

# Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2013 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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## 72% Support Polk County's Water and Land Legacy Bond

On Tuesday, November 6th, voters supported the Polk County Water and Land Legacy Bond (PCWLL) in historic fashion passing the measure by 72%. This large margin of victory clearly shows that there is bipartisan support for critical water quality, wildlife, trails, and recreation projects.

Much appreciation goes out to the citizens of Polk County and the many people that supported this bond referendum with volunteer efforts or financial assistance towards education efforts. Polk County's government leaders, community organizations, corporate friends, and individual supporters have shown tremendous local leadership. Special recognition must go to the Polk County Board of Supervisors, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and the Great Outdoors Fund.

*"The public has reinforced their compelling support for conservation and outdoor recreation. We are excited to work with local communities and agencies in the years ahead to fulfill the intent of the Polk County Water and Land Legacy bond referendum and improve the quality of life for generations to come."*

*-Dennis Parker, PCC Director*

The Conservation Board has a set of projects ready to go including critical water quality work at Easter Lake and in the Four Mile Creek Watershed as well as other trail connectors and infrastructure projects

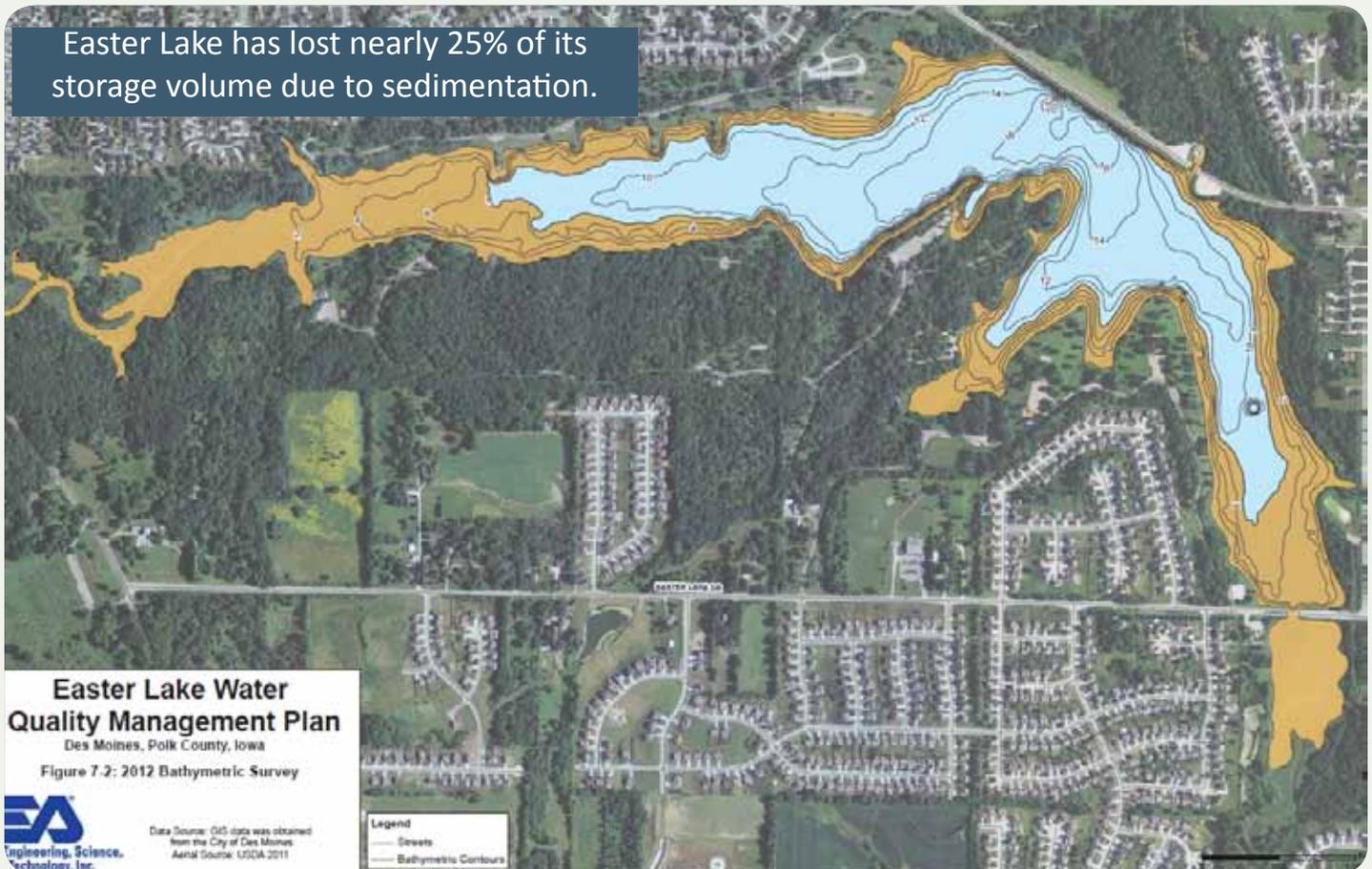


throughout the county. These projects have received valuable public feedback and support.

Broader than these specific projects, we are most excited to improve the quality of life for you, your children, and your grandchildren. Improved water quality, wildlife habitat protection, connected communities by means of trails and greenways, revitalized parks, outdoor recreation and education opportunities for all ages and abilities, active and healthy youth and adults, and adequate green space for our future generations are important to the health of our community.

We encourage the public to stay involved and updated on Polk County Water and Land Legacy projects in future years. Visit our website regularly for project updates and public input opportunities.

Easter Lake has lost nearly 25% of its storage volume due to sedimentation.



## Easter Lake Watershed Plan

The Easter Lake Water Quality Management Plan is a multi-agency effort to save a recreational resource of importance to many central Iowa residents.

### History of Easter Lake

Easter Lake has been providing recreational opportunities to Polk County residents since 1967. It hasn't always been an urban park. It was the site of the last operating coal mine in Polk County and served as a refuse dump prior to being purchased by Polk County for development as a park. When water filled the new basin in the late 60's, the lake was surrounded by farmland and was outside of the urban boundary. It is now completely within city limits and the watershed is primarily residential and commercial development.

