

Naturally LOUISA COUNTY

Rich in Nature, History and Culture

FALL 2024
VOLUME 17
ISSUE 3

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EDITED BY
Lana Artz-McComb

A weed is just a.....

By: Lana Artz-McComb, Naturalist
a...a...what? What is a weed?

Ask a gardener and the answer could be creeping charlie encroaching on the carrots. Ask a farmer and it could be water hemp or mare's tail. Ask a fisherman and it could be coontail. Ask a prairie management team and it could be cedar trees.

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"

A weed is a plant that is not valued where it is growing and is usually of vigorous growth (Merriam-Webster)

Any plant or vegetation interfering with the objectives or requirements of people (European Weed Science Society)

I'm sure you can infer my point; there is no hard and fast list of weedy plants because the answer varies depending on the situation.

Are dandelions a weed? To some, yes it is unsightly in a lawn, and to others, a welcome early food source for pollinators.



Is common milkweed a weed? The name certainly implies so, and for good reason, it's a fast growing, sturdy, hard to kill plant that takes over more and more space each season. Or is it a source of food and shelter for Monarch butterflies?

Coontail can take over a pond, making it difficult to fish and boat. But it's also a valuable year round habitat for fish and source of food for waterfowl.



"One man's trash is another man's treasure"

Consideration of an area's goals and management plan when coupled with consideration of the pros/cons of each plant in question is critical when defining if something is a "weed". It's not black and white and it won't be the same everywhere.

Educate yourself so that you can make the best decision possible before identifying everything as a "weed".

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder"



Stop! We're not weeds! Cutting back on roadside mowing to help pollinators

By: Sarah Martinez, LCC Naturalist

Iowa law prohibits the mowing of roadside ditches every year between March 15 and July 15 to prevent nest destruction and to protect ground-nesting birds.



Stewards of the land should consider delaying mowing even further, past the July 15th date, to help other native species.

While not optimal habitat, roadside ditches and medians provide vital areas and cover for ground-nesting birds to rear young and incubate eggs. Species that include both the eastern and western meadowlark, dickcissels, quail, pheasants, and sparrow and partridge species.

This vegetation is also essential to a diversity of generalist pollinators, including bumble bees, honey bees, and butterflies, some of which include rare or federally-listed species. Pollinators are critical to the health of our global ecosystem, as well as playing a major role in human agricultural production.

Recent concerns about the decline of wild native pollinators, such as monarch butterflies, has turned all attention on the importance of habitat restoration and management for the ecosystem services they provide. Roadside vegetation maintenance falls into this category.

Roadsides provide habitat for pollinators, acting as important sources for nectar, breeding, or nesting opportunities for many species, as well as aiding in the dispersal of pollinators by linking fragmented

habitats. Think of ditches like a rest stop on the interstate. While it might not be a place that you want to spend your entire life, you're grateful for the chance to take a break, grab a cup of coffee, and maybe rest your eyes.

Not all roadsides are equally beneficial to pollinators and disturbance plays a large role in this. Roadsides that are frequently mown, blanket-sprayed with herbicides, and/or planted with non-native and introduced plant species support far less species of pollinators than roadsides managed for native plants.

It is important to note the difference between roadside maintenance mowing for safety and visibility and mowing for aesthetics because they appear like "weeds". Voluntarily delaying mowing beyond the July 15th date allows more time for late nesters and fourth generation monarchs migrating to Mexico.

The Iowa DOT implements integrated roadside vegetation management (IRVM) to provide an alternative to conventional roadside management practices. For more information visit iowadot.gov/lrtf/Integrated-Roadside-Vegetation-Management



LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION



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2nd Annual Louisa County Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Women's Pheasant Hunt

Nov. 2, 2024

Henke's Place

Email Holly Shutt for an application or questions
hshutt13@gmail.com or 785-294-2004

Louisa County Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Highway Clean Up

Sept 28th, 2024 ; 1:00 pm

Meet at Grandview gas station

Questions?

Email Holly Shutt hshutt13@gmail.com
 or 785-294-2004



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Noah's Nature Nook

Hi! I'm Noah, and I love animals and insects!

There are over 1500 species of mantids in the world, two of which (the Chinese Mantis and the Carolina Mantis) can be found right here in Louisa County!

Here are five interesting facts about the amazing Praying Mantis:



* **They have five eyes!**

Two large eyes are located on the sides of their head, but they also have three smaller bead-like eyes that help them stalk and ambush prey.

* **They have green "blood"**

Praying Mantises don't have blood vessels like we do; they have a green fluid similar to blood that bathes their internal organs to deliver nutrients and remove waste.

* **They only have one ear— and it's in a weird place!**

Mantises have a hearing-type organ in the middle of their body, between their hind legs! It helps them detect vibrations and locate prey.

* **In some species, the female mantis eats her mate (YUCK!)**

She does this to get additional nutrients for egg production.

* **They are masters of disguise**

They can blend in with their surroundings and are often mistaken for leaves or twigs.



