

# Nature News

POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 2013 NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

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## Plight of the Monarch

by Rebekah Beall, PCC Seasonal Naturalist

Migrating monarch butterflies point to fall's approach as reliably as trees changing color. The flashy orange and black butterflies weigh about as much as a paper clip but can migrate as far as 2,000 miles to Mexico each fall to overwinter. In August and September at Polk County Conservation programs, the public helps naturalists net and tag the insects to monitor their progress south. Last fall the butterflies were hard to find, and scientists who monitor the butterfly agree this seasonal spectacle may be threatened.

Each December scientists visit remote forests in Mexico and calculate the total area of trees occupied by butterflies. Last winter's count came in at less than three acres, a 59% drop from 2011. Butterflies at one time roosted across almost 50 acres of forest. The winter numbers indicate how many butterflies will return to the United States in spring.

Like many migratory species, monarch butterflies need habitat protected across borders. According to Chip Taylor, insect ecologist and director of Monarch Watch, Mexico has largely stopped illegal logging of monarchs' overwintering sites. Now monarchs need help where they feed and reproduce in summer—Iowa and other corn belt states.

Monarch caterpillars only eat one thing—milkweeds—and increased use of herbicides (along with suburban and urban development) means less food. Genetically modified, glyphosate tolerant crops—better known as Roundup Ready - allow farmers more control over weeds in fields. The herbicide kills unwanted plants, leaving



### You can help monarchs by...

- Planting milkweed (some varieties available at most garden centers)
- Reducing herbicide and pesticide use
- Starting a Monarch Waystation with native plants through MonarchWatch.org
- Tracking monarchs by joining a citizen science project like Monarch Watch or Journey North
- Telling a friend how to help monarchs

the corn or soybeans unharmed. Before the Roundup Ready era, about 30 milkweeds snuck into each acre of corn, and monarchs followed. Now, many fields are almost clean of milkweed. Taylor estimates a loss of 120 million acres of habitat since the introduction of Roundup Ready crops. As a result, periodic stresses like last year's drought hit butterflies harder, and the population struggles to rebound.

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Bond updates pages 2-3



## Message from Mike Smith, Polk County Conservation Board Chair

It is an exciting time to serve as the Conservation Board Chair. We are working diligently to spend Polk County Water and Land Legacy bond dollars wisely and in accordance with the public's expectations.

We have been successfully acquiring sensitive natural areas from willing landowners that will play an important role to improve water quality and provide quality wildlife habitat. Additionally, we have been pursuing some significant trail connections throughout the county and tackling some recreation and education projects that were categorized as high priority in our park master plans.

More than 500 acres of quality natural areas have been purchased within recent months and will be preserved for your children and grandchildren at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Beaver Creek Greenbelt, and Camp Creek. Land protection and preservation will continue to be a priority in future years.

Water quality benefits associated with land protection, along with a series of pond, lake, and stream improvements have been another emphasis area "out of the gate". Pond restoration and shoreline stabilization is underway at Fort Des Moines Park, streambank stabilization is taking place along Camp Creek in Thomas Mitchell Park and along the Four Mile Creek Greenbelt. These projects will lead to improved water quality, fisheries health, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Some of these new outdoor recreation opportunities include a wildlife viewing platform at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, rental cabins at Jester Park, and construction of the Gay Lea Wilson and Mark C. Ackelson (Easter Lake) Trails. Planning and design for numerous quality recreation and education projects such as the Fort Des Moines Outdoor Classroom, Brown's Woods trailhead, Yellow Banks dam enhancements, Thomas Mitchell campground expansion, and Jester Park Conservation Center are coming along well. These plans will be posted on our website as they are completed.

Thank you for your interest and support of Polk County Water and Land Legacy. We look forward to fulfilling the intent of this bond referendum to its fullest capacity for the citizens of Polk County.

## The Latest

### Polk County Water & Land Legacy Updates

#### LAND PROTECTION

More than 500 acres of land has already been acquired with PCWLL funding: the Camp Creek Corridor between Runnells and Mitchellville, the Beaver Creek Greenbelt Woodland in north-east Polk County, and two properties in the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. These acquisitions will enable us to provide buffer areas adjacent to the parks, protect natural areas, and support planned park improvements.



