

# 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

You may have been surprised when you saw this addition of *In Nature's Care*. Cerro Gordo County Conservation has gone through a lot of changes over the last few years! And what better way to celebrate our growth as an organization than to showcase it here. This newsletter has been a publication of the Lime Creek Nature Center for more than 40 years. With this winter addition, we would like to announce that it will now be a space for both nature center and county conservation events, news, and information. We are growing and so must our newsletter. With the increase in weight and an increased focus on conservation, after this issue,

**WE WILL NO LONGER BE MAILING OUT PAPER COPIES.**

Paper copies are available at the nature center and an electronic copy on the Cerro Gordo County Conservation website. Members will receive a digital copy sent directly to their inbox. Please update your email with our Office Manager Mary at [mermer@cerrogordo.gov](mailto:mermer@cerrogordo.gov)

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# Programs

To register call (641)423-5309

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

## **WINTER BREAK AT LIME CREEK MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1-3 PM LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

It is time to get the kids out of the house for some fresh air! All ages are invited to join us for a variety of fun winter activities. Come dressed to play outside. There will be a warm fire burning and hot chocolate waiting. **There is no charge, but registration is required. Children must be accompanied by an adult to participate in the program.**



## **MAKE & TAKE BIRDSEED ORNAMENTS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1-4 PM LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Make beautiful decorations for your outdoor trees that will provide a snack for birds and other local wildlife! Use binoculars to watch winter birds from the warmth of the nature center. All ages are welcome at this free program.



**Please register by December 16**

## **CONSERVATION COFFEE CLUB ~ EAST AFRICA PHOTO SAFARI WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 9:30-11 AM @ LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Enjoy some social time with coffee, tea and treats followed by a conservation focused program. Alf Larson always wanted to go to Africa since he was a child and had read about it. In February 2024 he made the trip a reality on a 14 day safari. Visiting numerous conservancies, reserves, and refuges including Maasai Mara and Serengeti. Join us as he shares his photos of this experience of a lifetime!

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

**Registration deadline is Friday, January 10 by 4 PM**



## **LIME CREEK LITTLES - ARCTIC ANTICS THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 5-6 PM LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, will explore Arctic animals through story, song, and activities. How do you survive such wild winters? Come explore and discover even more!

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

**Pre-register by Tuesday, January 21 by 4 PM**

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

## **LIME CREEK LITTLES - LOVE IN THE WILD TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 5-6 PM LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Children ages 4-6, with their adults, discover what love looks like for local wildlife. With Valentines Day right around the corner, learn all about nature's sweethearts through story, activities, and crafts. Celebrate love in the wild!

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

**Pre-register by Friday, February 7 by 4 PM**



# Programs continued

Registration coming soon!

## **ANNUAL LCCA FAT TIRE RACE SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 10 AM start LIME CREEK CONSERVATION AREA**

The first year was a BLAST, last year was a BUST, let's make this year a BANG! Come help us pick up the pace this winter with our 3rd annual fat tire race at Lime Creek Conservation Area. We hope to enjoy a morning of snow and cycling. To race, you must have a bike with tires 3.8" or greater. Helmets are required. Beginner and advanced categories will be available. Registration and additional information coming soon! Watch our Facebook and Instagram to find out more.



**WAYNE'S**  
SKI | CYCLE | FITNESS

## **POP-UP SNOWSHOE HIKES LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Winter weather can be unpredictable but also very fun! When the snow gets deep, we can creep. Keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram pages for these fun, "pop-up" guided winter hikes.

