

# *In Nature's Care*

**Conservation News and Programs**



*To develop an awareness and appreciation of our natural world through conservation and education.*



# Naturalist Notes

BY HEATHER HUCKA, CONSERVATION EDUCATION MANAGER

With the summer season coming to a close, we can't be more excited to share with you what we have been up to these past months.

Summer began wet and wild! High water and high temperatures made for a tricky start to our summer programs. But with a bit of flexibility and a lot of sunscreen we were able to offer a full summer of educational and recreational programming. And we are not slowing down.

Inside this issue you will find new opportunities to explore and do more out at Lime Creek Conservation Area and Nature Center. We strive to offer experiences for everyone and hope to see you out at the park soon.

*Every season is a new adventure!*



## This Issue

Fall Programs  
Page 2-5

Fall Festival  
Page 3

Flora & Fauna  
Page 6

Roadside Review  
Page 7

Conservation Comment  
Page 8

Beyond Lime Creek  
Page 9

Thank You  
Page 10

# Programs

To register call (641)423-5309

**\*Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration\***

## **OUTDOOR COOKING 101**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 5-8 PM  
LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**



Cooking outside can be fun and easy. Whether it is on a stick or in tin foil, fire is a great way to make any meal better. Discover new ways of cooking some old favorites. Working in small groups, we will make and taste a variety of foods. This program is intended for ages 16 and up. Please indicate any food preferences/allergies upon registration.

**\$10/member or \$15/non-member.**

**Register by Friday, September 12 at 4 PM.**

## **FALL EQUINOX HIKE**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 5:30-7 PM  
LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

The fall equinox marks the changing of the season. It is a time of balance and reflection. Albert Camus said, "Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower." Come enjoy the fall beauty at Lime Creek and celebrate the first day of the new season.

**Please register by noon on Monday 22.**

## **CONSERVATION COFFEE CLUB ~ IOWA'S FASCINATING FUNGUS**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 9:30-11 AM @ LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Enjoy some social time with coffee, tea and treats followed by a conservation focused program. Learn about the kingdom of fungi with Amanda Flaata, board member and chair of the arts committee for the Prairie States Mushroom Club. This will be a discovery of all things fungi - why fungi are important to a healthy ecosystem, key aspects of identification, and myths and safety while foraging.

**Cost is \$3 for nature center members or \$7 for non-members.**

**Registration deadline is Friday, October 3 by 4 PM**



## **MUSHROOM FORAY 4:30-6:30 PM**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8  
LIME CREEK CONSERVATION AREA**

Come and explore the forest with Amanda Flaata of the Prairie States Mushroom Club in search of fungi! Learn about the key aspects of identification and discover a hidden kingdom of life.

**Please register for this event by Friday, October 3 by 4 PM.** This program is free.



## **WILDLIFE WONDERS ~ CREEPY CRITTERS**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 5-6 PM  
LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Learn all about some of the underappreciated animals in Iowa and why they spook so many people. This program is open to all ages, but is geared towards upper elementary children. Come to Lime Creek and face your fears this Halloween season! **Please register for this event by Friday, October 10 by 4 PM.** This program is free.

# Fall Festival

September 7, 2025

9:30am-2:30pm



The Lime Creek Nature Center Foundation and Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board invite you to our annual Fall Festival! Celebrate Lime Creek and the outdoors with guided activities and free exploration. Lunch is provided for a free will donation.

CALL TO RESERVE YOUR SPOTS ~ 641/423-5309

MINNOW RACES

CANOEING  
KAYAKING

FACE PAINTING

ARCHERY

LIVE ANIMAL PROGRAM

Don't  
Miss  
out

WOODWORKING  
FOR WILDLIFE

YOUTH FISHING

TRAM RIDES

AIR RIFLES

CRAFTS & GAMES

...AND MORE!



# Programs continued

## What in the world is **WHEP!**?



### NATIONAL WILDLIFE HABITAT EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) is an amazing opportunity for students ages 8-19 to learn about the wildlife around them through hands-on experiences and teamwork. Participants in this national program will discover how to identify animals through sight & sound, dive deep into habitat needs, and how to manage a habitat to encourage diversity. After practices and working together as a team, there is a chance for students to show off their hard work and knowledge at the state competition! If a team places first at state, they are invited to the National WHEP contest! The Iowa state competition will focus on species found in the tall grass prairie, wetland, and urban ecoregions.

