

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

After a long winter of freezing temperatures, cutting winds, and long nights, spring is finally arriving. Here are things that I am looking forward to, now that the season is changing:

Spring Ephemerals - when our forests burst with colorful spring wild flowers. I am always on the hunt for my favorite bloom, the buttercup.

Green - is it funny to miss a color? Green symbolizes renewal and harmony. It is a celebration of life.

Bird Song - with the change of a season comes a change in music. Every year, I cherish the moment I hear the cardinal's spring song. The sounds of spring are awakening!

Field Trips - the winter season is a lot of classroom time for the naturalists at Lime Creek. We are itching to spend our days outside, taking school groups on exciting explorations. You never know what there is to discover at Lime Creek!

This Issue

Spring Programs/
Summer Camp
Save the Dates
Page 2-3

Earth Day Celebrations
Page 4

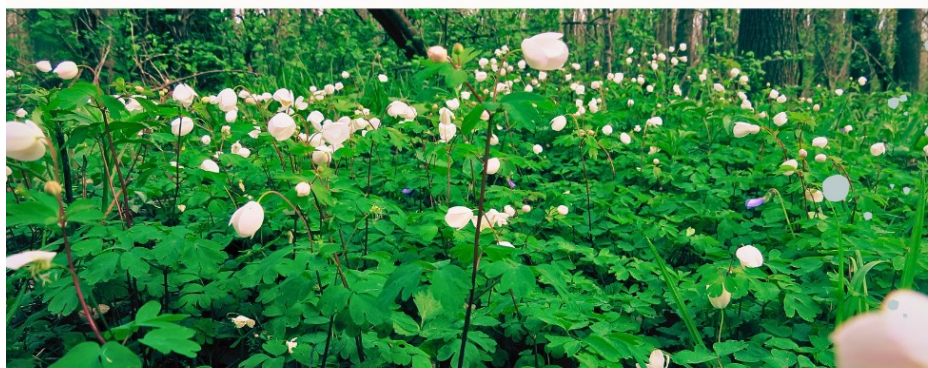
Flora & Fauna
Page 5

Roadside Review
Page 6

Conservation Comment
Page 7

Beyond Lime Creek
Page 8

Thank You
Page 9



Programs

To register call (641)423-5309

Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration

WILDLIFE WONDERS ~ SIGNS OF SPRING

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 5-6 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Come learn about some different signs of spring during this program appreciating all the wonders that wildlife has to offer! This program is open to all ages, but is geared towards upper elementary aged children. We'll explore the exciting changes that come with spring and then head outdoors to experience them! **Please register for this event by Monday, March 10th at 4 PM.**

SPRING AWAKENING WALK

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 7:15-8:15 AM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

There is no better way to welcome a new season than to start it with the sun! March 20 is the first official day of Spring. Join us for a walk at sunrise. Begin the season right by surrounding yourself with fresh air, bird song, and community.

Explore and Awaken!

CONSERVATION COFFEE CLUB ~ IOWA'S FIRST FARMERS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 9:30-11 AM @ LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Enjoy some social time with coffee, tea and treats followed by a conservation focused program. Archaeological evidence for Iowa's first domesticated plants stretches back about 4,000 years. This program explores the origins of plant domestication and the archaeological evidence found in Iowa. Our presenter, Cherie Haury-Artz, is an Education Assistant with the Office of the State Archaeologist. Discover Iowa's past through her display of real and replica artifacts and plant samples. Cost is \$3 for nature center members or \$7 for nonmembers.

Registration deadline is Friday, March 21 by 4 PM



LIME CREEK LITTLES ~ ROCKS ROCK!

MONDAY, APRIL 14, 5-6 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will learn all about why everybody needs a rock! Discover how nature has made so many different kinds of rocks and what you can do with them.

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

Pre-register by Friday, April 11 by 4 PM

This program may go outside for part of the experience, so please dress for the weather.



EARTH DAY SCAVENGER HUNT

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 5-6 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Celebrate Earth Day with an exciting scavenger hunt! Explore nature, learn about the environment, and discover the beauty of Lime Creek during this fun-filled event. Join us for an evening of adventure and celebration of our planet! **Please register for this event by Thursday, April 17 by 4 PM.** This program is free to attend.

