

Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2016 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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Glow Wild at Jester - September 4

Come 'Glow Wild' with your family on Sunday, September 4th at Jester Park from 6:00-10:00 p.m. Enjoy pony rides, live music, night hikes and a kids' prairie maze. Learn about bats, owls, and the stars plus children will make their own art and craft activity. Enjoy beverages, food and cook your own s'mores. The evening will cap off with a large bonfire and music by "The Swing Crew". Admission is \$10 per adult or \$25 per family and includes: free pony rides; one-drink ticket, lightning bug craft, discovery sessions, and night hikes. Experience nature in a fun filled evening of activities.

To purchase tickets ahead of time, please visit <https://tikly.co/events/1415>. Ticket prices will increase to \$15 per adult or \$30 per family at the door.

All proceeds from this event will go towards the construction of the new Jester Park Nature Center. Information about this unique educational facility will be on display as Polk County Conservation finalizes the plan for this \$10 million building, scheduled to open Earth Day, 2018.

Glow Wild attendees will be able to participate in development of a natural art piece that will be displayed at the Nature Center. A raffle will be held for someone to win a fireball pit and weekend stay at a Jester Park cabin.

We are excited to have "The Swing Crew" share their interactive-acoustic fun music with you! They play classic rock, country, pop, swing, "island beat" and about any other genre you could possibly come up with. The show features a wide variety of music, audience participation, jokes, stunts, cornball humor and toasts. They will perform from 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Thank you to our partner Cumulus Radio, for sponsoring this event.



Sample of fire pit ball to be raffled off during Glow Wild. \$2/ticket or 3 tickets for \$5

Turn to page 5 to learn more about the Jester Park Nature Center!



Message from the Director: Sometimes, Nature is Inconvenient

The summer recreation season is in full swing! People are outdoors, our parks and trails are well used, and it has been a fairly warm season thus far. Although most encounters with “the wild” are pleasurable, there are sometimes inconvenient and pesky aspects to nature. This has been a very prolific year for mosquitoes. We know mosquitoes can spoil your outdoor fun at times. We often get the question “why don’t you spray?!”

- It doesn’t work well. A spray, or mist, will kill mosquitoes it comes into contact with. However, mosquitoes will quickly repopulate areas that have been sprayed due to the surrounding forest, prairies, and wetlands in our parks and trails.
- Spraying is a costly endeavor, especially since it is so ineffective.
- The use of broadcast mist chemicals is harmful to ALL insects, and kills butterflies, dragonflies (that eat mosquitoes!), and honey bees. It also harms amphibians and birds that feed on the insects.
- That same mist is not good for people either. And consider that the best time to spray is dusk when winds are usually down. This is also the times when campers are gathering for their evening meals around the campfire. Pesticides and s’mores are not a good combination!

So, what to do? Firstly, please know that we at Polk County Conservation are doing everything we can to suppress mosquitoes. We monitor to make sure there is minimal breeding habitat, such as mud puddles, old tires, etc. We work with volunteers to install bat houses, which eat millions of mosquitoes nightly. We encourage long sleeves and pants, if possible, and minimal use of your own insect repellents if necessary.

Populations will often disappear as quickly as they appear, so don’t let this pesky critter stop your enjoyment of the outdoors. Here’s to a great summer, and perhaps looking forward to fall’s first frost which usually wipes them out until next year!

- PCC Director, Rich Leopold

Golf Course Improvements

The current contract for the management of Jester Park Golf Course expires on December 31, 2017. Polk County Conservation is in the process of developing Requests For Proposals (RFP’s) for the next management contract which will become effective January 1, 2018. As a part of this RFP, we will be identifying capital improvement needs during the next term of this agreement.



Prior to implementing future capital improvements, the following guiding principles have been established:

- Any changes to the golf course shall be equal to or exceed current operational and player use of the course;
- Disruption of use of the golf course shall be kept at a minimum with no feature being closed for more than two months of the playing season. (September - March construction);
- Public meetings shall be held to obtain user feedback into all proposed capital projects.

Potential future capital projects include relocation of the driving range, replacement of the irrigation system, clubhouse remodel, and course enhancements.

Public meetings to seek feedback on future capital projects will be held on Tuesday, August 30, at 6:00 p.m. and Thursday, September 8, at 6:00 p.m. Both meetings will be held at the Jester Park Lodge.

Please attend one of these meetings so we can share with you more details about these potential projects and get your input as we proceed with the process. Questions can be directed to Doug Romig, Deputy Director, at 515-323-5355 or doug.romig@polkcounty-iowa.gov.



The Latest

Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

TRAILS

Great Western Trail

Significant work to the land adjacent to the trail is currently underway and may require additional temporary reroutes of the trail. Polk County Conservation and the City of West Des Moines are working to establish a new trailhead, and every effort will be made to keep the trail open, functional and safe during this construction phase.