**No registration necessary.**

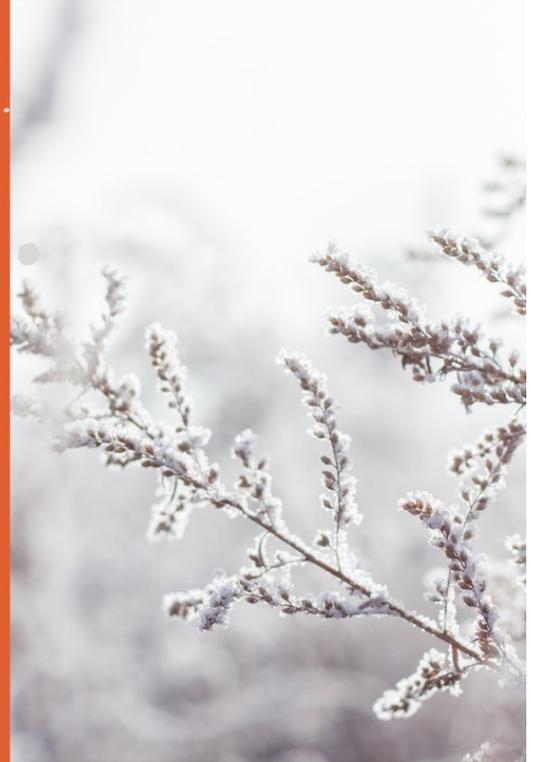


## **WOMEN'S WINTER REVIVAL! SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2-7 PM LIME CREEK NATURE CENTER**

*Just Breathe*

Winter can be draining in so many ways. Come and get revived during an afternoon of fun, relaxation, exploration, and connection. Breathing meditation, nature discovery, and a chili feast will fill your mind, heart, and ...stomach with renewed energy. Spend an afternoon surrounded by nature! All ages are welcome, however, this is an adult focused program. Cost is \$20 for members or \$25 for nonmembers.

**Registration/Payment deadline: February 18 by 4 PM.**



# Flora & Fauna

## White Pine

*Pinus strobus*

As fall arrives and deciduous trees shed their leaves, we can rely on conifers to give us a glimpse of green throughout winter. The Eastern white pine, one of Iowa's five native evergreen species, is a popular tree for many reasons. Known for its rapid growth and long life span, this tree provides both benefits and beauty.

The Eastern white pine has bundles of five needles, each about 3-5 inches long. This tree can grow up to 80 feet tall and live up to 100 years old. Each fall, the Eastern white pine sheds its older needles, keeping only the current year's growth. This sets it apart from the other Iowa evergreens, who overwinter with 2-3 years of needles.



Did you know?

Eastern white pines serve many important purposes, both ecologically and culturally. Many birds and small mammals benefit from the food and shelter these pines provide. Their size and extensive root system make them excellent windbreaks and help to mitigate soil erosion. Due to their beauty, Eastern white pines are popular ornamental trees in year-round landscaping. It's also common to bring them indoors during the holiday season as Christmas trees. The lumber industry favors white pines for many projects due to their soft and easily workable wood. Unlike many other woods, white pine doesn't shrink or swell significantly, which is a major advantage. These qualities make the Eastern white pine a favorite tree among many Iowans.



# Conservation Comment



BY JOSH BRANDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cerro Gordo County Conservation has been busy making facility improvements to our parks including new 50-amp service at all three modern campgrounds. But the newest feature we are excited to unveil in 2025 will be the ability to make online campsite reservations and electronic payments.

We are currently working on upgrading our presence on *mycountyparks.com* and building Cerro Gordo County's reservation system on the website. This spring, campers will be able to reserve campsites in advance online or pay instantly via credit card at Linn Grove, Wilkinson, and Ingebretson parks. Gone are the days of digging through your wallet or purse for the correct amount in cash!

We ask for your patience as we navigate through the transition, but the end product will undoubtedly be a smoother booking experience for our frequent customers as well as an opportunity to promote tourism in Cerro Gordo County on a broader scale. To streamline the process for reserving a campsite next year you can create a user profile on *mycountyparks.com* now. This site is a one-stop shop for all that County Conservation departments in Iowa have to offer. Check it out!

“Gone are the days of digging for the correct amount in cash!”





# Beyond Lime Creek



County Parks and Natural Areas

## Wilkinson Pioneer Park

Nestled in the town of Rock Falls this beautiful 80-acre park has something for everyone. Donated in 1960 by Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Wilkinson, this park contains 40 modern campsites and an enclosed shelter that can be rented for small events and gatherings.

Spanning across a small creek that empties into the river is a covered bridge that was originally built in 1969. This unique piece of history is one of only a few covered bridges that you can still drive through. Wilkinson Pioneer Park offers easy access to the beautiful Shell Rock River. Weather you canoe, kayak, or

tube, Wilkinson is the perfect place to begin any river adventure. Home to a small native remnant prairie, here you can get a glimpse of our historical lands. This public park truly has something for everyone.

21425 Vine Avenue  
Rock Falls, Iowa



## Amenities

Camping 

Riding 

Picnicing 

Fishing 

Playground 

Snowmobile 

River Access 

Biking 



# Volunteers and Donors

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

Program Volunteers: Thank you for your time and commitment Alice Phillips, Bruce & Suzanne McKee, Jim Degen, Carrie Berg and family, Matt & Melissa Fabian, Maeve & Nick Gales, Lane Hansen, Jamey Medlin, Dale Mills, Denise Wood, Mary Hodak, Scout Troup #1012, Mick Meyers, Lori Elbermawy, and Alf Larson.

