

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's next with a new season approaching!

We are eager to continue to host our two largest events of the year, Fall Festival and Timber Trot. As the festival continues to grow, we have decided to extend the day a bit. This will give the opportunity for even more to come out and enjoy a day at Lime Creek. We will also be celebrating our volunteers at the Fall Festival this year! We want everyone to know how much we appreciate and rely on our volunteer family. We hope you will join us in thanking them at the festival.

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!



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Fall Festival

September 13, 2026

9:30am-3:00pm



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

VOLUNTEER
RECOGNITION

ARCHERY

LIVE ANIMAL PROGRAM

Don't
Miss
out

WOODWORKING
FOR WILDLIFE

YOUTH FISHING

TRAM RIDES

AIR RIFLES

CRAFTS & GAMES

...AND MORE!



Programs

Register at LimeCreekNatureCenter.com

Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration



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.

Practice starts October 13! If you, or a youth you know, is interested in learning more or joining a team like no other, don't miss the fun informational WHEP Kick-Off!

WHEP KICK-OFF

September 22 @ 5pm

Lime Creek Nature Center

REGISTER ONLINE by SEPTEMBER 18

For questions contact Naturalist Kari Jeffrey
kjeffrey@cerrogordo.gov

FREE
PIZZA

FALL FLOAT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 5-6:30 PM
LIME CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

Enjoying the fall colors on the trails is one thing, but it can be even more magical from the water. Come to Lime Creek and enjoy an autumn evening in a kayak on Quarry Lake! With fall foliage in full display, this float will be both beautiful and relaxing.

This program is FREE. Kayaks and PFDs are provided. Spots are limited!

Please register by 4 PM on September 25.

LIME CREEK LITTLES~BRAVE BEASTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 5-6 PM
LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will discover that it takes bravery to be an animal that many people fear. Come explore the "scary" animals of Iowa through story, song, and hands-on experiences! Learn that animals are just as scared of us as we might be of them.

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

Pre-register by Monday, October 12

LUNCHING ON THE LANDSCAPE: AN INTRODUCTION TO WILD FOODS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 5-7 PM
LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

There is an entire grocery store of delicious, local, wild foods just waiting outside your backdoor! Join Mitchell County Conservation Naturalist Chelsea Ewen Rowcliffe to get a "taste of the wild"! This session will pique your curiosity with some common wild edibles and even sample some wild flavors!

Please register by October 20



IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Programs continued

Register at LimeCreekNatureCenter.com

Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration

ANNUAL LIME CREEK TIMBER TROT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 9 AM

**PACKET PICKUP FRIDAY OCTOBER 2, 2:30-4 PM or
SATURDAY OCTOBER 3, 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 conservation education program!

Register online with this QR code or download a registration form at www.limecreeknaturecenter.com or call 641/423-5309 to request one. **Register before noon on August 23 for \$40. Late registration is \$45.** In person registration available morning of between 8-8:30 AM. All registrations before midnight on September 17 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.



Splash
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ROOTED IN GRATITUDE: NATURE JOURNALING **SUNDAY, NOV. 22, 1-2:30 PM** **LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

It's the time of the year to look around and take inventory of the things we are thankful for. Spend an afternoon at Lime Creek observing the wonders of nature and reflecting with gratitude. No writing experience is needed. Just bring yourself and your journal! Different prompts, ideas, and nature insights will be shared to help you slow down, notice, and appreciate the world around you. **Register for this FREE event by Nov. 18**



CONSERVATION COFFEE CLUB ~ BLACK BEARS IN IOWA **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 9:30-11 AM @ LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Enjoy some social time with coffee, tea and treats followed by a conservation focused program. This presentation will be given by Vince Eversizer, IDNR Furbearer and Wetland Biologist. He will give a brief history and background of the species, along with recent updates on black bear in Iowa. Learn about the unique Dubuque bear and have all your questions answered by an expert! Cost is \$3 for nature center members or \$7 for nonmembers.

Registration deadline is Monday, November 16



Intern Reflections



Painted Turtle rescued by Merrin & Cadence this summer!



