



PRAIRIE HORIZONS

STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION | NATURE PROGRAMS AND NEWS

February to April 2026

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*Saw-whet owl
Photo by Peter Miller*

THE LATEST

Timely & brief updates on ongoing projects

Oak wilt management to begin at Hickory Grove Park



Leaves affected by Oak wilt.

Oak wilt, a fatal fungal disease affecting oak trees, has been identified at Hickory Grove Park. Story County Conservation is taking preventative measures to help manage the disease by removing infected trees. This will help prevent the spread to other oaks in the park. A management

plan has been developed with guidance from the Iowa DNR.

The public may notice changes in the area northwest of Oriole Ridge Lodge in the near future.

More information about oak wilt and our plan to manage the spread can be found online at www.storycountyconservation.org.

Celebrating Community Impact

Story County Conservation is proud to have recently been recognized by the Ames Regional Economic Alliance (AREA) with its 2025 Community Impact Award.

From the AREA:

“Story County Conservation’s successful paving and connection of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail has transformed a long-standing vision into a real, accessible asset — linking five communities, drawing visitors, and boosting small-town economies. Meanwhile, the 2024 Water and Land Legacy Bond gives the organization a stable, long-term foundation to expand conservation, recreation, water-quality, and park projects across the county. That combination of tangible recent accomplishment, forward-looking strategic vision, broad benefit to community, economy, and environment makes Story County Conservation a strong choice for the AREA Community Impact Award.”

Ames Regional Economic Alliance is an alliance of people and businesses partnering for economic growth and to promote community development across Boone, Greene, Hamilton and Story counties. Learn more at www.amesalliance.com.

SUPPORT OUR WISH LIST

Support us by purchasing items directly from our Amazon Wish List.

Gifts can be shipped directly to the Conservation Center OR shipped to home and delivered to the office - we would love to thank you in person!



www.bit.ly/SCCAmazonlist

NEW: FY25 Annual Report Available Now

There’s a lot more to what we do than just providing parks for public use! The annual report gives an overview of ongoing and completed projects, park and facility use, financial data and more.

View online:
www.storycountyconservation.org



Partners continue to raise funds for Cambridge Tract land acquisition project

Story County Conservation (SCC) long ago identified its greenway mission to protect essential habitat along the South Skunk River. SCC is fundraising to acquire the Cambridge Tract, 247 acres northeast of Cambridge, currently owned by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). Just eight miles upstream of Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, this property allows us to imagine a day when a floodplain corridor connects these areas.

In collaboration with Iowa DNR, this acquisition can be the cornerstone in establishing an expansive complex of roughly 500 acres of wildlife habitat in this area. The Cambridge Tract will be available for public hunting, as will 250 acres of adjoining land owned by Iowa DNR, also anticipated to allow hunting.

Partial funding will come from Story County Water and Legacy Bond. SCC *Partners* has pledged \$100,000 in donations to contribute to this acquisition. By becoming an individual or corporate *Partners* donor to chip away at this goal, you can support this shared vision. Scan the QR code below to become part of it today.

Current land cover and use include row crop and riparian woodlands. Reconstructed prairie will replace roughly 160 acres of floodplain cropland, creating a natural buffer to infiltrate runoff, providing both upland habitat and impacting water



PHOTO BY RICK DIETZ
The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail, visible in the distance, crosses the South Skunk River as it borders the Cambridge Tract, facing south.



quality. These improvements don't just benefit wildlife—they also make our landscape more resilient as weather becomes less predictable.

Another 53 acres of mature woodland encompass remnant fragments of the historic South Skunk River channel, prior to channelization. Lastly, roughly seven acres include the South Skunk River itself.

Bur oaks at this location support a vast array of wildlife, through producing acorns as a food source, to a canopy providing shelter and serving as a host for countless caterpillar species.

GET INVOLVED:

CAMBRIDGE TRACT SPRING WORKDAY & TIRE CLEAN UP

Join us Wednesday, March 18 for a collaborative volunteer workday at this property to celebrate Global Recycling Day. With help from Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, we will remove discarded tires along the South Skunk River so they can be appropriately recycled.

More details on Page 5.

