



Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2016 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

Jester Park Nature Center

Gateway to the Outdoors

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Older, Wiser,

Livelier, Seniors

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Polk County is the only metropolitan area in the state that does not have a nature center. There are 53 nature centers around the state of Iowa but the most populous county in this state is without this vital public resource. It is difficult to capture in words what the Des Moines area is missing that others areas have, and certain questions arise. Why does our county need a nature center? How does my family and community benefit from such a place?

Jester Park Nature Center will serve as one of Iowa’s leading nature centers as well as a gateway to experience our state’s natural environment. It will serve as a focal point within our community where recreation, education, tourism and conservation efforts all intersect into one goal - to protect, preserve and promote the landscape in which we live, work and play. There is a considerable amount of debate and strong views in today’s world sur-

rounding some natural resource and environmental topics such as water quality and climate change. We need a neutral, science-based understanding to form the foundation of our opinions, plans and actions in regards to the future of conservation in Polk County. Jester Park Nature Center will help to accomplish this goal.

Especially here in central Iowa, in the most urbanized area of our state, we need an understanding of natural systems and how human interactions function within both rural and urban sectors. Now, more than ever before, we face many challenges and opportunities. An understanding of basic scientific principles to face these challenges and possible solutions is needed to prepare our future citizens and leaders. The nature center will provide a place for minds to become more familiar with and educated on nature; our bodies a number of activities to enjoy and grow healthier in the outdoors; and

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We are Going to Build a Nature Center, and it's Going to be Fabulous!



Polk County Conservation has been desiring, planning, and designing a Nature Center for years, and it is finally near! You will be seeing a great deal of fundraising, special events, and publicity in 2016 as we prepare to build in 2017 and open in 2018.

Why do we need a Nature Center? So many reasons...

Environmental Education. Our team of naturalists do a great job. They give hundreds of programs to literally thousands of central Iowans through schools, public programs, hikes, etc. And they do this without a “home base,” acting as eco-troubadours at the good graces of schools and other facilities, and hoping for good weather. A Nature Center will DOUBLE the number of programs we can do!

Natural Resources Interpretation. In a recent statewide survey, County Conservation Boards (and other local government) came out as the most trusted source of information, with 92% feeling “strongly” or “very strongly” that we could be trusted on water quality issues. We use

science-based, non-biased, and practical means of presenting natural resources topics. Now more than ever, our society needs this approach!

Outdoor Recreation. Central Iowa is exploding - the millennial generation and families are moving here in record numbers. A big reason is quality of life, with opportunities such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter, and trails, wildlife viewing, paddling, etc. in the summer. This nature center will truly be a “Gateway to the Outdoors” in helping thousands experience Polk County’s bountiful and beautiful natural resources.

Conservation. There are 53 Nature Centers in Iowa, and none in Polk County. Again, now more than ever, we need a strong base for conservation, to guide development activities, to teach about proper care of our natural resources, and to preserve important places for us and for the wild things that live here.

Join us, in helping to build the Jester Park Nature Center, your “Gateway to the Outdoors!” - PCC Director, Rich Leopold

New Face at Polk County Conservation

Park Superintendent Michael C. Sledd began his employment with PCC on March 7, 2016. Before coming to PCC, Michael was employed with the City of Austin, Texas, Parks and Recreation Department where he initially started as a Park Ranger and eventually was promoted up to Park Ranger Program Manager. He was responsible for overseeing all Park Ranger operations across the city’s 270+ parks. He also managed all aspects of the department’s 15-site nature preserve system, the Zilker Botanical Garden, Department-wide wildfire mitigation concerns, the City’s community garden program, and Wildlife Austin initiative. Michael’s experience prior to this was primarily in the private sector as an environmental, health and safety consultant and in the customer service/construction retail industry.



Michael was born and raised in Austin, and attended the University of Texas-Austin where he earned his Bachelor’s degree in Anthropology with a minor in Geography and Linguistics. He later attended Texas State University-San Marcos for graduate school and earned his Master’s degree in Geography with a focus on Resource and Environmental Studies. His graduate research focused on using Geographic Information System technology and multi-variate statistics to analyze the effects of land-use variation on surface water quality. He is also a certified arborist through the International Society of Arboriculture, as well as a Type 2 wildland firefighter.

Michael is married to Lisa Sledd, who will be leaving her position as a lab manager with the Paull Molecular Genetics & Microbiology Laboratory at the University of Texas-Austin. She has a Master’s in Counseling and is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She will be looking to possibly start a new counseling practice in the Des Moines-area part-time, but will primarily be taking care of their 17-month old daughter Ysabel.

Jester Park Nature Center...

continued from page 1

our soul a respite and re-centering in this fast-paced world in which we reside where we can easily lose connection to our roots. At Jester Park alone, our naturalists are reaching out to more than 7,000 people through approximately 450 programs. Once built, these numbers are anticipated to double. Park attendance will also double and bring in more than one million people to the park each year.

To better appreciate our roles and responsibilities in this land and to strengthen our bond to ensure we leave a legacy for generations to come, a gathering place where all these goals come together to provide a platform for discovery must be present. The foundation of this center will be based on five core values that benefit and bring together the community at large and visitors of Polk County. The core values are education, recreation, economic development, environment, and community.