PARKS

Fort Des Moines Park

- Exciting park improvements have been in the works throughout 2016. Construction is moving forward on a new 3-season shelter and restroom. Roads, parking lots and building concrete has been poured. Resurfacing of the new hiking trails is now complete. Work on the peninsula, boardwalk and park structures (boat ramp, restroom facilities, etc.) continue as part of the larger ongoing improvements within the park. PCC was awarded a Water Resource Access Grant to leverage funds for the new boat ramp and boat dock. Staff, volunteers and Conservation Corps will be working on different aspects of the outdoor classroom this fall. Construction of shade structures, sitting areas, interpretive stations and additional woodland trails are in the works this fall.

Yellow Banks Park

- Staff is currently discussing the feasibility and compiling cost estimates for a series of improvements within Yellow Banks Park. Enhancements to waterways, facilities, camp areas and trails have already begun. A two-mile soft surface hiking trail that winds through recently acquired properties adjacent to the park has been laid out and will provide future access around the pond. Initial clearing has taken place with completion of the trail anticipated this fall. PCC was awarded a grant from REI for nature trail enhancement.

Jester Park Nature Center

- Building redesign for the Jester Park Nature Center continues and is anticipated to reach completion soon while fundraising efforts will continue throughout 2016. Visit www.jesterparknaturecenter.com for further details on the Jester Park Nature Center and its importance in our community. Mark your calendars and come support the Jester Park Nature Center at the following events.
- Glow Wild at Jester Park - September 4
- Great Outdoors Foundation Rolling Adventure on the Chichaqua Valley Trail - September 18
- Great Outdoors Foundation Buck Naked, Need Dough Annual Dinner at the Embassy Suites on the River - November 11

Easter Lake Park

- The dredge has been floating on the lake and has operated briefly since April. Flooding along the Des Moines River broke the discharge pipe and operations ceased until it could be repaired. A second dredge is in place on the lake by Shelter #5 and the two will work in tandem, operating in 12 hour shifts, 7 days per week. Because of the additional manpower and equipment dedicated to the project, dredging is still anticipated to reach completion by November 2016.
- Swimming and boating has been closed for the 2016 season at Easter Lake during the dredging process. Fishing regulations, however, are more relaxed from June 1, 2016 - June 1, 2017. Full regulation details are available under 'News and Announcements' on our website.
- Rain gardens are now in place throughout the park as a means to filter runoff from the road and parking lots around the lake before it enters into Easter Lake. Invasive species removal will continue in numerous areas around the lake. This will be a multi-pronged approach that will utilize both machine and hand clearing, spraying, and the re-introduction of fire throughout the area with a goal to increase the herbaceous layer in the treated woodlands.

MISCELLANEOUS

Conservation Corps

- The 2016 Conservation Corps crew began their annual term in our family of parks in February. Improvement of natural areas has become a priority with a focus on treatment of invasive species in woodlands, wetlands and prairies. This has not only provided an ecological benefit for PCC managed lands but also has improved access to some under-utilized areas. Work will continue on invasive plants throughout the fall. Other priorities include preparing woodlands for fall burns, improving access by creating soft surface trails, bio-swale installation at Fort Des Moines Park and tree plantings throughout PCC parks and trails.



Saving Pollinators One Garden at a Time

In November 2015, Polk County Conservation received a Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) - Conservation Education Program grant to work with 10 religious organizations to install native pollinator gardens at their place of worship. In addition to providing the garden designs and native plants, we educated congregations about pollinators and steps they can take at home to help pollinators.

Prior to the gardens being planted, naturalists met with congregations to educate them about the project and the importance of pollinators. We wanted congregations to take ownership of the project and understand they were in a unique position to help pollinators at their place of worship. Here are some comments from people following the education programs:

- “Very informative. Plan on planting many, many plants for pollinators.”
- “I have planted for butterflies and hummingbirds but didn’t realize they were pollinators.”
- “Did not realize the impact of pollinators on various foods.”
- “Already ordered pollinator plants for this year after our first committee meeting about this project.”

The pollinator gardens were prepped and planted by congregation members in the months of May and June. Each pollinator garden was approximately 300 square feet and included over 200 plants. There are 18 different species of native perennial plants such as butterfly milkweed and purple prairie clover in each garden. The plants will provide a variety of blooms from spring until fall so there is nectar and food source available for pollinators during the growing season. Native plants were chosen because they are adapted to the local soils and climates, flourish without fertilizers, require less watering and promotes biodiversity in our landscape.

This fall we will meet with each of the congregations to install a permanent educational sign about pollinators at their garden. At that time we’ll also celebrate monarch butterflies and answer any questions about the pollinator garden. Over the next couple of years, the native plants will fill in the garden and should be a wonderful habitat for many pollinators.

Steps you can take to help pollinators:

- 1 - Grow a variety of pollinator-friendly flowers which bloom from spring until fall.
- 2 - Avoid using insecticides and herbicides in your yard.
- 3 - Plant native plants as they have more nectar and pollen than cultivars.



Congregation members from Lincoln Heights Lutheran planting their Pollinator Garden

Waterfowl Hunting Blinds

Reserve Yours Now!

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, located 30 minutes northeast of Des Moines near Bondurant and Elkhart offers 13 hunting blinds. Marsh and timber blind sites are available in this 8,000- acre wildlife area which supports numerous waterfowl.