#### TRAILS

Groundbreakings for both the Gay Lea Wilson and Mark C. Ackelson Trails have now taken place and work is underway. We anticipate that Phase I of the Mark C. Ackelson Trail at Easter Lake Park will be completed by October 1, 2013.

We will see the completion of the Gay Lea Wilson Trail in mid-September. Check our website for grand opening details as the date gets closer.



Gay Lea Wilson Trail Groundbreaking (Pictured left to right: Ben Page, City of Des Moines; Steve Van Oort, Polk County Board of Supervisor; Gay Lea Wilson; Gary Lorenz, City of Ankeny; Nick Lennox, City of Ankeny; Dennis Parker, Polk CC)

**Brown's Woods**

A new trailhead parking lot will be constructed this fall to provide safe access to Brown's Woods for vehicles and buses. In addition, work will begin to expand the nature trails and improve interpretive information.

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

The Highway 65 Wildlife Overlook structure is now complete and soon to be followed by the addition of a parking lot, kiosk, restroom, and interpretive signage.



Highway 65 Wildlife overlook

**Fort Des Moines Park**

The water levels in the pond have been drawn down in order to begin the pond restoration. Fall and winter will see the installation of stabilization structures and the beginnings of wetland construction. This will lead to improved water quality, fisheries health, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

**Jester Park**

*Cabins*

Construction has begun on four modern cabins across from Two Dam Pond. This work, the installation of a shed for rental equipment, and the finishing touches on the trail around Two Dam Pond will be completed by late fall. Keep watching our website for rental information.



*Conservation Center*

Finalization of the planning and design for the new Conservation Center is now in progress. We have been working with staff, consultants, and an advisory committee made up of local residents and the general public. We hope to have a plan ready to go by this fall. From then, we will be looking for outside funding to supplement bond dollars to make this project a success. The designs for the Conservation Center will be on display at an open house on September 12, 2013, from 6-8 p.m. at the Jester Park Lodge. Please join us to view our progress!

**Thomas Mitchell Park**

Throughout the fall season, changes to improve water quality, protect downstream habitat, and protect existing and planned park infrastructure will be taking place on Camp Creek. Work has begun to construct an accessible trail around the pond and fishing piers. Additionally, work has already begun at the Camp Creek crossing to reduce the steep grade for crossing vehicles and to provide a recreational access point to the creek for visitors.



Mark C. Ackelson (Easter Lake) Trail Groundbreaking (Pictured left to right: Tom Hockensmith, Polk County Board of Supervisor; Sara Kurovski, PCC board member; Mark Ackelson; John Mauro, Polk County Board of Supervisor; Brian Meyer, Des Moines City Council; Jim Bollard, Easter Lake Park Neighborhood Association)

**Become a Friend of Polk County Water and Land Legacy (PCWLL)**

Public involvement has helped shape past and current planning efforts for Polk County Conservation. If you would like to receive periodic emails about upcoming meetings, project updates, and other information associated with the Polk County Water and Land Legacy bond referendum, please email [Kami.Rankin@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:Kami.Rankin@polkcountyiowa.gov) and ask to become a Friend of Polk County Water and Land Legacy. You can also request to just receive updates on a certain park or area of your choice. PCWLL updates can always be found online at [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) by clicking on the homepage logo.

## Environmental Education by the Numbers

How do you measure the value of a child's laughter when they catch a frog or the pride on a teenager's face when they learn how to paddle a kayak? You can't. But what we can measure is how many people we reach through our environmental education programs. PCC offers a wide variety of programming such as classroom programs, field trips, public programs, camps, trips, etc. Every year PCC naturalists keep track of how many people attend each program, where the program occurred and how long it was. Here's a look back at fiscal year 2012-13...



## Monarchs continued...

Milkweed thrives wild in Polk County parks, and PCC plants milkweed in prairie reconstructions like those at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Jester Park, and Thomas Mitchell Park, among others. But to replace the loss of milkweed in fields, monarchs need everyone to plant milkweed in their yards, flower gardens, around businesses, in roadsides, and anywhere else they can. These beautiful native plants need little care once established, and there are many species to choose from, including the spectacular fire-orange butterfly milkweed. Besides the gorgeous flowers, who can resist the added pleasure of generations of visiting monarchs?