Fundraising efforts for this public/private partnership project will be in full force through December 2016 to secure the remaining dollars needed to bring this project from the drawing board to reality. Construction bidding will occur late 2016 through early 2017 with project construction beginning after this bidding process. The Grand Opening of the Jester Park Nature Center is anticipated for Earth Day 2018.

The Jester Park Nature Center will serve as a beacon for all, providing a gathering place for both residents and visitors of our community alike to immerse themselves in the richness of Iowa's natural history and the promising future ahead. To stay on top of the latest information and to become part of this landmark opportunity in your community, make this project your own by visiting www.jesterparknaturecenter.com. It is here that you will be able to take direct action in helping create a legacy that will span across generations right here in Polk County.



"We don't inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

COME PLAY WITH US

*Events supporting the Jester Park Nature Center
Sponsored by the Great Outdoors Foundation*

Jester Park Nature Center Launch Party Thursday, April 21 at 4:00 p.m.

The plan to build a new interactive nature center at Jester Park will be announced to the public on Thursday, April 21st beginning at 4pm at the downtown Des Moines offices of the Greater Des Moines Partnership. Hosted by Polk County Conservation and the Great Outdoors Foundation, the launch announcement will include remarks from the planning team who will give an overview of the nature center's design and expected groundbreaking date. A short reception will follow the media announcement. The event is open to the public. RSVP is required - to secure your free reservation please register here: <https://tikly.co/events/1107>. Space is limited to the first 200 to register.

Great Outdoors Foundation Backwoods Challenge Sunday, June 5

Celebrate National Trails Weekend with a backwoods adventure through Jester Park! Test your outdoor skills through an obstacle course of nature-loving activities exploring the prairie, forest, and shoreline of Jester Park. Bring your bike, your hiking boots and your buddy for this two-person team challenge. Details and registration available online at: www.jesterparknaturecenter.com

Great Outdoors Foundation Best Shot Golf Tournament Wednesday, June 15 at 11:00 a.m.

Join us at the Jester Park Golf Course for the shotgun start of the annual Great Outdoors Foundation Best Shot Golf Tournament. Win prizes for longest drive, longest putt, and closest to the pin. Arrive early and warm-up at the driving range where you'll get a glimpse of the future site of the Jester Park Nature Center. Lunch and dinner provided for all golf teams. Register your team or find out how your company can sponsor the event at: www.jesterparknaturecenter.com

Mark your calendars! More details to come!

- Glow Wild - Sunday, September 4, 6-9:00 p.m.
- Buck Naked Need Dough - Locally Grown, Locally Brewed - Friday, November 11, 5:30-9:00 p.m.

GREAT
OUTDOORS
FOUNDATION

The Latest

Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

TRAILS

Seeding and finishing touches along the Great Western Trail connection to the Bill Riley Trail, which provides trail users with an all-weather connection, as well as the trail connection from the Chichaqua Valley Trail into Mally's Park is expected to be completed by the end of spring.



Chichaqua Valley Trail Connector to Mally's Park

PARKS

Fort Des Moines Park

- Many portions of the park will be built will be under heavy construction this spring and summer. Crushed limestone trails will be constructed around the pond and the new outdoor classroom near Studebaker Elementary. Completion is anticipated mid-to-late summer.

Jester Park

- Building redesign for the Jester Park Nature Center is anticipated to reach completion this summer. Fundraising efforts will be in full force throughout this year. Visit www.jesterparknaturecenter.com for further details on the Jester Park Nature Center and its importance in our community.

Easter Lake Park

- Dredge piping has been placed and dredging will take place through the summer with no boat access or beach use allowed during this time. The fish rearing pond, spillway, control valve box, and sediment basin work should be completed by late spring. See photo to the right.
- Trail design is underway for Phase 3 of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail which is anticipated to be completed in 2017. At that time, the lake will be fully drained and in-lake improvements are started.



- Amperage Fundraising is working with PCC staff and a Feasibility Steering Committee to complete the Easter Lake Lodge Feasibility Study. The final report will be presented to the Polk County Conservation Board this summer.

Yellow Banks Park

- Staff is currently discussing project feasibility and compiling cost estimates for a series of improvements within Yellow Banks Park. Proposed enhancements to waterways, facilities, camp areas, and trails are slated to begin this year. Design and planning is currently in progress for cabins and extensive trail system. A more defined plan will soon be available.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

- Oxbow rehydration will be completed by spring. Wetland restoration and native vegetation restoration on a 311-acre acquisition is well underway with completion of site work anticipated by mid-summer.
- A Land Use Management Plan, which will be used in companion with the Chichaqua Bottoms Master Plan, will be completed this year. This document will aid staff in assessing challenges and future needs for the park.

MISCELLANEOUS

- A 6-member Conservation Corps team will be working in our parks through November. This group will work on bond-related projects, primarily within natural resources unit.
- New CXT restrooms have been constructed in the Yellow Banks Park tent camping area, near the Thomas Mitchell Park pond, and at Jester Park Shelter #2.



