



PRAIRIE HORIZONS

STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION | NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

November 2022- January 2023



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Photo by Cindy Barrowcliff

-THE LATEST-

Timely and brief updates on ongoing park projects

Paving the HOINT

The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT) is a cooperative effort of the Story and Marshall County Conservation Boards and an important part of the Central Iowa Trails System. A segment of the former Milwaukee Railroad from Slater to Melbourne forms this 32-mile recreational trail corridor. This multi-purpose trail accommodates bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, and snowmobilers.

Story County Conservation has been diligently working on continuing the paving efforts eastward on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT). The next phase of paving effort has been funded almost entirely through recent awarded grants. This project is 1.9-miles in length from the South Skunk River bridge east to 610th Avenue. This project is scheduled to go to bid this winter

with construction in the summer of 2023. Progress is already underway for the next phase that will travel 1.2 miles between 610th Avenue and County Road S-14. Partial funding for this project has already been secured with a grant, as we wait the results of an additional submitted grant application. If all goes well the HOINT will be paved half way across the county by the summer of 2024.



PARTNERS UPDATE

Partners is off to a great start! So far this fiscal year you have helped raise 6% of the overall goal of \$40,000. Donations this year will go towards the purchase of the Deppe Property. We are excited to see an increase of online donations to protect this amazing property. Visit the storycountyconservation.org website to find out how your contributions can make a lasting impact.

IN THE PARKS

Carroll Prairie

- Conservation Corps of Iowa crew removed undesired trees and shrubs from grassland

Christiansen Forest Preserve

- Removed undesired trees and shrubs from prairie

Dakins Lakes

- New playground installation

Doolittle Prairie

- Staff and volunteer prairie seed harvest

Hertz Family Woods and Nature Preserve

- Removed undesired trees and shrubs from prairie

Hickory Grove Park

- Timber stand improvement – removed undesired trees and shrubs to provide space for desirable species
- Prescribed goat grazing along the north shoreline of the lake

Jennett Heritage Area

- Contracted State Hygienic Lab to conduct a bioassessment of West Indian Creek
- Conservation Corps of Iowa crew removed undesired trees and shrubs from a remnant prairie

McFarland Park

- Prescribed goat grazing in the savanna north of the lake
- New stair installation on woodland trail

Ronald Dick Jordan Family Wildlife Area

- Conservation Corps of Iowa crew removed undesired trees and shrubs

Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor

- Undesired tree and shrub removal

West Peterson Park

- New dock installation
- Prairie plug and tree sapling planting

CONTROLLING A PEST

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an invasive Asian beetle that is destroying ash in forests over much of eastern North America. With the adult beetle only measuring up to a half inch in length and EAB eggs smaller than the tip of a pencil, how can one possibly start to think of controlling such a destructive pest?

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is working with the USDA in using a biological control of beneficial insects to effectively control EAB larvae and eggs. This biological control approach reunites natural enemies with the invasive pest species. Currently three parasitic wasps are being used to control EAB. The parasitic wasps are reared and supplied from a USDA facility in Brighton, Michigan to cooperators in a number of states at no cost. The natural enemies have undergone years of testing and environmental assessment before release in the U.S. and pose no threat to humans or the environment.

Beneficial insects aimed at controlling the emerald ash borer are being released at Hickory Grove Park. Each summer for the next 1-2 years hundreds of the three different species of parasitic wasps will be released at the park. One species lays its eggs in EAB eggs while the other two seek the larval stage of EAB that feed beneath the bark of ash trees all in an effort to stabilize and eventually reduce EAB populations. The goal of the EAB biocontrol program is to protect ash regeneration and restore canopy over time.

What can you do to help stop the spread of EAB? Since the EAB is a wood-infesting pest, a simple way is to not move firewood, buy firewood from local sources, and burn where you buy it.



The three species of parasitoid stingless wasps are small in size and only target the EAB egg or larvae stage. By depositing a wasp egg within an EAB egg or larvae, they have been quite effective in EAB attacks on surviving ash trees. The hope is that within the next 5-10 years, young to mid-size ash trees will be able to tolerate EAB attacks and thrive with the help of the parasitoid wasps.



Pictured is IDALS Entomologist, Mike Kintner, releasing one of the three parasitoid wasps used in controlling EAB. Parasitoid releases have taken place at eleven sites in Iowa, involving ten counties. Hickory Grove Park is the single location in Story County.