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Iowa DNR
Pheasants Forever of Story County
Big Bluestem Audubon Society
Iowa Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Outdoor Alliance of Story County
Add your organization or business's name to the list!

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

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



www.bit.ly/sccdonaions

Bond Project Updates:

At the time of printing, we are awaiting construction of the very first Story County Water and Land Legacy (SCWLL) Bond project to break ground (oxbow restorations)! We are excited to see physical progress taking place and look forward for many other projects to follow behind. Here are our latest updates regarding our first focus group of projects:

OXBOW RESTORATION – Construction is underway on oxbows at Wicks Wildlife Area and Carroll Prairie. This will aid in nutrient removal from tile drains as well as providing important wildlife habitat and flood mitigation.

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

Estimated completion: Summer '26

HICKORY GROVE PARK BEACH IMPROVEMENTS

Design is underway for beach improvements. A tiered overlook, treatment area for stormwater runoff and conversion of mowed areas into deep-rooted native plantings will slow runoff into the lake and preserve water quality. New, accessible amenities will ensure park users of all accessibility levels can explore the water, including: picnic shelters, a fire pit, paved walkways and fishing pier. A local firm, Uncurbed, is assisting with accessible design and recently met with social service providers to gather input.

Funding/Partners: Community Impact Grant (Story County Community Foundation), Iowa DNR Lakes Program will partner on the project and share design and construction costs, SCWLL.

Estimated completion: Summer '26

DEPPE FAMILY CONSERVATION AREA – Design is underway for layout of the shelter and parking lot, with anticipated construction in fall of 2026. Plans will keep a light footprint, including restored prairie, upland timber and creek corridors, open picnic shelter and educational signage.

Estimated completion: Fall '26

Funding: Community Impact Grant (Story County Community Foundation), Land and Water Conservation Fund (Iowa DNR), Story County, SCWLL and donations.



R38 TRAIL ALTERNATIVE- A survey has been sent to landowners in the area of interest for the R38 Trail Alternative construction project. This survey will gauge landowner support for identifying a trail route.

TEDESCO ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CORRIDOR – Design is underway for restrooms, parking lot, trailhead and shelter. Anticipated construction is summer 2026.

Funding/Partners: Story County Tax Increment Financing (remaining funds from TELC construction), SCWLL and Hunziker Realty.

Estimated completion: Summer '26

DAKINS LAKE CABIN – Design is underway for a 6-8 person modern rental cabin complete with running water, electricity, kitchen appliances and more. Anticipated construction is summer 2026.

Funding: SCWLL, SCC and SCC *Partners*.

Estimated completion: Summer '26

C.J. SCHRECK WATER TRAIL ACCESS – Design is complete for this South Skunk River Water Trail Access point. The Access will include a new canoe launch, boat launch, parking area and interpretive signage

Funding: SCWLL and Iowa DNR

Estimated completion: Fall '26

HANNUMS MILL DAM MITIGATION – Design is underway. Funding is complete to the conceptual cost estimate. Anticipated construction is fall of 2026.

Funding/Partners: SCWLL, Iowa DNR, Great Outdoors Foundation and SCC Trust Fund

Estimated completion: Fall '26



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

VOLUNTEER CORNER



Scout project provides roosting space for Chimney Swifts

By Paul Readhead, Volunteer

Eagle Scout candidate William Soupir, Gilbert Troop 157, Scouting America, recently constructed and installed a Chimney swift roosting tower at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor (TELC) in Ames. This tower will be used by local birds as a spring nesting site and an overnight roost by migrating Chimney swifts as they fly south to wintering grounds in Central and South America.

Soupir, plus eight friends and family members, invested 114 hours building and installing the tower in total. The Eagle Scout candidate develops and organizes the project, recruits the necessary help, raises some funds, gathers materials and supervises the project to completion. The Ames Chapter, Isaac Walton League of America (Ames Ikes), and an anonymous donor, also provided funding and Paul Readhead, Conservation and Education Chair with Ames Ikes, provided mentorship throughout the project.

The tower is located at the west end of TELC, near the footbridge crossing the stream. Chimney swifts are small, gray, "cigar-shaped" birds. Their foot structure is specially designed to cling to vertical surfaces and does not allow them to land or perch on a limb like other birds. They fly all day without landing, feeding on insects. These cavity nesters originally nested in abandoned woodpecker excavations in dead trees or on cliff faces.