## REAP Assembly on Nov. 13

You are invited to attend the regional Resource Enhancement And Protection (REAP) Assembly meeting on November 13 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge in West Des Moines. REAP Assemblies are public meetings where those in attendance identify opportunities for regional REAP projects. People will also review and recommend changes to REAP policies, programs, and funding.

To receive this newsletter electronically, email:  
[polk\\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov)

## New Faces at Polk County Conservation

### Rich Leopold - Deputy Director



This spring Polk County Conservation Board hired Richard Leopold as the new Deputy Director. “I am honored to join the staff of the Polk County Conservation Board. The Board’s mission of providing quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long term protection of our natural heritage has also long been my personal career’s mission. There has been much accomplished by the Polk County Conservation Board. I believe there is a bright future ahead and I am excited about continuing this journey with the citizens of Polk County.” stated Leopold after accepting the position.

Mr. Leopold was the Executive Director for Dickinson County Conservation Board in northwest Iowa. Prior to his employment in Dickinson County, Richard served as the Assistant Regional Director for Science Applications within the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service where he provided leadership, direction, and coordination in the development and execution of high-priority science activities, including those involving climate change, adaptive resources management, and landscape conservation.

Richard was the Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources from 2007-2010. He was also the Executive Director of the Iowa Environmental Council and has held a variety of positions within the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Minnesota and Iowa Department of Natural Resources and served as the coordinator for Iowa’s statewide volunteer water quality monitoring program.

### Gary Halbersma



Gary Halbersma joined our staff as the Construction Maintenance Supervisor in May. Gary brings extensive construction experience to his new position. Prior to working for PCC, he owned a finish carpentry business specializing in luxury homes. Gary built conventional and log homes from start to finish. He also owned a dealership for structural insulated panels used in homes or commercial businesses.

### Bryan Fix



Bryan Fix has been hired as the new Jester Park Equestrian Center Barn Supervisor. He has been active in the horse industry for 24 years. Bryan has managed a boarding and breeding facility for the past 11 years and has shown competitively on a national level. His biggest showing accomplishments would be twice winning the world’s largest single breed horse show, the All-American Quarter Horse Congress in Reining.

### Lela Mullen



Lela Mullen was hired as the new Jester Park Equestrian Center Manager in July. Previously she had been working as an Inventory Manager for a Fortune 500 company. Before that she owned a 64-acre equestrian facility. She has been training horses and managing horse farms for the last 12 years and enjoys sharing her love of horses with people of all ages.

### Luke Harshbarger



This May Luke Harshbarger joined our staff as a Mechanic. Previously Luke worked at Van Wall in Madrid as a mechanic . He has a degree from Southeast Community College in Nebraska.



## Rain Barrels for Sale

Polk County Conservation has 33 gallon pre-constructed plastic rain barrels available for purchase.

Rain barrels are a great way to practice water conservation around the house while getting free water to use for watering plants and gardens. Barrels are \$50 each and come with information about installation, maintenance, rain barrel water usage, and other home water conservation techniques.

To order your barrel, contact the Education Department at 515-323-5339 or [pccb\\_info@polkcounty-iowa.gov](mailto:pccb_info@polkcounty-iowa.gov). Barrels may be picked up at the Jester Park Administration Building between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## Park Packs

**Nature-Themed Backpacks**  
**Free two-week checkout**

These backpacks come with a field guide and a variety of activities and fun facts to assist in the discovery of a specific nature topic. Themes include: Birds, Trees, Insects, Animals of Iowa, Geology, Life in a Pond, Wildflowers & Plants, Animals of the Night, Outdoor Skills, and Geocaching.

