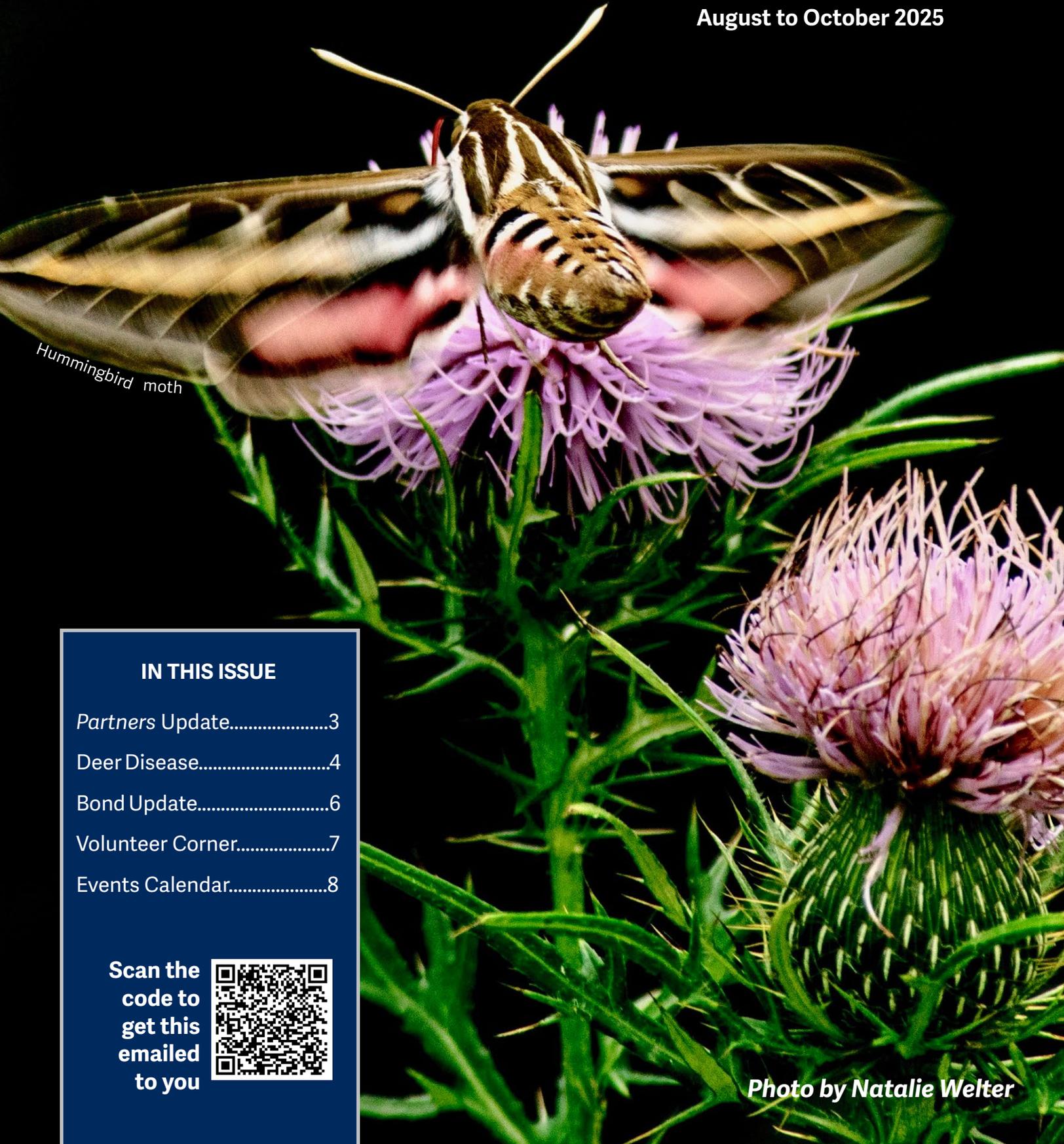




PRAIRIEHORIZONS

STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION | NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

August to October 2025



Hummingbird moth

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Scan the code to get this emailed to you



Photo by Natalie Welter

THE LATEST

Timely & brief updates on ongoing projects

Partners Update & New Goal

Congratulations! *Partners* met its pledge of \$45,000 in FY25 to help restore five oxbows at Wicks Wildlife Area. This project will enhance critical habitat along the South Skunk River, north of Story City. Read about the FY26 project goal below.