Chimneys then became a roost substitute as standing dead trees became less common. Chimney swift towers are now being constructed as substitutes, as chimneys become less common.

Swifts have already migrated south this year, so come back next year to see them! Best viewing time is at dawn or dusk, as they leave/return to the roost.



UPCOMING:

GLOBAL RECYCLING DAY AT CAMBRIDGE TRACT

Wednesday, March 18, 1 - 3 p.m.

Cambridge Tract

Co-Sponsored by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

Join Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) and Story County Conservation for a workday at the Cambridge Tract, northeast of Cambridge. To celebrate Global Recycling Day, we will clean up discarded tires so they can be appropriately recycled. Some lifting will be required. More details online. Registration required.

*Please note that registration will take place in a different place than usual: www.inhf.org/take-action/volunteer

SEEKING GUEST PRESENTERS

First Tuesday of month

Sept. to June, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Do you have an abundance of knowledge on a specific topic, something related to nature, local history or culture? Maybe you'd like to share scenic photos of recent travels abroad. We'd love to have you to present for an upcoming OWLS program! (No, it doesn't have anything to do with birds!). Public speaking skills required, and program must last roughly one hour.

Propose your topic, contact:

Environmental Education Coordinator Jerry Keys
jkeys@storycountyiowa.gov or call (515)-598-4765.

OWLS is a monthly weekday program series designed for adults. All ages welcome. Each month we explore a new topic with a guest expert. Free, no registration required.



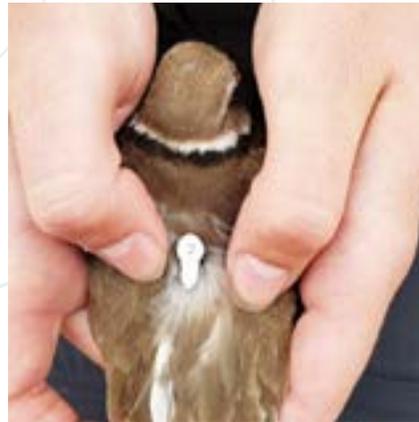
Volunteer needs are slow during winter, as parks are quiet and staff plans for the year ahead. Watch for volunteer needs to arise as winter fades and we begin spring clean up!

Register for events online at
www.storycountyconservation.org >Volunteering

Motus

Wildlife Tracking System

By Bobbi Donovan, Naturalist



(Left) Elysse Donovan, 2, practices her binocular skills while watching a Monarch butterfly in her front yard. (Center) Example of the small tracking device researchers place on avians. (Right) Semi-palmated sandpiper.

As my toddler and I walk out of our front door, I frequently hear her exclaim “Mama, that a Blue jay!”. The sounds of Blue jays’ echo through our neighborhood and my two-year-old delights in their familiar music. I find similar excitement when I hear the first call of a Red-winged black bird in early spring or see a flash of bright orange from a Baltimore oriole as summer approaches. Birds have long intrigued people with their cheerful songs, bold colors, long migrations, and unique appearances. More importantly, they play essential roles within their ecosystems.

Unfortunately, global bird populations are declining at an astounding rate. It’s estimated that in North America we have already lost about 1/3 of the total number of birds we had in 1970

(Gustave Axelson, 2019). While there often seem like there are plenty of Blue jays, Red-winged blackbirds and Baltimore orioles, the reality is that even these common birds are declining in numbers. According to Cornell Lab, 25% of Blue jays have been lost and 30% of Baltimore orioles have disappeared. Obviously, the loss of birds is a large problem that scientists are trying to solve before it’s too late.

There are many reasons for this global bird decline as each species of bird faces its own unique challenges in today’s world. However, one of the struggles many bird species are facing is climate change. Climate change causes extreme weather including droughts, floods, harsh hot and/or cold temperatures, etc., to happen more frequently, impacting both bird health and habitat.

Additionally, climate change makes it easier for non-native viruses and species to thrive in new habitats adding more pressure and stress to native birds.

