

CONSERVATION NEWS



VOLUME 28
ISSUE 2
SUMMER 2015

Iowa County Outdoor Adventure Day



Saturday, June 27th
Lake Iowa Park
10am-3pm



Join us for the 2nd annual Iowa County Outdoor Adventure Day. Activities will include archery, trap shooting, canoeing, and many more. All ages are welcome at this free youth event. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

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Pre-registration forms will be available online in May at <http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa.aspx> under "Related Items" and on the "Lake Iowa Park" Facebook page. Those who pre-register are guaranteed a free T-shirt and lunch. If you're interested in volunteering at this event, please contact Shelby at swilliams@co.iowa.ia.us or (319) 655-8465.



Fun Night with the Friends

*Betty Goodman, Board Member
Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation*

On April 11, 2015 the Friends of Iowa County Conservation Foundation held their 5th annual benefit dinner and silent auction at the Nature Center. Around 125 people attended the dinner. We would like to thank everyone that attended from near and far, the many people who donated items for the silent auction, and all the Friends Board members and spouses that helped also. The staff and anyone else that helped out deserve our sincere thanks! This was the best fund raiser yet thanks to so many supporters of the Friends. In regards to fundraising, this dinner is second only to the fall letter campaign, which raised over \$10,000 this year.

Ursula Williams from Middle Amana and Stephen Hanson from Williamsburg entertained everyone with bluegrass music from the balcony above the main floor. It was awesome!

The main floor was set up for the Silent Auction. Everything was donated, and such a variety of items. There were paintings, jewelry, pies, cakes, gift certificates, and more. Before the dinner, wine tasting provided by Fireside Winery was available on the main floor, as well as appetizers of cheese, meat and crackers. Meat and cheese trays were donated by Roehrkasse Meat Company in Williamsburg.



Attendees check out the silent auction items before dinner.

When everyone was seated in the dining area in the basement, the staff (Mike, Shelby and Caitlin) gave a presentation on the happenings around Lake Iowa for the past year along with a slide presentation. It was great!

Caitlin, our Naturalist, told us about the quest to purchase a buffalo hide along with buffalo supplies such as the skull and other parts that were used by the Indians when the buffalo were plentiful in our country. They already had raised about half of the funds needed from an initial anonymous donation and additional supporters who made donations. Joan Robinson wisely suggested passing the hat around for donations, and guess what? Our generous patrons tossed in enough to make it possible to purchase the buffalo hide right away.

The dinner was catered by PHAT Daddy's of Marengo. The food was excellent as usual. They grilled vegetables

outside just before the dinner that were out of this world, as was the rest of the meal. The meats, cheese, and cake were perfect! Many door prizes were given away during the meal. Most people ended up taking one home.

After the meal Caitlin divided the tables into groups and was MC for a game show like game. She did a wonderful job of keeping the audience entertained. When the game was over the silent auction bidding went on for about ten more minutes. Then everyone went to see if they were the lucky winner of some of the auction items.

It was a great evening of fun close to home. We always appreciate the donations and support we receive. If you have any items you think would go well at the silent auction next year, please save them for us. Thanks again everyone!



Benefit dinner attendees enjoyed wine tasting provided by Fireside Winery.



Guests enjoy a delicious dinner provided by PHAT Daddy's.

Iowa County Conservation Board

Gordon Dietze, Millersburg
John Gahring, Homestead
Shirley Messer, Ladora
Jim Scandridge, Victor
Marcia Wehner, Williamsburg

Iowa County Conservation Staff

Mike Bode, Director
Caitlin Savage, Naturalist
Shelby Williams, Park Ranger
Shelley Berger, Office Assistant
Michael Lopez, Naturalist Intern
Zach Ahrens, Conservation Tech

Iowa County Board of Supervisors

John Gahring
Ray Garringer
Kevin Heitshusen
Vicki Pope
Dale Walter

Win TWO kayaks!