NOTICE: RESTRICTED ACCESS AT ANDERSON ACCESS

The bridge over 150th Street near Anderson Access, south of Story City, is being replaced. The area remains open for recreational and water trail use, but users must approach from the east on 150th Street due to bridge closure. No trailer parking is available. [More info online.](#)



Photo by Volunteer Laura Beskow

Expanding Buffers along the South Skunk River

Partners contributions in FY26 and FY27 will be directed towards the purchase of roughly 240 acres along the South Skunk River near Cambridge, IA (see map) that is currently owned by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). Our goal is to raise \$100,000 over the next two years.

Funds raised by *Partners* will combine with Story County Water & Land Legacy Bond funding, private donations and more to make this acquisition possible.

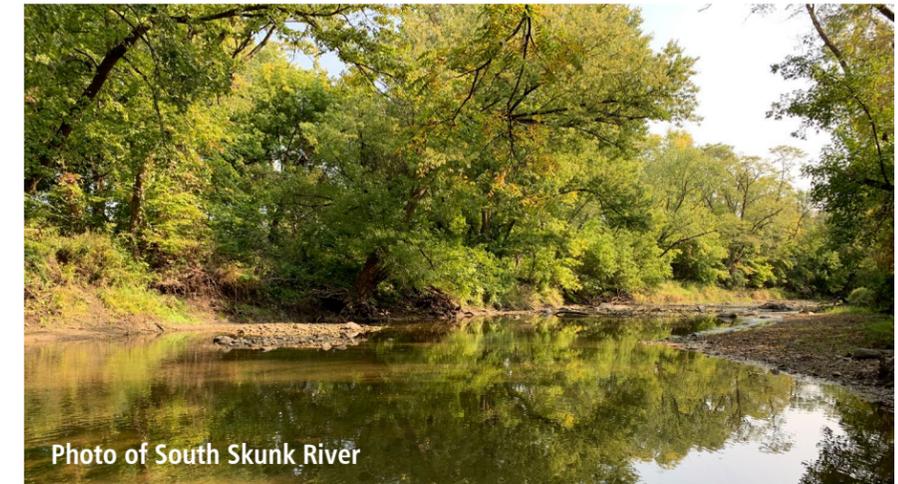


Photo of South Skunk River

PARKS PASSPORT Challenge!

Explore and answer challenge questions for 12 Story County Conservation parks to complete your Passport! Passports available for pick up at Conservation Center and Story County Administration Building or locations listed online.

Passport Challenge supported by Outdoor Alliance of Story County.

More info:

www.storycountyconservation.org



CHARGE UP!

A ChargePoint level 2 EV charging station was recently installed at McFarland Park for public use. Now you can hike the trails and charge up, all in one stop!

MORE WAYS TO GIVE

Support us by purchasing items directly from our Amazon Wish List. Big or small, your contribution is appreciated!



www.bit.ly/SCCAmazonlist
amazon wish list



Story County, IA

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

Scan QR code or visit link below to donate. Your gift provides a 10% discount on all program and facility rentals, and supports permanent land protection.



www.bit.ly/sccdonaions

This property's current land use and cover includes riparian woodland and row crops. Restoration efforts will include oxbow restoration, shallow water excavations and prairie restoration.

Protection of the South Skunk River floodplain corridor is important for water quality improvements, as well as wildlife habitat. A natural buffer protects the river from pollution directly from runoff, and the natural features like forest and wetlands offer high-quality wildlife habitat.

Story County Conservation (SCC) long ago identified its greenway mission to protect essential habitat along the South Skunk River. The South Skunk River Greenbelt currently includes roughly 1,000 acres owned by SCC.