One way scientists are trying to learn more about bird species, specifically migratory birds, is through the MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System. MOTUS (Latin for movement) utilizes radio telemetry tracking devices and a system of receiving stations to successfully track where migratory birds fly. Birds are captured, fitted with a small tracking device and released. The tracking device (see photo above) doesn’t interfere with the bird’s flight or movement. When the tagged birds fly over a receiving station it records the bird and date, so now scientists can track where birds are travelling in real time. Currently

What can you do to help birds?

While you are likely not going to put up your own MOTUS tower in your backyard, there are plenty of other ways to help birds from home:

GIVE YOUR WINDOWS SOME BLING! Bird strikes are a common cause of mortality. It's not uncommon for them to fly away and pass due to complications later, so you may not notice dead birds near your windows. Add dots or other markings to the outside of your windows to prevent strikes, especially if you have bird feeders nearby.

KEEP CATS INDOORS - Cats are great companions, but they are equally great predators. While it might be hard to believe that your fluffy, sweet kitty would ever hurt a bird, it happens all the time. They are born to hunt!

PLANT NATIVE - Many birds rely on insects, seeds and nectar. Planting native flowers, even if it's just in a small pot, can provide food and habitat.

SKIP PESTICIDES - It might be tempting to get rid of every insect in your yard, but birds need to feed on insects, especially when they are young. No insects, no birds.

LIGHTS OFF - Turn off your outdoor lights and close blinds at night during peak migration times. Many birds travel at night and unnatural lights can confuse them.

GET OUTDOORS & EXPLORE - The best way to learn about birds is to watch and hear them in their natural habitat, even if that's your own backyard.

HELP OUT - Join community science projects! We have the Great Backyard Bird Count coming up in February, read more on page 8.

there are 2,343 receiving stations in 34 countries, but this number continues to grow.

The Iowa DNR is coordinating a statewide "belt" of receiving stations. One of these receiving stations is located near Dakins Lake in Zeoring, IA. Story County Conservation (SCC) thought the MOTUS effort was important and wanted to contribute to migratory bird research. SCC purchased a receiving tower with the goal of placing it in a location where the receiving radius would overlap with the existing receiving stations at Ada Hayden Heritage Park and Marshall County Conservation.

Through partnership with Colo-NESCO Elementary School in Zeoring, a receiving station was mounted to the school - as Dakins Lake unfortunately did not offer a good location for the tower. The Colo-NESCO school district approved mounting the receiving station to the elementary school and the receiving station officially started receiving data on June 17, 2024, with its first bird detection occurring on September

26, 2024. So far, the SCC receiving station has detected Franklin's gulls and most recently a Semipalmated sandpiper. The Franklin's gulls that were detected in 2024 eventually flew to either Central or South America to overwinter!

The data received from the MOTUS receiving stations can highlight important migration routes, overwintering sites and breeding grounds. This information can help scientists protect critical habitats for various species in hopes of saving our bird populations.

In addition to birds, MOTUS tracking devices have successfully been secured to bats, dragonflies and monarch butterflies to learn more about migratory routes and aid in conservation efforts for these species. The hope is that people will be able to continue to delight in the magic of species like Blue jays, blackbirds and orioles.

The public can view MOTUS data and monitor flight patterns of thousands of birds all over the world at www.motus.org.

Bird Friendly Community

Story County has been a designated Bird Friendly Community through Bird Friendly Iowa (BFI since 2020. BFI focuses on educating and engaging the public about birds, reducing threats to them and protecting, restoring and enhancing habitats birds rely on.

Visit www.birdcity.org to learn more.



PUBLIC PROGRAMS & EVENTS

February to April, 2026

ALL PROGRAM DETAILS
SCAN HERE



Register online at www.mycountyparks.com

FEBRUARY

O.W.L.S. - HEALTHY LAWNS, HEALTHY PEOPLE BY GOOD



NEIGHBOR IOWA

Thursday, Feb. 5, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Conservation Center - McFarland Park

Healthy Lawns, Healthy People is an engaging program that explores the mission of Good Neighbor Iowa, the hidden health impacts of pesticide use, and practical, pesticide-free lawn care solutions. Learn simple, effective ways to grow a healthy yard while protecting children, pets, pollinators and our water. Free, no registration required.