EAB larvae kill ash trees by tunneling under the bark and eating the phloem, the part of the tree responsible for moving water and nutrients up and down. It can take as little as one to five years for an EAB infestation to kill an ash tree.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Diane Birt is a SCC volunteer and the President of the Outdoor Alliance of Story County - a nonprofit that works to protect outdoor areas throughout Story County.



Diane Birt is an active volunteer for Story County Conservation, helping with a variety of projects including trash removal, trail maintenance, native seed collection, and brush removal. Her love for the outdoors started in her childhood growing up in rural Northern California. “My fondest childhood memories are all set in the outdoors,” Diane says. “Whether strolling on the seashore picking up shells, making trails through the forest, or traipsing through pasture and forest to find our horses, I was outdoors as much as possible.”

Diane went to Southern California for her undergraduate degree and found her way over to Purdue University for school. While at Purdue she met her husband, Ken Birt, in the Purdue outing club. They spent their time spelunking, rock climbing, and backpacking. With two daughters in tow, their love of nature continued with backpacking, rock climbing, bicycling, and canoeing. More recently they are enjoying kayaking with their grandkids.

Volunteering has always held a special place in Diane’s heart. “I volunteer in conservation because it gets me outside, allows me to help improve the outdoors, and encourages others as well,” says Diane. “The most rewarding volunteer activities have been when young people, my child or grandchild, have been able to volunteer with me.”

This led Diane to become an integral part of Outdoor Alliance of Story County (OASC), a nonprofit group working to enhance outdoor recreation, education, and conservation for multiple partners and the public. OASC is an important partner of Story County Conservation. OASC helps raise funds for projects, encourages volunteerism, and seeks to increase awareness of local SCC parks and properties.

Diane is excited for the future and what it holds not only for OASC and SCC, but also for all residents of Story County. “I’m impressed by the leadership and staff at SCC. They give me hope for the future. I’m pleased at the engagement by residents with our county parks system. We see intense polarization in so many aspects of our daily life; conservation is a topic that continues to cut across barriers.”

If you also have an interest in protecting and conserving Story County habitats or would like to receive information about our volunteering program, contact: conservationoutreach@storycountyia.gov.



Learn more about the important work done by OASC and visit their website at oasc.org or email at Info@oasco.org.

HEADWATERS OF THE SOUTH SKUNK RIVER

A Who, What, When, and Where of the South Skunk River Watershed Management Authority

WHAT

A Watershed Management Authority (WMA) is a mechanism for cities, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other stakeholders to engage in a planning and management process. A WMA is legally formed by a Chapter 28E Agreement by two or more eligible political subdivisions within a specific watershed, like the South Skunk River. A WMA can undertake the following activities:

- Assess and reduce flood risks
- Assess and improve water quality
- Educate residents of the watershed
- Allocate moneys for above stated purposes

*WMAs have no taxing authority and cannot acquire property through eminent domain.

WHERE

The Headwaters of the South Skunk River (HWSSR) WMA encompasses almost 211,000 acres, contains the northernmost 47 miles of the South Skunk River, and includes parts of Hamilton, Hardin, Boone, and Story counties.

WHEN

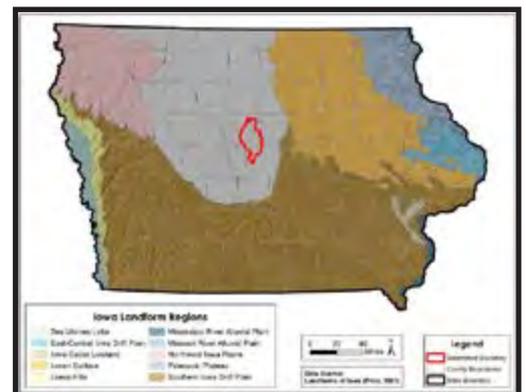
While the HWSSR WMA was established in 2018, stakeholders started meeting regularly in 2021 to develop the plan which will be finalized November 2022. The HWSSR WMA plan seeks to guide improvements over the next 20-years, with a focus on shorter term goals and actions.

WHO

JEO Consulting Group has been hired to conduct a watershed assessment and create an action plan. The members of the WMA include representatives from Hamilton and Story Counties, Hamilton and Story SWCDs, and the following cities – Ames, Ellsworth, Jewell, Randall, Roland, and Story City.

