

CONSERVATION NEWS



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Creepy Camping 2017

By: Shelley Berger

This year Creepy Camping may have been the scariest in recent history but maybe only for the new staff at Lake Iowa. We have a lot of veteran Creepy Campers that come out year after year that know what to expect when September rolls around. But how do you describe an event that fills the campground two weeks in advance and draws over 600 people to see one haunted hayride to someone who's never seen it?

The basics of Creepy Camping prep are easy. The staff will need to find volunteers (at least 60) to not only scare the wits out of everybody but also sell tickets, help load or drive the hayracks, sell pop and popcorn, provide musical entertainment, place port-a-potties in convenient locations for visitors and volunteers, keep an eye on bathrooms, and feed hungry volunteers.

The fun part is planning the scenes for the haunted hayride. There is no shortage of inspiration during any given evening's commercials or movie listings once September rolls around. The only limit to how scary a scene can be is the imagination of the staff and the supply of electrical cords or fake body parts. (ICCB has tubs and tubs of each) Jenni Olson and volunteers from Marengo Haunted Barn always bring their A game to planning meetings and set the bar high for how creepy scenes can get.

The hard part of explaining Creepy Camping to a newbie is the Murphy's Law of Creepy Camping. This law states that the harder a staff member tries to check one item off the to-do list the more obstacles will present themselves to the staffer. As an example: Staffer A is trying to take a CD player to the haunted trail. To accomplish this they need to pick up the CD player, make sure it works, and grab a golf cart to drive to the trail. Sounds easy but as the staffer walks in the direction of the shop where the CD player is they are stopped at least twice by campers or volunteers with questions about getting tickets or when trick or treating takes place, etc. As they are answering those questions a couple of text messages or a phone call will interrupt the conversation. These calls or texts have the potential to lead the staff member even further from the CD player in the shop and may even take them back to the starting point of their to-do list.

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Creepy Camping 2017 continued...

After taking care of the urgent things that pop up every five minutes (not an exaggeration) if the planets align Staffer A will somehow find themselves at the shop and with any luck even find the CD player and a golf cart. You might think the staffer might easily drive to the trail and deliver the CD player but there has probably been 5 more items added to the list of things that need to be taken to the trail, most of which will not be sitting at the shop. You could compare preparing for Creepy Camping to a game of Chutes and Ladders or maybe the ever-moving staircases in the Harry Potter dorms. Just when you think you have the game figured out the rules change.

In the past such things as having torrential rain flood out the trail entirely were the penultimate of Murphy's Law of Creepy Camping. It was a huge hurdle but not impossible to handle. This year's drought had staffers feeling pretty safe from huge disasters such as that. To which Murphy's Law presents...sewer problems! While scrambling to fix problems with electrical cords on the haunted trail staffers also dealt with clogged plumbing in one shower house and a broken septic pump in the other.

The plumber was called...twice. The honey wagon (if you don't know what this is don't be fooled by the name) was brought down from the storage shed and the timer was set to manually turn on the pump every hour to make sure the campground septic didn't create a whole new level of horror for guests.

Crunch time came as the staff fixed all the items on the trail that had worked perfectly an hour before but as the sun set refused to work. Volunteer spooks were covered with gory makeup and taught Michael Jackson's Thriller to replace volunteers who were unable to help out last minute. A dozen pizzas donated by the Friends of Iowa County Conservation disappeared as the energy level of the spooks amped up as show time neared. Finally, after putting out "fires" with the electrical problems and lighting actual fires on the trail in the form of camp fires and Swedish torches, the first hayrack was sent out at 8:04 p.m. There was an audible sigh of relief from the staff at 8:05 p.m. Suddenly the never ending time warp filled with problems shifted into fast forward and before we knew it the night was over. As the parking lots emptied and the campers all tucked in for the night we stood by the Nature Center listening to the last few tunes played by DJ Monte, and thought "We did it! We pulled off another Creepy Camping."

