, Iowa
July 19	6:30 p.m.	Insect Safari	Fort Des Moines Park
July 23-26	9:00 a.m.	Water Wonders Camp II*	Jester Park
July 24	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
July 25	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Fort Des Moines Park
July 26	6:30 p.m.	Creek Walk	Thomas Mitchell Park

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
August 1	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Jester Park
August 2	10:00 a.m.	Princess Adventures*	Fort Des Moines Park
August 7	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - National Weather Service	Jester Park Lodge
August 7	2:00 p.m.	Reptiles	Jester Park Lodge
August 8	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Jester Park
August 13	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Easter Lake Park
August 25	10:00 a.m.	Monarch Butterflies	Chichaqua Longhouse
August 28	6:30 a.m.	On Safari Bus Tour*	Omaha, Nebraska
August 28	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Southwoods Park

JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR:

Summer Riding Camps

June 12 – 14	Beginning Western
June 19 – 21	Beginning Western
June 26 – 28	Beginning Western
July 10 – 12	Beginning Western
July 17 – 19	Intermediate Western
July 24 – 26	Beginning Western
July 31 – Aug 2	Intermediate Western
Aug 7 – 9	Beginning Western

All camps are from 9:00 a.m. – noon

Equestrian camps are a wonderful way for a child to discover the world of horses. Beginning western camps cover an introduction to the horse, safety, horse care, grooming, saddling, and basic riding skills. Intermediate camps are for the more experienced rider. Campers must be able to tack their own horse, ride independently, and trot comfortably on a loose rein. Horse and equipment are provided. Children should wear jeans and sturdy shoes.

Cost for all camps is \$130 per child. Campers must be at least 8 years old. Register early as space is limited. Register for these camps on www.mycountyparks.com.

Trail Ride Incentive Program

It's really simple and free! Log your trail hours on Jester trails from April 1 to October 31. Turn in your hours for prizes at a BBQ on November 4 (you don't have to be present to win).

Fun Stuff to Participate In:

- Poker Run on National Trails Day (Cost \$5) – June 2
- Scavenger Hunt & Tack Swap – August 26
- Old Fashioned Horse Show – November 4

Trail Rides

Trail rides start at the end of May. Children need to be 8 years old and accompanied by an adult to ride. The price is \$25 for a one hour guided ride.



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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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.

Brazil May 1

Several visits to northeast Brazil, the Amazon, and the Pantanal wetland over the last 10 years have given Dr. Jim Pease an understanding of the incredible biodiversity of Brazil. Both economically and ecologically, Brazil is the 900 pound gorilla of South America. Dr. Jim Pease will explore some of this diversity in his presentation and speculate on its future.

Recycling the MWA way June 12

Learn about local recycling guidelines and options with Rhonda O'Connor, program manager for Metro Waste Authority (MWA). MWA is a government agency responsible for managing the landfill in Polk County. Part of that proper management is partnering with the cities to provide curbside recycling and education on where to recycle other materials.

A Sight to See! July 3

Lee Goldsmith with the Brenton Arboretum will discuss trees and shrubs that provide a beautiful landscape and are attractive to wildlife.

National Weather Service August 7

Join Jeff Johnson with the National Weather Service as he discusses the various weather hazards here in Iowa including tornadoes, flash floods, severe storms, heat and winter weather. After discussing what the hazards are, safety tips will be covered along with the different ways to receive warning information from the National Weather Service.

To register for lunch: www.leadingyououtdoors.org