*All cities and counties in the WMA were invited to participate in the planning process.

The Technical Advisory Team for the WMA plan includes representatives from county Conservation departments, Iowa State University, Center for Rural Affairs, county Environmental Health departments, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Iowa DNR.



OPEN HOUSE

Learn more about the plan and meet the WMA members on **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10TH**

STORY CITY COMMUNITY CENTER
503 ELM AVE, STORY CITY, IA 50248
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

JEWELL GOLF COURSE
601 GOLFCOURSE RD, JEWELL, IA 50130
5:00 - 7:00 PM

ROADSIDE *Reflections*

from Joe Kooiker after 34 years with Integrated Roadside Vegetative Management



Joe Kooiker

Patches of prairie can be seen scattered along the six thousand acres of roadsides in Story County. A few of these gems could be remnants left behind to recover after

our road system was built back in the day. However, the majority of these linear strips of color are native plantings. Approximately 1,400 acres of right-of-ways lands left bare after construction have been seeded with a diverse mix of plant species specifically designed to withstand the extreme conditions found in roadsides.

Using native plants as a landscape tool had been slowly catching on, and in 1987 the Story County Board of Supervisors, in cooperation with Story County Conservation and Story County Engineer, decided to take a new approach to roadside maintenance. The Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) program was brought to life – making it the second program in the state. Now there are officially 54 IRVM programs in the State of Iowa.

The program was developed to provide an environmentally safe management alternative to conventional chemical and mechanical management practices. The “old school” method of using brome in plantings and blanket spraying were out. Priority one is to maintain a safe travel environment on the county right-of-ways. Other main objectives include wise use of herbicide while controlling invasive and noxious vegetation. Promoting native vegetation reduces soil erosion, sustains water quality, improves wildlife habitat and provides the public esthetically-pleasing roadsides.

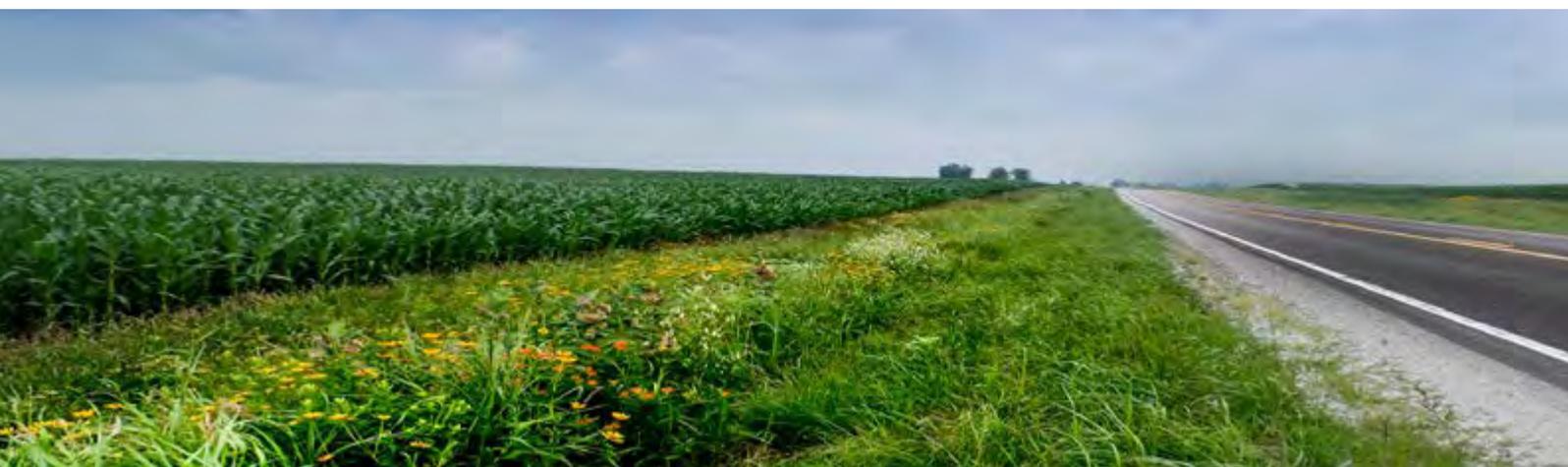
I’ve had the privilege to be a part of the SCC IRVM program for 33 years. We started with backpack sprayers and a self-propelled walk behind seeder. Now our toolbox includes the latest in vegetation management equipment, including a hydroseeder and herbicide equipment that has pinpoint accuracy.