EARTH DAY

Programs continued

Summer Nature Camps

SAVE THE DATES

Water Wanderers ~ July 1 & 2

Youth completing 7th or 8th grade



Caving Adventure ~ July 8-10 (2 nights)

Youth completing 9th - 12th grades

Evening Explorers ~ July 16-17 (1 night)

Youth completing 6th or 7th grade



Recreation Renegades ~ July 21, 22, 23,

Youth completing 5th or 6th grade



24 & 25

Animal Adventurers ~ July 28, 29, 30, 31

Youth completing 3rd or 4th grade

& Aug. 1

Nature Neighbors ~ August 5, 6, & 7

Youth completing 1st or 2nd grade

August 12, 13, & 14



Tiny Tots (9-10:15 am)

Youth ages 4-6 years old

Crawly Critters (10:45-noon)

Youth ages 7-8 years old

CONCRETE CRAFTING ~

STEPPING STONES

SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1 PM

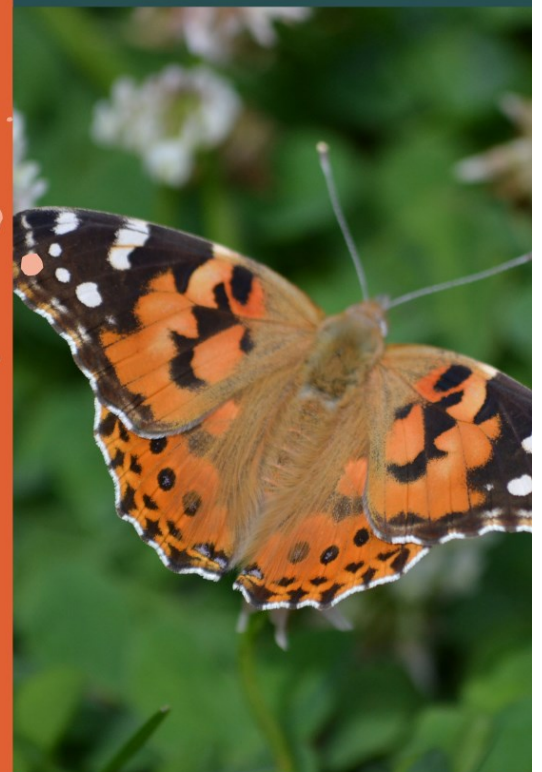
LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Learn about the rich history of cement at Lime Creek while crafting your very own mosaic stepping stone! This is a great opportunity to make a unique decoration for your home or to create a one of a kind gift.

This program is open to everyone, but geared towards adults.

Cost is \$10 dollars for members and \$15 dollars for nonmembers.

Pre-register by May 5th by 4 PM.



Earth Day Needs You!

April 22, 2025

MASON CITY EARTH DAY



"IT'S IN OUR HANDS"

City-wide Earth Day
Clean-up!

April 14 - May 14
(dates may change slightly)

Roll up your sleeves and help clean up
Mason City streets, parks, and trails.

Form a team or on your own.

To register and claim a location, go
to **MasonCity.net**, call **421-3372**, or
e-mail **volunteer@masoncity.net**



Visit the Clear Lake Earth Day website to
find out and sign up for all their events and
activities to celebrate our earth!

Trash Bash / Outdoor Fest /
Green Expo / 10K-5K Run /
Photo Contest / AND MORE!

EarthDayClearLake.org

Empower Yourself!
Make a Difference!
Celebrate!



Flora and Fauna

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

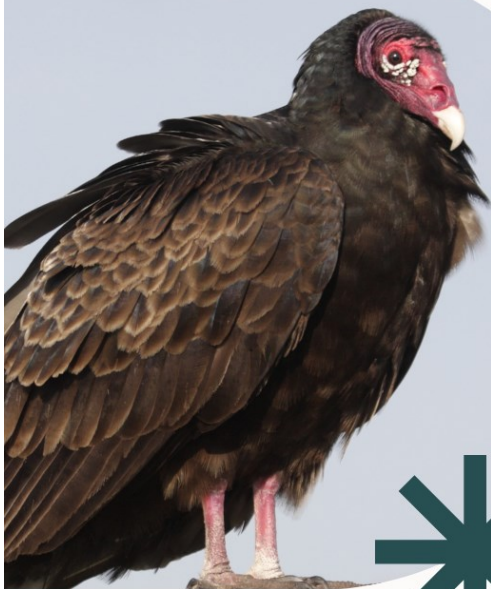
One of the best signs of spring to look forward to is the return of the turkey vultures! These amazing birds can often be seen soaring high in the sky as early as March. Although they're not the most glamorous, turkey vultures are an essential part of the Iowa ecosystem.