Daily reservation cost is \$25 per hunting blind. Hunting is allowed from legal opening time to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays during the waterfowl season.

Reservations for blinds should be made in person or by calling the Chichaqua Office at (515) 967-2596 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (M-F) beginning on Monday, September 12, 2016.

Polk County Conservation Board Members:
 Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*
 Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*
 Lance Northway, *Runnells*
 Mike Smith, *West Des Moines*

Polk County Conservation Director:
 Richard Leopold

Pledge Your Support for the Jester Park Nature Center... The Time is Now!

As a friend of Polk County Conservation (PCC), we ask that you consider helping us complete one of the most exciting and powerful projects to benefit Greater Des Moines for many generations to come. We invite you to be part of a regional conservation and education effort focused on water quality, habitat, energy, outdoor recreation and getting people outdoors.

The highly anticipated Jester Park Nature Center offers exceptional experiences and learning to change the face of conservation education – and conservation results – in Central Iowa. This facility will serve as a premier nature center where people of all ages promote their personal and public health, gain hands-on stewardship experience and make meaningful connections to the natural world.



We are eager to begin construction on the Jester Park Nature Center for the people of Polk and surrounding counties. Planning for this facility has been in the works since 2008 and it was one of our Polk County Water and Land Legacy bond referendum signature projects. As promised to voters, PCC must supplement bond funds with other public and private dollars and secure grants to achieve full funding for this project.

More than 80% of the funds needed for this project have been pledged or secured. With your support, we can secure the final dollars needed to break ground in the spring of 2017. Leave a legacy on behalf of you or your family that will stand the test of time. We need your support now to make this center a reality and shape the future of our great outdoors.

Please give or pledge to this project today! Donors who give \$100 or more will receive permanent on-site recognition upon completion. All gifts are tax deductible and can be committed as a multi-year pledge over three years. This is your opportunity to be an important part of this local project.

To make a donation, please fill out your pledge below and mail to the address listed below. Or you can also pledge online at www.jesterparknaturecenter.com.

Full Name (include spouse/partner if applicable): _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Email Address: _____ Telephone #: _____

I/We would like to make an immediate donation of \$_____ to this project.

I/We would like to make a pledge of \$_____ over _____ years (1, 2, or 3 yrs).

This gift is a corporate commitment from: _____

Name and Title of corporate contact: _____

Please have this gift recognized in publications, Wall of Honor, (etc.) in the following way:

Mail form to: Great Outdoors Foundation PO Box 8071, Des Moines, IA 50301



Rock of Ages Eco-Bus Tour

August 30 @ 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

West Bend, Iowa

Rock-on with Polk County Conservation to view the eighth Wonder of the World in northwest Iowa. The Grotto covers more than a city block. It is filled with precious and semi-precious stones collected worldwide. This unique collection and display artistry has been described as a "Miracle in Stone." We will also hear the story of the trumpeter swan reintroduction. Join us for a day of history, geology and wonder.

- Fee: \$60; includes motorcoach transportation, lunch and tour fees
- Registration deadline is August 16
- Departure from Living History Farms, SE corner of the parking lot, Urbandale

Going Greene Eco-Bus Tour

September 20 @ 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Jefferson, Iowa

Journey to historic Greene County. The day begins with a tour of Hotel Pattee and the many themed guest rooms. Then we will step back in time at the RVB~1875 Historic Furniture Shop and Museum to learn the art of custom furniture. Ride the elevator to the top of the 168 foot Carillon Bell Tower and view Iowa's rural landscape from a "bird's eye" view. A final stop at the John 15 Vineyard for an afternoon snack of grape pie or ice cream with grape syrup to complete a fun filled day of discovery.

- Fee: \$55; includes motorcoach transportation, lunch and tour fees
- Registration deadline is September 6
- Departure from Grimes Walmart, parking lot NW corner

Discover Dubuque & Manchester Overnight Eco-Bus Tour

October 11-12 @ 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Dubuque, Iowa

Explore the fall colors in eastern Iowa via a two day extravaganza! Enjoy a luncheon cruise on the mighty Mississippi aboard the Spirit of Dubuque. Following lunch explore the award winning National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium. Explore downtown Dubuque and the Fenelon Street Elevator. Supper will be served riverside with a surprise presenter for the evening program. On our second day we will discover the new Whitewater Park in Manchester, find scarecrows on parade in downtown Manchester, enjoy the beautiful fall colors in Backbone State Park and tour the historic Civilian Conservation Corps museum.

- Fee: \$220 double or \$260 single occupancy; includes motorcoach transportation, meals, lodging, and all tour fees
- Registration deadline is September 12
- Departure from Prairie Meadows, Parking Lot 1, Altoona



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 Administration Office at Jester Park or Raccoon River Nature Lodge to receive your Nature Friend Explorer Pack. One pack per child please.

September 12 - Animal Homes at *Brown's Woods*

September 27 - Whoo's There? at *Quail Cove Park, 1515 S. 52nd St., WDM*

October 3 - Turning Trees & Falling Leaves at *Easter Lake Park, Shelter #4 (starts at 6 p.m.)*

October 18 - Unhuggable Animals at *Raccoon River Park, 2500 Grand Ave., WDM (starts at 6 p.m.)*

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 West Des Moines Parks and Recreation.