INHF, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and SCC have identified land protection in the South Skunk River corridor as a high priority, and this project is a key part of this effort.

Imagine a day when there is a floodplain corridor along the South Skunk River from Story City, south to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, providing critical wildlife habitat, flood reduction and outdoor recreation. It's possible, and this is a piece of that puzzle.

The South Skunk River Greenbelt includes multiple properties bordering the river that offer wildlife habitat, scenic trails and hunting opportunities. The Greenbelt includes Peterson Park, McFarland Park, Sopers Mill, and more recent additions like Osheim Slough & Prairie Preserve and Wicks Wildlife Area. Learn more about the South Skunk River Greenbelt at www.storycountyconservation.org.

SPOTLIGHT: OUTDOOR ALLIANCE OF STORY COUNTY

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE



OF STORY COUNTY

Outdoor Alliance of Story County (OASCO) is an independent, nonprofit friends group to Story County Conservation (SCC), with a shared vision: Enhancing outdoor recreation, education and conservation. OASCO actively assists SCC's many efforts, through donations, fundraising, education, service learning projects and more. Get involved: Become a member, volunteer, advocate and more.

Visit www.oasco.org or email info@oasco.org.



BOND PROJECT UPDATES

For up-to-date information and list of bond projects, scan QR code or visit www.bit.ly/waterandland



The first of funds from the recently-passed Story County Water and Land Legacy (SCWLL) Bond will be available in August. SCC is committed to maximizing impacts of the investment Story County residents voted to provide and has taken no pause between election day and project progress. SCC has secured matching grants, community partnerships and funding for initial projects.

Numerous projects are already moving forward:

OXBOW RESTORATION – Design is underway. Restorations will include oxbows at Wicks Wildlife Area and Carroll Prairie.

Funding/Partners: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Iowa Soybean Association, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, SCWLL and SCC *Partners*.
Estimated completion: FY27

DAKINS LAKE CABIN – Design is underway for a 6-8 person rental cabin. Construction is estimated to begin this fall.
Funding: SCWLL, SCC and SCC *Partners*.
Estimated completion: FY26

Register today!
Details on Page 9

WILD WOMEN OF THE WOODS

HANNUMS MILL DAM MITIGATION – Design is underway. Funding is complete to the conceptual cost estimate. Desired construction period is fall of 2026.
Funding/Partners: SCWLL, Iowa DNR, Great Outdoors Foundation and SCC Trust Fund
Estimated completion: FY27

DEPPE FAMILY CONSERVATION AREA – Currently awaiting approval of a proposal for site layout design. A Phase 1 cultural review has been completed and submitted to the Iowa DNR. Funding is complete to the conceptual cost estimate. Shelter, parking lot and trail improvements anticipated for fall of 2026. Prairie recreation anticipated for fall/winter 2026-2027.
Estimated completion: FY27
Funding: Land and Water Conservation Fund (through Iowa DNR), Story County, SCWLL and donations.

TEDESCO ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CORRIDOR – Design is underway for restrooms, parking lot, trailhead and shelter. Construction anticipated in 2026.
Funding/Partners: Story County Tax Increment Financing (remaining funds from TELC construction), SCWLL and Hunziker Realty.
Estimated completion: FY27

HICKORY GROVE PARK BEACH IMPROVEMENTS Design is underway. A Cooperative Funding Agreement has been approved with Iowa DNR.
Funding/Partners: Iowa DNR Lakes Program will partner on the project and share design and construction costs, SCWLL.
Estimated completion: FY27

C.J. SCHRECK WATER TRAIL ACCESS – Design is underway. Anticipated construction is fall of 2026.
Funding: SCWLL and Iowa DNR
Estimated completion: FY27

Do you - or your business - want to be part of something big? We're seeking major donors and corporate partners to elevate bond-funded projects through financial gifts and in-kind support. Your gift could directly enhance a trail, restore critical habitat or bring a new park amenity to life. Call Director [Mike Cox](#) at (515) 232-2516.