My name is Merrin Hanson! This summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to serve as a conservation technician and environmental education intern with Cerro Gordo County Conservation. It has been such a rewarding experience. Going into this position, I knew I loved the outdoors, but I didn't realize how much I would grow- not only in my knowledge of Iowa's natural resources, but also in my confidence as an educator and conservation professional. No two days this summer have looked the same. Some mornings were spent preparing for nature camps, taking care of our education animals, or chatting with visitors around the nature center. Other days had me outside maintaining trails, assisting with conservation projects, or ensuring that our parks remain

clean and welcoming for our wildlife and guests. One of the highlights of my internship was leading and facilitating environmental education programs. From pond studies to community events and summer camps, I had the opportunity to introduce children and families to the incredible diversity of nature right here in Iowa. Whether we were catching insects in the prairie, netting for pond creatures, exploring under rocks and logs, or meeting the education animals at the nature center, it was incredibly rewarding to watch curiosity grow into excitement. Seeing a child light up after catching a millipede or discovering a dragon fly nymph in the mud reminded me why environmental education is so important. I am especially looking forward to leading Crawly Critters Nature Camp in August. It's exciting to know that the skills and experiences I've gained throughout the summer will culminate in helping inspire the next generation of conservationists.



My Experience as a Hybrid Intern by Cadence Rish--- When I was younger, Lime Creek was always a place where I could go on adventures and enjoy nature. I've known for a long time that I wanted to work in the great outdoors and growing up in Cerro Gordo County gave me the opportunity to grow my passion for my future career. Then I went to North Iowa Area Community College, and learned that Environmental Science, the field I'm majoring in, was a lot bigger than I could have ever imagined. When the haunting uncertainty of my future started creeping in, I went to the one place that could make me feel better: Lime Creek. But I didn't come here to get lost in the woods. I came to learn. Through my hybrid internship I have had the honor to work as a naturalist and a field operator in hopes to find the career path I want to follow. Since I'm over halfway done with my internship, I can say with certainty; I am more confused than ever, but in the best way possible. The uniqueness of this internship was designed for me to find what I like better, but without a balance between environmental education and field work, I feel unfulfilled. Canoeing with kids while teaching them about painted turtles is just as important to me and the community as planting trees and clearing trails. Even my accomplishments need balance. One day I'm learning how to run a tractor and the next I'm holding a snapping turtle for the first time. To say the least, this internship has given me more than I could ever imagine, and even though my options for a career have doubled this summer, I know I'm on the right track, all thanks to the support and passion I've gained through this internship.

Flora and Fauna

Roly Poly Armadillidium sp.

Pill bugs, also known as Roly Polys, are the perfect example of small but mighty. Often found in gardens, on the forest floor, or in backyards, pill bugs are doing an amazing service to the ecosystem. Despite their name, these creatures are not true bugs, in fact, they are not insects at all. They are crustaceans, making them more closely related to crawdads than insects.

Roly Polys are a part of the isopod family and are identified by their gray or brown armored shells. They have 7 pairs of legs and two pairs of antennae. They are also recognized because of their defense. When they feel threatened, they roll into a tight ball with their hard shell facing outwards. This behavior is known as volvation and helps to protect them from predators, but also helps them to retain moisture.

Did
you
know?

The importance of roly polys is often overlooked by the people who come across them. They are detritivores, meaning they eat dead and decaying organic material. Their diet includes things like dead leaves, rotting wood, and decomposing plants. They are essentially part of a clean up crew that recycles the dead material in the soil and makes it available again for plants to use. They make the soil healthier and serve an important role in the ecosystem.



Roadside Review

BY RYAN WILCKE - ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGER

JAPANESE KNOTWEED



On the first of July of this year, a new plant was officially added to the Iowa noxious weed list. Japanese Knotweed, *Fallopia japonica* and/or *Polygonum cuspidatum*, was introduced both as an ornamental and for erosion control in the late 1800s. This robust, bamboo like perennial is native to Eastern Asia. Like many invasive plants, it can quickly establish and shade out all other vegetation.

Japanese knotweed grows up to 10 feet tall with hollow stems showcasing ridges and joints like bamboo. It's large oval-shaped, alternate leaves have a rough surface like sandpaper. Small white flowers grow on a long stem reaching up to six inches in length. Knotweed begins its growth in April reaching max height in June with flowers showing up in late summer. Tiny, black, three-sided seeds are scattered by the wind.

The root system is the reason this plant is so difficult to control. Powerful roots can reach up to 60 feet in length and can grow six feet down. Anywhere along the root new plants can shoot up, making a very dense stand from a single root system. If that wasn't bad enough, these plants can also sprout from a single root or plant fragment! There are even reports of Japanese Knotweed growing directly out of concrete!

