

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

As I sit and write this article, the sun is shining and it is 80 degrees! It already feels like summer. And you can bet your team of naturalists out at Lime Creek can not wait for the season to get started. This year we are able to offer more public programs and more youth nature camps than ever before. There are going to be some big projects happening inside the nature center as well! A new exhibit will be introduced in the auditorium that will surely excite.

Out around the park things have been happening too. We have almost completed all of our trail renovations. We hope you find time to get out this summer and discover these new connections. Additional signage and updated trail maps are slowly rolling out so you won't lose your way.

A new season means new discoveries out at Lime Creek! We can't wait to see you out at the park this summer.



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Programs

Register at LimeCreekNatureCenter.com or call (641)423-5309

Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration

FISHING FUN!

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 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**

LIME CREEK LITTLES ~ EXCITING INSECTS!

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 5-6 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will learn all about insects and what makes them so important through stories, games and exploration! 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 by Thursday, June 25 at 4 PM.**

MY MARSH MONDAYS (It's Back!)

MONDAY, JUNE 8, 6-7:30 PM ~ MALLARD MARSH

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 6-7:30 PM ~ LIME CREEK CONSERV. AREA (Quarry Lake)

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 6-7:30 PM ~ LIME CREEK CONSERV. AREA (Quarry Lake)

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.

TEACHER TIME-OUT

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 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 July 24 before 4 PM.

WILDLIFE WONDERS: WHAT IS WEATHER?

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 5-6 PM

LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Do you know why rain falls or how tornados form? Discover the mysterious world of weather through experiments and hands-on exploration! This program is open to all ages, but is geared towards upper elementary aged children.

Pre-register by July 24 before 4 PM.

Summer Nature Camps

Register at LimeCreekNatureCenter.com

Programs may be cancelled due to weather or low registration



Animal Adventurers ~ June 16, 23, July 7, 14

Youth completing 3rd or 4th grade (9 am-12pm)

Each day of camp is a new adventure! Dig into the different animal groups and find out what makes them so unique! Come to one or come to them all this summer

LCNC Member ~ \$7/camper per day

Non-member ~ \$9/camper per day

Snack is provided each day of camp.

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY THE WEDNESDAY BEFORE CAMP

Nature Neighbors ~ June 18, 25, July 9, 16

Youth completing 1st or 2nd grade (9am-12pm)

Four days of fun or maybe just one. Each day is unique so you can make camp as long as your little one wants. Learn about all the creatures, big and small, that call Iowa home!

LCNC Member ~ \$7/camper per day

Non-member ~ \$9/camper per day

Snack is provided each day of camp.

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY THE FRIDAY BEFORE CAMP

Evening Explorers ~ June 24-25 (1 night)

Youth completing 6th or 7th grade 4pm-10am

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 OR Non-member ~ \$40/camper

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

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JUNE 18



Recreation Renegades ~ June 30 & July 1

Youth completing 5th or 6th grade (9am-4pm)

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

LCNC Member ~ \$35/camper OR Non-member ~ \$40/camper

Lunch and snack is provided each day of camp.

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JUNE 23

Caving Adventure ~ July 7-9

(2 nights) 9am/3pm

Youth completing 9th - 12th grades

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

Pack list will be sent upon registration.

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JUNE 29

Water Wanderers ~ July 22 & 23

Youth completing 7th or 8th grade (9 am-2pm)

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

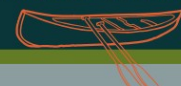
*Camp may be canceled due to unsafe water/weather conditions.

LCNC Member ~ \$35/camper

Non-member ~ \$40/camper

Lunch and snack is provided each day of camp.

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JULY 16



Summer Nature Camps continued

We are excited to partner with other organizations to offer even more nature camps this summer!



Iowa History Camp ~ June 17 & 18

Youth completing 3rd - 5th grades (9am-12pm)

Step back in time and discover what Iowa was like many years ago! Explore our past through interactive activities and immersive experiences. Our first day will be at Lime Creek exploring Iowa life Pre-contact. Then day two will be hosted at the Kinney Pioneer Museum. See how tools and time has changed and discover local Mason City history. Snack is provided each day of camp.

\$15/camper **REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY JUNE 10**

Register at
LimeCreekNatureCenter.com

August 4, 5, 6



Tiny Tots (9-10:15 am)

Youth ages 4-6 years old

Campers will discover nature's wonders while investigating the pond, woods, and prairie. Through stories, song, and games we will play and learn by growing our love for nature. Snack is provided

Crawly Critters (10:45-noon)

Youth ages 7-8 years old

Uncover the fascinating world of bugs and other crawly critters. Find out how they help people and the places we love to play. Discover how they are small and mighty. Snack is provided

To register call 421-3673
or
masoncity.activityreg.com

W.H.E.P. Camp ~ July 13



Youth ages 8-13 years old (10am-3pm)

This camp is a great introduction to the hands-on, year-round WHEP (Wildlife Habitat Education Program) club! Come to Lime Creek and spend the day in nature, learning all about Iowa wildlife and their habitats. Maybe you will want to join the club!