VOLUNTEER CORNER



Outstanding Volunteer Award



Dr. Jim Pease, long-time educator and volunteer, as well as a Story County Conservation (SCC) Board member since 2011, was honored as SCC's 2024 Outstanding Volunteer in June.

Over the past year, Dr. Pease dedicated extensive time and leadership to support the addition of the Story County Water and Land Legacy (SCWLL) Bond initiative to the November 2024 ballot. His advocacy and guidance were instrumental to the passing of the SCWLL Bond, which will make a lasting impact on the people and landscapes of Story County.

If you see him out and about, please give him your thanks!

Have a skill to share, or want to join our volunteer community? Volunteer events, projects and specific need requests are posted online regularly.

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Please record any un-logged volunteer hours online soon, as the fiscal year recently ended and we will soon run reports.

Not sure how? Contact Community Engagement Coordinator Madi Nolte for more detail: email mnolte@storycountyiowa.gov OR call (515) 232-2516.

UPCOMING:

T.E.A.M. TRAIL WORKDAYS -

Trails Enhancement And Maintenance! No existing skills needed. Register online.

Saturday, Aug. 23, 9:00 a.m. to Noon
McFarland Park

Bring your muscles, we're hauling rock! It's time to re-fill the steps along the trails with gravel.

Saturday, Sept. 20, 9:00 a.m. to Noon
West Peterson Park

We'll install a turnpike, creating a stable surface trail surface and discouraging future erosion. Heavy lifters welcomed.

WILD WOMEN OF THE WOODS

Friday & Saturday, Oct. 3-4
Hickory Grove Park

One of our biggest events of the year (see page 9)! Naturalists will need people able and willing to help with whatever the day brings! May include registration table, washing dishes, loading/unloading program materials and more.

HAPPY HOUR HARVEST

Saturday, Oct. 4, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Doolittle Prairie

Collect prairie seed at Doolittle Prairie, then we'll enjoy a drink together to celebrate our hard work, relax and mingle. Details yet to come. Watch online for more details to come. Must be 21+.

PRAIRIE SEED HARVEST

Tuesday, Oct. 14, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Jennett Heritage Area

Collect prairie seed with us! We'll show you what to collect and teach you about the plants around you. Family-friendly seed harvest, and great opportunity to learn more about prairie while lending a helping hand! Register online.

FISHING LINE DISPOSAL ASSISTANCE

Ongoing
Hickory Grove Park; Various Parks

Help ensure our fishing line disposal receptacles are emptied routinely. Hickory Grove Park is priority, but other parks available, too. We prefer someone who can commit longterm. More details / sign up online.

Register online at www.storycountyconservation.org >Volunteering

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Aug. - Oct. 2025

Register online at www.storycountyconservation.org



AUGUST

CAMPIRES & GOURMET S'MORES

Friday, Aug. 8, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Hickory Grove Park - Oriole Ridge Lodge

Join naturalist Amber Carpenter for an evening of campfire building skills and tasty gourmet s'mores to celebrate National S'mores Day! Bring a chair/blanket and if you have a family friendly story, bring that with you as well. Register online by August 7.

HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL BIKE RIDE

Saturday, Aug. 9

Locations Vary - Official Start at Slater Main Street

Pedal 21 miles across Story County in this family-friendly bike ride celebrating connection of all five communities in southern Story County with a paved trail! Festivities and Ribbon Cutting, too. Join for as much or little of the ride as you wish. More details on page 10.

WILD TOTS: BUGGING OUT

McFarland Park

Learn about our six-legged friends and how amazing they are while exploring outdoors. Grab a net and come search for insects! Program includes short hike, story, craft and lots of nature activities. *Intended for tots 18 months to four years.

Two sessions of the same program are being offered. Register online by August 17.

- Sunday, Aug. 24, 10 - 11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, Aug. 26, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

RIVER WALK

Saturday, Aug. 30, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

West Peterson Park

Flip rocks, explore riffles, and scoop waterbugs during a river walk. Who knows what else we may discover! Plan on getting wet and muddy. Subject to change based on water levels. Free, but register online by August 28.