Turkey vultures are large birds, with a wingspan that can stretch up to 6 feet. They are covered with dark brown or black feathers with the exception of their bald heads. Turkey vultures are named because of their bald heads, which resembles the head of a wild turkey. Their heads are featherless so that they can keep clean while they're eating.



If threatened, Turkey Vultures are known to vomit on predators, using the smell as the perfect deterrent!

Did you know?



Turkey vultures are scavengers, meaning they eat dead animals. They have an incredible sense of smell that helps them find decaying food from over a mile away! Turkey vultures are often spotted feeding on carcasses that have been hit by cars. By eating dead animals, they prevent the spread of disease and help clean up the environment.

The next time you see a turkey vulture, remember that it's a part of nature's clean-up crew. Whether they're soaring above a forest or flying over a field, turkey vultures play a big part in keeping our world clean and healthy!





Roadside Review

BY RYAN WILCKE - ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGER

What noxious weed do you think is my least favorite to control? **Leafy Spurge**, *Euphorbia esula*, is hands down my most hated noxious weed in our county. Native to Eurasia, Leafy Spurge was accidentally introduced to the USA in the early 1800's. It shades out native vegetation by emerging early in the spring and produces chemicals that hinder the growth of other species. Leafy Spurge is also known to be poisonous to cattle causing severe eye irritation. This can cause serious problems to roadsides and pasturelands. Twenty-two states have Leafy Spurge listed as a noxious weed. Noxious weeds are defined and classified by authorities as harmful to humans or animal health, agricultural, or the environment.

Leafy Spurge is unique and easily identified. This perennial can grow between six inches to three feet tall with blue-green long needle shaped leaves. This plant will form cuplike yellow-green flowers that bloom as early as May. Once it has flowered, the seed will be stored in capsules that will burst and fling seed up to 15 feet away! Seeds can be viable in the seed bank for up to eight years, and this plant can also spread by its extensive root system which can reach 15 feet deep and 35 feet laterally.



With an individual plant able to produce 200 seeds, controlling this plant is a challenge. Being an early season species and its short height, Leafy Spurge can really blend in and be difficult to see. Luckily for us in Cerro Gordo County, we only have a few isolated patches of this plant throughout the county. Spot treatments of herbicides has been the best way we have found to control this pesky plant.

For more information on this plant and other noxious weeds, please feel free to check out the Iowa weed commissioner's website below or reach out to me, I'd be happy to chat.

IowaWeedCommissioners.org



Conservation Comment

BY JOSH BRANDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What's going on at Lime Creek by the Winnebago River? Late last Summer, Cerro Gordo County Conservation (CGCC) acquired a small parcel that will have a BIG impact on outdoor recreation in North Iowa.

Although bordered by the Winnebago River to the North and East, Lime Creek Conservation Area has always lacked convenient access to the water. The recent purchase of 2.28 acres located just East of the intersection of B20 and Hwy 65 has created an exciting opportunity to improve public access to the Winnebago River.

Over the last few months, CGCC staff has been working on tree removal and site grading in preparation for the construction of a parking lot, access road, and river access that will make it easier and safer for anglers and people launching canoes/kayaks to get to water's edge.

Mason City has made a focused effort to embrace the Winnebago River as an outdoor recreation opportunity and this project located just north of town will tie in nicely with the initiative to promote this on a broader scale. With the closest public launch located nearly seven miles upstream, the new Lime Creek river access will create a convenient access point that will surely be a popular draw for both residents and visitors to Cerro Gordo County.

Site prep, gravel work, and construction of the launch will continue throughout the Spring, with an anticipated opening of the launch some time in the Summer of 2025.





Beyond Lime Creek



County Parks and Natural Areas

Spring Creek Preserve

Just down the road from Lime Creek Conservation Area is a park with something for everyone. Spring Creek Preserve is a 18-acre wildlife area with so much to provide to the community. Just outside of Mason City, a spring fed creek meanders along limestone bluffs, perfect for a creek stomping exploration. Coveted fishing access to the Winnebago River can be found just a short walk down one of the park's hiking trails. A covered shelter and tables provide a great place for a picnic. Wildlife abounds in this beautiful park so you never know what you might get to experience.