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



Scan to download the Park Pack brochure

## Bridges of Madison County Bus Trip

**October 10 @ 7:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m.**  
**Winterset, Iowa**

Journey to the Bridges of Madison County and other unique venues. Our first stop will be at Howell's Dried Floral and Greenhouse. Explore the 1910 Gift Barn filled with beautiful fall floral arrangements or stroll through the farm exhibits. Visit John Wayne birthplace, enjoy lunch at Northside Café where Clint Eastwood ate, and enjoy free time to visit the unique shops in downtown Winterset. A step on guide will take us to the historic covered bridges of Madison County. Our last two stops will be the Pumpkin Patch and the Madison County Winery.

- Fee: \$55; includes motor coach transportation, lunch and tour fees.
- Departure from the Living History Farms parking lot in Urbandale.
- Registration deadline is September 25.

**Trip Cancellation Policy:** If the trip reservation is cancelled before the registration deadline the individual will be issued a full refund. If the trip reservation is cancelled after the registration deadline, the individual will be refunded payment only if the assigned space is filled by another person. The refund shall be the amount of the trip less a \$10 cancellation fee. If assigned space is not filled, no refund will be given. The trip reservation fee may also be transferred to another trip prior to the registration deadline providing the trip is not full.



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

## Rental Skis and Snowshoes Available

The first snow will be here before we know it. If you'd like to try cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, consider renting a pair from us. Equipment can be reserved in advance by calling (515) 323-5300. Cross-country skis: \$8/day and snowshoes: \$7/day.

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

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

## Monarch Tagging

**Tuesday, September 3 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

What lives only eight months, migrates over 2,000 miles, and spends the winter in Mexico? It's the monarch butterfly. Learn about their amazing life cycle and how and why monarchs are tagged.

## Discover Chichaqua

**Sunday, September 8 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

This event is designed to introduce the public to the opportunities afforded at one of Iowa's largest natural area restoration projects. Venues will include a prairie maze, monarch tagging, pond study, birding wagon tours, geocaching, and canoe rides. All activities are family-friendly and free of charge.

## Stargazing

**Friday, September 13 @ 8:00-9:30 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, Shelter #1**

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

Program Registration: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

## Catfishing Basics

**Thursday, September 19 @ 6:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, meet at boat ramp**

Have you always wanted to catch a flat head or channel cat? In this hands-on class you'll learn about catfish biology, what and when they eat, where to find them, and more. After the program, we'll go out on a sand bar and fish for catfish. Bait, hooks, and sinkers will be provided. Bring a fishing pole if you have one, bug spray, chair or bucket to sit on, and flashlight or lantern. Participants 16 years and older must have a valid fishing license. Pre-registration is required; deadline is September 13. Fee: \$5.



## Wild Night Life & Hike

**Friday, September 27 @ 7:30-9:00 p.m.**

**Yellow Banks Park, Savanna trail**

Join naturalists for a campfire program about the wild night life in Yellow Banks 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 25. Fee: \$5.

## Iowa Outdoor Expo

**Saturday, September 28 @ 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, September 29 @ 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**

**Des Moines Izaak Walton League**

Try your skills at canoeing/kayaking, archery, fishing, trap shooting, BB Guns, geocaching and much more. Free family event. Visit [www.iowadnr.gov/expo](http://www.iowadnr.gov/expo) for more information.

## Spiders

**Tuesday, October 1 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

What has eight eyes, fangs, and spins silk? Spiders, of course! Discuss the fears and myths about these eight legged animals.

## Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day

**Saturday, October 5 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse**

Come learn the basics of waterfowl hunting while having lots of fun. Sessions will include dog training, calling, decoy setup, waterfowl identification, gun and blind safety, rules and regulations, and waterfowl ecology. Youth will also shoot clay "ducks" on our trap range. Door prizes and snacks provided. Partners of this event include: Ducks Unlimited, Iowa DNR, and Mid Iowa Retrievers. Pre-registration encouraged. Fee: \$5. Ages 6-18 (youth must be accompanied by an adult).

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

**Saturday, October 12 @ 5:15 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

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 Shop. 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 October 7. Fee: \$10. This hunt is for youth ages 12-15 only. Youth must have completed hunter education class and attended a field day.