Dredge piping at Easter Lake

Polk County's Geocaching Parks Challenge

To celebrate Polk County Conservation's 60th Anniversary in 2016, we are kicking off a Geocaching Parks Challenge! We want to encourage you to get outside and explore our county parks and trails and we think geocaching is a great way to learn about them. Geocaching is a high tech scavenger hunt using GPS. We have worked with local geocachers to hide geocaches in 16 different Polk County parks and trails. Once all 16 geocaches have been found, individuals must turn in their passport to claim their reward - a special geocoin! By the end of the challenge, we hope you'll know where there are tons of cool places to hike, bike, camp, and explore.

How it works!

Download and print the Geocaching Passport found on www.leadingyououtdoors.org. The passport includes details about where to find the 16 special geocaches in the challenge. To find the geocaches, you'll need to download Groundspeak's geocaching app on your smart phone or use a handheld GPS unit.

What's inside each geocache?

Geocaches are small containers with a log book, crayon, and rubbing plate inside. You must use the crayon to create a rubbing in the passport of the secret word for the corresponding cache.

Win!

Once all 16 geocaches have been found, users may turn in their passport to the Jester Park office or by mail and each family will receive one geocoin. Additional geocoins may be purchased at \$10/coin.

When can you participate?

The geocaches will be hidden and the passport will be posted on-line by April 15! There are no limits on how long it takes to complete the challenge.

Geocaching FAQs

Unfamiliar with geocaching and have questions, visit www.geocaching.com to learn more!



Polk County
Geocaching Challenge Geocoin

NEW Practical Conservationist Coming this Fall!

Are you a person that loves being outdoors and/or feels a real connection with the natural world? Do you try to enhance your property in the name of conservation? Do you want to understand the inner workings of our environment in greater depth, perhaps so you can employ more conservation practices? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this is the class for you. Beginning on September 6, over the course of 6 weeks, we will gather every Tuesday evening from 6-9:00pm to listen to a variety of local experts on topics ranging from water quality, to forestry and prairie ecology, to the plight of pollinators, and much more. The class will culminate on October 15 with a field day to tie all of the information together. Participants will walk away from this class with a greater understanding and appreciation of the natural world, along with practical ways to get more engaged with conservation practices. Class will be held at the Jester Park Lodge. Cost is \$50 per person and pre-registration is required. Registration deadline is August 28.



Park Packs *Nature-themed Backpacks* FREE two week checkout

Themes include: Birds, Trees, Insects, Animals of Iowa, Geology, Life in a Pond, Wildflowers & Plants, Animals of the Night, Prairies, Geocaching, and Outdoor Skills.

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

Polk County Conservation
11407 NW Jester Park Drive
Granger, Iowa 50109
515-323-5300
polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov
www.leadingyououtdoors.org
Follow us on:



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 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.

PROGRAMS

Iowa Butterfly Survey Network Training

Thursday, April 28 @ 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Urbandale Public Library



Take an active role in conservation as a citizen scientist through the Iowa Butterfly Survey Network (IBSN) with this free training from the Reiman Gardens' entomology staff. Learn survey techniques specifically developed for butterflies so you can help monitor butterfly populations, and provide valuable data to identify potential threats, show effectiveness of habitat restoration efforts, and give an annual snapshot of the health of all butterfly populations in Iowa. Pre-registration required; deadline is April 25. Free.

What's the Buzz about Pollinators

Tuesday, May 3 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Jester Park Lodge

Did you know more than 1/3 of our global food supply depends on pollinators? During this educational program you'll learn how pollination works, who the pollinators are and threats they face. We'll also discuss actions you can take to help pollinators in your own yard.



Catch-n-Croakers

Friday, May 20 @ 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.

Music in the Park

Saturday, May 28 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Jester Park Amphitheater

Join us for Music in the Park on Memorial Day Weekend. The Four Mile Creek Band plays a variety of acoustic music including traditional bluegrass, contemporary bluegrass sounds and old time country and gospel. Bring a lawn chair and a blanket to sit on.

Senior Fishing Derby

Friday, June 3 @ 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 27. To register, call (515) 286-3536.

Kayak Basics

Thursday, June 9 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Jester Park, 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 June 2. Minimum age 14. Fee: \$10.

Wild Night Life & Hike

Friday, June 10 @ 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 required; deadline is June 8. Fee: \$5.

Wild Edibles

Saturday, June 11 @ 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Jester Park, Shelter #3

Ever wonder what those pesky weeds in your yard are good for? Come take a walk on the wild edibles side! You'll learn to identify the common, edible plants around you and get a few new recipes to try at home! We will prepare and sample a variety of edible plants so bring an appetite. Pre-registration required; deadline is June 3. Fee \$10.



Go Outside & Play

Saturday, June 11 @ 1:00-2:30 p.m.
Jester Park Playscape

Although technology has created numerous benefits to



society, it has also changed the way children play. Adults will learn how to help engage their child in playing outdoors while kids have fun. Warning! your child will get wet, dirty, and tired. This program is co-sponsored by the Blank Park Zoo.

Princess Adventures

Tuesday, June 14 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #6

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 about birds, followed by a tea party with a snack. Fee: \$5.