When Naturalist Kari first heard about this program, she knew she had to bring it to North Central Iowa. Now is your chance to join her team and use your love of nature to build a solid foundation and grow your knowledge of the natural world.

Practices will start soon! If you, or a youth you know, is interested in joining a team like no other, don't miss out on the fun informational WHEP Kick-Off!

## WHEP KICK-OFF

September 15 @ 5pm

Cerro Gordo Extension Office

PLEASE CALL TO REGISTER (641)423-0844

For questions contact Naturalist Kari Jeffrey  
[kjeffrey@cerrogordo.gov](mailto:kjeffrey@cerrogordo.gov)



IOWA STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

FREE  
PIZZA

## **MAKE & TAKE - LEAF MOSAICS**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 5 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Nature can inspire amazing art! Create a picture using colorful leaf fragments. Whether you use provided leaves or hike to find your own, what you make is up to you!

**Please register for this free program by Monday, November 10 at 4 PM**

## **LIME CREEK LITTLES ~**

### **TAKE A HIKE**

MONDAY, NOV. 17, 5-6 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will celebrate *National Take A Hike Day!* Come and discover what nature has to show us.

Cost is free for members and \$2 for each nonmember youth.

Please call to pre-register!



# Programs continued

**ANNUAL LIME CREEK TIMBER TROT**  
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 9 AM**  
**PACKET PICKUP FRIDAY OCTOBER 3, 2:30-4 PM or**  
**SATURDAY OCTOBER 4, 8-8:30 AM**  
**LIME CREEK CONSERVATION AREA & NATURE CENTER**



Enjoy a five-mile trail run OR a 5K among the beautiful fall colors of the Lime Creek Conservation Area. This event is for everyone from avid runners to beginning joggers. All proceeds go to support the education program!

Register online with this QR code or download a registration form at [www.cerrogordo.gov](http://www.cerrogordo.gov) or call 641/423-5309 to request one. **Register before noon on August 23 for \$35. Late registration is \$40.** All registrations before noon on September 18 include a long-sleeve tech shirt. Additionally, all entries will receive a gift card for \$20 to our sponsor's store, Wayne's Ski and Cycle.



## Critter Stuffer's Club

Join our "Critter Stuffer's Club" by paying for the cost of mounting an animal for display or educational programming at the Lime Creek Nature Center!

**Animals Available: Coyote pup ~OR~ Red Fox kit**

Please contact Lime Creek Nature Center at 641/423-5309 to sponsor a critter.

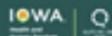


**PUBLIC  
HEALTH**

### Keep Quitting

Get help quitting tobacco and nicotine.

1-800-QUIT NOW | [QuitlineIowa.org](http://QuitlineIowa.org)



Text 'START' to 300500



# Flora and Fauna

## Destroying Angel

*Amanita bisporigera*

The Destroying Angel is a late season mushroom that's often a signal that fall is arriving. This mushroom is native to North America. The name fits the mushroom perfectly. A stunning white mushroom, one could compare it to an angel. However, the first half of the name is something that is extremely important to remember. Although the destroying angel is beautiful, it is also one of the deadliest. It contains a toxin that is so harmful just one bite of the mushroom could be fatal. The toxin is called **amanitan** similar to the mushrooms scientific name which is *Amanita bisporigera*. This toxin can be deceptive as symptoms typically show up 6-24 hours after ingesting and are quite mild. Often the reaction subsides for a day or two before becoming extreme and deadly.



Did you know?

**Never eat wild mushrooms that you can't confidently identify!**

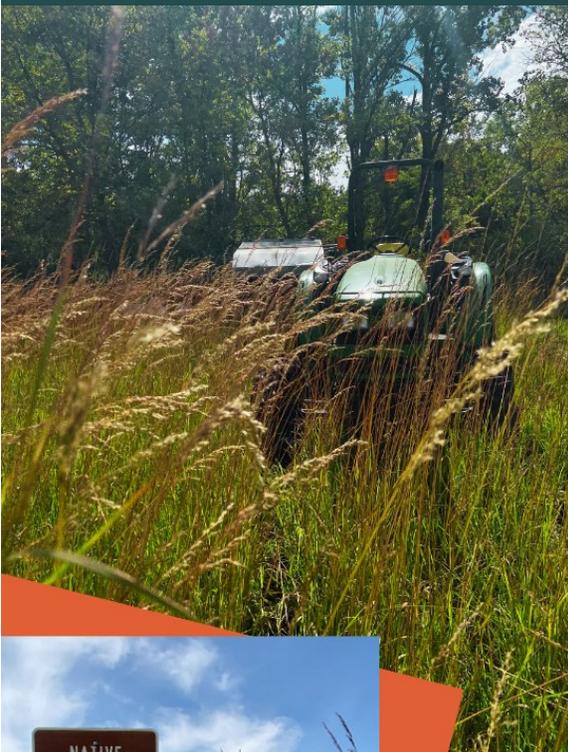
Another tricky characteristic of the destroying angel is its looks. There are many mushrooms that can look similar to this deadly fungus as it grows and changes. It starts out as an egg shaped button that can be mistaken for puffball mushrooms that are edible. As it matures it develops gills with a parasol shaped cap that can distinguish them from other white mushrooms but not all.