WILD TOTS: ANIMAL OLYMPICS

Saturday, Feb. 7, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Celebrate the spirit of the Olympic games by learning all about animal superstars. Tots will test their skills as they explore which animals are the best climbers, sprinters and jumpers. Program includes story, craft, hands-on activities and brief hike. Register online by January 29. Intended for tots ages 18 months to not yet in kindergarten.

NATURE PLAYDATES: WHERE IN THE WILD!

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 10:00 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

This is a casual opportunity to meet other families and play outside. Naturalist Bekah will read children's book "Where in the Wild!" and provide a self-guided camouflage mask exploration activity. Free, no registration required.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Saturday, Feb. 13, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Enjoy a quiet morning learning about Iowa birds and a special citizen science project, Great Backyard Bird Count. To start the morning, Naturalist Bobbi will present about this global volunteer project and birding basics. Then participants can choose to set out on a self-guided hike to search for birds or cozy up inside by our bird viewing window to count birds. Whether you are a novice bird watcher or a seasoned "bird nerd", we could use your help counting! Participants are encouraged to bring binoculars if possible. No registration required.

FLY TYING WORKSHOP

Saturday, Feb. 21, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Join us for a hands-on fly tying program that promises to elevate your fishing experience. Tie your own flies to take home with instructor Marty J. McVey! Includes Zebra Midge, Mayer Mini Leech, Rubber Leg Woolly Bugger, San Juan Worm and Elk Hair Caddis. Register online by February 15.

GREENER CLEANING

Saturday, Feb. 28, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Join Naturalist Amber to create eco-friendly cleaning products with minimal ingredients and using reusable tools. These low-waste products avoid chemicals and reduce environmental impact - while keeping your home fresh and clean! Register online by February 18.

MARCH

O.W.L.S. - LOON MAGIC BY TY SMEDES

Thursday, March 5, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Conservation Center - McFarland Park



Local writer/photographer Ty Smedes will share about the Loon, an icon of north-country. Presentation will include history and stunning images, plus discussion on how a nature photographer pre-visualizes and plans a wilderness photography trip. No registration needed.

THE GREAT GREEN GEOCACHE

Tuesday, March 17, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

McFarland Park

Join us for a festive St. Patrick's Day adventure! Learn how to use a handheld GPS unit before setting off on a self-guided quest through McFarland Park. Follow the clues and uncover

PUZZLE TUESDAYS

1st and 3rd Tuesdays, December - February

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Cozy up with a warm drink and enjoy birdwatching while building jigsaw puzzles. Coffee and hot chocolate provided. Available on first and third Tuesdays, thru February. Just show up, come and go as you please.

a series of hidden waypoints tucked throughout the trails - and maybe, if you're lucky, find a bit of "gold" along the way! Register online by March 12.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

Thursday, March 19, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Meet and greet our education animals. Get a brief introduction to Iowa's reptiles and amphibians, followed by a casual Q&A opportunity with the animals. Possible encounters include a turtle, salamander and/or snake. Free, no registration required.

NATURE PLAYDATES:

THE NEST THAT WREN BUILT

Tuesday, Mar. 24, 10:00 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

This is a casual opportunity to meet other families and play outside. Naturalist Bekah will read children's book "The Nest that Wren Built" and provide a self-guided bird play and nest building exploration activity. No registration required.

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP

Become a water conservationist! Naturalist Clair Pfantz will discuss the importance of rain barrels, then create a 55-gallon barrel of your own so you can reduce water usage at home. This fun workshop can be done independently, or bring a group/partner to create one together. Register your group online by March 22.

Three individual sessions being offered:

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

- Saturday, Mar. 28, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
- Saturday, Mar. 28, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

Nevada Public Library

- Monday, Mar. 30, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

APRIL

O.W.L.S. - MONARCHS IN CENTRAL MEXICO

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

Conservation Center - McFarland Park

Karen Johlas-Szalkoeski, Marion County naturalist, will share highlights from her travels to Mexico's mountainous region, where millions of beautiful Monarch butterflies gather each winter. Learn about their migration, lifecycle and explore rich local culture of the area - plus travel tips! No registration required.



CAMPFIRE COMFORTS

Wednesday, Apr. 8, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Warm up your outdoor skills with this introduction to cooking over an open flame. Participants will learn the essentials of safe and simple campfire cooking—from tending coals to preparing easy, flavorful dishes using a variety of cast iron and basic tools. We'll create a hearty, comforting dinner and a sweet dessert to share. Register online by April 2.