In recent years, the water quality of the lake has declined. The lake suffers from poor water quality due to nutrient and sediment loads which produce algal blooms and seasonally low oxygen concentrations. The lake is listed as a 303(d) impaired water under EPA guidelines.

### Cooperative Effort

Easter Lake is an important community and regional resource. The significance is apparent when you consider the cooperating agencies who have come together to address this concern. In addition to Polk County Conservation Board, the City of Des Moines, Iowa DNR, Polk County Soil and Water Conservation

District, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, several citizen advisory groups, and neighborhood groups have joined forces to address the problems in the watershed and to begin restoring the lake.

### What's in the plan

The lake is located within Easter Lake and Ewing Parks in urban Des Moines. The watershed of 6,380 acres sustains the lake with 178 remaining surface acres (down from nearly 200 original surface acres). The lake has lost nearly 25% of its storage volume due to sedimentation. The ten year plan will address the erosion hot spots in the watershed, non-point pollution, as well as the hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sediment already in the lake that must be removed. Items included in the 10 year plan are shoreline protection, improved fishing access, a 5-mile paved trail around the lake, erosion control structures on the two stream branches to prevent future erosion, and in-lake fish habitat improvement.

The funding for many of these improvements will come from the Polk County Water and Land Legacy Bond referendum. The final water quality management plan is complete and is available electronically on our website.

## Polk County Urban Bow Hunt Program Continues Success

The Polk County Deer Task Force was formed in 1996 to study the impact of the growing deer population in Polk County. The task force developed a special set of rules for controlled bow hunting, defining when, where, and at what times bow hunting could take place within city limits and surrounding areas. Concentration on adult does results in significant long-term impacts of deer numbers.

Based on task force recommendations, Polk County Conservation allows controlled bow hunting in Brown's Woods, Easter Lake, Four Mile Creek Greenbelt, Gay Lea Wilson East Trail, Jester Park, Mally's, Sycamore Trail, Thomas Mitchell Park, and Yellow Banks Park. To hunt in these areas, hunters need to successfully complete the Iowa Department of Natural Resources approved bow hunter safety education course, pass an annual archery proficiency test, fill out a PCC application form and attend a hunter orientation meeting, and purchase deer management zone antlerless deer licenses for this program.