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

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

Music in the Park

Saturday, September 3 @ 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Jester Park Amphitheater

Join us for Music in the Park on Labor Day Weekend with Tropical Steel. This Caribbean Steel Band has been performing their “sweet island sounds” since 1997. Let them sweep you off to the islands with their collection of energetic and soothing sound of Caribbean and Latin music featuring Calypso, Soca, Rock, Reggae and Cha Cha. Bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on.



Glow Wild

Sunday, September 4 @ 6:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Jester Park

See front page for details.

Monarch Tagging

Tuesday, September 6 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Come learn about one of the world’s most talked about butterflies and what makes them so unique! We’ll talk about why monarch butterflies are “tagged” and even try tagging a few!

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Find the event on our calendar and follow the link provided to register

Prairie Exploration

Saturday, September 10 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Longhouse

Come explore Iowa’s tall grass prairie. We will search for insects and attempt to catch and tag monarch butterflies as they migrate back to their winter home in Mexico. This program is co-sponsored by the Blank Park Zoo.

Wild Night Life & Hike

Friday, September 16 @ 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 September 14. Fee: \$5.*

Monarch Festival

Sunday, September 18 @ 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Blank Park Zoo

Join us for the third annual Monarch Festival at the Zoo. We will have meet and greets with local butterfly and bee experts, crafts and activities for kids, puppet shows and a “Bug Parade” where kids can dress up as their favorite insect. This year’s event will be themed around the astonishing monarch migration to Mexico. Take home a free seed packet (limited supply) to start your own butterfly sanctuary in your yard!



Photo by Nathan Brockman

Youth Waterfowl Hunt

Saturday, September 24 @ 5:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse

Would your child like to experience the thrill of waterfowl hunting? This mentored hunt in a controlled waterfowl hunting area at Chichaqua can provide this opportunity. Start the morning with a “hunter’s breakfast” in the Longhouse. Youth will be placed in groups of two and teamed with an experienced waterfowl hunter and a conservation officer to serve as mentors. Mentors will provide the dogs, decoys, calling skills and guidance. Youth need to provide their own gun, ammunition, and waders (PCC will provide if youth do not have them). *Pre-registration required; deadline is September 16. Fee: \$10.* This hunt is for youth ages 12-15 only. Youth must have completed hunter education class.

Iowa Outdoor Expo

Saturday, September 24 @ 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 25 @ 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Des Moines Izaak Walton League

Try your skills at canoeing, kayaking, archery, fishing, trap shooting, shooting BB guns, geocaching and much more. Free family event! Visit www.iowadnr.gov/expo for more information.

Stargazing

Friday, September 30 @ 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Yellow Banks Park, Shelter #1

Turn your eyes to the sky to view the autumn constellations. Local astronomers will provide telescopes for viewing.

Fall Hike

Saturday, October 8 @ 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Brown's Woods

Come enjoy the season! A naturalist will lead a nature hike through the woods and explain the brilliance of fall colors.

Spooktacular Halloween Series

Superhero Spiders

Tuesday, October 4 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

Either you love them or hate them, spiders tend to evoke a strong response in many people. Come learn about these fascinating animals and how they perform superhero-like feats!

Snakes Alive

Tuesday, October 11 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

North Side Library, 3516 5th Ave., Des Moines

Snakes have some amazing adaptations for survival! We'll discuss the fears and myths that surround these scaly creatures people love to hate.

Owl Mania

Tuesday, October 18 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Urbandale Library, 3520 86th St., Urbandale

Owls aren't scary, but find out why their prey don't stand a chance against these rulers of the night sky!

Going Batty

Tuesday, October 25 @ 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Kirkendall Library, 1210 NW Prairie Ridge Dr., Ankeny

Are they blind? Do they really suck blood and turn into vampires? Come learn the truth about this "grossly" misunderstood animal.

Fall Frenzy

Sunday, October 9 @ 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Walker Johnston Park (Giovannetti Community Shelter)

Bring your family for a day of fall fun! Come explore Walker Johnston Park and all the amenities it has to offer. We will have a scavenger hunt, outdoor games, crafts, and live critters. This event is hosted by Polk County Conservation, UCANN, and Urbandale Parks and Recreation.

Walk For Wildlife

Saturday, October 22 @ 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Enjoy a family walk through the park or extend your trip with a 5 or 10-kilometer Volkssport walk. You can also try geocaching along your walk, GPS units will be available. Girl Scouts of America are also invited to take part in the day, there will be a number of badge requirement activities available. It's almost Halloween; wear a costume that allows you to walk. Walkers can start anytime between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored by the Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association. *\$2 registration fee payable at the event.* Pets on a 6-foot leash are welcome.

