

# 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

This summer brings exciting additions to Lime Creek. Naturalist Kari's first full season of nature camps brings new opportunities for our community's youth! We now are able to offer camps for ages four through graduating seniors! Check out our summer nature camp line-up on page 4.

We welcomed Sydney Miller to the education team in April. As the new naturalist intern, she will bring even more to the mix of interpretation at the park. Learn more about her story on page 6.

A new season always brings new experiences and opportunities. This summer we are offering some new programs to help you get outside. And if you haven't been out to the nature center recently, I invite you to come back. There is always more to explore!



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# Programs

To register call (641)423-5309

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

## **LIME CREEK LITTLES ~ WACKY WORMS**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 5-6 PM**

### **LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will discover more about the slimy creatures living under our feet! Explore what makes worms so wacky with a story and hands-on experiences. The cost is free for members and \$2 for each nonmember youth. This program may go outside for part of the experience, so please dress for the weather. **Please register for this event by Monday, June 2 at 4 PM.**

## **FISHING FUN!**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 1-4 PM**

### **LIME CREEK DISCOVERY POND**

Join the naturalist on free fishing weekend to try your hand at baiting a hook, casting a line, and catching fish! Whether you bring your own pole or borrow one from us, bait will be provided. No license is required to fish during this event. **Registration deadline is Wednesday, June 3 by 4 PM**

## **MY MARSH MONDAYS (new series)**

**MONDAY, JUNE 9, 6-7:30 PM ~ MALLARD MARSH**

**MONDAY, JUNE 30, 6-7:30 PM ~ ZIRBEL SLOUGH**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 6-7:30 PM ~ MIKE ZACK WILDLIFE AREA**

Come enjoy an evening in one of our county's wetlands! Kayaking is a fun way to explore a marsh. Paddle deep into a park less traveled. Join one of your naturalists as we discover three different areas by boat! **Register for one or all but please register for this event by the Friday before.** This program is free to attend. Kayaks and PFDs are provided.



## **CONSERVATION COFFEE CLUB ~ CREATING BUZZ: THE JOY, EASE, AND CHALLENGE OF SUPPORTING POLLINATORS**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 9:30-11 AM @ LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Enjoy some social time with coffee, tea and treats followed by a conservation focused program. Jamie Beyer, a lifetime Master Gardener and President of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association, will deliver a lively presentation that dives into the fun of planting flowers, the ease of reducing negative impact, and the rewarding challenge of shifting attitudes about weeds and wild spaces. After all, in nature, "diversity is the key to stability," and "the more you know, the less you mow!" Cost is \$3 for nature center members or \$7 for nonmembers.

**Registration deadline is Friday, June 20 by 4 PM**



# Programs continued



## **LIME CREEK LITTLES ~ EXCITING INSECTS**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 5-6 PM**

**LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will learn all about different insects. Summer is the perfect time to discover the diversity of these tiny creatures.

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

**Pre-register by Friday, August 15 by 4 PM**

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



## **GPS CHALLENGE**

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 1 PM**

**LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

How are your navigation skills? Test them out by using a GPS unit to find clues and solve a puzzle! This event is designed for middle-schoolers, but can be fun for all ages. GPS units are limited so pre register to secure your spot!

**Pre-register by August 6 before 4 PM.**

## **STORY WALK<sup>®</sup> IS COMING BACK!**

Summer is always a great time to come to Lime Creek for a walk in the park. Every summer we provide Story Walks. The Story Walk<sup>®</sup> Project's mission is to promote early literacy, physical activity, and family time together in nature. The book will begin on the Easy Access Trail. Keep an eye on our Facebook page to know when it is ready!



## **TEACHER TIME-OUT**

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 10 AM-2 PM**

**LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

To teach is to give and we want to give our area teachers a fun filled time-out(side).

This is "nature camp" for educators! Cook lunch over a fire, explore nature, and have fun at Lime Creek with your naturalist student free!

This program is open to all adults, but geared towards education professionals.

**Pre-register by August 4 before 4 PM.**

Additional information will be provided after registration.



# Summer Nature Camps



To register call (641)423-5309  
\*Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration\*



August 12, 13, & 14

## Water Wanderers ~ July 1 & 2 (9am-2pm)

Youth completing 7th or 8th grade

Enjoy outdoor recreation on the water. Learn and grow skills in fishing and canoeing/kayaking. The lake and river await!



LCNC Member ~ \$35/camper

Non-member ~ \$40/camper

Lunch and snack is provided each day of camp.