Overall the Polk County Urban Bow Hunt program has proved to be successful at reducing and maintaining deer herds at a lower level. Harvests have steadily increased from 65 deer the first year to 462 does in 2011. Over time this represents thousands of deer not added to the population. For more information about this program, contact Brian Herrstrom at 515-967-4889 or [brian.herrstrom@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:brian.herrstrom@polkcountyiowa.gov). You can also look on the PCC website under "Things to Do/Hunting" for additional information and resources.



## Jester Park Equestrian Center Receives \$25,000

The Gabus Automotive Group donated \$25,000 to the Jester Park Exceptional Rider (JPER) program for participant scholarships and programming. The JPER program was one of six local organizations that received monies from the Gabus Automotive Group. Cars sold at Charles Gabus Automotive dealerships this July didn't just put keys in the hands of happy drivers. Each purchase also contributed \$100 to local children's charities.

## Find us on Pinterest

Follow our new Pinterest page to discover on-line finds from the Polk County Conservation staff. Pinterest is an on-line pinboard that allows us to pass on our favorite resources to you. See photos of parks and trails, explore for kids' nature activities and crafts, or check out the field guide collection. Look for new content and categories as we continue to expand the page!



## Thank you to the Great Outdoors Fund

Polk County Conservation would like to extend a special thank you to the Great Outdoors Fund Board for helping to fund the following projects in 2012:

- Jester Park Amphitheater
- Mally's Park Playground Equipment
- Rental and educational canoes for Jester Park's Two Dam Pond
- Guide by Cell Audio Interpretation Program
- Eagle Scout Scholarship Program
- Greater Des Moines Area Pocket Trails Map
- School Bus Field Trip Scholarships
- At-Risk Horse Camp Scholarships
- Jazz in July Sponsorship



Polk County Conservation is proud to partner with the Great Outdoors Fund 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 Fund and to become a "Friend", go to [www.greatoutdoorsfund.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsfund.org).

# Emerald Ash Borer Already in NE Iowa

by Mark Dungan, Natural Resources Manager



Ash Borer, adult beetle. Photo by David Cappaert, Michigan State University.



Feeding galleries of emerald ash borer larvae. Photo by Laura Jesse



Woodpecker damage to ash infested with emerald ash borer larvae. Photo by Laura Jesse

Polk County Conservation is very concerned about Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and the affect it will have on the citizens of Polk County, our woodlands, and our urban forests.

## What is EAB

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a beetle that is native to Asia where it is kept in check by its natural enemies (predators and parasitoids). Unfortunately this isn't the case in the United States. EAB differs from most native borers in that it will attack healthy trees while most native borers attack stressed and declining trees. EAB is so aggressive that ash trees may die within two or three years after they become infested with the beetle. No ash has shown resistance to EAB. Emerald Ash Borer beetle attacks on ash in North America will be similar to that of the devastation from two fungal diseases, Chestnut Blight and Dutch elm disease, which destroyed woodland and urban forests in the 20th century.

## How Does EAB Kill Ash Trees

EAB destroys the ash tree by cutting off the movement of water and essential elements, effectively strangling the tree. The female lays eggs in crevices of the bark. These eggs hatch and larvae chew through the bark and start burrowing in the cambium layer of the tree just under the bark. The larvae work in a serpentine fashion as they eat through the cell walls of the tree eventually killing it.

## Symptoms of EAB include:

- crown dieback
- small sprouts from the trunk and major branches
- woodpecker holes
- serpentine feeding paths under the bark
- D-shaped exit holes

## Where is it?

EAB is currently found in Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, West Virginia and Canada. EAB has only been confirmed in Allamakee County which is in northeast Iowa and currently under quarantine.

## Importance of Using Local Firewood

One way the borer has spread is by transportation of firewood. As a Polk County resident, you can do your part to limit the spread by using local sources of firewood and not taking firewood out of quarantined areas. Natural spread of EAB is 2-5 miles per year. The real threat comes when EAB is moved long distances in infested logs, firewood, and nursery stock. To reduce this threat, PCC enacted a firewood policy in 2009 which outlaws the use of out of state firewood in our areas. Additionally, PCC only buys nursery stock that is grown outside of quarantined areas.