Geocache Pumpkin Hunt

Saturday, October 22 @ 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Thomas Mitchell Park, meet near pond

Join a naturalist to learn how to use a GPS, then go search the woods to find some pumpkins, collecting prizes and candy along the way! Be sure to keep an eye out for spiders along the way that are worth special prizes. Space is limited, so register early. *Pre-registration required; deadline is October 14. Fee: \$5 per collector (any child ages 3-14).*

Geocaching Basics

Saturday, November 5 @ 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Jester Park

Never heard of geocaching or always wanted to give it a try? Geocaching is a high tech scavenger hunt using a GPS. Come learn the basics and try finding several geocaches hidden just for you in Jester Park. *Pre-registration required; deadline is November 2. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5.*

Native American History Day

Sunday, November 6 @ 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Yellow Banks Park, Tent Camping Area

Join us as we celebrate the history of Native Americans at Yellow Banks Park. Get hands on experience constructing a tipi and try throwing an atlatl. Don't know what an atlatl is? Join us and find out. Authentic artifacts collected from the area

Program Registration: www.leadingyououtdoors.org

and rarely seen by the public will be interpreted. The artifacts span over twelve thousand years of history and represent four different cultures. We'll also take a short hike to the last remaining burial mound in the park. This event is free and all ages are welcome.

Barrel Birdhouses

Saturday, November 12 @ 10:00 a.m. - Noon
Jester Park

Join a Polk County Conservation Naturalist and build a home for one of your favorite backyard animals. You'll be given a plastic 15-gallon barrel and necessary supplies. You can make a wood duck house, an owl abode, a purple martin manor, a bat bungalow, a squirrel studio or a plant tower. Barrel dimensions are 14" diameter X 26" tall. Bring your ideas and we'll make them happen. *Pre-registration required; deadline is November 6. Fee: \$10.*

Soap Making

Saturday, November 12 @ 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Jester Park Office

With recent interest in more "natural" lifestyles, the art of soap making is gaining popularity. Let Mitchell County Naturalist, Chelsea Ewen, help you discover the history, chemistry, process, and benefits of making your own homemade soap. The best part of this class is customizing and taking home your own unique soap! Whether using it as a gift or for personal use, you're sure to be hooked on your first batch! *Pre-registration required; deadline is November 4. Fee: \$15.*

Indoor Archery

Tuesday, November 15 @ 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Jester Park

This class will focus on form and safety, giving students basics that will get them safely shooting, and offer a general feel for archery. The class will cover eye dominance, archery safety rules, range rules, equipment, and proper shooting techniques using a compound bow. The class is suitable for those with no experience or those that may have shot before and need a refresher. *Pre-registration required; deadline is November 10. Ages 12 and up. Fee: \$5.*

Animal Winter Survival

Wednesday, December 28 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Polk City Library, 1500 W. Broadway

Wednesday, December 28 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
South Side Library, 1111 Porter Ave., Des Moines

Friday, December 30 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
West Des Moines Library, 4000 Mills Civic Parkway

How do animals survive the winter? Learn about the different strategies animals use to survive through a long cold Iowa winter.

Tricky Tracks

Thursday, December 29 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Urbandale Library, 3520 86th St.

Thursday, December 29 @ 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
East Side Library, 2559 Hubbell Ave., Des Moines

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.

Snowshoe Hike

Friday, December 30 @ 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Easter Lake Park, Shelter #3

Learn how easy and fun snowshoeing can be while experiencing the great outdoors. Wear warm boots. Class will be canceled without snow. *Pre-registration required; deadline is December 28. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).*



Practical Conservationist

Tuesdays, September 6-October 11 @ 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Jester Park Lodge

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 six weeks, we will gather every Tuesday evening from 6:00-9:00 pm to listen to a variety of local experts on topics ranging from water quality, forestry and prairie ecology, 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. *Pre-registration is required; deadline is August 28. Fee: \$50.*

2015 Volunteers of the Year

Volunteer of the Year - Jane Clark

Jane has been a crucial part of all things conservation in Polk County for many years. A member of the Polk County Conservation Advisory Committee, Resource Enhancement and Protection Committee, Polk County Deer Task Force, as well as assisting in countless events and programs, Jane represents the heart of volunteerism.

Volunteer Team of the Year - John Zeitler and Ron Eckoff

Long-term stewards at Brown's Woods, John and Ron have dedicated their spare time to woodland restoration at Brown's Woods. Ron began his stewardship 13 years ago, and John joined him shortly after. They have helped to keep invasive species at bay in the woodland preserve.

Volunteer Group of the Year - Friends of Chichaqua Valley Trail

An important self-start up group that formed around the newly extended trail is the Friends of the Chichaqua Valley Trail (CVT). Composed of citizens from several counties and communities along the CVT, these individuals have come together to bring awareness of the trail to the public and surrounding neighborhoods as well as helped finance trail amenities along the route.

Scout of the Year - Coby Konkol with Boy Scout Troop 295

Coby and his family, along with Boy Scout Troop 295, built the new information kiosk at Brown's Woods. From start to finish, Coby took charge of this project by raising part of the funds needed for building supplies, organizing work days to build the structure, assembled the kiosk at Brown's Woods and applied the finishing touches.

Congratulations and thank you for your service!!!

Win a Geocoin!

To celebrate Polk County Conservation's 60th Anniversary in 2016, we created a Polk County Parks Geocaching Challenge. This challenge will be ongoing into 2017. Find all 16 special geocaches hidden in our parks and trails and win a free geocoin! Download the geocaching passport found on www.leadingyououtdoors.org to get started.