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JUNE 23**

## Caving Adventure ~ July 8-10 (2 nights)

Youth completing 9th - 12th grades

9am/3pm

Go caving, hiking, and climbing on a two-night spelunking adventure. Discover nature, build confidence and have fun!

\*This camp involves crawling through dark, small spaces.\*

\$65/camper

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JUNE 30**

## Evening Explorers ~ July 16-17 (1 night) 4pm-10am

Youth completing 6th or 7th grade

Overnight at Lime Creek! It's not summer until you camp outside. Discover the park after dark. Enjoy sleeping in tents and cooking over the fire!

LCNC Member ~ \$35/camper

Non-member ~ \$40/camper



Dinner and breakfast is provided. Pack list sent upon registration.

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JULY 7**

## Recreation Renegades ~ July 21, 22, 23, 24 & 25

Youth completing 5th or 6th grade

(9am-1pm)

Explore the outdoors, grow your skills, and discover more ways to play outside! Some activities may include canoeing, fire and shelter building, and outdoor cooking.

LCNC Member ~ \$35/camper

Non-member ~ \$40/camper

Lunch is provided each day of camp.

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JULY 14**



## Tiny Tots (9-10:15 am)

Youth ages 4-6 years old

## Crawly Critters (10:45-noon)

Youth ages 7-8 years old

To register call 421-3673

or

[www.masoncity.net](http://www.masoncity.net)

## Animal Adventurers ~ July 28, 29, 30, 31 & Aug. 1

Youth completing 3rd or 4th grade

Dig into the different animal groups and find out what makes them so unique!

LCNC Member ~ \$30/camper

Non-member ~ \$35/camper

Snack is provided each day of camp.

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JULY 21**

## Nature Neighbors ~ August 5, 6, & 7

(9-11:30 AM)

Youth completing 1st or 2nd grade

Learn more about all the creatures, big and small, that call Iowa home!

LCNC Member ~ \$25/camper

Non-member ~ \$30/camper

Snack is provided each day of camp.

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JULY 28**

# Flora and Fauna

## Tiger Salamander

*Ambystoma tigrinum*

The warm season in Iowa brings out all kinds of interesting animals, including the Eastern tiger salamander. These amazing amphibians are the largest land-dwelling salamander in North America and they can be found along the East Coast and into the Midwest.

The life cycle of Eastern tiger salamanders are fascinating. A female salamander can produce up to 1000 eggs per season, laying them in clusters of 10-100 in a pond or wetland. Once the eggs hatch, salamander larvae emerge into the water where they hunt and feed on aquatic invertebrates.



**Salamanders can regenerate their limbs or tail if it gets severed!**

Did you know?

After 2.5-5 months, larvae go through metamorphosis where biological changes occur to make the switch from an aquatic lifestyle to a terrestrial one. However, some adult tiger salamanders can stay in the aquatic stage for their whole lives.

Tiger salamanders can be hard to find because they are burrowing animals. Although tiger salamanders seem rare, their populations in Iowa are stable.

However, they can be sensitive to environmental changes. Their skin makes them vulnerable to chemicals in their habitats. Wetland destruction also negatively effects salamanders because they need water to complete their life cycle. Keep an eye out this summer and if you're lucky, you might just spot a tiger salamander somewhere dark and damp!





# Welcome Sydney

BY SYDNEY MILLER - 2025 NATURALIST INTERN

Hello! My name is Sydney Miller. I graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in 2022 with a Bachelor's degree in Recreation, Tourism and Nonprofit Leadership. I worked for the National Park Service for the past two and a half years at five different national parks, monuments, and memorials. One of those included Effigy Mounds National Monument in Northeast Iowa. While working at Effigy Mounds National Monument I realized how much I enjoy connecting with the local community! Which is what led me to seeking out an opportunity with county conservation. Unlike many others who have careers in conservation, I did not grow up doing a lot of outdoor activities. It wasn't until high school and college that I started to discover my love for the outdoors and conservation. Because of this, I am very passionate about environmental education as it gives people of all ages the confidence and knowledge to experience, enjoy, and protect our natural resources! I'm so excited to be a part of Cerro Gordo County Conservation for the next six months and can't wait to connect with and serve the local communities!

We are so excited to have Sydney on staff! She has already been helping with spring field trips and will be busy this summer assisting with our summer nature camp series. Come fall, she will experience classroom programs and help provide for our special request programs throughout her six months here at Cerro Gordo County Conservation.