Basics of Fermenting Foods

Thursday, June 23 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Northwest Community Center



Fermenting foods is a great way to preserve your harvest while providing health benefits to your family. Simple recipes will be shared including sauerkraut, gingered carrots and kefir. You will also get to sample some fermented foods and get kefir starter to take home. Pre-registration required; deadline is June 20. Fee: \$5.

Creek Walk

Friday, June 24 @ 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.

Music in the Park

Saturday, July 2 @ 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Jester Park Amphitheater

Join us for Music in the Park with Dance of a ParrottHead, Midwest's premier Jimmy Buffett tribute band. Bring a lawn chair and blanket to sit on.

Stand Up Paddling

Thursday, July 7 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m. and 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet in pond parking lot

Come on out and explore the pond at Thomas Mitchell on a paddle board! Stand up paddling is the fastest growing sport in America. Why? Because it's easy to learn, tons of fun, and can be done on almost any body of water. Instruction and equipment provided. Sign-up for the 6:00 or 7:00 class. Pre-registration required; deadline July 1. Minimum age 13. Fee: \$5.

Wild for Wildlife Hike

Saturday, July 9 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Jester Park, Shelter #6

Join a naturalist for a hike to discuss critters that might call Jester Park their home. We'll discuss animal adaptations and look for clues that might tell us who is living there. We'll also take a look at the resident herds of bison and elk as well as visit the bird blind to see who might be visiting the feeders.

Creek Walk

Thursday, July 21 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Mally's Park

See description for the June 24th Creek Walk.

Jazz in July

Friday, July 22 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jester Park Amphitheater



Join in on an evening of food, fun, art and music. Food, beverages and local arts will be available to purchase along with free nature programs and art activities. Our featured band is the Bryan Schumaker Quartet. This jazz quartet plays music by artists such as Joshua Redman, Horace Silver, McCoy Tyner, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Billy Strayhorn, John Scofield, and Charles Mingus, along with traditional jazz standards.

Iowa Reptiles

Tuesday, August 2 @ 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.

Creek Walk

Saturday, August 13 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #1

See description for the June 24th Creek Walk.

Monarch Tagging

Saturday, August 27 @ 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Come learn about one of the world's most talked about butterflies and what makes them so unique! We will also try our hand at catching and tagging monarchs as they migrate back to their winter home in Mexico. We will also be looking for milkweed that has ripened so we can collect the seed and plant more habitat for monarch butterflies!

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 1 - Feathered Friends @ *Jester Park, Shelter #6*

June 15 - Busy Bees @ *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4*

June 29 - Giants of the Prairie @ *Jester Park, Shelter #6*

July 13 - Snakes Alive @ *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

July 27 - Silly Salamander @ *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #1*



Exploring the Jester Park Elk and Bison Educational Plaza is part of the "Giants of the Prairie" Story Hour!

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 8 - Nature Detectives @ *Brown's Woods*

June 22 - Tyke Hike @ *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

July 6 - Creek Walk @ *Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelter #1*

July 20 - Water Wonders @ *Jester Park, Shelter #5*

August 3 - Geo the Geode @ *Jester Park, Shelter by the Lodge*

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 9 - Rrrabbit! at *Raccoon River Nature Lodge*

May 24 - Feathered Friends at *Jester Park, Shelter #6*

June 6 - Everyone needs a Rock at *Jester Park Park, Shelter by the Lodge*

June 21 - Let's go Fishing at *Raccoon River Nature Lodge*

July 11 - Grandfather Buffalo at *Jester Park, Shelter #6*

July 26 - Wiggly Worms and Life Underground at *Pearson Park*

August 8 - Beaver Buddies at *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

August 23 - Tricky Tracks at *Southwoods Park*

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



Des Moines Chapter

Polk County Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*

Connie Johnson, *Ankeny*

Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*

Lance Northway, *Runnells*

Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

Polk County Conservation Director:

Richard Leopold

Summer Skills

Ages: 10-16 years

Summer is about having fun and playing outside. Join PCC naturalists as they introduce your child to some fun outdoor activities which can be enjoyed the rest of their lives. Come to one or sign-up for an entire series. All equipment will be provided. Pre-registration required. Fee: \$10.

Series 1

1:00-3:00 p.m. at Thomas Mitchell Park

June 13 - Canoeing
 June 15 - Fishing
 June 20 - Geocaching
 June 22 - Archery
 June 27 - Survival Hike
 June 29 - Kayaking

Series 2

1:00-3:00 p.m. at Jester Park

June 14 - Canoeing
 June 16 - Fishing
 June 21 - Geocaching
 June 23 - Archery
 June 28 - Survival Hike
 June 30 - Kayaking

Series 3

10:00 a.m.-Noon at Jester Park

July 11 - Archery
 July 13 - Canoeing
 July 18 - Kayaking
 July 20 - Survival Hike
 July 25 - Geocaching

Series 4

10:00 a.m.-Noon at Fort Des Moines Park

July 12 - Archery
 July 14 - Canoeing
 July 19 - Kayaking
 July 21 - Survival Hike
 July 26 - Geocaching

Overnight Youth Caving Trip

Maquoketa, Iowa

July 28-29

Join Polk County Naturalists and explore Iowa underground! Go caving, climbing, and hiking on an overnight trip to Maquoketa Caves State Park in Northeast, Iowa. Meals, transportation, tents, and camping fees provided. Participants must provide sleeping bag. Please note caving involves crawling through small dark places. Depart Jester Park 8:00 a.m. on July 28 and return by 5:00 p.m. on July 29. *Pre-registration required, deadline July 15. Limited to 10 participants, ages 12-16. Fee: \$50.*



2016 Eco-Bus Tours

Step on the bus and rediscover Iowa with us!