The Polk County Conservation Geocoin you can earn by completing the Geocaching Parks Challenge



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 and to reserve a pack, 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

pccb_info@polkcountyiowa.gov
www.leadingyououtdoors.org

Follow us on:



EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Happy Hour Harvest

Wednesdays, September 7 & October 5 @ 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, meet in the Longhouse parking lot

Join us on the first Wednesday of each month on the Chichaqua prairie. We will be collecting seed from plants ready to harvest throughout the summer and fall. We will gather afterwards to cool down and relax with drink, appetizer and dinner specials from Founders Irish Pub in Bondurant. No experience necessary and all equipment provided.

Puccoon Prairie Restoration

Saturday, September 10 @ 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Join us 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. 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.

Four Mile Creek Sweep

Saturday, September 17 @ 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Mally's Park, Berwick

Strap on your boots or waders and get muddy with the Conservation team! In an effort to improve water quality, we will be sweeping Four Mile Creek for tires and other debris as well as clean up litter in and around Mally's Park. Participants should dress for the weather, bring work gloves and wear appropriate shoes for water or shore-based efforts (old shoes, rubber boots or waders). Be sure to bring along a refillable water bottle. Meet at Mally's Park at 11:30 a.m. for lunch (RSVP by September 15). Please RSVP for lunch (note any dietary restrictions).



Trash Bash participants from several metro area companies removing invasive species from Easter Lake Park

Moonlight Seed Harvest

Saturday, October 15 @ 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, meet at the youth campground

Join us for a moonlit evening as we collect prairie seed ready to harvest. No experience necessary and all equipment provided. Participants should dress for the weather and wear appropriate shoes for field walking. This event will be followed by a bonfire and s'mores.

Woodland Restoration

Saturday, November 5 @ 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Yellow Banks Park, meet at 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.

Invasive Species Roundup

Saturday, December 10 @ 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Jester Park, Shelter #5

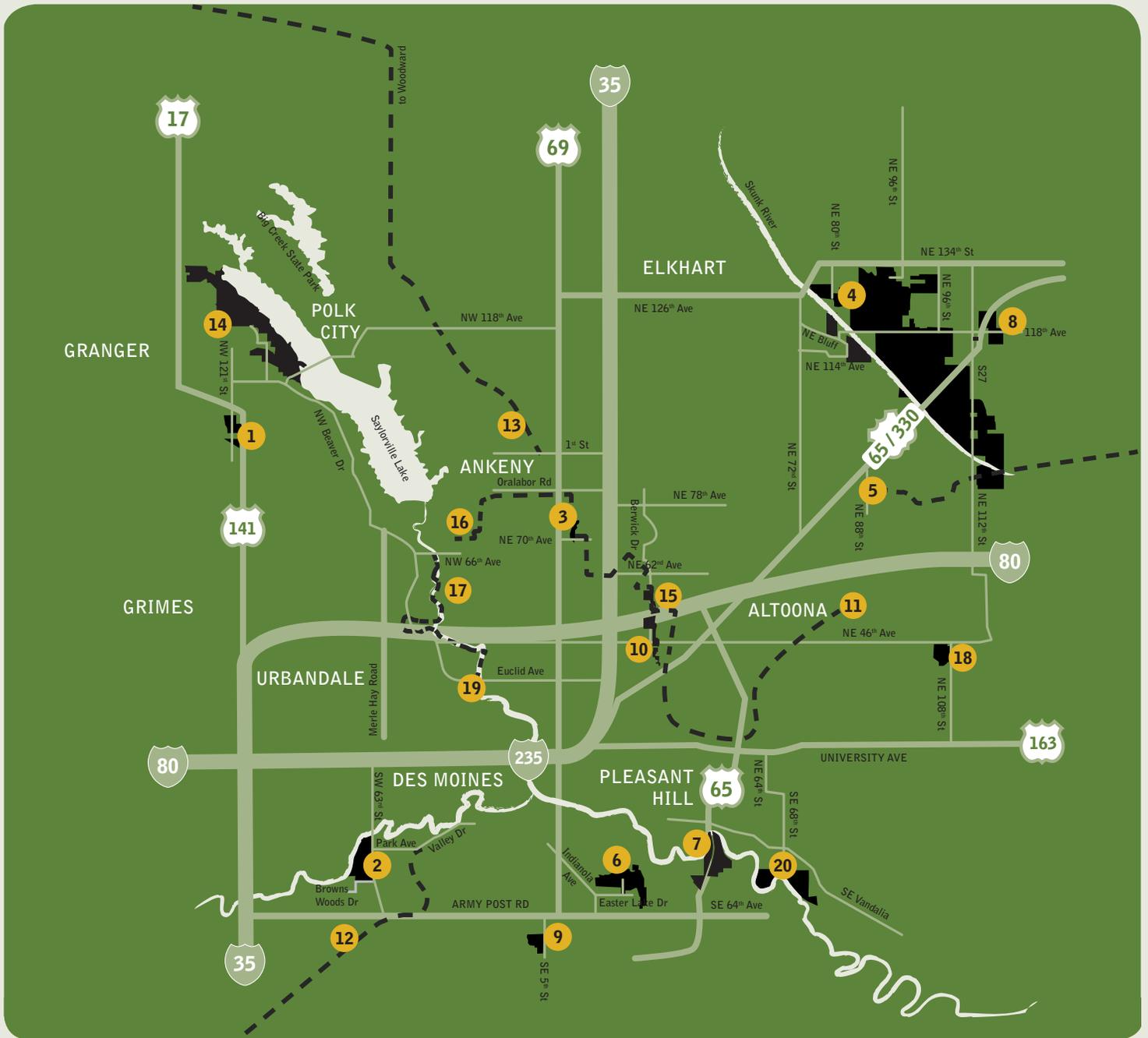
Your help is needed to restore our woodlands by removing honeysuckle and other invasive species. Meet us at 9:45 a.m. All supplies are provided. Dress for the weather and bring appropriate shoes or boots and a water bottle.