Friends Foundation raffle

Raffle ticket prices:

- 1 ticket for \$1**
- 3 tickets for \$5**
- 8 tickets for \$10**

The complete package comes with 2 kayaks (1 pictured at right), 2 paddles, 2 Paddler's Guides, and 2 Keep It Clean river bags!

To purchase tickets, contact a Friends member or the Iowa County Conservation staff. Drawing will be 4th of July weekend.



A Greenhorn's First Burn Experience

Shelley Berger, Office Assistant

Safety glasses...check. Work boots...check. Old ball cap...check. Snazzy yellow jumpsuit (made from Nomex flame-retardant material)...check. Water tank with shoulder harness that weighs a ton...check.

That seemed like a good and thorough checklist for our first prescribed burn at Lake Iowa Park, but Director Bode and Ranger Williams had a much longer list for the day of the burn.

Put the large water tanks on the golf cart and the DP (Club Car XRT)...check. Air up the tires on the golf carts and DP...check. Fill the lighter thingy (drip torch) with appropriate mixture of gasoline and diesel fuel...check. Check and recheck the weather app for wind speed and direction and possible rain in the forecast...check. Check for burn bans in Iowa...check. Go over possible burn areas for the best fit with weather conditions...check. Call Sheriff's Office with burn plan and call numbers...check. Let the Greenhorns (Ahrens, Berger, and Savage) know how a prescribed burn works...check. Answer question after question...check.

Even that check list doesn't cover all the prep work that Bode, Williams, and Ahrens had done before the day of the burn, like weed eating around trees, posts, and infrastructure to prevent fire damage; mowing fire breaks; and creating elaborate burn plans.

All that planning and prep work still leaves one thing unprepared for the burn. When the burn begins the part of your brain that has listened to all the warnings and lectures on fire safety is pretty insistent that you should flee the scene and call the fire department. It keeps telling you "Run! Fire!!" while you spray water and beat down the flames with your flapper. After hours of keeping the fire where you want it, while trying to keep watering eyes and running noses from slowing you down, I can honestly say that I do not look forward to another prescribed burn. But we are pretty proud of how it helped the parks.



Burn areas at Lake Iowa Park during the prescribed burn (left) and afterwards (right).

Benefits of Prescribed Burns

There are numerous benefits of properly managed prescribed burns. They include:

- Control of invasive and non-native species.
- Removal of vegetation litter, encouraging prairie plant growth and reproduction.
- Removal of plant pathogens, reducing disease rates.
- Promotes the growth of native trees, wildflowers, and other plants.

Home Where the Bison Roam

A few months ago, we received an anonymous donation from a donor who hoped we would purchase a bison hide and bison supply kit to use for educational programs. We published a piece asking for additional donations in our newsletter and received generous assistance, but were still only a little over halfway to our goal for fundraising.

At our Friends Foundation annual benefit dinner on April 11th, we explained our goal to obtain the bison supplies and passed around a hat to ask for donations towards this goal. Within an hour, we had received the remainder of the funds needed for our bison hide and supply kit. We could not have raised the funds for these supplies without our generous supporters, and we thank each and every one of you for your help!

The bison supplies have been ordered from Sioux Replications, a South-Dakota based company that specializes in bison items prepared in the traditional style used by the Plains Indians. The supply kit includes bison bones, teeth, horn, tail, hooves, beard, and several other supplies. The full hide will have the head attached. These materials take some time to prepare, but we should receive the supplies within a few months.

Look for upcoming public programs where you may see these new educational materials! The supplies will also be used in programs for school groups and other organizations.



The bison kit came with many supplies, including a book on hide tanning in the traditional Sioux way, a bison horn, a bison bladder, and more.

Did You Know?

Bison used to be a common sight in Iowa, found throughout the whole state. In the 1800s, early settlers hunted bison for food, hides, or sport. By the 1850s, bison were gone from the state. Today they only exist on ranches or refuges in Iowa. There are a few managed populations, including at the Neil Smith Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City, Iowa. Bison are an important part of a tallgrass prairie ecosystem. Their grazing encourages the growth of native plant species and increases plant diversity, providing important habitat for grassland birds and invertebrates. They also create wallows (depressions without plants) by rolling on the ground. These wallows collect water during rains, which provides habitat for aquatic insects and amphibians.