SEPTEMBER

LIGHTS OUT

Thursday, Sept. 4, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

McFarland Park

Discover how artificial light affects birds, pollinators, and human health—and how simple changes can make a big difference. Join Ames residents Lorna Carroll and Laura Beskow to learn how light pollution disrupts wildlife behaviors, threatens migration and reproduction, and impacts our own well-being. A brighter future starts with a darker night! Free program, no registration required. Doors open at 10:00 a.m. for coffee, tea and conversation; program begins at 10:30 a.m.

MONARCH MAGIC

Saturday, Sept. 6, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Ada Hayden Heritage Park

Hosted by Prairie Rivers of Iowa

Event will feature many activities to learn about monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Experience tagging a monarch butterfly, monarch crafts, survival games, a pollinator obstacle course and more. Free, family-friendly event. No registration required. More info at www.prrcd.org.



NATURE PLAYDATES

Tuesday, Sept. 9, 10:00 a.m.

McFarland Park

Casual opportunity to meet other families and play outside. This month, Naturalist Bekah will read "Seeds Move!". Then it's up to you to play! The self-guided exploration activity to follow will be a Chipmunk Dinner / Seed Scavenger Hunt. If desired, bring a picnic snack to eat during story time on the lawn. Free event, no registration required.

MONARCH MANIA

Celebrate one of the world's greatest animal migrations by helping with a community science project! We will learn about the amazing journey monarch butterflies embark on every fall. Participants will help with research by catching, tagging and releasing monarchs. This community science project is fun for all ages and abilities! No registration required.

Two sessions of the same program are being offered:

- Monday, Sept. 15, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. at McFarland Park
- Thursday, Sept. 18, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor

FALL FORAGING

Saturday, Sept. 20, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

McFarland Park

An entire grocery store of delicious, local, wild foods is just waiting outside your backyard! This HANDS ON class, led by foraging guide Chelsea Rowcliffe, focuses on identifying key features of seasonal wild edible plants. Class includes lesson on ethical and sustainable harvest of wild food, ID, how to prepare it and eat it. Sampling included! Register online by September 18.

OCTOBER

WEEDS ARE MORE THAN PLANTS OUT OF PLACE

Thursday, Oct. 2, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

McFarland Park

Join Dr. Robert Hartzler to learn about several of Story County's most nefarious (invasive) plants, their history and the traits that allow them to thrive. The research of two of Iowa State University's early botanists, Dr. Louis Pammel and Dr. Ada Hayden, will be featured. Dr. Hartzler is a retired ISU weed scientist and agronomy professor, as well as a very active SCC volunteer. Free program, no registration required. Doors open at 10:00 a.m. for coffee, tea and nature conversation.



WILD WOMEN OF THE WOODS

Friday and Saturday, Oct. 3-4

Hickory Grove Park

One of our biggest events of the year, this two-day gals getaway gives women an opportunity to connect with women of similar interests, explore outdoors and learn new skills. No outdoor experience required - come as you are! Choose from sessions of mocktails, yoga, archery, hobby farm basics, forest therapy and more. Supported by Outdoor Alliance of Story County.

*Registration packet available at www.mycountyparks.com but must be submitted via mail or in person. Register fast for the best session selections!

HALLOWEEN HIDES & CREEPY CACHES

Friday, Oct. 24, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

McFarland Park

This is a geocache hunt like no other! Combining the fun of geocaching with the spirit of the season, the pursuit has turned nocturnal! Join us and explore the origins of Halloween while using a GPS. Experience McFarland Park after dark and find hidden jack-o-lanterns. Space is limited so be sure to register your group early! Register online by October 22.

Need Financial Assistance?

Ask about **NATURE CONNECT** to receive **75% off** the cost of program registrations, facility rentals, camping and more.

Contact us at conservation@storycountyiowa.gov or (515) 232.2516 to obtain coupon code.

EVENING WALKS ON THE PRAIRIE

Join us for "Evening Walks On The Prairie!" These walks will take place at Doolittle Prairie, led by Dr. Tom Rosburg. Registration encouraged, but not required - this allows.