Shake it Up to Dysart - April 28

Orange City Tulip Festival to Orange City - May 18 & 19 - FULL

Frank Lloyd Wright/Music Man to Mason City - June 28

Music on the Mississippi to Moline, IL - July 14 - FULL

Rock of Ages - Grotto of the Redemption to West Bend - August 30

Going Greene to Jefferson - September 20

Discover Dubuque & Manchester Overnight to Dubuque - October 11 & 12

For information about these trips and to register on-line, go to www.leadingyououtdoors.org. Questions, call Lori Foresman-Kirpes at 515-323-5380.



To register for a trip: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Summer Library Tour

Polk County Conservation Naturalists will be visiting several libraries this summer and you are welcome to attend! These programs are free and geared for families.

June 8 - Rock Me at *West Des Moines Library*, 1:30 p.m.

June 13 - Animal Olympics at *Kirkendall Library, Ankeny*, 1:30 p.m.

June 16 - Bug Me at *Central Library, Des Moines*, 2:00 p.m.

June 16 - Animals Olympics at *Kirkendall Library, Ankeny*, 10:00 a.m.

June 21 - Animals Olympics at *Northside Library, Des Moines*, 3:30 p.m.

July 11 - Animal Olympics at *Forest Ave. Library, Des Moines*, 3:00 p.m.

Water Wonders Camp

June 13-16

9:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Ages: 8-9 years

Come and get your feet wet as we discover all we can about water. We'll compare ponds, rivers, lakes, and wetlands plus the animals that live in them. Daily field trips will take us to various Polk County parks.

- Fee: \$125
- Registration deadline is May 27
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter by Lodge

**These day camps are designed to encourage hands-on learning through outdoor explorations, activities, games, crafts, and more. Camps will be led by naturalists.*



Junior Naturalist Camp on
June 20-23 and June 27-30
are FULL!

Discovery Camp

July 5-8

9:00-11:00 a.m.

Ages: 6-7 years

This camp is all about animals! Learn about the basic animal groups: insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. There will be plenty of games, live animals, snacks, and more!

- Fee: \$60
- Registration deadline is June 17
- Limited to 12 campers
- Meeting location: Jester Park, Shelter #5

**Camps fill up quickly! To register go to www.leadingyououtdoors.org. Due to popularity of our camps, your child may only attend each camp one time.*



Adult Summer Camp

Ever wished you had gone to summer camp as a kid but never got the chance? Well here's your opportunity. Sign up for this exciting hands-on adult summer camp and learn all the skills you'll need to feel comfortable and confident in the great outdoors. Each session will be led by Polk County Conservation naturalists, all equipment will be provided, and each evening will conclude with a campfire and social with appetizers provided. This is a great opportunity for you to get that summer camp experience while meeting other adults with a similar outdoor interest. Sign up for one or the entire series. *Pre-registration required, minimum age 21, all classes will meet at Jester Park, Shelter #5. Fee: \$10 per class.*

Paddle Party

Wednesday, June 8 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Don't get left up the creek without a paddle. Learn the basics of paddling and then get hands on practice in a kayak, canoe, or both. Plan to get wet. Registration deadline is June 3.

We're Not Lost

Wednesday, June 15 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

You'll never have to stop and ask for directions again. You'll learn way finding techniques like how to use a GPS to find a geocache, read a compass, make a map, and use the sun and landmarks for orientation. Registration deadline is June 10.

To register, visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org

A is for Archery, Atlatls, and Artifacts

Wednesday, June 22 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Try your hand using ancient techniques for hunting game. You'll learn the basics of archery, how to throw an atlatl, and see real authentic artifacts crafted by early Iowa natives and learn how the artifacts were constructed into tools. Registration deadline is June 17.

Be a Survivor

Wednesday, June 29 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.

You'll be ready for an episode of Naked and Afraid after you attend this class. You'll learn how to construct your own woodland shelter, try out a variety of fire starting techniques, and understand how to identify and forage for native wild edibles during a hike through the woods. Registration deadline is June 24.

EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Woodland Restoration Workday**Saturday, May 21 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.****Yellow Banks Park, meet south of the ball field (along the road to the pond)**

We will be assisting longtime park stewards Penny Thomsen and John Harri in their efforts to remove undergrowth and invasive species. No experience is necessary and equipment is provided. Wear sturdy shoes, long pants and bring a refillable water bottle.

National Trails Day: Trails Workday and Camping**Saturday, June 4 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. & 1:30-4:00 p.m. Jester Park**

Join other natural surface trails enthusiasts for a day of trail maintenance, clearing overlook areas, re-surfacing trails and repairing erosion structures. Then kick up your feet and relax for an evening of food, drink and entertainment. Check-in at 9 a.m. on Saturday with free camping provided for volunteers Friday and Saturday night. Saturday evening BBQ provided. Registration is required for camping and Saturday evening events. You can come to the morning, afternoon, or both! To register, go to www.leadingyououtdoors.org. Registration deadline is May 20.