Actually, we pulled off the final Creepy Camping Haunted Hayride. As you may have heard, this year was our last year for the hayride. We've had to scratch it from next year's schedule due to insurance reasons. The good news is that we will continue to have Creepy Camping each year. We plan to bring back some of the decorating and costume contests and will continue to have campground trick-or-treating, the kid's Halloween movie, and the Dummy Board tournament. We were delighted to have almost 200 people attend our first annual Non-Scary Night Hike and will continue to hold it. We've had some volunteers offer to bring back the kids games as well. **So mark your 2018 calendars for October 5th and 6th. We hope to see you at the lake!**



From the Director's Desk

By: Chris Anderson

Fall is here, and in the words of House Stark "Winter is Coming". The back half of the campground is closed to camping. The shower houses and the dump station are winterized. We have been having one to two campers at a time on the weekends. You could say that things have slowed down, and in reference to the campground you would be correct. The staff of Iowa County Conservation is still busy though. This is the time of year where we do a lot of maintenance that we could not slow down to do in the summer. There are planning meetings and lots of networking going on to build partnerships; partnerships that will help grow events and improve natural resource management at Lake Iowa and our 13 other properties.

Winter is a time of grant writing, which tests our analytical, grammatical and mathematical skills. Grants that will help us get educational & natural resource management equipment or to make improvements to pre-existing structures. The "off season" is a time for inventory. We get a chance to take stock of what supplies and equipment we have and to see what tree and shrub species we have in our forests. Unlike ground squirrels that hibernate or carpenter ants that freeze to thaw out in the spring, we are staying busy. The tasks we complete change, but we are not sedentary.

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Iowa County Conservation Staff

Chris Anderson, Director
Mary Bulger, Naturalist
Phil DeJarnatt, Park Ranger
Shelley Berger, PT Office Assistant
Dan Williams, PT Maintenance Tech

Wish List

*The following items are needed by Iowa County Conservation. Please call ahead to bring donations to the nature center. **Thank you!***

- Children's scissors, glue sticks, and manual pencil sharpeners
- Donations for education animal food and supplies
- New or gently used patio furniture

Visit us online at:

www.iowacountyconservation.org

www.mycountyparks.com/county/iowa.aspx

Like "Lake Iowa Park" on Facebook

Vermicomposting

By Phil DeJarnatt

What is vermicomposting? A great question, if you google vermicomposting it says.....
“Vermicomposting (or vermi-compost) is the product of the composting process using various species of worms, usually red wigglers, white worms, and other earthworms, to create a heterogeneous mixture of decomposing vegetable or food waste, bedding materials, and vermicast.”

Hmmm... Some of you are still wondering what the heck? Ok I'll break it down for you... all you need is; a container, soil, worms, and food scraps. It's as simple as getting a \$15 tote, drilling some holes in the top, and putting some soil and worms in. Then you can add leaves, cut up newspapers, and table scraps.

Or you could spend \$75-\$100 and get one already made. I went with the “Can-o-Worms” after researching; I felt that was the best set-up for me. It comes with almost everything; materials and instructions. (Worms not included). I ordered my worms online too, I started with a 1,000 worms, and they cost about \$25. That's the recommended number of worms to start for one unit. The Can-o-Worms come with several trays. When the worms are done with one tray, put the next tray on top and the worms will climb through the holes and into the top tray. You can remove the old tray and top dress your garden or put it in a pot.



The soil is alive, teaming with fungi, bacteria, microbes, minerals, and organic matter. The worms will rejuvenate the soil. You see, worms are ruminants; they have good bacteria in their “stomach”. Worms don't have a normal stomach, it's more like a crop that birds have. Then when the worms excrete the castings, it is rich in essential bacteria and minerals. A great benefit of ordering a vermicomposting kit, most have a spigot to make your own compost tea. Just take distilled water and pour through your composting bin and open the spigot and the nutrient rich tea will pour out. You can take and water your garden with this mix or dilute.

So many people have a compost pile in their back yard. My family produces more plant waste than my worms can handle, so we have one compost bin outside and the Can-o-Worms we keep inside. It doesn't smell bad at all, and the worms will be fine year round. The worms just add the living bacteria the soil needs. Do some research; find out what set up works best for you and your family and good luck. Thanks for reading and go get some worms.