Mushrooms are an essential part of our natural world. They recycle the energy that all living creatures rely on. Wild mushroom foraging can be a fun and healthy recreational activity. Just remember, "There are old mushroom hunters and bold mushroom hunters, but there are no old, bold mushroom hunters."



# Roadside Review

BY LAKOTA KIRST - ROADSIDE VEGETATION SPECIALIST



Fall in Iowa means harvest time. While farmers are in the fields working hard to bring in the year's crop, the roadside staff at Cerro Gordo County Conservation are busy with a harvest of our own. Each year we grow, harvest, and clean around 700 pounds of native prairie seed to be used throughout the county. Five different species of native grasses are grown in production plots located at Lime Creek Conservation Area. The seed plots are closely monitored throughout the year and when the time is just right, harvesting begins. Like our friends in the ag field, specialized equipment is needed to gather the seed. A machine called a seed stripper is used to pluck the grass seed from the plant while leaving the majority of stem and leaves behind. The seed is then allowed to dry throughout the fall. Once dry, the seed is put through a cleaning process to remove any debris that remains after harvest.



Native grasses are not the only seeds we harvest. A variety of native forbs and wildflower seeds are also picked to ensure a diverse mixture. Getting the forb seed is more labor intensive as it is harvested by hand from existing native prairie plantings throughout the county. It also goes through the same drying and cleaning procedure as the grass seed. In the end, all the cleaned seed is mixed together and stored to be used later in reseeding projects in the county right of ways. By using native prairie mixes to reseed areas, we are able to provide extra habitat for wildlife and insects, reduce soil erosion, and combat weeds through natural competition. The harvesting process takes about 3 weeks in the fall and provides us with a year long supply of seed to put towards our goal of improving the county's right of ways and natural areas.



# Conservation Comment

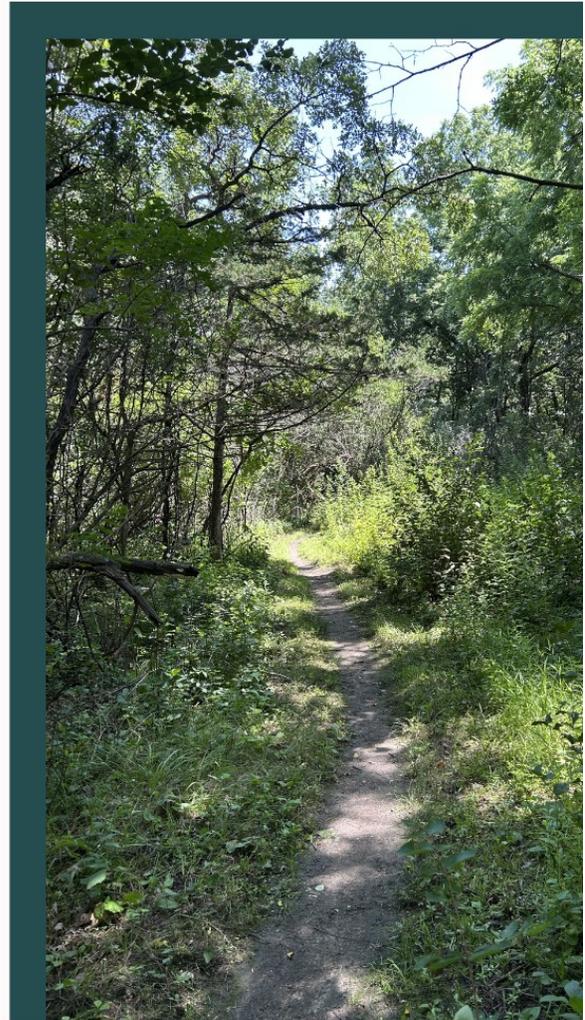
BY JOSH BRANDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lime Creek Conservation Area has been one of the most popular destinations in North Iowa for trail enthusiasts for many years. With over nine miles of multi-use trails, hikers, bikers, horseback riders, and cross-country skiers can enjoy exploring many different habitat types while immersing themselves in nature.