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

Please wear long pants, sturdy closed toed shoes and bring a refillable water bottle to any workday event!



Neumann Brothers Construction donated their time and resources to restore the Jester Park amphitheater



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
September 3	6:30 p.m.	Music in the Park	Jester Park
September 4	6:00 p.m.	Glow Wild	Jester Park
September 6	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Camp Dodge	Jester Park Lodge
September 6	6:00 p.m.	Practical Conservationist*	Jester Park Lodge
September 6	6:30 p.m.	Monarch Tagging	Jester Park Lodge
September 7	5:30 p.m.	Happy Hour Harvest	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 10	10:00 a.m.	Puccoon Prairie Restoration	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 10	1:00 p.m.	Prairie Exploration	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 12	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Brown's Woods
September 13	6:00 p.m.	Practical Conservationist*	Jester Park Lodge
September 16	7:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Jester Park
September 17	11:30 a.m.	Four Mile Creek Sweep	Mally's Park
September 18	12:00 p.m.	Monarch Butterfly Festival	Blank Park Zoo
September 20	7:30 a.m.	Going Green Eco-Bus Tour*	Jefferson, Iowa
September 20	6:00 p.m.	Practical Conservationist*	Jester Park Lodge
September 24	5:00 a.m.	Youth Waterfowl Hunt*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 24-25	9:00 a.m.	Iowa Outdoor Expo	Des Moines Izaak Walton League
September 27	6:00 p.m.	Practical Conservationist*	Jester Park Lodge
September 27	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Quail Cove Park, West Des Moines
September 30	7:30 p.m.	Stargazing	Yellow Banks Park
October 3	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Easter Lake Park
October 4	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Brenton Arboretum	Jester Park Lodge
October 4	6:00 p.m.	Practical Conservationist*	Jeste Park Lodge
October 4	6:30 p.m.	Superhero Spiders	Jester Park Lodge
October 5	5:30 p.m.	Happy Hour Harvest	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 8	10:00 a.m.	Fall Colors Hike	Brown's Woods
October 9	1:00 p.m.	Fall Frenzy	Walker Johnson Park, Urbandale
October 11-12	7:00 a.m.	Discover Dubuque Eco Bus Tour	Dubuque, Iowa
October 11	6:00 p.m.	Practical Conservationist*	Jester Park Lodge
October 11	6:30 p.m.	Snakes Alive	North Side Library
October 15	6:00 p.m.	Moonlight Seed Harvest	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 18	6:00 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Raccoon River Park, West Des Moines
October 18	6:30 p.m.	Owl Mania	Urbandale Library
October 22	9:00 a.m.	Walk For Wildlife	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 22	1:00 p.m.	Geocache Pumpkin Hunt*	Thomas Mitchell Park
October 25	6:30 p.m.	Going Batty	Kirkendall Library, Ankeny
November 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Bison	Jester Park Lodge
November 5	10:00 a.m.	Woodland Restoration	Yellow Banks Park
November 5	1:00 p.m.	Geocaching Basics	Jester Park
November 6	1:00 p.m.	Native American Day	Yellow Banks Park
November 12	10:00 a.m.	Barrel Birdhouses*	Jester Park
November 12	10:00 a.m.	Soapmaking*	Jester Park
November 15	6:00 p.m.	Indoor Archery*	Jester Park
December 6	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Bobcats & Other Predators	Jester Park Lodge
December 10	10:00 a.m.	Invasive Species Roundup	Jester Park
December 28	11:00 a.m.	Animal Winter Survival	Polk City Library
December 28	1:00 p.m.	Animal Winter Survival	South Side Library
December 29	11:00 a.m.	Tricky Tracks	Urbandale Library
December 29	1:00 p.m.	Tricky Tracks	East Side Library
December 30	1:00 p.m.	Animal Winter Survival	West Des Moines Library
December 30	1:00 p.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park

JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR

Jester Park Therapeutic Riding Program

New Session Starts: September 13, by appointment

JPEC is pleased to announce openings in our therapeutic riding program. We offer therapy lessons to persons with physical, emotional, and social disabilities, in a safe setting with experienced instructors. We are now enrolling for the fall. Please call (515) 999-2818 and speak with our Program Specialist for more information and a registration packet.