The Praying Mantis is not native to Iowa, but it has become a welcomed guest by eating many other insects that are harmful to gardens and crops.

*I like looking at this beautiful and unique creature!
 How about you?*

SUMMER SCRAPBOOK!



We hosted our annual camp for the visually impaired, exploring everything from furs and skulls to paddling Port Louisa to Odessa. (right)



Outdoor Explorers learn about the turtle research going on at Big Sand Mound with Don Becker. (left)



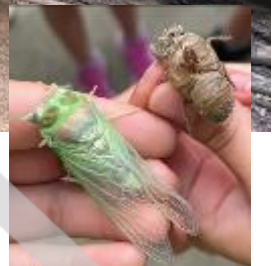
Caterpillar and Tadpole campers explore all the critters on Langwood's wetland and timber trails (left) and camper Gray Lomeli smiles with LCC ambassador snake Nugget. (below)



Emery Springsteen and one of LCC's ambassador turtles. (left)



Older campers got the chance to visit surrounding counties' parks such as Wild Cat Den and Starr's Cave Nature Preserve. (right)





All the flooding held off just enough for LCC to take campers to the Upper Iowa River and paddle around Louisa County waterways. (above)



None of these programs would have been possible without the help of our two naturalist interns Griffin Schoonover and Brelynn Randall, as well as Raen Acker, an intern at PLNWR, who spent time assisting the E.E. staff this summer. (right)



2024 Waterfowl Population Status

The annual Waterfowl Population Status Report summarizes the most current data and estimates on the breeding population and habitat conditions of most North American duck species, several populations of geese, tundra swans, and American coot. Annual status of these populations is monitored and assessed via a combination of aerial and ground crew surveys across 2 million square miles. Here's some nuggets from the report:

- This year marks the first increase in (+5%) in total surveyed breeding ducks since 2015
- Habitat and breeding numbers improved in Alaska and British Columbia
- Eastern area duck numbers increased in 5 out of the 6 species
- Prairie pond estimates increased 4% from 2023

If you want to swan dive into more of this year's data, check out the [entire report here](#).



2024 Waterfowl Population Status Report infographic, Rosalie Wetzel/USFWS, Public Domain, <https://www.fws.gov/media/2024-waterfowl-population-status-report-infographic>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

PORT LOUISA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



10728 Cty Rd X61,
Wapello, Iowa 52653
319-523-6982

Office Hours:
M-F, 7:30 - 4:00 PM
fws.gov/refuge/port_louisa
facebook.com/portlouisaNWR

LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION EVENTS

Paddle Louisa County - Sandbar Camping

Saturday, Sept. 14– Sept. 15

\$40/person

Iowa River Water Trail

Paddle the Iowa River Water Trail and camp on a sandbar with Louisa County Conservation.

We will be canoeing the 14 river miles from River Forks Access in Fredonia to Schwob Access in Wapello. This is a leisurely paddle with emphasis on the experience.

We will paddle for 2 hours on Saturday afternoon, camp on an island sandbar, and then finish the remaining 2 hours on Sunday morning.

This is an adult only paddle geared towards people who have paddled before but want to take it a step further by camping on the river.

Louisa County Conservation has 8 canoes that will be used for this trip (plus lifejackets and paddles) and everything needed for eating.

We have a limited number of tents that people are welcome to borrow or you can provide your own. Participants will be expected to provide their own sleeping pad/bag, personal hygiene items, and evening activities.

Because we will be hauling our overnight gear and camping with limited space, registration is limited to 14 participants in the LCC canoes.

Registration required



Monarch Tagging

Monday, Sept. 16

Louisa County Complex

Learn about monarch butterflies and their incredible lifecycle. We will also catch, tag, and release Monarchs. Come for a few minutes or stay the entire time.

Free, no registration required



Halloween Treat Hike

Saturday, Oct. 26, 6:00pm-8:30pm

Virginia Grove Campground

Join us for Halloween at Virginia Grove!

A new twist on an old favorite!

Wear your costume and trick or treat at the campsites, hike the luminary lit trail, gather around the campfire for smores, and learn all about nocturnal animals.

No registration necessary, all ages welcome!

Unless otherwise stated, all registration and program information can be found at

LouisaCountyConservation.org

Call our office: 319-523-8381

Send an email: conservation@louisacountyia.gov

**Save the trees,
enroll in eStatements today!**
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Growing Together Iowa

By: Adair Lents, Director, Louisa County Extension

Have you heard?!? Louisa County has a new community donation garden called a Growing Together Iowa garden! The purpose of the garden is to donate fresh produce to our local food pantries. Our local food pantries are seeing increased usage every month and we want to make sure healthy, fresh and local options are available.

We are harvesting weekly on Monday mornings and look forward to donating much more!

The champions of the project are Jeri Bailey as our Master Gardener, Brian Hall as our land owner, the staff at the Louisa County Extension and Outreach office and Tim Johnson and the Youth Group at the Wapello Methodist Church.