# Conservation Comment

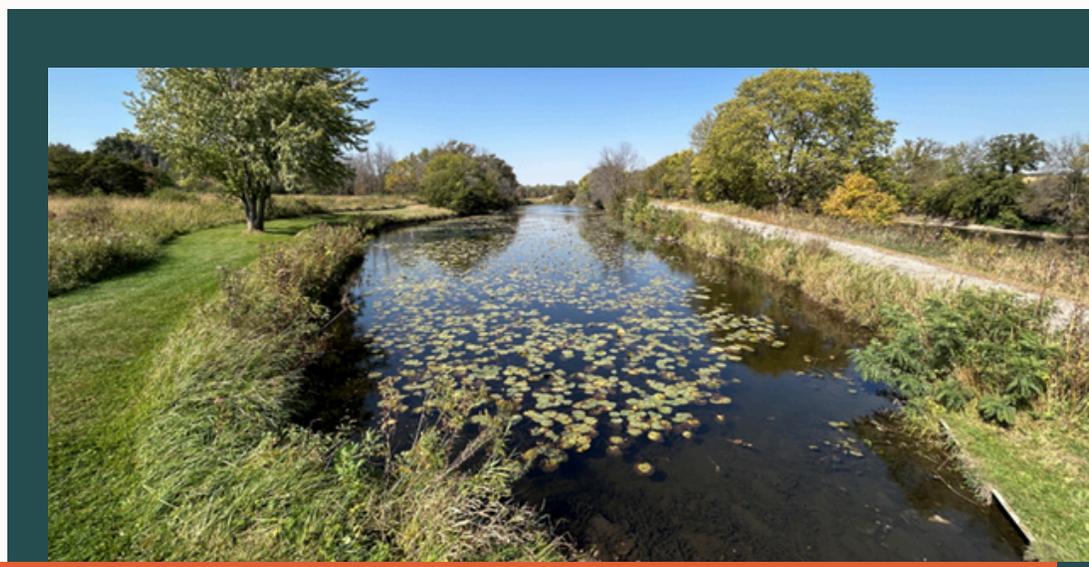
BY JOSH BRANDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

More exciting improvements are underway at Wilkinson Pioneer Park in Rock Falls! Following recent upgrades to the campground electrical service, the new online campsite registration system, and shelter & shower house improvements, the Cerro Gordo County Conservation (CGCC) staff continues to work towards improving the user experience at the park.



This summer we are focusing on road resurfacing from the park entrance to the covered bridge and improving the fishery in the Wilkinson Park pond. The chip-sealed road surface will be ground up and top dressed with a layer of roadstone which will allow for easier continued maintenance for CGCC staff. The pond is scheduled to be renovated with a partial draining, replacement of the overflow structure, and minor dike modifications. These pond improvements should add an additional 2-3 feet of water depth and increase the ability of the pond to support a more sustainable fishery. This project is a great example of how your contributions as a licensed angler make a difference. \$3 of every Iowa fishing license purchased goes toward the Iowa DNR Fish Habitat Grant Program. These funds are earmarked for projects that improve public fisheries. CGCC applied for and was awarded a grant that will fund 90% of the Wilkinson pond project.

As these projects get underway this summer, we ask for your patience while contractors and staff are working in the park. Some temporary road closures may occur to facilitate the improvements.





**BLUEBILL WILDLIFE AREA**  
**CERRO GORDO COUNTY**  
**CONSERVATION BOARD**

# Beyond Lime Creek



County Parks and Natural Areas

## Bluebill Wildlife Area

One of the counties hidden secret fishing spots, this 40-acre lake is stocked with bass, bluegill, crappie, and catfish. Bluebill Wildlife Area was purchased from the Iowa DOT in 2002 . A 62-acre park along the north side of the Avenue of the Saints provides for many outdoor recreational opportunities. Boating, fishing, and hunting are popular activities at Blue-bill. A dock and boat ramp provide easy access to the water along with two jetties and a kayak launch. A picnic shelter and table allow for a break from the sun during a full day on and around the water.



This year-round fishing destination contains several different fish structures to provide habitat and cover. This lake is a "no wake" lake.

## Amenities

- Boating 
- Hunting 
- Picnicking 
- Fishing 
- Hiking 



14369 Indigo Ave.  
Mason City, Iowa



# Volunteers and Donors

**Weekend Volunteer Hosts:** Midge Gaylor, Mike & Nancy Roddy, Ron & Lea Norlinger, Jeremy & Mary Klatt, Randy Krueger, Pat & Dave Hansen, Bruce & Suzanne McKee, Bob & Sally Becker, Jim Degen, Bob & Debby Friedrichs, and Bruce Trimble.