\$10/camper **REGISTER BY JULY 8**

Register by emailing
xcerrogorde@iastate.edu



NATIONAL WILDLIFE HABITAT EDUCATION PROGRAM



Programs continued

Register at LimeCreekNatureCenter.com

WINNEBAGO RIVER CLEAN-UP (It's Back!) SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 9-NOON WINNEBAGO RIVER

Join us for an all-out trash bash on a beautiful stretch of the Winnebago River! Let's work together to leave the river better than we found it and have fun doing it. A limited number of canoes are available for use and can be reserved upon registration. Lunch will be provided.

No cost but registration is required by July 27!

Thank you partners: Landfill of North Iowa, Cupola Inn Bed & Breakfast, and Cutting Edge Tree Service.



NATURE NAVIGATION MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 5-6:30 PM LIME CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

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

Pre-register by July 30 before 4 PM.

STORY WALK® 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® 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!



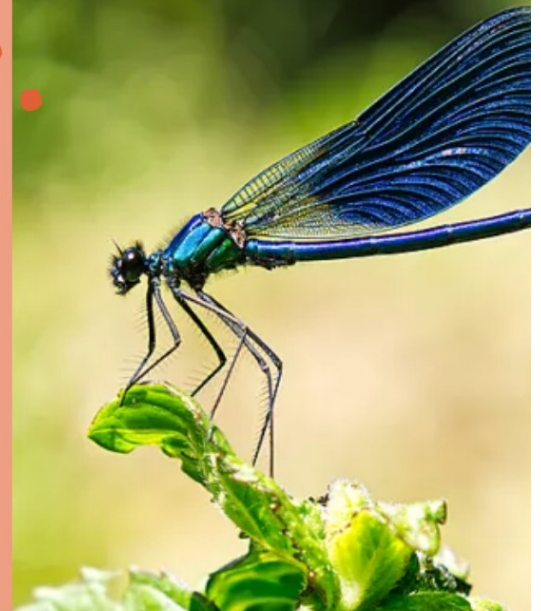
CONSERVATION COFFEE CLUB~ WILD WONDERFUL WINNEBAGO! WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 9:30-11 AM LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER

Enjoy some social time with coffee, tea and treats followed by a conservation focused program.

After learning last season about all the unique rivers in Iowa, join Dale Mills in a stunning visual celebration of our local river, the Winnebago. Paddle under a full moon, relish in unparalleled reflections, marvel at extraordinary ice formations, and get up close and personal to area wildlife. Our river is a free-flowing source of stress relief providing emotional and physical healing.

Cost is \$3 for nature center members or \$7 for nonmembers.

Registration deadline is Friday, August 21 by 4 PM



Flora and Fauna

Cattails

Typha sp.

If you are visiting a marsh or pond this summer, chances are you will spot a distinctive patch of cattails. Cattails are wetland species that are found near the water all over North America. They can grow to be 4-8 feet tall and thrive in 2-3 feet of water. They have a long, deep green stem with thin leaves coming from the base.

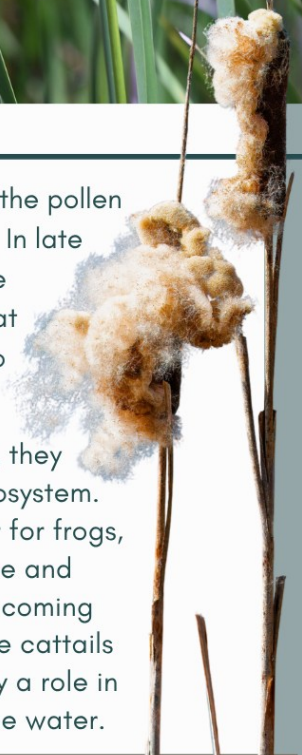
The most recognizable part of this plant is the flower, that looks different from most other flowers. Cattails actually have separate male and female flowers. The brown hotdog is actually the cluster of densely packed female flowers while the male flowers are the thinner yellow spike on top.



Did you know?

The female flowers are fertilized by the pollen of the male flowers that bloom first. In late summer or early fall, the brown spike turns into fluffy white seeds that float along with the wind to find a spot to grow.

Not only do cattails create a nice view, they are also incredibly important to the ecosystem. Under the water, cattails provide cover for frogs, fish and turtles. Many animals like geese and muskrats also feed on cattails that are coming up. Red-winged blackbirds primarily use cattails for their nesting sites. Cattails also play a role in both preventing erosion and filtering the water.





Conservation Comment

BY JOSH BRANDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Wetlands like Zirbel Slough occasionally need assistance from Cerro Gordo County Conservation (CGCC) staff to keep them functioning as healthy and productive ecosystems. Water levels are actively controlled to mimic the natural wet and dry cycles that wetlands experienced prior to humans drastically altering natural drainage patterns. Advanced engineering, control structures, and pumps allow us to temporarily remove water from targeted basins. This process is known as a “drawdown” and is essential for maintaining the long-term health of the marsh. This Spring, CGCC is utilizing an electric pump to remove the water from the south basin at Zirbel Slough.