## What is PCC doing to Prepare for EAB

PCC is working with Iowa State University and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to set up trap trees in many of our Polk County parks. The purpose of these trees is to alert arborists as soon as possible when the EAB moves into an area. The trap trees are girdled (bark is removed) which will eventually cause the tree to become weakened and die. The borer is first attracted to stressed and declining trees. The trap tree locations were selected due to their proximity to places where they might be exposed to infested firewood.

More than 600 ash trees can be found in Polk County Park's mowed areas and many more are in our natural areas. The arrival of the EAB in Iowa will have a significant impact to our parks. To lessen that impact PCC, has inventoried and mapped all trees within the mowed areas. This allows us to determine what ash (if any) can be removed without an overall impact to the park user. PCC has started to proactively remove some ash, which allows replacement plantings to be installed. PCC will also consider treating some high valued trees to spread out the removal costs and reduce the loss of environmental benefits associated with removal.

Users will no doubt notice the arrival of EAB. With careful planning and foresight, PCC is hoping that we reduce this impact and provide an enjoyable and safe experience for our park patrons.

## New Wildlife Observation Platform at Chichaqua

Surveys consistently demonstrate that wildlife watching is one of the most popular forms of outdoor recreation today. Thanks to financial support from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Diversity Program, a wildlife observation platform is currently under construction by Polk County Conservation staff at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt and will be available for use in spring 2013. When completed, the platform will be a unique and valuable asset to Chichaqua visitors.

The platform is being built on the north side of Highway 65 and will overlook several wetland basins, including one that has been home to nesting sandhill cranes in recent years. Because of its size and design, the platform will be able to accommodate larger groups and mobility-impaired users. Visitors may bring their own binoculars or use the permanently mounted pair available at the platform.

Viewed from above, the platform is in the shape of a bald eagle, currently designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan. Users access the platform via the “tail” ramp and continue upward to either “wing” or the “head” to scan for wildlife.

“There is not very much topographical relief over much of the Chichaqua landscape” remarks Doug Sheeley, Natural Resources Supervisor at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. “This platform will allow users a markedly enhanced viewing experience as they explore some of the diverse wildlife that use this area.”



Construction Technician Barney Feezell, sets the forms for the platform.



When completed, the platform will look like this one in Tama County along the Iowa River corridor.

## PCC Wins Iowa Tourism Award



Shawna Lode-Director of Iowa Tourism, Lori Foresman-Kirpes-PCC Naturalist, and Linda Bacon-President of Iowa Travel Federation

Polk County Conservation was recently recognized with an Iowa Tourism Award at their annual conference. The Iowa Tourism Office and the Travel Federation of Iowa presented 12 awards recognizing excellence in the tourism industry. Lori Foresman-Kirpes, PCC Naturalist, was recognized as an Individual Friend of Tourism award winner for her efforts with park interpretation and eco-bus tour leadership. Lori has planned over 46 Eco-bus adventures in the past nine years for Polk County Conservation. Her goal on these trips has been to reconnect Iowans to the unique venues, conservation, and natural history areas in Iowa, as well as showcase the wonderful hospitality offered by local residents. Congratulations Lori!

The annual Iowa Tourism Conference brings together more than 250 industry representatives from across the state to network, attend educational sessions and discuss emerging industry trends. Tourism in Iowa generates more than \$7 billion in expenditures, employs 63,400 people statewide, and generates \$328 million in state taxes. The Iowa Tourism Office is part of the Iowa Economic Development Authority. For more information about Iowa tourism, visit [www.traveliowa.com](http://www.traveliowa.com), call 800-345-IOWA or stop at any Iowa Welcome Center.

### Polk County Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*  
 Sara Kurovski, *Pleasant Hill*  
 Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*  
 Michelle McEnany, *Urbandale*  
 Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

### Polk County Conservation Director:

Dennis Parker

Each year Polk County naturalists select a variety of programs we feel the public will enjoy. Our programs have been designed with you in mind, so they are both educational and fun.

- Program and event information is available by visiting: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) or by calling our administrative office at: (515) 323-5300, Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Fees and registration are not required unless otherwise noted.
- Many programs are family-oriented and are designed so all ages can participate.
- Outdoor programs will be canceled if there is lightning or other extreme weather conditions such as wind, cold, or rain.
- Programs are developed for beginners. No prior experience is required unless noted.
- Youth and adult groups such as church, scouts, and 4-H are always welcome.
- No refunds will be given after the registration deadline.