The giant shaggy mammals that live in Iowa are bison, not buffalo. The American bison lives only in North America, and the two true buffalo species live in Asia and Africa. In the United States, the terms bison and buffalo are usually used to describe the same animal.

See page 9 for more facts on the bison!

NRCS Still Conservation Planning Agency, Free to Iowa Farmers

Jay Mar, State Conservationist

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa

Although the 1996 Farm Bill introduced conservation financial assistance programs to the list of services that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides, long before then – since 1935 to be exact – and still today, the agency's focus is providing free conservation planning assistance to Iowa's farmers and rural landowners.

NRCS has at least one office in every Iowa county, located at USDA Service Centers. With conveniently located offices comes local knowledge of local resource concerns. NRCS employs soil conservationists, engineers, biologists, and even specialists in grasslands and wetlands, to assist landowners through the conservation planning process.

Conservation planning is the first step in managing all natural resources on your farm. Natural resources include soil, water, air, plants, or even animals, energy efficiency, and people. To protect the resources, NRCS works one-on-one with landowners to plan and install conservation practices to reduce soil erosion; improve soil health and air and water quality; create and restore wetlands; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; improve pasture and woodlands; and reduce flooding.

A conservation plan is a record of a farmer's decisions in managing the natural resources on the land. The plan can include a land use map, soils information, inventory of resources, and engineering notes – all based on the landowner's goals.

That's exactly what Iowa landowner Denny Busch of Winterset, Iowa, did with local NRCS District Conservationist Wayne Shafer. "When I inherited my mother's farm, it was in pretty bad shape and I wanted to improve it," said Busch. "I knew that my first step to fixing it was working with Wayne to get a plan and learn more about our options."

Busch's land is now undergoing a makeover thanks to a long-term conservation plan for protecting the resources on his entire farm. He has already removed overgrown brush to shed light on newly seeded pasture and added fence to the pasture. He plans to add more fences and a pond to pump out water for livestock in a rotational grazing system.

Good conservation planning also strategically combines practices to maximize environmental benefits. David Petersen, who runs a 175-head dairy cattle farm in Muscatine County, worked with NRCS to install a grassed waterway and a filter strip to keep runoff from entering the water. "Our property forms the confluence of two major water drainage areas," he said. "It is our responsibility to maintain the water quality in those streams."

Petersen's plan also included a concrete manure storage structure that forms a pit under slotted dairy cow flooring. The manure storage structure can store up to 500,000 gallons of dairy liquid manure. "I inject the manure into fields for crop nutrients," said Petersen. "That was a really nice project to get completed with NRCS."

Good conservation planning can also combine experienced farming skills with NRCS science-based knowledge. Veteran row crop farmer Tim Smith in Eagle Grove experienced that firsthand. Smith farms in the Boone River Watershed, where the water flows downstream to the Des Moines River, then to the Mississippi River, and eventually to the Gulf of Mexico.

When NRCS recommended he consider changes to his nutrient management plan, tillage activities, and add cover crops to his farm to prevent sediment and nutrients from leaving his property, he trusted their knowledge and experience. “What I learned from working with NRCS is that these conservation practices are not only helping to improve water quality, but they are also improving soil conditions and producing more dependable row crop yields through challenging weather conditions,” he said.

Jay Mar says one of the best things about conservation plans is their flexibility. “We know goals change, markets change, and weather is always a factor,” said Mar. “We recognize that it’s your farm, so it’s your plan to change.”

Conservation Planning Fundamentals

Know your soil. Soil types vary widely. Different soils require specific management techniques, and support different types of plants.

Know your plants. Which plants will survive? Use native plants as often as possible.