Our last harvest was 110lbs of produce for the Wapello Food Pantry!

Come take a look! Our garden is behind the Farmers Elevator and Exchange.

We are always looking for volunteers to help in the garden, don't hesitate to reach out if you would be interested!

We would also love to grow our Master Gardener program in Louisa County. If you have a green thumb or would like to learn more, send an email to our Louisa County Extension and Outreach Director, Adair Lents - alents@iastate.edu.



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY Extension and Outreach

Contact Information: **Louisa County**

317 Van Buren Street
Wapello IA 52653
alents@iastate.edu
319-523-2371

Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Southeast Research and Demonstration Farm
FALL FIELD DAY

SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 - 1:30 to 4:00 PM | Check-in at 1:00 PM
3115 Louisa-Washington Rd, Crawfordsville, IA

Brought to you by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the Southeast Iowa Agricultural Research Association

Farmers and farm businesses in southeastern Iowa are invited to join the Southeast Iowa Agricultural Research Association and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach on the afternoon of Thursday, September 5 at the Southeast Research and Demonstration Farm for the Fall Field Day. The field day will feature nitrogen management, corn rootworm management, and utilizing weather data for agricultural purposes. Contact Cody Schneider at schn145@iastate.edu

HOW LONG UNTIL IT'S GONE?

Estimated decomposition rates of common household garbage



Leaves

1- 3 months



Cotton T-Shirt

2 - 5 months



Cigarettes

5 - 10 years



Styrofoam

500 years



Paper

2 - 4 weeks



Apple Core

2 months



Plywood

1 - 3 years



Plastic Bag

10 - 20 years



Louisa County Transfer Station
Drop Off Recycling and Waste Disposal
Monday thru Friday...8:00am - 4:00pm
Saturday...9:00am - 12:00pm
14048 70th Street, Wapello, IA 52653
Questions? 319-523-5013
louisacountyia.gov



Inspiring the Next Generation

Al Bohling, President, Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation

Have you ever witnessed a child first touching a frog or snake?

How about digging into the soil, capturing an earthworm and catching their first fish?

Or discovering the connection between plants and animals and ecosystems?

These moments are not guaranteed. It takes mentoring. All of the Tri-Rivers Directors have experience in being mentors.

I remember Karen Minnis, retired teacher, talking about taking fourth graders to Langwood Education Center and describing the joy on all of the students faces as they experienced nature.

I remember seeing many, many children and adults learning about and enjoying Dan and Sue Vogeler's amazing habitat restoration!

We support many conservation education programs and provide scholarships to those students intending to pursue a career in creating a sustainable environment.

Please consider a donation to Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation. We are expert volunteer directors that use our resources wisely. Every dollar goes to supporting our mission, none to calendars, address labels or mailing requests for more money.

Teach your children well

Learn all that you can



12635 County Road G56, Suite 106

Wapello, Iowa 52653

319-523-8381

tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov

www.tri-rivers.org

The Mission of Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation is to provide funds for the protection and enhancement of the natural resources in the environmentally rich area of the confluences of the Cedar, Iowa and Mississippi Rivers in eastern Iowa.

The Foundation will employ enjoyment and use of these resources to educate and instill an appreciation for good land stewardship. It will seek to distribute these funds to carefully chosen public, civic, institutional and quasi-public programs.

MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN LOUISA COUNTY

Enclosed is my donation for:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250
 \$500 \$1,000 Other _____

Name or Business _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Return this form and payment to:

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation
12635 County Road G56, Suite 106
Wapello, IA 52653

Please earmark my donation for:

- Langwood Improvements
- Louisa County Trails Council
- TRCF Scholarship
- Environmental Education
- Use my donation where needed most
- Other: _____

General Donations are payable to:

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation

Endowment Funds are payable to:

- Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine* (for Iowa Tax Credit)
- Tri-Rivers Endowment Fund
- Trails Endowment Fund
- Paris Scholarship Endowment



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“In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect.
Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they’re still beautiful.”
-Alice Walker

**Halloween at
Virginia Grove Campground**

Saturday, Oct 26th; 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Trick or Treat at the Campsites
Hike the Luminary Trail
Campfires and S'mores
Nocturnal Animal Exploration

The poster features a black background with a large full moon on the left, a black cat sitting on a broomstick, and several orange and yellow leaves scattered around. There are also spider webs in the corners.

***Naturally Louisa County* Newsletter is now entirely digital and delivered straight to your inbox**

Printed copies of this edition can be found at partnering organizations including the LCC office, SWCD, PLNWR, and local libraries.

If you know of an organization that would like to have printed copies for people to pick up, please let us know at conservation@louisacountyia.gov or 319-523-8381.

Naturally Louisa County is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December.

It is provided free to the public as an innovative collaboration between government agencies, private organizations and individuals interested in showcasing the natural and cultural resources of Louisa County, Iowa.