Great Outdoors Foundation Backwoods Challenge**Sunday, June 5 @ 9:00 a.m., registration opens at 7:30 a.m. Jester Park, Campground 6**

Got what it takes to complete this backwoods mudslinging, canoe paddling, bike riding, trail hiking, fun filled morning of challenges? Let's find out as you and a team member put your skills to the test! Registration open to the first 100 teams (of two). Register online at www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org. Fee: \$ 50/person. Proceeds to benefit the new Jester Park Nature Center.

Brown's Woods Clean up and Restoration**Saturday, June 18 @ 9:00-11:00 a.m. Brown's Woods, meet in parking lot**

Join us for a morning of beautifying a county park. Your help is needed to remove trash and invasive garlic mustard in Brown's Woods. No experience is necessary and equipment is provided. Wear sturdy shoes, long pants and bring a refillable water bottle.

Puccoon Prairie Restoration**Saturday, July 16 @ 9:00-11:00 a.m.****Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

Join PCC as we work to restore a unique prairie remnant in Polk County. Volunteers and staff will be helping to clear the area of brush and invasive species. No experience is necessary, and equipment is provided. Please wear appropriate footwear, long pants and bring a refillable water bottle. After crossing the South Skunk River coming from highway 330, take NE 102nd St. east then turn south on NE 112th St. We will meet at the entrance gate south of 102nd about one half mile down the road on 112th St (east side of road). Look for signage along the road. In partnership with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

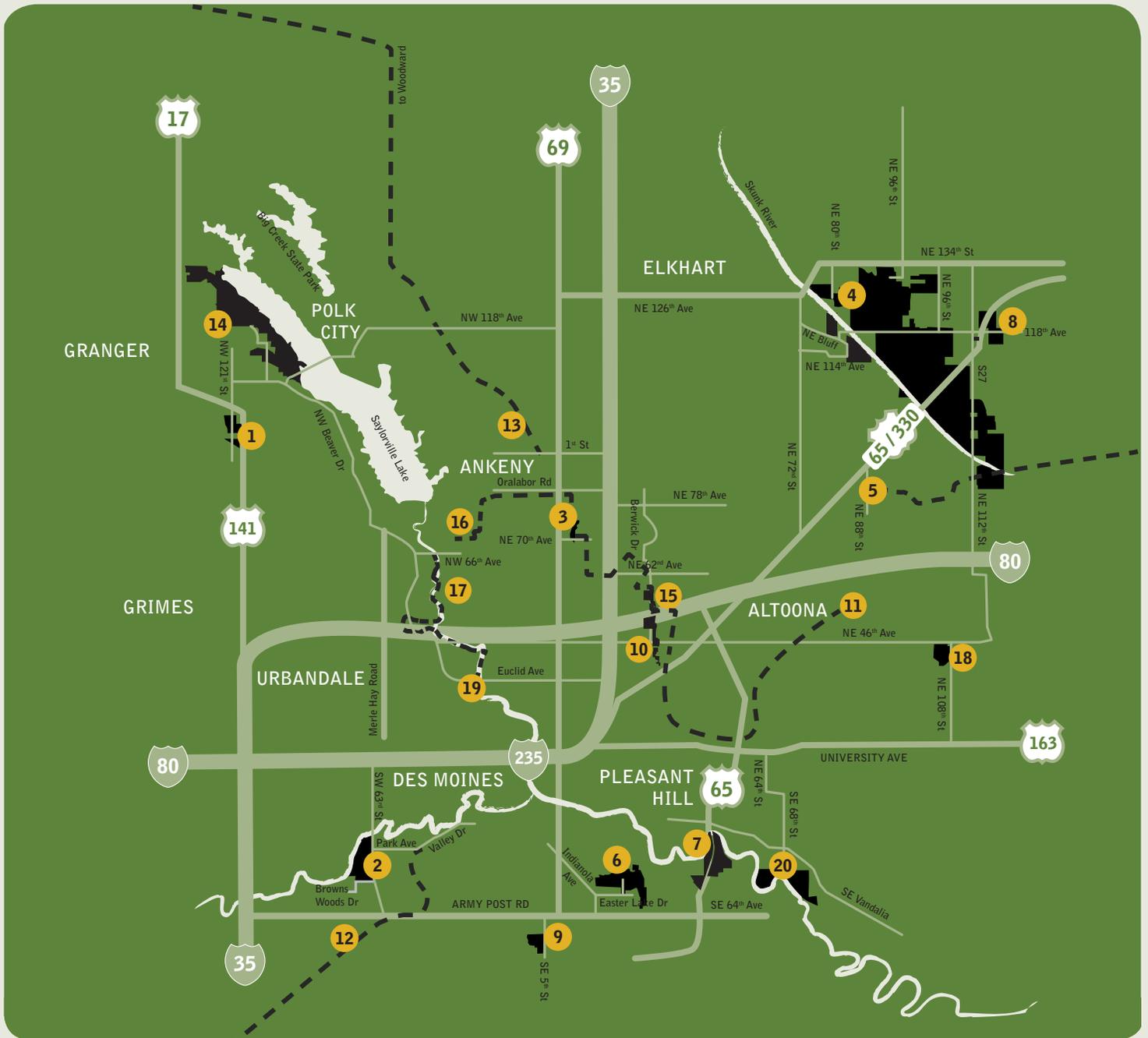
River Run Garbage Grab**Friday, August 26 (tentative) 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.****Des Moines River: from below Saylorville Dam to Pleasant Hill Boat Ramp****Raccoon River: from Walnut Woods State Park to Des Moines Water Works Park**