## Fall Colors Hike

**Saturday, October 12, 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

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

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

## Do More Outdoors

**Sunday, October 13 @ 1:00-4:00 p.m.**

**Thomas Mitchell Park, Shelters #1 and #2**

Looking for some fun this fall? Come play outside! Learn how to kayak (must be 12 or older) and geocache. Enjoy a woodland hike, discover pond life, join in on some family friendly games, and learn how to stay safe in the outdoors. To learn more go to [www.domoreoutdoorsiowa.com](http://www.domoreoutdoorsiowa.com). Co-sponsored by Unity Point Health - Des Moines.



## Tales from the Appalachian Trail with Jennifer Pharr Davis

**Sunday, October 20 @ 1:00-3:00 p.m.**  
**Jester Park Lodge**

Jennifer Pharr Davis has hiked over 12,000 miles on long distance trails. She has trekked on six continents and currently holds endurance records on three separate trails. In 2011, Jennifer became the first female to claim the overall record on the Appalachian Trail by finishing the 2,181-mile journey in 46 days, 11 hours, and 20 minutes – an astounding average of 46.9 miles per day. Jennifer will recount stories from her 46 Day Record on the Appalachian Trail. This is an unbelievable account of overcoming the odds and achieving a spectacular goal. You will be captivated not only by her determination and perseverance, but by the love and support shown by her husband along the way.

## Going Batty

**Tuesday, October 29 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St., Urbandale**

Are they blind? Do they really suck blood and turn into vampires? Come learn the truth about this "grossly" misunderstood animal. Learn how to deal with them when they become an unwanted houseguest and find out what you can do to help protect this beneficial species.

## Owls of Iowa

**Tuesday, November 5 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

Come and learn to identify several Iowa species of owls by their appearance and distinctive calls. We will discuss how adaptations enable them to be good nocturnal predators. A live owl will be part of the program.

## Rain Barrel Workshop

**Saturday, November 9 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Jester Park Shop**

A short discussion about ways to collect and use runoff water will be held before participants construct their own 55-gallon rain barrel. It could be a great gift to give this holiday season. All materials and tools will be provided. Make sure you are able to transport your barrel back to your home after the workshop. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 1. Fee: \$50.

Program Registration: [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

## Archery Basics

Thursday, November 14 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jester Park Equestrian Center

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 - "basic steps" 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 12. Ages 12 and up. Fee: \$5.

## Geocaching 101

Saturday, November 16 @ 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Jester Park Equestrian Center

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 is required; deadline is November 8. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5.

## Mammals of Iowa

Tuesday, December 3 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

From big to small, mammals are an amazing group of animals. Join us as we learn about Iowa's mammals, including where they live and what they like to eat.

## Cross-Country Ski Basics

Thursday, December 26, 10:00 a.m. – Noon & 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on the trails. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will also be discussed. Class will be canceled without snow. Sign up for the 10:00 or 12:30 class. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 20. Minimum age 10. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles.) Smallest boot size available is men's 4 1/2 and women's 6.

## Snowshoe Hike

Friday, December 27 @ 1:00-2:30 p.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 20. Minimum age 8. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

## Animal Winter Survival

Monday, December 30 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m.

South Side Library, 1111 Porter Avenue, Des Moines

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

## 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.

**September 9** - Monarch Mania

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

**September 17** - Falling Leaves

at Brown's Woods

**October 7** - Bats

at Quail Cove Park, 1515 S. 52nd Street, WDM

**October 15** - Owl Moon

at Jester Park Equestrian Center

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](http://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.



Polk County Conservation

11407 NW Jester Park Drive

Granger, Iowa 50109

515-323-5300

[polk\\_info@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:polk_info@polkcountyiowa.gov)

[www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

Follow us on:



## OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors)

Looking for an excuse to get out of the house, make some new friends, enjoy a good meal and learn about the exciting world of nature? Then join us! These programs are held the first Tuesday of each month. The nature program will start at 11:00 a.m. at the Jester Park Lodge. An optional luncheon follows the program at noon in which pre-registration is required. The cost of the catered lunch is \$9.00. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program.