## PROGRAMS

### Ice Fishing Clinic

January 13 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Fort Des Moines Park, boat ramp

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

January 18 @ 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Yellow Banks Park, tent camping area

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.

### Tricky Tracks

January 19 @ 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Have you seen all of the animals that live in the woods or in your neighborhood? Come to this program and you'll learn how to identify the signs that animals leave behind.

### Unhuggable Animals

January 19 @ 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Explore the truth about snakes, spiders, and other animals we find difficult to love.

### Cross-Country Ski Basics

January 26 @ 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 beautiful woodland trails. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will be discussed before we practice our new skills on the trails. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is January 24. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).



### Snowshoe Hike

January 26 @ 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #5

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 January 24. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

### Indoor Kayaking Basics

January 26 @ 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. Pre-registration is required; deadline is January 18. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

## Do More Outdoors

January 27 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Come enjoy the great outdoors this winter and have fun playing in the snow. Ongoing activities include snowshoeing, cross country skiing (for ages 12 and older), and winter hikes. There will be plenty of snowy fun like snow painting and sculpturing too. Indoor programming will include topics like keeping safe and warm in the winter and how to make a winter survival kit. Event will be canceled without snow. Co-sponsored by Iowa Health Des Moines.

## Ice Fishing Clinic

February 2 @ 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Easter Lake Park, Shelter #2

See description for January 13th Ice Fishing program. Anyone over the age of 16 will need a valid fishing license.

## Hog Wild Winter Hike

February 2 @ 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. This event is free and for all ages.

## Mammals of Iowa

February 5 @ 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 like to eat.

## Cross-Country Ski Basics

February 9 @ 10:00 -11:30 a.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

See description for January 26th Cross-Country Ski program. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is February 7. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).

## Basket Weaving

February 9 @ 12:00-4:30 p.m.

Chichauqua Longhouse

We will be creating a willow basket with woven handles, inserts, etc, approx 10-12" square. This simple process teaches the fundamentals of identifying & gathering willows, construction, and weaving as well as a variety of decorative techniques. No

previous experience needed. Participants should dress for outdoor gathering of their willow materials. Participants will need to bring: a small hammer, sharp anvil pruning shears, and small wire cutters. Nails will be supplied. Pre-registration required; deadline is February 1. Fee: \$45.

## Cross-Country Ski Basics

February 10 @ 12:00-2:00 p.m. and 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

See description for January 26th class. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required, register for the 12:00 or 2:30 class; deadline is February 7. Minimum age 12. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles).

## Indoor Kayaking Basics

February 23 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Urbandale Public Pool, 7201 Aurora Ave., Urbandale

See description for January 26th Indoor Kayaking Basics. Pre-registration is required; deadline is February 15. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

## Bald Eagle Watch

February 24 @ 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 "Spirit", a live eagle used for education. Hourly programs starting at 1:00 p.m. will give you a close look at this amazing species.

## Discover Iowa

March 5 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

What's there to do and see in Iowa? Take a visual journey with PCC Naturalist, Lori Foresman-Kirpes, and discover the variety of eco and historical treasures in Iowa.

## Indoor Kayaking Basics

March 9 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Urbandale Public Pool, 7201 Aurora Ave., Urbandale

See description for January 26th Indoor Kayaking Basics. Pre-registration is required; deadline is March 1. Minimum age 18. Fee: \$20.

## Wild Night Life & Hike

**March 19 @ 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 15. Fee: \$5.

## Spring Fling

**March 20**

**Jester Park Lodge**

**Animal Eggs from 10:30-11:30 a.m.**

**Reptiles from 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

Come for one, or stay for both. Bring a sack lunch and enjoy a spring picnic or eat inside the Lodge. Wear your hiking shoes to explore the great park trails before or after the programs.

## Survivor Day Camp

**March 21 @ 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 7. Ages 10-12 years. Fee: \$30.

## Mud Hike

**March 22 @ 10:30-11:30 a.m.**

**Thomas Mitchell Park, meet in pond parking lot**

Join a PCC naturalist to discover what's happening in the woods in early spring! The trails could be muddy, snowy, or dry as a bone in March. Wear boots or shoes that can get dirty.