Think about topography. The size of the drainage area, slope, and cover will determine how much runoff water to expect and how fast it will move.

Know how conservation practices work.

Grass, trees, downed logs, and rocks are all obstacles that slow down or reduce the forces of nature. Conservation practices work the same way. If erosion from water is the problem, the objective is to slow the moving water. If wind erosion is the problem, the objective is to slow the wind at or near the soil surface.

Hole In One

Mike Bode, Director

We are excited to announce that the front nine holes of the Lake Iowa Disc Golf Course are complete. If you remember from an article in the last newsletter, we received a grant to develop disc golf as another recreational opportunity at Lake Iowa Park. The course has diverse terrain - some holes have narrow corridors with trees on both sides, while others run through wide open prairie.

The first nine out of the eighteen start at the beach parking lot and end at the turnaround (the furthest point you can drive on the far side of the lake). Until the back nine are completed (slated for early this summer), we’d suggest dropping a vehicle off at the turnaround to save your group the walk back. When the course is finished, this would also be an ideal option when facing time constraints. Once the back nine holes are complete, you will be able to make an entire lap around the lake and end up back at your vehicle.

For those of you that are new to the sport, there are several discs that can be purchased for game play. When I play, I just use a driver for every shot, but the more serious players have other discs such as a putter, approach, mid range, and drivers. It’s fairly inexpensive to start playing; for example, long range driver prices start around \$9.00. We’d suggest having a spare disc because the lake does come into play as a hazard on multiple holes.

Make sure you bring the whole family out to play, as this sport is enjoyable for all ages. You’ll even get to see some of our hidden treasures that are just off the beaten path as you make your way through the course.



Nerd Alert

*Audra Turner, Biology Teacher
Iowa Valley High School*

In the last couple of years, many changes have occurred in the Iowa Valley Community School District. Several new teachers have arrived, including Biology teacher Audra Turner and with her the birth of the Nerd Herd.

When I started teaching at Iowa Valley, I had several students ask if I could sponsor a science club for the student body. I didn't see any reason not to, so I put up some flyers just to see what kind of interest the students had in such club. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and I set a date for the first meeting. The only order of business for that first meeting was to come up with a name for the club. The dozen or so students who showed up to that first meeting were arguing back and forth about two ideas they had when one of the girls yelled, "Nerd Herd!" That was it. Turner's Nerd Herd had now come into existence.

The Nerd Herd has been in existence for almost two years now. Since the start of the club, we have been furiously working on establishing some long term research projects for the students to work on while at Iowa Valley. Some of those projects include: bat house construction and population studies, planting milkweed for the Monarchs, tagging Monarch butterflies, and trash collection from the parks and river. The Nerd Herd has partnered with Iowa County Conservation staff on many of these projects. I truly hope these projects are a legacy we can pass on to future Nerds with



Nerd Herd students constructed multiple bat houses to put up around Marengo. Bats are an important part of Iowa ecosystems and help to control insect populations.

the continued support of Iowa County Conservation. We have also worked with the Blank Park Zoo to expose some of the Nerds to the many volunteer opportunities as well as career options in the sciences, and I hope our weekend service trip will continue in future years. The final endeavor of the Nerd

Herd I want to mention is through the hard work of several of the Nerds, the Iowa Valley School Board has approved the implementation of graduating with a green cord, which symbolizes a distinction in the sciences and academic achievement.

Currently, the Nerd Herd has about 22 members, from freshmen to seniors. We meet on the first Tuesday of every month, and any other Tuesdays for our projects as needed. We meet throughout the school year, and the Nerds also volunteer throughout the summer.