### The Home Fronts of Iowa - 1940-45

**September 3**

Lisa Ossian, associate professor of history at Des Moines Area Community College, will describe how Iowans contributed to the war effort. Food for Freedom directed American farmers in the all-out production needed for the war effort, and Iowa farmers lead the nation in crop and livestock production. Iowa's small businesses and industries added to the "Arsenal of Democracy" by filling many military sub-contract orders while the two newly constructed ordnance plants in Burlington and Ankeny produced thousands of bombs and millions of machine gun bullets. Iowa's matched and exceeded records in the eight War Bond Drives as well as the numerous scrap drives. Iowa's women met the rationing and production requirements demanded from the federal government in all home kitchens. This program is sponsored by Humanities of Iowa

### Sacajawea and the Lewis and Clark Expedition

**October 1**

Sacajawea and the Lewis and Clark Expedition Sakakawea, Sagagawea, "Bird Woman", or "Janey": Shoshoni Girl/Woman of History - however you pronounce it or spell it, this strong young woman had a unique place in the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803-1806. What is myth? What is fact? What is fiction? One Sacagawea, or two? Guide, Interpreter, Wife, or slave? Beverly Hinds of Sioux City will share the fascinating story of this young woman and what the past almost 200 years and the records have told us about her. This program is sponsored by Humanities of Iowa.

### Birding in NW Ecuador

**November 5**

The small South American nation of Ecuador is one of the Earth's most ecologically diverse countries. With nearly 1,700 species of birds (North America has only about 900) it has become a leading destination for birdwatchers and eco-tourists from all over the world. Join us for a photo tour of northwestern Ecuador with its lush rainforests, spectacular Andes mountains, and birds of all colors of the rainbow. The program will be presented by wildlife photographer Doug Harr, avian consultant and president of Iowa Audubon.

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

### Freshwater Mussels

**December 3**

Freshwater mussels can be found in many rivers and streams in Iowa. They are valuable components of freshwater biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, and help keep the water clean by acting as Mother Nature's water filters. For something that looks like a living rock, they have a unique life cycle and interesting adaptations to the environment in which they live. Come learn more!



photo by Doug Harr

Learn about this long-tailed sylph hummingbird from Ecuador at the November 5 OWLS program.

## Volunteer News & Opportunities

After a very wet start to the year, recent dry weather has allowed us to hold many of our requested workdays. Workdays this spring and summer included our annual Brown's Woods Clean-up, Earth Day Activities and planned workdays for volunteers from Pioneer Hi-Bred, Iowa Energy Basketball Team, Central Iowa Geocachers, Wells Fargo, Principal Financial, Liberty Mutual Insurance and Cargill Milling. Projects have ranged from conducting park and roadside clean-ups, invasive species removal, cleaning out and painting fire rings, painting shelter houses, pruning brush along trails and other trail maintenance projects.

Eagle Scout candidates are actively completing projects across the county. Projects include: the third of five planned walk-in campsites at Jester Park, Outdoor Classroom and trail extension at Brown's Woods, bench and bike racks along Trestle to Trestle Trail off Beaver Avenue, bat houses at Yellow Banks Park and Thomas Mitchell Park, flagpole at Jester Park youth campsite and lake view clearing at Fort Des Moines Park.

Volunteer activities at the Jester Park Equestrian Center include helping with pony rides, cleaning stalls, assisting with special events, and the At-Risk Program and the Exceptional Riders Program (therapeutic riding). Thank you to all our volunteers who have been active this spring and summer!



Iowa Energy Basketball Team cleaned up winter storm debris and shredded invasive species debris at Easter Lake Park



Cargill Millings employees and families painted Shelter #1 and picked up trash at Fort Des Moines Park

### VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

#### Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Seed Harvest

Volunteers are needed from now through this fall to collect prairie seeds from native plants such as: Rattlesnake Master, Gray-headed Cone Flower, Prairie Cinquefoil, Rose Hips, Wild Bergamot, Purple Prairie Clover, Tick Trefoil and Little Blue-stem. This activity is suitable for groups of any size and most ages (younger children will need parental supervision). Please contact Doug Sheeley, Natural Resources Supervisor at 515-967-2596, 515-249-2515 (cell), or [doug.sheeley@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:doug.sheeley@polkcountyiowa.gov).