## Rain Barrel Workshop

**March 23 @ 9:00-10:00 a.m. and 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Jester Park Shop**

Did you know 50% of the pollution in our lakes and rivers is washed in by storm water? One way to slow down storm water runoff is to install a rain barrel. A short discussion about ways to collect and use runoff water will be held before participants construct their own rain barrel. All materials and tools will be provided. Make sure you are able to transport your 55-gallon barrel back to your home after the workshop. Pre-registration required; deadline is March 15. Sign up for the 9:00 or 10:00 class. Fee: \$50.



Cape May Warbler, Photo by Ty Smedes

## Iowa's Spectacular Spring Songbird Migration

**April 2 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

Iowa's position in the center of the country makes it a spectacular location to observe and enjoy the spring songbird migration. Writer and photographer Ty Smedes will share his photos and knowledge of this magnificent annual event. Learn about those tiny birds that most of us never notice or know anything about. We'll see and learn about the vireos, tanagers, wrens, flycatchers, and especially the colorful warbler family. You'll learn when and where to look for these long-distance migrators, and more!

## Rain Barrel Workshop

**April 13, 9:00-10:00 a.m. and 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Jester Park Shop**

See March 23rd Rain Barrel Workshop description. Pre-registration required; deadline is April 5. Sign up for the 9:00 or 10:00 class. Fee: \$50.

## Geocaching 101

**April 20 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Chichaqua Longhouse**

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 Chichaqua. Pre-registration required; deadline is April 13. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5.

## Spring Wildflower Hike

April 20 @ 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.

## Earth Day Tree Planting

April 21 @ 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Location TBA

Join Polk County Conservation staff to celebrate Earth Day (April 22) with a tree planting project in one of our local parks. Check our website at [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) for the location when details become available.

## Wild Night Life & Hike

April 26 @ 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area 5

See description for March 19th Wild Night Life & Hike. Pre-registration is required; deadline is April 24. Fee: \$5.

## Winter Adventure Trip

March 6-10

Ely, Minnesota

Got the winter blues? This trip is full of both adventure and relaxation. Experience an adventure of a lifetime by spending a full day of dog sledding! Experienced guides will lead our trip into the wilderness, teaching you how to harness your dogs and steer the sled. The extensive training of both dogs and staff contributes to a safe and comfortable sled dog experience. During this five-day trip you will have an opportunity to cross country ski on groomed trails and explore the wilderness by snowshoe. We will also get an introduction to wolf research techniques by spending several hours tracking wolves on snowshoes. Instruction and equipment will be available. Lodging will be a large family style cabin.

- Fee: \$600; includes transportation (15 passenger van), lodging, rental fees, most meals, and dog sledding
- Departure from Jester Park
- Minimum age 21 years
- Participants will need to provide personal items and money for meals while traveling
- Registration deadline is February 15

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



## 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](mailto: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) 323-5300. 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**

## Junior Naturalist Camp

**June 10 - 13**

**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 other Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$120
- Registration deadline is May 27
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge



Jr. Naturalist campers taking pride in the fire they built

## Water Wonders Camp

**June 17 - 20**

**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 other Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$120
- Registration deadline is June 3
- 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](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

## Paddle Camp 1

**June 24 - 27**

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

**Ages: 12 - 15 years**

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: \$120
- Registration deadline is June 10
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

## Discovery Camp

**July 8 - 11**

**9:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Age: 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 24
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter #5

## Paddle Camp 2

**July 15 - 18**

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

**Ages: 12 - 16 years**

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: \$120
- Registration deadline is July 1
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

## A Job Well Done

Volunteers played an important role in the success of 2012 annual events such as the River Run Garbage Grab, Amazing Prairie Festival, Do More Outdoors series, and the Four Mile Creek Sweep. Three teams of Wells Fargo employees recently helped construct a canoe launch at Two Dam Pond in Jester Park, painted bathrooms at Easter Lake Park and picked up more than 750 lbs of trash along the Trestle to Trestle Trail. Also, an army of 30 volunteers helped 81 participants safely compete at the Equestrian Special Olympics Iowa events.

Eagle Scouts have been constructing bat houses to be installed at Thomas Mitchell, Easter Lake, and Ft. Des Moines parks. Other scout projects included planning a third walk-in campsite, removing invasive species, and installing an overlook picnic site at Jester Park, painting the outdoor arena fence, and building an outdoor paddock shelter at the Jester Park Equestrian Center.