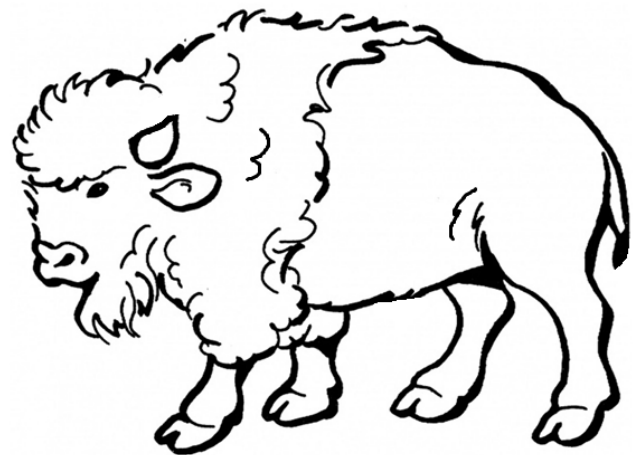
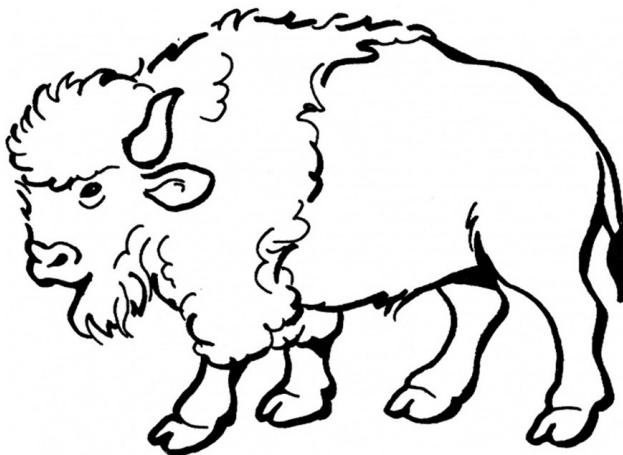
Nerd Herd students will be planting butterfly milkweed at Gateway Park and Preserve in Marengo to provide vital habitat for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Creature Feature: American Bison

- North America used to be home to 30-60 million bison, but they were hunted almost to extinction.
- Today the only bison in the U.S. live on ranches, national or state parks, and reserves.
- Bison are often called “buffaloes” in the United States. True buffaloes only live in Asia and Africa.
- The bison is the largest land animal in North America. Adult male bison can weigh up to 2000 pounds!
- Bison can eat more than 30 pounds of grass in a day. They may also eat lichens, moss, and berries.
- Bison are powerful swimmers.
- Both male and female bison have long, curved horns that can grow up to 2 feet long!

Can You Spot the Differences?

There are 6 differences between the pictures below. Try to find them and circle them when you do! Then color the bison.



Answers: 1) No crease under the eye; 2) Horn is shorter; 3) Long hairs on the belly are gone; 4) Extra tuft of fur on the shoulder; 5) Extra tuft of fur by the back leg; 6) Tail is shorter.

Programs will meet at Lake Iowa Nature Center unless otherwise stated. All are free (unless otherwise noted) and everyone is welcome. We will meet rain or shine!

Memorial Day Weekend

Friday, May 22nd

Movie showing at sunset



A family-friendly movie will be shown behind the Nature Center. Movie title to be announced. Pop and popcorn will be available. In case of rain, the movie will be shown in the Nature Center basement.

Saturday, May 23rd

Welcome Back, Campers! 12PM-1PM

Summer is getting close and that means camping season is starting too! Meet at the Roundhouse for some fun games to celebrate the warming weather. We will also make s'mores to kick off the start to summer. S'mores supplies will be provided, but you are welcome to bring some of your own. Please bring roasting sticks if you have them.

Sunday, May 24th

Friends Pancake Breakfast, 8AM-noon

Enjoy a delicious start to your day! Breakfast includes pancakes, eggs, and sausage. Free will donation.

What's the Buzz? 2PM

Local beekeeper Stan Geiken has been raising bees for about 30 years. Join him as he discusses the basics of beekeeping and how a bee hive works. View an observation bee hive and the various gear used in the care of bees.