Digging up the roots is an effective control, however, this is difficult because of their extensive root system. It is also important to bag and properly dispose of all parts of the plant or they will resprout. Other options include applying certain herbicides to either stems or leaves at different times of the year. For more information on this plant and how to control it, go to the Iowa weed commissioner's website IowaWeedCommissioners.org or reach out to me, I'd be more than happy to chat.

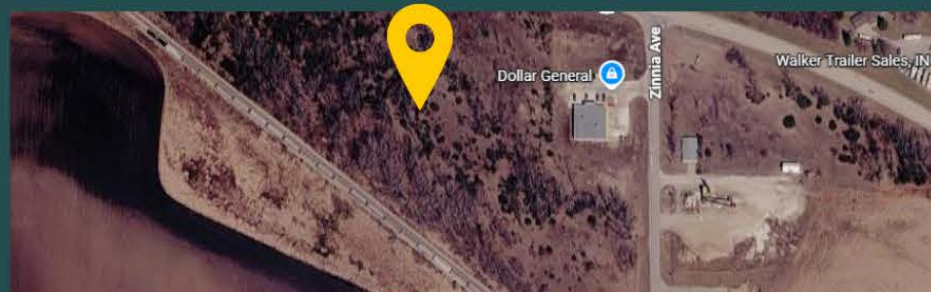


Conservation Comment

BY JOSH BRANDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NEW COUNTY PARK

Cerro Gordo County Conservation recently accepted a donation of 11 acres of wildlife habitat located just west of Nora Springs. Carl & Ann Netzel Wildlife Preserve has a mix of upland habitat including numerous red cedars, a corridor of cottonwoods, both warm and cool season grasses, and wildflowers throughout. Perhaps the most unique feature of this property is the discovery of prickly pear cactus onsite. Although native to Iowa, prickly pear cactus is rare to find growing naturally in North Iowa. This property has been designated as a refuge for wildlife; no hunting or trapping is allowed. It is however, open to the public for other outdoor recreation activities such as wildlife viewing, photography, and hiking. We would like to extend a BIG thank you to Jim and Mary Margaret Netzel for their generous donation of this unique property that will continue to provide valuable wildlife habitat for years to come.



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Strong family connections are one of the greatest protective factors for positive youth development. Unplug, explore, and enjoy all the Cerro Gordo County has to offer!

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scanning this code.**



North Iowa Addiction
Prevention Alliance

Beyond Lime Creek



County Parks and Natural Areas

Mallard Marsh

This part of Iowa has some of the best wetland complexes in the state. One of county conservation staff favorites is Mallard Marsh. Located in the Northwest corner of the county, this 227 acre park contains three man-made wetland basins, restored prairie, and woodlands.

To help access the unique areas of the park, there are two entrances. The East entrance off Cardinal Avenue, has a gravel ramp allowing direct access to the largest pool along with a small parking area. The South entrance is off of 325th St.

A beautiful treed drive leads you to a parking area near a second wetland complex.

During spring and fall migration, this park is a haven for waterfowl and a celebration of Iowa's diverse habitats.



Amenities

Boating 

Fishing 

Hunting 

Wildlife Viewing 

2500 325th Street
Fertile, Iowa
50434



Volunteers and Donors

Weekend Volunteer Hosts: Mike & Nancy Roddy, Jim Degen, Bob & Debby Friedrichs, Ron & Lea Norlinger, Bob & Sally Becker, Dave & Patty Hansen, Sam Hunt, Cassady Rosell, and Bruce & Suzanne McKee

Environmental Education Donations:

Thank you to Cargill for sponsoring the food for this year's annual Fall Festival for a second year! To Mary Lynn Oertel, your love and support for the education program is deeply felt. Thank you for your many levels of giving!

To the Bolan Vacation Bible School, thank you for giving in celebration of the world's forests.

A very generous gift was given to supply a year's worth of bird seed for the wildlife feeding station at the nature center. Thank you **ITC Midwest** for your incredible contribution.



Get involved

Thank you

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!

In memory of...

Ron Dannen

Thank you Dean Shunkwiler for giving in honor and memory of Ron.



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: LimeCreekNatureCenter.com

Social Media: Facebook & Instagram



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