### Stewards and Adopt-A-Park Sponsors Needed!

These volunteers work on various tasks e.g. removing invasive species, picking up litter and monitoring trails, helping restore natural areas and collecting prairie seed (to name a few). Each receives necessary training and tools to perform their tasks. They also recruit their own volunteers, plan their own workdays, work at their own pace, and only complete duties they feel comfortable performing.

## Jester Park Invasive Species Winter Round-up

January 12 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Your help is needed restore our woodlands by removing honeysuckle and other invasives. Dress according to weather (in layers), wear sturdy boots/hikers and bring gloves. Light refreshments will be served and tools will be supplied. Meet us at 9:45 a.m. along the road, near the pines by Two Dam Pond (near Shelter #5).

## Volunteer Appreciation Banquet

March 3 @ 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Come join us at the Jester Park Lodge where we will highlight some of our volunteer projects and events from 2012. The evening includes a special program, catered dinner and awards. Anyone who has volunteered 10 (or more) hours is invited to attend. Please contact Pat Spain ASAP to confirm your hours.

## Brown's Woods Clean-up

April 6 @ 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Families, youth groups and scouting organizations welcome! Lunch will be provided by The Huntmaster's Club following the event. Meet at the south parking lot off Brown's Woods Dr. Please contact Pat Spain to confirm your attendance to ensure adequate lunch counts.



Wells Fargo employees installing a canoe launch at Two Dam Pond in Jester Park.



Volunteers helping riders safely compete at the Equestrian Special Olympics.

### VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

- Therapeutic riding program
- Helping with pony rides
- Cleaning horse stalls
- Trail clearing and maintenance
- Conducting park and shoreline clean-ups
- Harvesting prairie seed
- Invasive species removal
- Planting trees
- Cleaning out fire rings
- Mulching trees
- Stream clean-ups
- Helping with programs & events

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

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
- ◆ 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 'Friends of the Great Outdoors' Banquet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Kids: \_\_\_\_ (\$25)    White: \_\_\_\_ (\$1 to \$100)    Bronze: \_\_\_\_ (\$101 -\$999)

Silver: \_\_\_\_ (\$1000 - \$2499)    Gold : \_\_\_\_ (\$2500-\$4999)    Platinum: \_\_\_\_ (\$5000+)

Great Outdoors Fund • PO Box 8071 • Des Moines IA 50301 • Phone 515.967.3895 • Fax 515.323.5354

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
January 8	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Theodore Roosevelt	Jester Park Lodge
January 12	10:00 a.m.	Invasive Species Winter Round Up	Jester Park
January 13	1:00 p.m.	Ice Fishing	Fort Des Moines Park
January 18	5:30 p.m.	Owl Prowl	Yellow Banks Park
January 19	10:30 a.m.	Tricky Tracks	Jester Park Lodge
January 19	12:30 p.m.	Unhuggable Animals	Jester Park Lodge
January 26	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
January 26	10:00 a.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Jester Park
January 26	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Public Pool
January 27	1:00 p.m.	Do More Outdoors	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 2	10:00 a.m.	Ice Fishing Clinic	Easter Lake Park
February 2	1:00 p.m.	Hog Wild Winter Hike	Brown's Woods
February 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Galapago's Islands	Jester Park Lodge
February 5	6:30 p.m.	Mammals of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
February 9-17		Sweetheart Sleigh Rides	Jester Park Equestrian Center
February 9	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics *	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 9	12:00 p.m.	Basket Weaving*	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 10	12:00 p.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 10	2:30 p.m.	Cross-Country Ski Basics*	Chichaqua Longhouse
February 23	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Public Pools
February 24	12:00 p.m.	Bald Eagle Watch	Saylorville Lake & Jester Park Lodge
March 3	5:00 p.m.	Volunteer Appreciation Banquet	Jester Park Lodge
March 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Civil War	Jester Park Lodge
March 5	6:30 p.m.	Discover Iowa Through Eco-Bus Tours	Jester Park Lodge
March 6-10		Winter Weekend Adventure Trip*	Ely, Minnesota
March 9	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Kayaking Basics*	Urbandale Public Pool
March 19	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 19	7:30 p.m.	Wild Life & Night Hike*	Jester Park
March 20	10:30 a.m.	Animal Eggs	Jester Park Lodge
March 20	1:00 p.m.	Reptiles	Jester Park Lodge
March 20	10:00 a.m.	Spring Break Equestrian Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 21	9:00 a.m.	Survivor Day Camp*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
March 22	10:30 a.m.	Mud Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
March 23	9:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
March 23	10:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
April 2	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Spring Songbird Migration	Jester Park Lodge
April 2	6:30 p.m.	Spring Songbird Migration	Jester Park Lodge
April 6	9:00 a.m.	Brown's Woods Clean Up	Brown's Woods
April 13	9:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
April 13	10:30 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
April 20	10:00 a.m.	Geocaching 101*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
April 20	1:00 p.m.	Spring Wildflower Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
April 21	1:00 p.m.	Tree Planting	Location TBA
April 26	7:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park