Iowa Nature Notes: Your LINC to the Outdoors

The staff of Iowa County Conservation Board (ICCB) and Lake Iowa Nature Center (LINC) have started a podcast! Each month the podcast will offer a discussion or interview on a different seasonal topic. November's podcast was about Wild turkeys and December's podcast will be about the solstice. You can find the podcast on CastBox at castbox.fm, just search for **Iowa Nature Notes: Your LINC to the Outdoors**. Once you find the podcast please subscribe and share it with your friends. Let us know what you think of the podcast and what you might like to hear about in the future!

THANK YOU!

We would like to Thank those of you who help Iowa County Conservation accomplish our projects and goals. Some volunteer their time and others donate money or items. Thank You!

Family and friends of Robert Faas for generous memorial donations to ICC. These donations will go towards conservation education supplies, programs, and projects.

Gene Ackerman, Steve Wilhelm, Jeff Meier, and Mike McCamment who volunteer countless hours to keep our parks mowed in the summer.

The many volunteers who made Creepy Camping Weekend a success!

Iowa County Master Gardeners for your help at the Seed Harvesting Program and maintaining gardens at Lake Iowa and Gateway Parks.

Friends of Iowa County Conservation who volunteer their time and fundraise to help make many things possible for ICC.

Williamsburg Scouts who purchased picnic tables, and Victor Scouts Troup #226 who volunteered to help clean out fire pits, and assemble the picnic tables for Lake Iowa Park.

St Paul's United Methodist Church members who volunteered to help with maintenance and make repairs in the nature playscape at Lake Iowa Park.

Rachel Rietveld for assistance with grant writing.

Save the Date for 2018!

Friends Banquet - April 7th

Iowa County Outdoor Adventure - June 16th

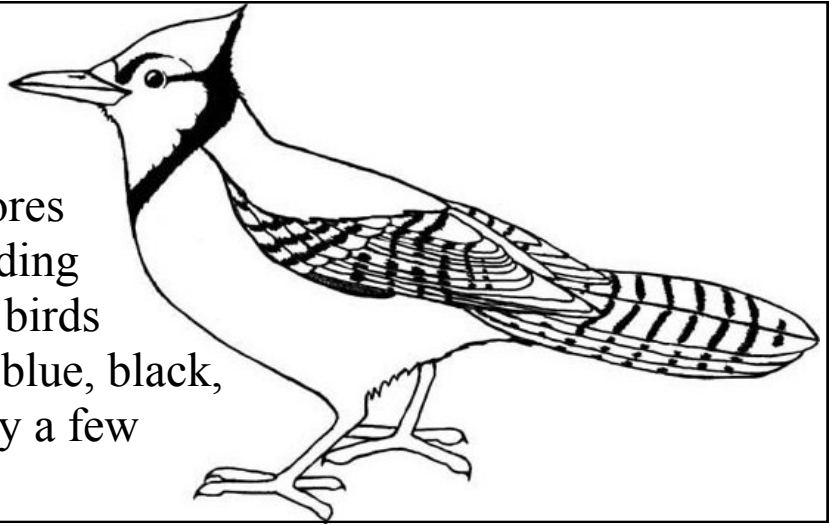
Pollinator Festival - September 15th

Creepy Camping Weekend - October 5-6th

WINTER BIRDS IN IOWA

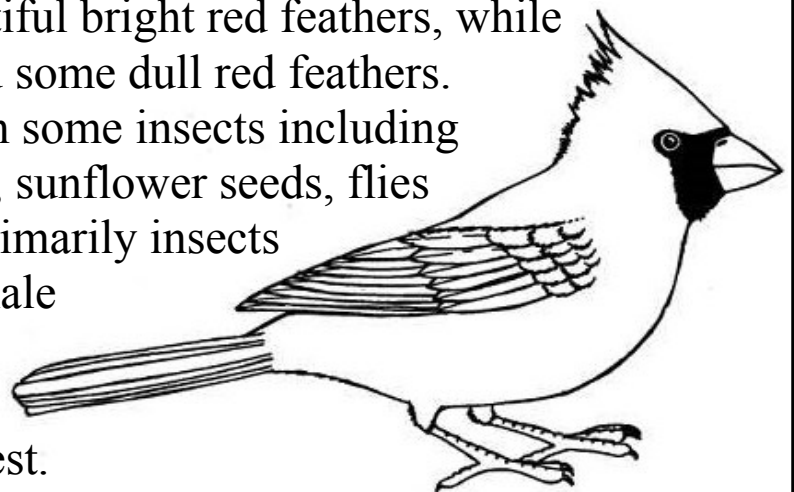
In the winter some birds will migrate to warmed climates where they can find food, but some birds stay here in Iowa all winter long. Learn about a few of our winter residents by reading about them and then color their pictures!