Come join our partners and volunteers for this long-standing annual event to remove trash from the river or along its adjacent trails – paddlers, rowers, power boaters, walkers, bicyclers, mountain bikers, birders, etc are all welcome! Later this summer go to www.riverstewards.org, to sign up for water based or trail and land based clean-up efforts.



Trash collected from a previous River Run Garbage Grab

To volunteer for any of these events, please contact Pat Spain at (515) 323-5280 or pat.spain@polkcountyiowa.gov



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

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

BE A FRIEND OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

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

FRIENDS ENJOY:

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

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY, ZIP: _____

DAYTIME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

FRIENDS LEVELS:

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

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS:

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



DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
April 21	4:00 p.m.	Jester Park Nature Center Launch Party	Greater Des Moines Partnership
April 28	6:00 p.m.	Iowa Butterfly Survey Network Training*	Urbandale Public Library
May 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Whitetails	Jester Park Lodge
May 3	6:30 p.m.	What's the Buzz about Pollinators	Jester Park Lodge
May 9	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
May 18-19	7:15 a.m.	Orange City Tulip Festival*	Orange City, Iowa
May 20	8:00 p.m.	Catch-n-Croakers	Chichaqua Longhouse
May 21-25	7:00 a.m.	Buffalo National River Kayak Trip*	Harrison, Arkansas
May 21	10:00 a.m.	Woodland Restoration Workday	Yellow Banks Park
May 24	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
May 28	6:30 p.m.	Music in the Park	Jester Park
June 1	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Jester Park
June 3	9:00 a.m.	Senior Fishing Derby	Easter Lake Park
June 4	10:00 a.m.	Trails Workday & Camping	Jester Park
June 5	9:00 a.m.	GOF Backwoods Challenge*	Jester Park
June 6	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
June 8	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Brown's Woods
June 8	6:00 p.m.	Paddle Party*	Jester Park
June 9	6:00 p.m.	Kayak Basics*	Jester Park
June 10	8:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
June 11	9:00 a.m.	Wild Edibles*	Jester Park
June 11	1:00 p.m.	Go Outside & Play	Jester Park
June 13-16	9:00 a.m.	Water Wonders Camp*	Jester Park
June 13	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills-Canoeing*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 14	10:00 a.m.	Princess Adventures*	Jester Park
June 14	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Jewels of the Wetlands	Jester Park Lodge
June 14	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Jester Park
June 15	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Fishing*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 15	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Easter Lake Park
June 15	6:00 p.m.	We're Not Lost*	Jester Park
June 16	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Fishing*	Jester Park
June 18	9:00 a.m.	Brown's Woods Clean-up & Restoration	Brown's Woods
June 20-23	9:00 a.m.	Jr. Naturalist Camp*	Jester Park
June 20	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 21	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Jester Park
June 21	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge
June 22	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Fort Des Moines Park
June 22	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 22	6:00 p.m.	"A" is for Archery, Atlatls, & Artifacts*	Jester Park
June 23	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Jester Park
June 23	6:30 p.m.	Basics of Fermenting Foods	Northwest Community Center
June 24	6:30 p.m.	Creek Walk	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 27-30	9:00 a.m.	Jr. Naturalist Camp*	Jester Park
June 27	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Survival Hike*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 28	6:45 a.m.	Frank Lloyd Wright Bus Trip	Mason City, Iowa
June 28	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Survival Hike*	Jester Park
June 29	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour*	Jester Park
June 29	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Thomas Mitchell Park
June 29	6:00 p.m.	Be a Survivor*	Jester Park
June 30	1:00 p.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Jester Park
July 2	6:30 p.m.	Music in the Park	Jester Park
July 5-8	9:00 a.m.	Discovery Camp*	Jester Park