This conservation-based program started with faith and now has become reality. Next time you see some roadside prairie, tip your hat and thank all those of you who have supported the program through 34 years.



Top photo: Joe in May 1998 giving a presentation on the IRVM program.

Bottom photo: Joe on a controlled burn to promote native plant growth and weed suppression.





Prairie Seed Harvest



Tyler Kelley

This past fall Story County IRVM completed its 22nd annual local seed harvest. Staff works with private landowners and harvests from public ground and privately-owned seed nurseries. These areas produce local ecotype seed originally propagated from plants in Story County remnant populations.

Sixty acres of diverse seed is harvested mechanically from private native grasslands. This is done using pull type Allis Chalmers Model 72 combines and a John Deere 4400 self-propelled combine. This combine run seed is used as a base for natural area and roadside plantings in the county.

Throughout the growing season, Story County Conservation staff and volunteers collect native plant seed from roadside remnants, pioneer cemeteries, and other high-quality natural areas. This seed is cleaned, tested, and stored in a climate-controlled area to ensure proper germination. Our local hand harvest seed is substituted into commercial seed mix purchases to lower costs and add more diversity to plantings.



Annually this seed harvest program collects an average of 300 pounds of native seed in Story County. At an average cost of \$20.00 a pound this equates to \$6,000.00 native seed annually.

Opportunities exist throughout the year for volunteers to join staff in the collection and cleaning of this seed.

Some common seed collected includes:

- Lead Plant
- Bottle Gentain
- Purple Coneflower
- Rough Blazingstar
- Compass Plant
- Gray-headed Coneflower
- and MORE!



-PROGRAMS AND EVENTS-

Providing people opportunities and inspiration to develop an appreciation and understanding of nature and humans as a part of it

Wild Tots

Sunday, November 6, 10:00 - 11:30 AM
McFarland Park

The seasons are changing! Come learn about birds with your tot and discover what they do to get ready for winter. This program will include a story, craft, short hike, and lots of nature activities. Participants should be prepared to go outside. Please dress for the weather. We might get a little messy while we play so make sure to dress accordingly. Participants should also bring a snack. Program is intended for children between 18 months and 4 years old; children must be accompanied by an adult. Fee of \$5 with registration is required by Tuesday, November 1 at 4:30 PM.

OUTside Meetups: LGBTQ+ allies "Fire 101"

Tuesday, December 13, 5:00 - 6:30 PM
McFarland Park

This program is for anyone age 16+ who identifies as LGBTQ+ and allies. Join Naturalist Jess Lancial and we will explore unique ways to start campfires without using matches or lighters! We will end our evening with a bonfire and s'mores. Program is free but registration is required by Wednesday, December 7 at 4:30 PM.

Hidden Candy Cane Hike

Sunday, December 18, 1:00 - 3:00 PM
Hickory Grove Park- Oriole Ridge Lodge

Bring the whole family out on the trails at Hickory Grove Park in search of hidden candy canes. This is a self-guided hike, so you can come and go at any time between 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm. Check in at Oriole Ridge Lodge for a map and instructions. Make sure to dress for the weather! Fee of \$10 per family/group with registration is required by Wednesday, December 14 at 4:30 PM.

Noon Year's Eve

Friday, December 30, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Hickory Grove Park - Oriole Ridge Lodge

Celebrate the final days of 2022 and the start to a new year with an outdoor adventure! For the first hour, there will be lots of nature activities setup for the whole family to explore. Right before noon we will gather together for a countdown to a noon birdseed toss and a grape juice toast. The celebration will end with hot chocolate and s'mores around a campfire. Fee of \$10 per group with registration is required by Tuesday, December 27 at 4:30 PM.

OUTside Meetups: LGBTQ+ allies "Full Moon Snowshoe"

Thursday, January 5, 5:30 - 7:30 PM
McFarland Park

This program is for anyone age 16+ who identifies as LGBTQ+ and allies. Join Naturalist Jess Lancial for an inclusive community-themed snowshoe hike around McFarland Lake, under a bright full moon. We will end our evening with a bonfire and s'mores, and brainstorm ideas for future hikes and events. If there is no snow, we will just plan to hike. Fee of \$5 per person with registration is required by Monday, January 2 at 4:30 PM.