Monday, May 25th (Memorial Day)

Foil Cooking, 10AM

Celebrate Memorial Day weekend with a tasty sample of some treats cooked in foil. Meet at the Roundhouse. Fee: \$2/person. Please pre-register by

Friday, May 22nd if possible, but drop-ins are welcome! You can register by calling (319) 655-8466 or emailing csavage@co.iowa.ia.us.

Saturday, May 30th

Slimy Tales, 10AM

Meet at the silt pond (just past Shelter 2) to discover some of the cold-blooded critters that make their homes in Iowa. Dip nets will be provided.

Saturday, June 20th

Dutch Oven, 4PM

Bring Dad for a sampling of some Dutch Oven treats to celebrate Father's Day weekend! We will meet behind the Nature Center to learn the basics of Dutch Oven cooking, plus get the chance to sample a couple dishes. A perfect appetizer before dinner. Fee: \$2/person. Please pre-register by Thursday, June 19th if possible, but drop-ins are welcome! You can register by calling (319) 655-8466 or emailing csavage@co.iowa.ia.us.

The Park After Dark, 9PM

Meet at Shelter 4 to experience the wonder of Lake Iowa Park in the nighttime. We will enjoy a leisurely hike and keep our ears open for some of the nocturnal animals that live here.

Saturday, June 27th

Outdoor Adventure Day, 10AM-3PM

Activities will include archery, trap shooting, canoeing, and many more. All ages are welcome at this free event. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Pre-registration forms will be available online in May at <http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa.aspx> under "Related Items" and on the "Lake Iowa Park" Facebook page. Those who pre-register will be guaranteed a free T-shirt and lunch. If you're interested in volunteering at this event, please contact Shelby at swilliams@co.iowa.ia.us or (319) 655-8465.

Sunday, June 28th

Busy as a Bee, 10AM

Join Matt Stuart, local beekeeper and owner of Noble Bee Honey in South Amana, to discover more about the care of bees. Participants will be able to view an observation bee hive and see the equipment used in beekeeping.



Saturday, July 4th

Stars and Stripes Trivia, 10AM



Come test out your knowledge of Independence Day! Bring the family for some fun trivia. Prizes will be awarded to the winning team.

Fire Starting, 2PM

Come learn how to make some basic fire starters to make campfire lighting a little easier!

Saturday, July 18th

Geocaching, 10AM

Experience the excitement of the modern-day treasure hunt! Participants will go over the basics of geocaching and get a chance to try it out. We have a few GPS units we can provide, but if you have your own, please bring it.

Saturday, August 8th

Happy National S'mores Day! 2PM

Did you know that August 10th is National S'mores Day? Celebrate a little early by meeting at the Nature Center playscape tree house for some s'mores! Bring your own roasting sticks if you have them.



Wish List

The following items are needed by Iowa County Conservation. Please bring donations to the nature center.

- ◆ Large glass aquariums (please call ahead before bringing)
- ◆ Cash donations for bird seed
- ◆ Small aquarium nets

Visit us online at:

www.mycountyparks.com/County/Iowa

Like "Iowa County Conservation" and "Lake Iowa Park" on Facebook.





Iowa County Conservation News

Lake Iowa Park
2550 G. Ave
Ladora, IA 52251

For more information about
Iowa County Conservation,
please contact us:

Director
Park Ranger
Naturalist

319-655-8465 **mbode@co.iowa.ia.us**
319-655-8465 **swilliams@co.iowa.ia.us**
319-655-8466 **csavage@co.iowa.ia.us**

Thank you for supporting the Iowa County Conservation programs with your tax-deductible donation:

Enclosed is my donation for:

___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$500 ___ \$1000
___ \$5000 ___ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please earmark my donation for:

- ___ Cabin Development
- ___ Lake Iowa Park Improvements
- ___ Environmental Education materials & equipment
- ___ Conservation News newsletter
- ___ Habitat improvement/development on ICCB areas
- ___ Use my donation where needed most
- ___ Other: _____

Send to ICCB, 2550 G. Ave, Ladora, IA 52251

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Yes, sign me up to receive Conservation News!

I want to receive *Conservation News* electronically:

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