Administration Office at Jester Park  
11407 NW Jester Park Dr.  
Granger, Iowa 50109  
515-323-5300

pccb\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov  
www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt 515-967-2596	Thomas Mitchell Park 515-967-4889
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Easter Lake Park 515-285-7612	Yellow Banks Park 515-266-1563
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Mally's Park Open House Celebration in October 2012. Toe tapping music provided by Flying Pig and Banjo Band.

### JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR:

## Sweetheart Sleigh Rides

**February 9 - 17**

You and your sweetheart can book a 45-minute private ride which includes hot chocolate and a flower. You may also share your ride with another couple if you'd like. Rides will be in the daylight and run on wheels if there is not enough snow. Reservations can be made starting February 1 by calling the Equestrian Center. Fee: \$60.

## Sleigh Rides

Come enjoy the winter snow by taking a horse drawn sleigh ride. A 45-minute sleigh ride costs \$50 for 5 people, and \$10 for each additional person. One sleigh holds 6 and one holds 8 (3 and younger are free). If you have a larger group we can run two sleighs at once.

We also offer an open fire pit outside free to use or an indoor conference room that may be rented to warm up after your ride.

## Spring Break Day Camp

**March 19 & 20, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

This camp will be for children ages 8 and older. Sign up on [mycountyparks.com](http://mycountyparks.com).

## Indoor Riding Lessons

We also offer indoor riding lessons year round for beginner to advanced riders. Private lessons are \$35 per hour and \$30 if you ride with a group of 2 or more. Buy five lessons and get the sixth one free. Lessons are scheduled by calling the Equestrian Center.

## FREE Compost

We have a large quantity of horse manure if you need some good compost for your garden. It is free for the hauling and we can help with loading. A voluntary donation will be accepted for loading.



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

### Theodore Roosevelt

**January 8**

Darrel Draper portrays Theodore Roosevelt on the campaign trail in his bid for the presidency as the 1912 Progressive “Bull Moose” Party candidate. He reviews his life from his asthma-plagued childhood, his days at Harvard, personal tragedies and victories, military success, and rise to the White House. Mixing humor, drama, and inspiration, this presentation is designed to entertain all audiences. This program is sponsored by Humanities of Iowa.

### The Galapagos Islands

**February 5**

The Galapagos Islands are famous for inspiring Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. Located 600 miles from the Ecuadorian coast, the Galapagos are of marine volcanic origin and have never been connected to a continental land mass. As a result, most of the flora, the reptiles, and the majority of resident land birds are found only in the Galapagos, many of them restricted to one or a few islands. Denny and Cecille Thompson will share images from their recent visit to this special place.

### Civil War

**March 5**

Join Rodger and Carol Shannon as they share their knowledge on the Civil War. Their program will include a style show, songs, show and tell, and discussion of things that went on during the war.

### Iowa’s Spectacular Spring Songbird Migration

**April 2**

Iowa’s position in the center of the country makes it a spectacular location to observe and enjoy the spring songbird migration. Writer and photographer Ty Smedes will share his photos and knowledge of this magnificent annual event. Learn about those tiny birds that most of us never notice or know anything about. We’ll see and learn about the vireos, tanagers, wrens, flycatchers, and especially the colorful warbler family. You’ll learn when and where to look for these long-distance migrators, and more!

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