Wild Tots

Saturday, January 7, 10:00 - 11:30 AM
McFarland Park

Calling all reptile lovers! We will explore what makes reptiles special and learn about where they go in the winter. It's too cold to find snakes and turtles outside, but we will meet some scaly friends indoors. We will also go on a winter hike, play games, read stories and make crafts together. Please dress for the weather. We might get a little messy while we play so make sure to dress accordingly. Participants should also bring a snack. Program is intended for children between 18 months and 4 years old; children must be accompanied by an adult. Fee of \$5 with registration is required by Monday, January 2 at 4:30 PM.



-PROGRAMS AND EVENTS-

Providing people opportunities and inspiration to develop an appreciation and understanding of nature and humans as a part of it

Winter Play Day

Saturday, January 7, 1:00 - 2:30 PM
McFarland Park

Let's celebrate winter and the new year! It may be chilly outside, but there's no need to get cooped up. Get outdoors and discover how amazing nature can be during the winter months. We will spend the afternoon building shelters and exploring the woods. After we play, we will warm up with some hot cocoa! Fee of \$5 per group with registration is required by Monday, January 2 at 4:30 PM.

Artifacts Road Show

Thursday, January 19, 6:00 - 8:00 PM
McFarland Park

Matt Graesch, a local geologist with an interest in artifacts from time past, will present a program about these artifacts. He will also do a flint knapping demonstration, a technique used in tool making in past cultures. Bring artifacts you need help identifying or bring unique artifacts to show others. Fee of \$5 per person with registration is required by Thursday, January 12 at 4:30 PM.

Environmental Literature Club

Tuesday, January 24 and February 21, 7:00 PM
Location TBD

Explore nature cozied up with a good book at Environmental Literature Club. Join a discussion with naturalist Rebekah Beall at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 24 and Tuesday, February 21. Location (in Ames) TBD. Each month we will discuss a different book focused on the human relationship with the environment.

World of Wonders by Amiee Nezhukumathil (January)

The World as We Knew It ed. by Amy Brady and Tajja Isen (February)

This club is free (book purchase is on your own) but registration is required by Monday, January 9 at 4:30 PM.

O.W.L.S. Programs

(Older, Wiser, Livelier, Souls) are designed for "boomers" or older, but anyone can attend.

Program runs from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.; doors will open at 10:00 a.m. for coffee/tea and chatting.

McFarland Park, Conservation Center

Thursday, November 3

The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles

Join local author/photographer Ty Smedes for a slide presentation which will reveal many incredibly interesting discoveries about the Bald Eagle and how they go about their every-day lives here in Iowa! This presentation will reveal many highlights of Ty's book "The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles," which he will be signing and offering for sale.

Thursday, December 1

Climate Conversations

Story County naturalist Rebekah Beall will help you find out why and how to start a climate change conversation with friends and neighbors. Develop stories and strategies based on personal experience to share with others.

Thursday, January 5

Artifacts Road Show

Matt Graesch, a local geologist with an interest in artifacts from time past, will present a program about these artifacts. He will also do a flint knapping demonstration, a technique used in tool making in past cultures. Bring artifacts you need help identifying or bring unique artifacts to show others.

EVENT CALENDAR

Date	Time	Event	Location
Thursday, November 3	10:00 - 11:30 AM	O.W.L.S.	McFarland Park
Sunday, November 6	10:00 - 11:30 AM	Wild Tots	McFarland Park
Thursday, December 1	10:00 - 11:30 AM	O.W.L.S.	McFarland Park
Tuesday, December 13	5:00 - 6:30 PM	OUTside Meetups: LGBTQ+allies	McFarland Park
Sunday, December 18	1:00 - 3:00 PM	Hidden Candy Cane Hike	Hickory Grove - Oriole Ridge Lodge
Friday, December 30	11:00 - 12:30 PM	Noon Year's Eve	Hickory Grove - Oriole Ridge Lodge
Thursday, January 5	10:00 - 11:30 AM	O.W.L.S.	McFarland Park
Thursday, January 5	5:30 - 7:30 PM	OUTside Meetups: LGBT+allies	McFarland Park
Saturday, January 7	10:00 - 11:30 AM	Wild Tots	McFarland Park
Saturday, January 7	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Winter Play Day	McFarland Park
Thursday, January 19	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Artifacts Road Show	McFarland Park
Tuesday, January 24	7:00 - 8:00 PM	Environmental Literature Club	TBD
Tuesday, February 21	7:00 - 8:00 PM	Environmental Literature Club	TBD
TBD	TBD	Pop-Up Snowshoeing	TBD

DON'T FORGET TO TAKE PHOTOS FOR OUR ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

Submissions are in March. Visit our website for more details.