TUESDAY, AUG. 19, 7-8:30 PM

TUESDAY, SEPT. 16, 6-7:30 PM



Scan the QR code or visit our website for more details. Questions? Call 515.232.2516

HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL

THE HEART'S NEW BEAT BIKE RIDE

08.09.2025

Details on page 10

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Rummage RAMPage

Hosted by City of Ames and ISU Office of Sustainability
Ames Intermodal Facility

Many leases in Ames terminate at the end of July, causing many relocating students and community members to discard items that may still be useable. Rummage RAMPage keeps items out of the waste stream by selling items that are donated, much like a large garage sale. This year's dates:

Friday, July 25 - Drop-off only; noon to 6 p.m.

Saturday, July 26 - Sales and drop-off, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sunday, July 27 - Sales and drop-off, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Monday, July 28 to Friday, Aug. 1 - Sales and drop-off, noon to 6 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 2 - No drop-off and half-price sales, 8 a.m. to noon

[Click here](#) for more information.

IOWA YOUNG BIRDERS FIELD TRIP

Saturday, Sept. 6, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

McFarland Park

Hosted by Iowa Young Birders

Bring your "young birder" to McFarland Park for a birding adventure. We will target migrating species, like the Palm warbler, and other songbirds likely to be traveling through. Free to attend and open to any "young birder" and their parents/guardians. Free event, but register in advance at www.iowayoungbirders.org.



Iowa Young Birders is a non-profit organization that encourages Iowans ages 8-18 to study and enjoy birds and birding through field trips statewide. IAYB is currently working to deploy "Birding Backpacks" throughout Story County and beyond to make birding equipment and information accessible to all Iowans. Learn more or become a member [online](#).

FALL HIKE SERIES

Hosted by Outdoor Alliance of Story County

Free events, no registration required. All are welcome, no experience needed. Hikes are led by Outdoor Alliance of Story County (OASCO) volunteers. More info at www.oasco.org.



Lichen Walk

Monday, Sept. 15, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

McFarland Park

Lichens are everywhere outdoors - but are easily overlooked. Learn about the amazing world of lichens from retired ISU biologist and local lichen expert, Jim Colbert.

Afternoon Walk

Thursday, Sept. 25, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Robison Wildlife Acres, 29496 632nd Ave., Nevada

Several streams cross through this forested refuge's slopes. The trail also includes stairs - a walking stick may be helpful.

Fall Foliage Walk

Thursday, Oct. 3, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

East Peterson Park

Nothing beats a fall afternoon walk among the trees and with good company!

HAUNTED CAMPGROUND AT DAKINS LAKE

Saturday, Oct. 17, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Dakins Lake

Put on your best costumes and head to the campground for a fun evening of trick-or-treating. All are welcome. Campers are encouraged to decorate their campsites, prizes are given for Spookiest site. We hope you will join us for this FREE event.

DEER DISEASE, Continued from page 5.

Over time, it is expected that more deer will survive HD outbreaks and pass on immunity to future generations.

Hemorrhagic disease has been in Iowa's landscape since the late 1990s, with the first severe outbreak recorded in 2012. This year's drought in southern states caused the movement of cattle to the midwest, which is thought to be attributed to more severe EHD outbreaks in recent years.

In 2024, the DNR launched new online tools to allow the public to collect and report suspected hemorrhagic disease mortalities. Over 1,200 individuals reported hemorrhagic

disease mortalities, leading to the highest reported count of Hemorrhagic Disease-suspect mortalities in Iowa's history. Please view the relative severity compared of the 2023 and 2024 EHD/Bluetongue outbreaks in the map on page 4.

How you can Help

If you find suspected hemorrhagic disease mortalities this summer or fall, please report them via the EHD/Bluetongue Reporting Tool on the Iowa DNR's Deer Health Webpage or through the toolbox on the GoOutdoorsIA app.



HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL BIKE RIDE



Saturday, Aug. 9
Locations Vary - Official Start at Slater Trailhead

Join us Saturday, Aug. 9 as we celebrate 21 miles of continuous pavement now connecting all five communities across southern Story County! The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail now connects Slater, Huxley, Cambridge, Maxwell and Collins – a long-awaited milestone that officially opened this spring.