**Environmental Education Donations:** Thank you to the River City Rifle & Pistol Club for your monetary donation to purchase upgraded air rifle equipment to be used during programming this coming year.

To Dave and Anne Foster and the Foster Family Charitable Fund, thank you for your generous support of the Lime Creek Nature Center and the environmental education program.

Thank you



In memory of...

## John Groninga

Thank you Robert & Donna Buol, Bruce & Diane Trimble, Rose Mary Ryan, Fred Heinz & Cheri Ross, Anthony Peck, Vernon & Linda Bottorff, Amanda & James Ragan, Nancy Sweetman, Peggy Bang, Christine White, Frances Fleck, Jay & Cynthia Hansen, Tim & Laurie Lichman, Todd & Julia Von Ehwegen, John & Elizabeth Cherry, Mary Jane Porter, Carol Iverson, Jeffrey Rezab, and David Kingland for your donations to the Lime Creek Nature Center in honor of John.

## Ramy Leo Peters

In memory of Ramy Leo, thank you Bruce & Debra Harlan, Eileen Amundson, Christine & James Ruger, and Paul Markwardt for your donations.

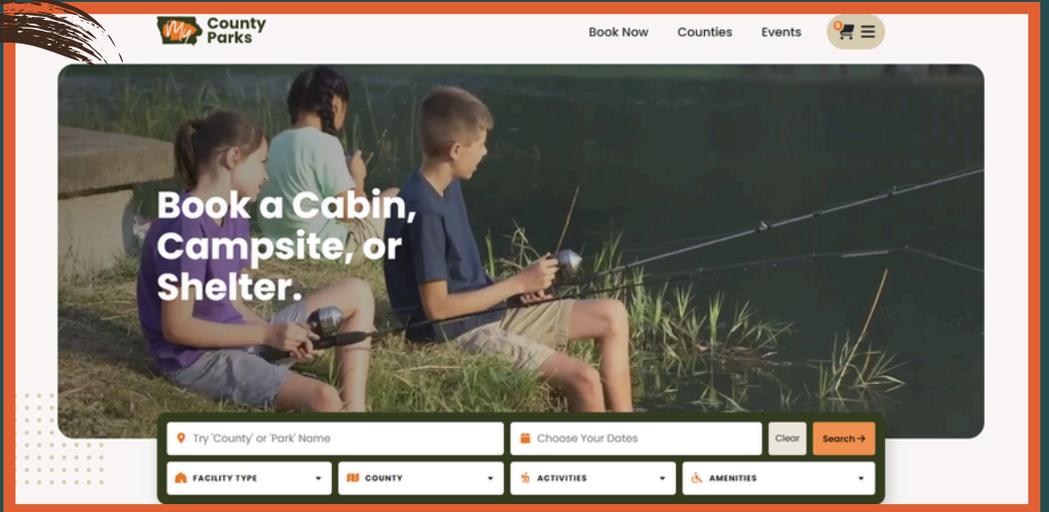
## Richard 'Butch' Piper, Dorothy Piper Witt and Delbert Witt

Dodie Wilkins, has gifted a picnic table in memory of Butch, Dorothy, and Delbert. This memorial table will be located in the horse parking lot at Lime Creek Conservation Area.





**REMINDER:** Cerro Gordo County Conservation campgrounds are going cashless in 2025. All campsite registrations must be completed on [MyCountyParks.com](https://MyCountyParks.com)



# 2025 Iowa Project A.W.A.R.E. July 13-18

Iowa Project AWARE – A Watershed Awareness River Expedition – is the state’s largest river cleanup event. The event educates participants while improving the health of Iowa’s rivers and streams. Cerro Gordo County Conservation is excited to be partnering with Iowa Project A.W.A.R.E this year to clean up both the Winnebago and Shell Rock Rivers!

For one week each summer, hundreds of kids and adults converge on a river to pick up trash. Join for the entire week or just a few days. Iowa Project A.W.A.R.E. is happy to have you for whatever time works best with your schedule. To learn more about the event or to register to participate, go to their website.

[iowaprojectaware.org](https://iowaprojectaware.org)



**IOWA PROJECT A.W.A.R.E.**  
A Watershed Awareness River Expedition

## **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

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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

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