Cerro Gordo County Conservation (CGCC) is currently working on enhancing the trail user experience by expanding our comprehensive trail management plan. Last fall we hired a consultant to complete an assessment of the trails at Lime Creek to help guide staff through future trail enhancements. Based on recommendations from the consultant and discussions with staff, the Conservation Board, and representation from various trail user groups, CGCC is moving forward with a plan to incorporate some additional single-track trails into the property's management plan.

With miles of well-established social trails existing on the property, but not sanctioned by CGCC, we have identified numerous natural surface trails that can be incorporated into our trail system with minimal input costs. Our focus moving forward will be on improving safety, connectivity, flow, and wayfinding in the park, with a conservation mindset always at the forefront. We will be keeping many of the favorite single-track trails utilized by numerous user-groups while eliminating/closing the trails that have been identified as safety hazards, highly erosive or damaging to the landscape, or simply redundant.

Trail work has already begun and is expected to continue into the Summer of 2026. We ask that all trail users respect the trail closures and re-routes by staying on the designated route. A new wayfinding system with improved signage is also in the works which will assist with navigating through the park. When the trail enhancements are complete, we will be releasing updated trail maps in our park kiosks and online.



**WORK IN PROGRESS**



# Beyond Lime Creek



County Parks and Natural Areas

## Averydale Access

With parks the size of Lime Creek Conservation Area and the Shell Rock River Greenbelt and Preserve it can be easy to overlook some of the smaller parks and natural areas that Cerro Gordo County Conservation manages. Each county property provides the public an opportunity to connect with their natural resources.

Averydale Access is a six acre river access that offers a premier location for fishing and boating on the Winnebago River just outside of Mason City. Donated by Merrill and Annette Avery in 1972, this park is a favorite launch point for many river adventures.



## Amenities

Boating 

Fishing 



3455 S. Birch  
Dr.  
Mason City,  
Iowa



# Volunteers and Donors

**Weekend Volunteer Hosts:** Midge Gaylor, Mike & Nancy Roddy, Ron & Lea Norlinger, Jim Degen, Bruce Trimble, Bob & Deb Friedrichs, Bruce & Suzanne McKee, Dave & Patty Hansen, Bob & Sally Becker, Kay Larson, Randy Krueger.

**Environmental Education Donations:**

Thank you to Cargill for sponsoring the food for this year's annual Fall Festival!

To the Susan R. Floy Estate, thank you for your donation in support of the educational opportunities provided by Lime Creek.

Thank you

Get involved

If you would like to be an even bigger part of the Lime Creek Legacy, consider becoming a Weekend Host. It is because of amazing volunteers that we can be open seven days a week.

If interested, call 641-423-5309 to find out more!



## **Building Hours & Information**

Mon. - Fri.: 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Sat. - Sun.: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Address: Lime Creek Nature Center

3501 Lime Creek Road

Mason City, Iowa 50401

Phone: (641)423-5309

Website: CerroGordo.gov

Social Media: Facebook & Instagram



## **CERRO GORDO COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS:**

Shannon Anderson - Secretary/Treasurer

Stephen Gales - Member

Dudley Humphrey - Member

Jacquelyn Arthur - Vice-Chair

Jim Roseland - Chair

## **LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER FOUNDATION BOARD OFFICERS:**

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Maeve Gales - Vice-President

Denise Wood - Secretary/Treasurer

## **STAFF**

Josh Brandt - Executive Director

Heather Hucka - Conservation Education Manager

Kari Jeffrey - Naturalist

Ryan Wilcke - Roadside Vegetation Manager

Lakota Kirst - Roadside Vegetation Specialist

Ryan Theel - Roadside Vegetation Specialist

Todd Hansen - Operations Supervisor

Grady Kragenbring - Natural Resource Specialist

Derrick Barnes - Natural Resource Specialist

Kolton Byrne - Natural Resource Specialist

Mary Ermer - Office Manager