WILD TOTS: EGG-TRAVAGANZA

Saturday, April 11, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Conservation Center at McFarland Park

Spring is a busy time for many of our animal friends, especially those that lay eggs. We'll play outdoors while learning about eggs and the animals that lay them. Program to include story, craft and hands-on activities and potential hike. Register online by April 2. Intended for tots ages 18 months to not yet in kindergarten.

NATURE PLAYDATES: WONDER WALKERS

Tuesday, April 14, 10:00 a.m.

Conservation Center - McFarland Park

This is a casual opportunity to meet other families and play outside. Naturalist Bekah will read children's book "Wonder Walkers" and provide a self-guided five senses play exploration activity. No registration required.

Need Financial Assistance?

Ask us about **NATURE CONNECT** to receive a discounted rate for program registrations, facility rentals, camping and more.

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



SHOP LOCAL

THIS ADVENTURE SEASON

By Madi Nolte, Community Engagement Coordinator

The next adventure season is just around the corner! With the recent closure of a popular outdoors store, we are reminded just how special local shops are to the community.

Before adding a new pair of Keens - or whatever you're buying - to your Amazon cart this spring, give a locally owned shop the chance. Try them on in person, take them home the same day and feel good about supporting local jobs—even if it can sometimes cost a few extra dollars.

As we head into “adventure season,” here are a few reasons to keep your hunt for new gear close to home:

1. Your dollar stays put.
Every dollar spent at a local shop generates local sales tax that circulates right here in Story County. That means money supporting park improvements, nature programs, water quality efforts and more.
2. Fewer delivery trucks = happier trails.
A single in-person purchase can save multiple shipments, returns and repackings. Shopping local means fewer miles traveled and less carbon puffed into the atmosphere. And less trips across town to drop off your cardboard recycling.
3. Local businesses give back. A lot.
Many of our favorite shops donate raffle items, offer us special discounts, support conservation efforts and more. Supporting them means you're indirectly supporting us — and the places you love to explore.
4. You get real humans. With real advice.
Need advice on a new sleeping bag or boots that don't blister? Local staff know the terrain — literally.

So this season, wander the aisles close to home. Your gear, your community and your recycling bin will all breathe a little easier.

NEED A NEW PAIR?



Our staff is always willing to discuss options for local outdoor and recreation retailers!



Spring Wildflower Walks with Outdoor Alliance

Enjoy a series of spring walks as we explore our local public parks! Free events, no registration required. Walkers are invited to bring a light snack to share with the group afterwards.

Hosted by Outdoor Alliance of Story County and co-sponsored by Story County Conservation.

For more info, contact info@oasco.org or visit www.oasco.org.

Thursday, Apr. 23, 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Reactor Woods

2098 Scholl Road (off of Ontario St), Ames, IA 50010

Thursday, Apr. 30, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Robison Wildlife Acres

29490 632nd Ave., Maxwell, IA 50161

Thursday, May 7, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Soper's Mill - North

56535 170th Street, Ames, IA 50010

Additional gravel parking area available on northwest side of bridge. Group will meet at trailhead southwest of bridge.

THANK YOU

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROSITY:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| All Partners & Volunteers | Country Landscapes, Ames |
| Amy Brown | Outdoor Alliance of Story County |
| Heuss Printing | Overflow Thrift Store |
| JAX Outdoor Gear | Big Bluestem Audubon Society |
| Bryan Debshaw | Contributions in Memory of Opal Nelson |
| Judy and Rich Jones | Contributions in Memory of Jan Sherwood |
| Heidi Provost | Contributions in Memory of Dale Brentnal |
| Nancy Franz | |

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, Chair
- Christine Laumer, Vice Chair
- Erica Place, Secretary
- Dr. Jim Colbert, 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 Weber, 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

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Garden Q & A

Monthly (Virtual) at 12:30 p.m.

ISU Extension & Outreach

Join ISU Extension and Outreach horticulture specialists and ask your gardening questions live. Sessions are held the second Monday of each month via Zoom. More info [here](#).

Iowa Prairie Network Winter Seminar

Saturday, Jan. 24, 8:30 a.m. - 5:45 p.m.