#### 12th Annual Des Moines River Run Garbage Grab

**Friday, August 23rd @ 8:00 a.m. (end times vary by location)**  
Volunteers can choose from many locations to either clean up land based trails by foot or bike, or choose to clean up the Des Moines and Raccoon River Water Trails by power boat, canoe or kayak. Polk County Conservation Locations: Sycamore Access, Sycamore Bike Trail. Register at [www.riverstewards.org](http://www.riverstewards.org).

#### Discover Chichaqua

**Sunday, September 8 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

##### Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Volunteers can choose to help at the information center, youth craft area, or assist with pond study and monarch tagging. Contact Pat Spain to register.

#### Outdoor Expo

**September 28, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.**

**September 29, 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

##### Des Moines Izaak Walton League

Volunteers are needed to help staff the PCC booth, assist with fishing, archery, canoeing/kayaking, parking, general information booth. To volunteer, please contact Lori Foresman-Kirpes at (515) 323-5380, or [lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov).

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



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

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

# 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:

- |                                      |                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ___ <b>KIDS:</b> (\$25)              | <i>Receive a Birthday Card, Name recognition at our Friends Celebration</i>                                       |
| ___ <b>WHITE:</b> (\$1–\$100)        | <i>Invitation to our Friends Celebration and name recognition at the event</i>                                    |
| ___ <b>BRONZE:</b> (\$101–\$999)     | <i>2 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration</i>                                    |
| ___ <b>SILVER:</b> (\$1,000–\$2,499) | <i>4 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration<br/>Name recognition at all events</i> |
| ___ <b>GOLD:</b> (\$2,500–\$4,999)   | <i>6 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration<br/>Name recognition at all events</i> |
| ___ <b>PLATINUM:</b> (\$5,000 +)     | <i>8 complimentary tickets and name recognition at our Friends Celebration<br/>Name recognition at all events</i> |

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY (*pre-registration required)	LOCATION
September 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Home Fronts of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
September 3	6:30 p.m.	Monarch Tagging	Jester Park Lodge
September 8	1:00 p.m.	Discover Chichaqua	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
September 9	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Southwoods Park, West Des Moines
September 13	8:00 p.m.	Stargazing	Yellow Banks Park
September 17	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Brown's Woods
September 18	7:30 a.m.	Czeckin' Out Cedar Rapids Bus Tour (FULL)	Cedar Rapids, Iowa
September 19	6:00 p.m.	Catfishing Basics*	Yellow Banks Park
September 27	7:30 p.m.	Wild Night Life & Hike*	Yellow Banks Park
October 1	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Sacajawea and Lewis & Clark	Jester Park Lodge
October 1	6:30 p.m.	Spiders	Jester Park Lodge
October 5	1:00 p.m.	Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 7	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Quail Cove Park, West Des Moines
October 10	7:30 a.m.	Bridges of Madison County Bus Tour*	Winterset, Iowa
October 12	5:15 a.m.	Youth Waterfowl Hunt*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
October 12	1:00 p.m.	Fall Colors Hike	Thomas Mitchell Park
October 12	1:00 p.m.	Ladies Day*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
October 13	1:00 p.m.	Do More Outdoors	Thomas Mitchell
October 15	6:30 p.m.	Nature Friends*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
October 26	10:00 a.m.	Fall Halloween Event	Jester Park Equestrian Center
October 29	6:30 p.m.	Going Batty	Urbandale Library
November 5	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Birding in NW Ecuador	Jester Park Lodge
November 5	6:30 p.m.	Owls of Iowa	Jester Park Lodge
November 9	10:00 a.m.	Rain Barrel Workshop*	Jester Park
November 14	6:30 p.m.	Archery Basics*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
November 16	10:30 a.m.	Geocaching 101*	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 3	11:00 a.m.	OWLS - Freshwater Mussels	Jester Park Lodge
December 3	6:30 p.m.	Mammals of Iowa*	Jester Park Lodge
December 7	9:00 a.m.	Snowball Express to Santa	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 14	9:00 a.m.	Snowball Express to Santa	Jester Park Equestrian Center
December 26	10:00 a.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
December 26	12:30 p.m.	Cross-Country Skiing Basics*	Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt
December 27	1:00 p.m.	Snowshoe Hike*	Easter Lake Park
December 30	1:00 p.m.	Winter Animal Survival	South Side Library