Photo by Tana Tesdall

NEED TO LOCATE ONE OF OUR PARKS? VIEW INDIVIDUAL MAPS AND 911
ADDRESSES ONLINE.

www.storycountyconservation.org

Board & Staff

Conservation Board

Christine Laumer, Chair
Dr. Nancy Franz, Vice Chair
Dr. Jim Pease, Secretary
Craig Meyers, Member
Ted Tedesco, Member
Linda Murken, Ex Officio Member

The Story County Conservation Board typically meets the second Monday of each month at the Story County Conservation Center at McFarland Park (56461 180th St.), northeast of Ames.

Meetings are open to the public.

Conservation Staff, Ames

Michael Cox, Director
Ryan Wiemold, Parks Superintendent
Pat Shehan, Special Projects Ranger
Marianne Harrelson, Financial Data Manager
Brittany Ridgway, Administrative Assistant II
Jerry Keys, Environmental Education Coordinator
Bobbi Donovan, Naturalist
Jess Lancial, Naturalist
Rebekah Beall, Naturalist
Beth Waage, Naturalist
Casey Struecker, Outreach/Community Engagement Coordinator

McFarland Park Shop, Ames

Russ DeWall, Operations Supervisor
Logan Heissel, Park Ranger
Dillon Schmidt, Conservation Technician II
Kallie Judson, Conservation Technician I
Derek Seward, Trails/Natural Resources Technician

Hickory Grove Park Shop, Colo

Jake Smith, Operations Supervisor
Olivia VanderHart, Park Ranger
Hunter Simmons, Conservation Technician II
Maxwell McCarty, Conservation Technician I
Brandon Clough, Natural Resources Specialist

IRVM Office & Shop, Nevada

Joe Kooiker, Vegetation Management Biologist
Tyler Kelley, Vegetation Management Specialist

Administration Bldg., Nevada

Sara Carmichael, Watershed Coordinator

HELP PURCHASE A NEW PROPERTY!

Help us reach our new goal of \$40,000!

Your Story County Conservation *Partners* membership will help purchase the Deppe Property. You will receive a nature-themed magnet and a 10% discount on all programs, facility rentals, and merchandise. The Red Fox membership and above will be recognized in the Conservation Center for their support.

Eagle Business Level

\$1,000 or more

Red-tailed Hawk

\$1,000 or more

Great Blue Heron

\$275 to \$999

Red Fox

\$125-\$274

Monarch Business Level

\$250 to \$999

Goldfinch

\$70 to \$124

Otter (Family)

\$35 to \$69

Great Horned Owl (Individual)

\$30

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

My membership level is _____

Make checks payable to:

Story County Conservation Partners
56461 180th Street, Ames, IA 50010-9451
Phone (515) 232- 2516

Join online: www.mycountyparks.com/County/Story/donations.aspx

Thank You!

We are grateful to all those who support Story County Conservation with donations of time, funding, and materials.

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR
GENEROSITY**

Gerald Deters

Bruce and Marlene Ehresman

Joslin Peters



STORY COUNTY
CONSERVATION
56461 180th Street
Ames, Iowa 50010-9451

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Ames, Iowa
Permit 301



You **Tube**

A New

WINTER TRADITION

Read winter
solstice books



Celebrate with time
outdoors!



Celebrate the winter solstice!

The winter solstice marks when the Earth's pole reaches its maximum tilt away from the sun; this day is measured with the shortest period of sunlight and longest night of the year occurring on December 21st. The winter solstice was historically very important because people depended on monitoring the seasons. Ancient people all over the world (Stonehenge anyone?) celebrated the winter solstice as it was a sign of the changing sun and warmer seasons ahead.

Celebrate the winter solstice with these fun and easy ideas.

Create edible ornaments
for outdoor animals



Make lanterns