Ames High School

Learn more about Prairie in Iowa, our relationship with the land, talk with others who share this interest and check out the silent auction and exhibitors (including Story County Conservation!). This year's theme is "Passing the Driptorch." More info / registration [here](#).

Iowa Bike Expo

Saturday, Jan. 24, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Iowa Events Center, Des Moines

Join us for annual Iowa Bike Expo! Story County Conservation will be present promoting the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. This free event is one of the Midwest's largest one-day bike shows, attracting over 5,000 enthusiasts. Attendees can find anything for a cycling journey, from gear to destinations and beyond!

National Seed Swap Day

Saturday, Jan. 31, 3-5 p.m.

Ames Public Library

Celebrate National Seed Swap Day with a seed giveaway! Local organizations, including Story County Conservation, will share information on sustainability, and free seeds will be available while supplies last. Visitors are also welcome to bring seeds to donate to the Ames Seed Library. More info [here](#).

Seed Swap & Giveaway

Saturday, Jan. 31, 10 AM - 12 PM

Nevada Public Library

Another event to celebrate National Seed Swap Day. Bring your saved or unused seeds to share with the community. Don't have seeds? Attendees will be provided with a limited number of FREE seed packets courtesy of Nine Square Feet, a non-profit supporting backyard food. More info [here](#).

Forest Management for Birds

Thursday, Feb. 19, 6:30 p.m.

at Ames Public Library

Hosted by Big Bluestem Audubon Society

Adam Janke, Associate Professor and extension wildlife specialist in Dept. of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at ISU, will explore the biology and ecology of the birds we share our forests with. Plus, forest management practices. More info [here](#).

Family Snowshoeing

Saturday, Feb. 21, 1 - 3 p.m.

Iowa Arboretum & Gardens

Co-hosted by Boone County Conservation

Start the new year off with some outdoor fun. You can use the snowshoes provided or bring your own. A limited number of adult and child snowshoes available, so registration is required and space is limited. Event is free and open to the public. Registration and more info [here](#).

Birds of Early Spring

Thursday, March 19, 6:30 p.m.

at Ames Public Library

Hosted by Big Bluestem Audubon Society

Learn about the birds of spring from Lindsey Page with the Polk County Conservation Commission. More info [here](#).

Celebrate Iowa's Outdoors Day

Tuesday, Mar. 24

Iowa State Capitol

Hosted by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

In the morning, join INHF and many other organizations and individuals in celebrating Iowa's outdoors featuring displays and speakers. This event offers a chance to engage with your legislators and express gratitude for great conservation work.

Deep Roots Book Group

Monthly

Ames Public Library

Join gardeners and nature enthusiasts for deep discussion of book. Topics to touch on seeds and plants, gardening, community-building, and relationship between humans, animals, and plants. Typically held 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday each month. More information [here](#).



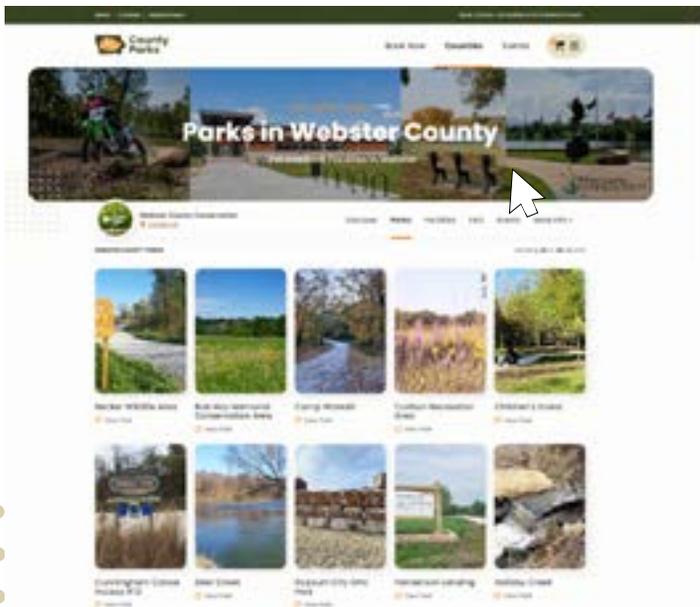
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