"Pumpkin Patch" Wagon Rides

Weekends, October 8-23, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Bring the family out to enjoy a trip to our pumpkin patch. Take a horse-drawn wagon ride out to our patch, pick out your pumpkins, and grab a ride back. Concessions will be available daily as well, with all your fall favorites - cider, pumpkin cookies, and more. Cost includes horse drawn wagon rides to and from patch, and one pumpkin of your choice per person. Fee: \$10/person, ages 5 and under are free

"Tiny Tots" Fall Session

October 8-November 20, Saturdays and Sundays, one hour time slots from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

"Tiny Tots" is designed to prepare riders ages 5 – 8 years of age to transition from those hand-led pony rides to more progressive riding lessons. Over weekly lessons for six weeks - riders will develop confidence, hand/eye coordination and balance as they play games on horseback in structured classes taught by patient, experienced instructors. 2:1 instructor ratio and assistants for each student. Registration required. Fee: \$40/class or \$200/full session.

JPEC Horse Owner Seminar Series

October 9, November 6, and December 4, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Attend this great educational seminar series with guest speakers, covering topics for horse owners of all ages. Topics to include: how to pick the best vet, pasture maintenance and care, what is important in a farrier, and much more. Registration required. Fee: \$5/person, per class.

Pink Ribbon Trail Ride

Saturday, October 15, Start Time: 10:00 a.m.

Bring your horse, or ride one of ours, and show your support for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Ride will leave trail head at 10:00 a.m., and lunch will be served at noon. Fee: \$20/person with your horse, and \$40/person with JPEC horse. Includes trail ride, lunch, and t-shirt.

JPEC "Spook-tacular"

October 29 and 30, 4:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Come out and enjoy a night of Halloween fun. Trick or Treating, face painting, a "haunted" hike, hay rack rides, costumed pony rides and games for the whole family. Costumes are encouraged and loved! Fee: \$10/person, ages 5 and under are free.

"Pony Express to Santa"

December 10-11 and 17-18, 11:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Bring your child out to enjoy a winter wonderland aboard our ponies and end the trip with a visit to see Santa. Decorate stockings, enjoy Christmas carols on a sleigh ride, and much more! Fee: \$20/child, and sleigh rides additional \$5/ per person.

Winter Break Camps

December 27, 28, and 29, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Are your kid's going stir crazy in the house? Bring them out for some horsey fun over the holiday season. Winter camps will include safety training, horsemanship skills, a riding lesson, wagon/sleigh ride and a holiday keepsake craft. Registration required. Fee: \$60/session.

Christmas Sleigh Rides

December 22-29, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Come and hear the sleigh bells jingling at JPEC! Rides for groups up to 8-10 people. \$15/per person for a 45-minute ride through the snow-covered trails of the Jester Park. We will also spread holiday cheer with complimentary hot chocolate, cookies and holiday crafts for the kids. Reservations accepted after the snow lands. Please call (515) 999-2818 for more information.

Winter Sleigh Rides

All of December, when the snow falls

Sleigh rides provided for groups up to 6 people. \$10/per person for a 45-minute ride through the snow-covered trails at Jester Park. Reservations accepted after the snow lands. Please call 515-999-2818 for more information.



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. Register for lunch at www.leadingyououtdoors.org or by calling (515) 323-5300. The cost of the catered lunch by The Radish is \$10. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

Camp Dodge: Home Away From Home, 1917-1918

Tuesday, September 6

Michael Vogt, Iowa Gold Star Military Museum Curator, will share stories on the organization, construction, disease, camp life, and other facets of military training conducted at Camp Dodge during World War I. The presentation includes an accompanying slide show of period photographs from the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum collection. Sponsored by Humanities of Iowa.

The Brenton Arboretum

Tuesday, October 4

Melissa Burdick, Executive Director of The Brenton Arboretum will describe the past, present, and future of The Brenton Arboretum, a botanical treasure in the Iowa countryside. The Arboretum is a living museum of trees, shrubs and native prairie with over 2,200 different trees and shrubs representing 486 species, hybrids and cultivars.

To register for lunch visit www.leadingyououtdoors.org or call (515) 323-5300.

Bison, a Keystone Species

Tuesday, November 1

Bison are a keystone species in North American prairies. Through grazing, wallowing, nutrient cycling and seed dispersal, bison altered their historic range in ways that are not found in most prairie reconstructions. We'll explore the natural history of bison in the eastern tall grass prairie and look at new findings from research in Iowa. Pete Eyheralde has been involved in bison ranching in southern Iowa for the last 18 years and is an Assistant Professor of Biology at William Penn University.

Bobcats and Large Carnivores in the Midwest Landscape

Tuesday, December 6

William R. Clark, Professor Emeritus of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology at Iowa State University will discuss the return of predators to the Midwest. He'll cover the recent sightings of bears, pumas, and wolves and talk in some detail about how biologists study large carnivores using the Iowa bobcat research as an example. He will also discuss the future, conflicts and conservation of these incredible animals.