**Polk County  
Conservation Board Members:**

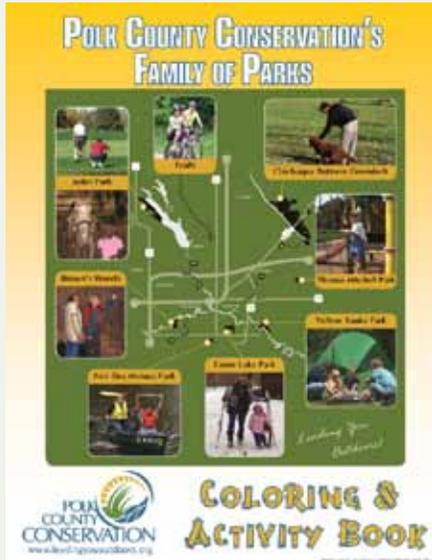
- Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*
- Sara Kurovski, *Pleasant Hill*
- Connie Johnson, *Ankeny*
- Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*
- Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

**Polk County  
Conservation Director:**

Dennis Parker



## Get Your Coloring Book Today!



FREE coloring + activity books are now available for program participants, campers, and park users. See your local park ranger, campground host, or stop in at a park office for a free book and crayons for your child.

## Plant Some Shade Fall Tree Program

Residential customers of MidAmerican Energy in central Iowa can reduce future energy use and at the same time landscape their homes through Plant some shade®, an expanded tree-planting program. Plant some shade enables MidAmerican Energy's central Iowa residential customers to purchase up to two, three to eight-foot landscape trees for just \$30 each. Approximately 500 high-quality trees are available on a first-come, first-ordered basis. Tree species available can be found online. Advance orders for Plant some shade are required online only at [www.greatoutdoorsfund.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsfund.org) beginning mid to late August. Orders will be accepted until all trees have been sold. Trees will be available for pickup at the Hoover State Office Building south parking lot, located at the intersection of S.E. 14th and E. Court Avenue in Des Moines between 8:30 and 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 21st.



Scan to learn about Iowa's backyard birds



## Your Cans are Feeding the Birds

Over the last three years, many park visitors and students have enjoyed watching birds from the bird blind in Jester Park. The bird feeders behind the blind are filled regularly to attract birds to the immediate area. During the first year, the Des Moines Audubon Society helped sponsor the project by purchasing bird seed for the feeders. Since then, PCC has purchased bird seed but we haven't been able to keep the feeders full year round due to limited funds.

To help pay for bird seed, one of our volunteers Darrell Stout started a can collection program at Jester Park late last fall. Darrell placed white plastic barrels throughout the park with a sign asking for pop cans to be dropped in the barrel to help pay for bird seed. As soon as they were placed, we started receiving cans and to date we have raised over \$1,000 towards the purchase of bird seed. So the next time you're out and about at Jester Park, do your share and drop a can in the white barrels to help feed the birds.



Polk County Conservation  
 11407 NW Jester Park Dr.  
 Granger, IA 50109

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## JESTER PARK EQUESTRIAN CENTER CALENDAR

### Ladies Day

**October 12 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

Enjoy a day at the barn with friends and horses! Participants will have the chance to learn to groom and tack their horse, learn basic riding skills, play some games on horseback, possibly ride the beautiful Jester Park trails, ride in a horse drawn wagon, and end the day with some relaxing and wine tasting. Registration deadline is October 7. Fee: \$50.

### Fall Halloween Event

**October 26 @ 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. & 12:30-2:00 p.m.**

Come walk through our Little Goblins Haunted Trail, take a pony ride in the indoor arena, or take a wagon ride on the trails. No reservations are needed. Wagon and pony rides are \$5 each.

### Snowball Express to Santa

**December 7 & 14 @ 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

Children ride a pony through a winter wonderland to get their picture taken with Santa, make a holiday photo frame, and enjoy hot chocolate and cookies. Fee: \$20 per child. No reservations are necessary. Sleigh or wagon rides are available for an additional \$5 per person.



All dressed up for Halloween!



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