The Blue Jay has one of the loudest and most recognized calls a loud “Jay-Jay-Jay”, and can also mimic (copy) other birds. They are omnivores eating both plants and animals including acorns, insects, berries, seeds, small birds and mammals. They have beautiful blue, black, and white feathers, and is one of only a few birds that have blue feathers.



The American Goldfinch is the state bird of Iowa! Males have bright yellow feathers, except in the winter when they change to dull yellowish tan, and look much like the female. Primarily seed eaters they nest in the summer when milkweed, thistle, and other plants produced fibrous seeds, which they eat, use in their nests, and feed to young.

The male Northern Cardinal has beautiful bright red feathers, while the female has mostly light brown and some dull red feathers. Adults mainly eat seeds and fruit, with some insects including dogwood, wild grape, grasses, berries, sunflower seeds, flies beetles, and crickets. Young are fed primarily insects when still in the nest. Only a few female North American songbirds sing, the female Northern Cardinal is one of them, and often while sitting on the nest.



WINTER PUBLIC PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Pre-registration is required by email to mbulger@co.iowa.ia.us
All are free (unless noted) and everyone is welcome.

Expedition to the Grand Canyon

January 13th 2p

Lake Iowa Nature Center

Avid hiker & survival expert Bob Thurman will present on his epic rim-to-rim hike across the Grand Canyon.



Owl Prowl

Saturday March 3rd 6:30-8p

Lake Iowa Nature Center and Park

Would you like to learn more about an amazing nocturnal animal? Then join us at Lake Iowa Park for an Owl Prowl adventure!



There will be an indoor presentation at the nature center about the three most common owls in Iowa. Then we will venture outside to call and try to find some of these amazing nocturnal creatures.

Dress to be outside in the elements. After our Owl Prowl we will return to the nature center for hot refreshments.

Paddling Adventures with Vern Fish

Saturday February 3rd 2-4:30p

Lake Iowa Nature Center

Former Director of Black Hawk County Conservation and avid paddler, Vern Fish will be sharing some of his paddling adventures at Lake Iowa Nature Center.

Bound for the Barrens is an Iowa EE history lesson, it combines a paddling adventure in the far north and a story of a famous Iowa conservationist. **Gull River Whitewater** is a paddling adventure that includes wildlife, whitewater, geology and cultural heritage at a



Maple Sugaring Program

Saturday March 17th 10-Noon

Lake Iowa Nature Center

Do you have a maple tree in your yard? Do you want to learn how to collect the sap and turn it into maple syrup? Join neighboring Naturalist, Emily Klein, from Poweshiek County as she demonstrates the process of maple sugaring step by step. Learn how to identify maple trees, what tools and supplies you need to buy, tips for tapping trees, how to safely boil sap into maple syrup, and do a taste test comparison.

Dutch Oven brunch, featuring real maple syrup, will be provided. Recipes and samples will be available for everyone who pre-registers.

Pre-register by March 12th to
mbulger@co.iowa.ia.us

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday February 17th 1-3pm

Lake Iowa Nature Center and Park

Join us at Lake Iowa Park to be citizen scientists and participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count! We will start with a short indoor presentation on what the count involves, materials will be available to make pinecone bird feeders to hang and attract birds (or take home with you), then you can venture outside to count all of the beautiful birds at Lake Iowa Park! Refreshments will be available at the nature center so you can warm up. Dress to be outside in the cold





Iowa County Conservation News

Lake Iowa Park
2550 G. Ave
Ladora, IA 52251

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

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Park Ranger
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319-655-8465 sberger@co.iowa.ia.us
319-655-8466 mbulger@co.iowa.ia.us

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Enclosed is my donation for:

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

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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: _____

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