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
July 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Barn Owls	Jester Park Lodge
July 6	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Thomas Mitchell Park
July 7	6:00 p.m.	Stand-up Paddling*	Thomas Mitchell Park
July 7	7:00 p.m.	Stand-up Paddling*	Thomas Mitchell Park
July 9	10:00 a.m.	Wild for Wildlife Hike	Jester Park
July 11	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Jester Park
July 11	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park
July 12	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Archery*	Fort Des Moines Park
July 13	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Jester Park
July 13	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Fort Des Moines Park
July 14	7:00 a.m.	Music on the Mississippi Bus Trip*	Moline, Illinois
July 14	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Canoeing*	Fort Des Moines Park
July 16	9:00 a.m.	Puccoon Prairie Restoration*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
July 18	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Jester Park
July 19	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Kayaking*	Fort Des Moines Park
July 20	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Survival Hike*	Jester Park
July 20	10:30 a.m.	Nature Playdate	Jester Park
July 21	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Survival Hike*	Fort Des Moines Park
July 21	6:30 p.m.	Creek Walk	Mally's Park
July 22	6:30 p.m.	Jazz in July	Jester Park
July 25	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Jester Park
July 26	10:00 a.m.	Summer Skills - Geocaching*	Fort Des Moines Park
July 27	12:00 p.m.	Nature's Story Hour	Easter Lake Park
July 28-29	8:00 a.m.	Overnight Youth Caving Trip*	Maquoketa, Iowa
August 2	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - What's New with PCC	Jester Park Lodge
August 2	2:00 p.m.	Iowa Reptiles	Jester Park Lodge

More events listed on-line

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

Week-Long Riding Camps

Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

- June 13-17: June Horsin' Around (Beginner Riding Level), Ages 8-10
- June 20-24: Horses, Horses, Herds of Horses (Beginner Riding Level), Ages 11-14
- July 11-15: Hit The Trails (Intermediate Riding Level), Ages 10-14
- July 25-29: Rodeo Camp (All Riding Levels), Ages 9-13
- August 1-5: Horses Through History (All Riding Levels), Ages 12+

Overnight Riding Camp

June 2-4, Thursday 9:00-2:00 p.m., and Friday 9:00 a.m.-Saturday 11:00 a.m., Ages 12+

Half Day Riding Camps

Monday-Wednesday from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

- June 6-8: Tiny Tots ~ Pony Power, Ages 5-7
- June 27-29: Tiny Tots ~ Joker's Wild West, Ages 5-7
- July 18-20: Tiny Tots ~ Fairy Tales, Ages 5-7
- August 8-10: Let's Go to the Fair, Ages 8-10

Special Events

- Mother's Day Event - May 7 from 12-4 pm
- National "I Love Horses" Day Event - July 15 from 4 pm-7 pm
- Competitive Mounted Orienteering Event - July 16 from 10 am to 4 pm
- Horse Owner Seminar Series # 1 - August 7 from 4 pm- 7 pm
- Fall Open House - August 27 from 11 am- 3 pm

Guided Trail Rides

Season Opening - May 27! Offered Tuesdays-Sundays at: 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:30 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. Riders must be 8 years or older, and must be accompanied by an adult over 18. Each ride time can accommodate up to 10 riders. Trail rides are guided through Jester Park, and along the picturesque shores of Saylorville Lake. Guests are accompanied by 2 guides, rides are walk only, and 1 hour in length. Cost: \$35 per person. Call 515-999-2818, ext. 1 to make a reservation.



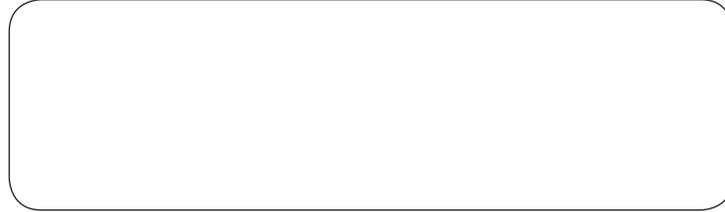
Jester Park
Equestrian Center
11171 NW 103 Court
Granger, IA 50109
(515) 999-2818

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. Call 515-323-5300 to register. The cost of the catered lunch by The Radish is \$10.

Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

Whitetail: Treasure, Trophy or Trouble?

May 3

Larry Stone will share the history of deer in Iowa. - Although Iowa's original deer herd vanished in the face of white settlement, the animals rebounded during the 20th century to the point of over-population. Adapted from 2003 book written for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Whitetail" traces that history. It's a story with broad appeal to farmers, hunters, motorists, and wildlife watchers – anyone whose life has been affected by Iowa deer. Program Sponsored by Humanities of Iowa.

Jewels of the Wetlands

June 14

Ann Johnson is a life-long Iowan and birder. In the summer of 1999 she expanded her natural history interests to learning identification of dragonflies and damselflies. That process of learning led to the publication of "Dragonflies and Damselflies in Your Pocket: A Guide to the Odonates of the Upper Midwest" and the creation of the informal Iowa Odonata Survey – <http://iowaodes.org>. Ann's presentation will focus on gaining an awareness and appreciation of the beauty and diversity of these fabulous insects.

Barn Owls

July 5

Meet "Alba", an education ambassador for SOAR-Saving Our Avian Resources. Barn owls are beautiful birds and have some of the most extreme adaptations of owls, that make them supreme hunters. But even with their special skills their numbers are believed to be declining in the Midwest. Barn owls have been listed as an endangered species in Iowa since 1977. Alba can help us understand what has happened and what we can do to help.

What's New with Polk County Conservation?

August 2

Director, Richard Leopold, will share how Polk County Conservation and the Great Outdoors Foundation are teaming up to bring one of Iowa's leading nature centers to this area. Jester Park Nature Center will provide exceptional value and leadership through avenues of recreation, education, and conservation. Leopold will also discuss other park and natural resource improvements taking place in the county.

To register for lunch: www.leadingyououtdoors.org