Festivities will take place in each community - more details to come. This family-friendly ride is free, although registration is encouraged. **Scan QR code or visit www.bit.ly/ridetheheart25** to register via Eventbrite. Cyclists are welcome to join for as much or as little of the ride as they wish - regardless of cycling experience!

Volunteer assistance will be needed. Watch online for details.

EVENT SCHEDULE:

- Check in & rolling start at Main Street in Slater
- Ride to Huxley (4 mi)
- Ride to Cambridge (4 mi)
- Ride to Maxwell (7 mi)
- Ride to Collins (5.5 mi)
- Ribbon cutting in Collins at 12:30 p.m.



Workplace Recycling made Easy

At the Story County Conservation Center, staff have expanded office recycling beyond plastic bottles, cardboard, glass, paper and tin cans (all accepted at the Ames Resource Recovery Center). Now, office recycling includes items like batteries and used markers taken to local retailers. Setting up shared bins at work makes it easy for everyone to drop off hard-to-recycle items from home—no need for a special trip across town. We challenge you to encourage your workplace to do the same. Together we can make a big impact keeping these items out of the waste stream!

*Handheld electronics recycling is available for the public in the Conservation Center lobby.



New Face at Hickory Grove Park: Meet Bailey Walters

Bailey Walters recently joined Story County Conservation as a full-time Conservation Technician, based at the Hickory Grove Park shop. Make sure to give her a warm welcome when you see her in the parks!

“Hi, I’m Bailey Walters! I was born and raised in Webster City, Iowa. I graduated from Ellsworth Community College with an AA in conservation technology. I was a park ranger with Hamilton County Conservation from 2016 to 2023. I am married to my husband Connor and have two boys Emmitt and Elijah. I love working in the parks and being able to see people getting to enjoy all the work we do.”



Bailey Walters

SCC Board meetings are typically held the second Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Story County Conservation Center at McFarland Park. The public is encouraged to attend.

THANK YOU

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROSITY:

All Partners & Volunteers
 Outdoor Alliance of Story County
 Robert Brown
 Gerald & Sally Deters
 Pet Supplies Plus

Michelle Ward & Kimball Olson
 Contributors in memory of Charles Mortvedt
 Contributors in memory of Bob Deppe

BOARD & STAFF

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.). Meetings are open to the public.

Conservation Board

- Craig Meyers, Vice Chair
- Christine Laumer, Vice Chair
- Erica Place, Secretary
- Dr. Jim Pease, Member
- Dr. Judy Levings, Member
- Linda Murken, Ex-Officio Member

Conservation Center Staff, Ames

- Michael Cox, Director
- Ryan Wiemold, Parks Superintendent
- Pat Shehan, Special Projects Ranger
- Marianne Harrelson, Financial Data Mgr.
- Jess Paulin, Administrative Assistant
- Jerry Keys, Environmental Education Coord.
- Rebekah Beall, Naturalist
- Bobbi Donovan, Naturalist
- Amber Carpenter, Naturalist
- Clair Pfantz, Naturalist
- Madi Nolte, Community Engagement Coord.

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 Tech.

Hickory Grove Park Shop, Colo

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

IRVM Office & Shop, Nevada

- Ty Hamiel, Vegetation Mgmt. Biologist
- Nathan Schmitt, Veg. Mgmt. Specialist

Administration Bldg., Nevada

- Sara Carmichael, Watershed Coordinator



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

Nonprofit Org.
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PAID
Ames, Iowa
Permit 301

LIFE JACKETS SAVE LIVES.

State law requires ALL vessels to have one personal flotation device for each person on board.

Children under 13 years **MUST** wear a personal flotation device.

For more on boating safety, search: "Iowa DNR Boating Safety"

PACK IT.

WEAR IT.

Paddling rentals available at Hickory Grove Park and Dakins Lake. Personal flotation devices provided. Download Rent.Fun app for details.