The primary reason for this temporary de-watering is to promote the growth of native wetland vegetation. When the wetland basin is dried, the exposed soil creates ideal conditions for seeds already in the ground to germinate. Plants like cattails, bulrushes, and other aquatic species can then re-establish themselves, providing critical food and shelter for wildlife. Drawdowns also help improve habitat for birds and other animals. As water returns after a dry period, the wetland produces seeds and aquatic insects, which are key food sources for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

Another important reason for periodic drainage is to control “rough fish” such as carp. These fish can damage wetlands by uprooting plants and stirring up sediment, which reduces water clarity and inhibits the growth of native plants. Draining the wetlands at Zirbel Slough is a carefully planned management strategy that is temporary.



Yellow-headed Blackbird

By simulating natural cycles, we are encouraging native plant growth and improving wildlife habitat so that our wetlands remain a thriving habitat for years to come.



Arrowhead in bloom



Lime Creek Catch-up

Updates and Additions at Lime Creek

Community Fire Pit

The area behind the nature center has had many variations and updates throughout the years. Most of these changes have been made possible by a generous gift from the estate of Dorothy Curtis beginning in 2000. With some of the last remaining funds, we wanted to create a multi-use space at the base of the amphitheater. Upon completion, this fire pit will serve as a table and/or stage when not in use. The larger dimensions will allow for additional Dutch-oven and outdoor cooking opportunities as well as provide a larger area for larger groups to gather for campfire stories and programs.



Before



Our hope is to continue to create unique, beautiful spaces for our community to enjoy and experience the outdoor spaces at Lime Creek. We want to continue to give back with what we are given and continue to grow the opportunities that are available here at Lime Creek.

When complete, this area will be available for use by other community organizations and structured youth groups upon request and training.

**Please contact
641/423-5309
with any inquiries.**

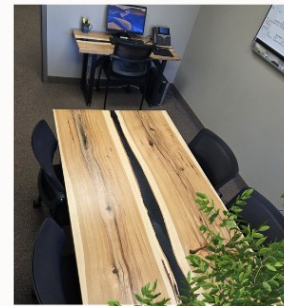


Volunteers and Donors

Weekend Volunteer Hosts: Bruce Trimble, Mike & Nancy Roddy, Bob & Sally Becker, Cassady Rosell, Ron & Lea Norlinger, Jace Spear, Kevin Schreur, Dave & Patty Hansen, and Jim Degen

Donations: Thank you North Iowa Touring Club for the bench placed at the Trolley Trail Shelter. We also want to thank Cargill for their very generous donation in support of environmental education.

To Keith and Jeremy Brandt, Ben Hucka, and Dewey Koch, thank you for your help processing two fallen trees at Linn Grove Park. The lumber that was milled and dried is now being used to enhance the meeting room and nature center lobby area.



Thank you

Memorial Tree: A tree is to be planted at Lime Creek Conservation Area in memory of the bond of friendship and laughter of "The Supper Club" - Bob & Marie Grunwald, Rich & Shirley Dean, Joel & Joyce Hanes, and Francis & Lora Holland. The tree was donated by the Grunwald Kids-Beth, Sarah, Chuck, and Jane.



In memory of...

Nadine Mathre

Thank you Dale & Judy Mills for your gift in memory of Nadine.

Shirley Smith

In memory of Shirley, thank you Andrew & Carla Alexander for you donation.

Joyce Pavek

For the monetary donation in memory of Joyce, we thank Mary & Tom Ferleman.

Ralph McEachran

Dale & Judy Mills, thank you for your gift to honor Ralph.

Ann Fisher

We are grateful for the support given by Carol Schutte in memory of Ann.



Don't forget to mark your calendars for two of our most popular annual events!

Save the Dates!

2026 Fall Festival Sunday, September 13 9:30-2:30



Timber Trot Saturday, October 3 9am Race

Being in nature is one of the best stress management strategies available - and it's FREE!
Iowa is a beautiful place to live and enjoy nature's bounties. They are all around us!
Spending time in nature improves overall mood, reduces stress, and increases physical, mental, and social wellness.



North Iowa Addiction
Prevention Alliance

NIAPA's quick tips to encourage everyone to take some time to enjoy nature.

- Work outside when you get a chance
- Position yourself near a window
- Take walks
- Take your bite or beverage outside
- Try an outdoor hobby
- Add a few plants to your space.



PUBLIC
HEALTH

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



CERRO GORDO COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS:

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Stephen Gales - Secretary/Treasurer

Dudley Humphrey - Member

Jaquelyn Arthur - Chair

Jim Roseland - Member

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Heather Hucka - Conservation Education Manager

Kari Jeffrey - Naturalist

Ryan Wilcke - Roadside Vegetation Manager

Lakota Kirst - Roadside Vegetation Specialist

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