Another amenity of the preserve is the public archery range. The Mohawk Archery Club maintains the seven targets available at the park. They can be enjoyed by anyone.

Spring Creek Preserve was donated by the City of Mason City in September of 1973.



Amenities

- Archery 
- Picnicking 
- Fishing 
- Hiking 

15829 300th St.
Mason City,
Iowa



Volunteers and Donors

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

A special shout out to Jim Degen for providing nature center space for the early morning birders during the 2024 Christmas Bird Count!

Thank you

What an amazing community to be a part of! Thank you all for your generous end of the year donations to support the conservation education program.

John & Rosalyn Barron, Blanche Carey Martin Charitable Trust, Steve & Theresa Betz, Dan & Jane Billings, Mark & Teresa Buffington, Brad Huso, Brad & Wendy Janson, Paul & Barb MacGregor, James & Linda See, Chereen Stroup, Gerald Von Ehwegen, Shirley Dean, Greg & Patty Held, Brenda Miller, Bruce & Diane Trimble, Robert & Mary Williams, John Welch, Jessielee Frieden, Fred Heinz & Cheri Ross, Tim & Kris Latham, Alice Phillips, Mike Benak & Judy Nau, Julie Geving, Diane & Scot Kruckenberg, Craig MacDougall, Nadine Pals, David & Linda Stine, Mark & Shannon Dodd, Randy Lewis, Susan Madsen, Craig & Janet Miller, Jim & Terri Patchen, Price & Kris Dahlstrom, Tim & Carol Dettmer, and the Swaledale Garden Club.



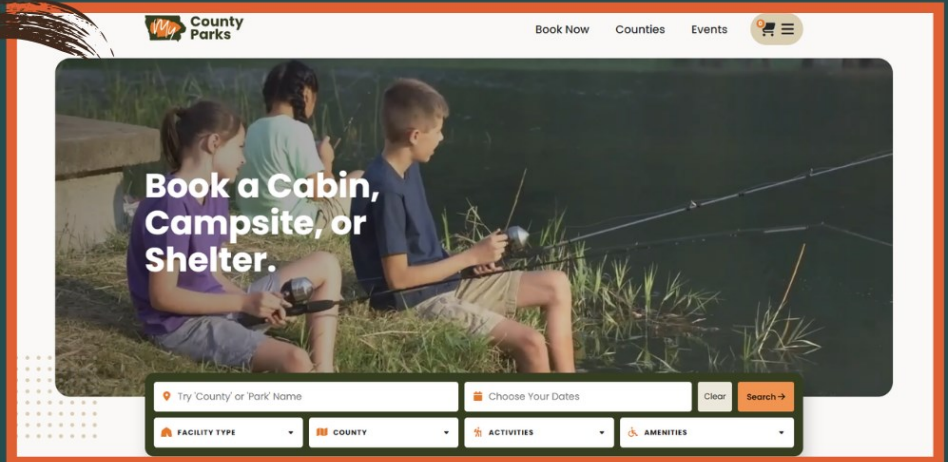
"Gratitude is the
fairest blossom
which springs from
the soul."

Henry Ward Beecher





REMINDER: Cerro Gordo County Conservation campgrounds are going cashless in 2025. **All campsite registrations must be completed on MyCountyParks.com**



FREE Wood Chips Available

The Cerro Gordo County Conservation Roadside Management staff will be giving away a portion of its stockpile of wood chips at the Lime Creek Conservation Area starting April 14-18. Mulch will be loaded into small trailers or trucks with the assistance of a tractor at 7:45 AM and 3:30 PM each day. Smaller amounts may be loaded by hand. If you are wanting a large quantity, we can arrange a dump truck load(s) to be delivered directly to your location within county lines.

Interested individuals please contact us at **(641)423-5309** to reserve a day and time for pick up. Watch our Facebook page for updates as the date is weather dependent.

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 – Member

Dudley Humphrey – Chair

Jim Roseland – Vice-Chair

Stephen Gales – Member

Jacquelyn Arthur – Secretary/Treasurer

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Maeve Gales – Vice-President

Denise Wood – Secretary/Treasurer

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Ryan Wilcke – Roadside Vegetation Manager

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