Environmental Education Donations:

Thank you Thomas Eddy and family for donating the large insect collection of Douglas James Eddy. Thank you to Donavon and Diana Reinsmoen for donating Robert Anderson's extensive skull collection, rattlesnake skin, and historic grinding stones to be used for educational programming.

## New County Website

Cerro Gordo County's website has a whole new look!

Go online at [cerrogordo.gov/conservation](http://cerrogordo.gov/conservation) and discover more about what there is to do and where there is to go in Cerro Gordo County. Learn more about the staff and parks that make our county great!



## In memory of...

### Marge Haugen

Thank you Marcy Gebel for your memorial for Marge.

### Jenny Buls-Vrba

A memorial bench was placed at Lime Creek in Jenny's honor by Scott & Susan Moorman.

### Robert Fedders

Thank you to Robert's family for the picnic table given in his memory.





# Intern Reflections

BY BECCA HEFFLEFINGER, NATURALIST INTERN

Working at Lime Creek Nature Center has been amazing! I have learned so much about being a nature teacher and about the amazing county of Cerro Gordo. I loved being able to explore the habitats of Lime Creek and I especially loved all the pond studies and the exploration of under the water. I have to say my favorite part of working at the nature center was getting to know all the community members I could in my time there.

While being an intern for other counties, I have not been able to see a lot of classroom programs, so having the opportunity to go into classrooms and learn how to navigate those kinds of programs has really helped me these past couple of months. Seeing the students not only learn something new but learn in a unique way was exciting to me because they are seeing why people care about conservation so much and that nature is fun. My favorite classroom program to experience has been *Super Critters* because it's a fun way to connect adaptations with one of my favorite things, superheroes. My favorite field trip has to be *Big and Small Y'all* because I got to teach about a mystery animal and then play a fun game with the students.

While exploring Cerro Gordo County, I got to use my skills in photography to take photos of all the different parks I explored to share with the public. I also wanted to encourage more photography at parks which lead me to start a new Instagram page for Lime Creek. One of my accomplishments has been to watch it grow! Thank you for sharing this journey with me and I can't wait to see how this education program grows along the way!



# County Conservation at a Glance

2024



4 Boat Ramps

8 Canoe/Kayak  
Launches



587  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

7 Ponds &  
Lakes

37  
Public  
Properties



5  
Playgrounds

128 ELECTRIC  
CAMPSITES

6 PRIMITIVE  
CAMPSITES



356  
Educational  
Programs

968  
Miles of  
Roadside

9,147

Participants in  
Environmental Programs

6 ANIMAL  
AMBASSADORS



400  
pounds of seed  
harvested

2,700 +  
Acres of Public

Hunting



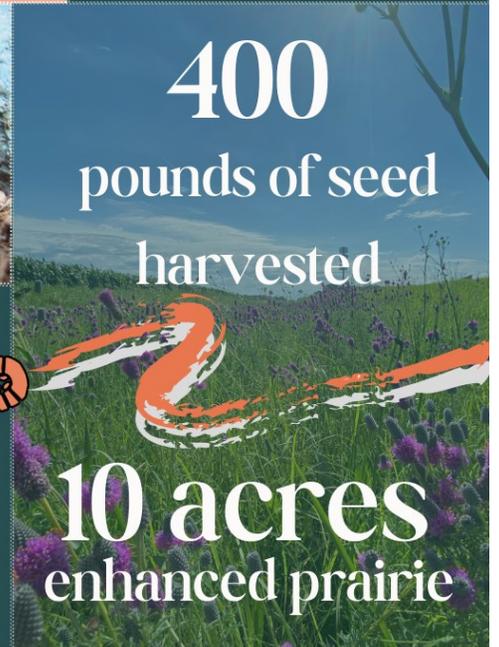
Approximately

37

Miles of Trail



10 acres  
enhanced prairie





# Happy Holidays

Give a gift this season that has a lasting impact on your community and beyond. Provide opportunities for generations to explore, discover, and connect to our natural world.

A tax-deductible gift membership or monetary donation to Lime Creek Nature Center is a gift that many benefit from. The environmental education team provides opportunities to all who wish to deepen their connection to nature.

The nature center relies on donations and memberships to fund our environmental education activities, programs, and internships.

**Please send your donation to:** Lime Creek Nature Center, 3501 Lime Creek Road, Mason City, IA. 50401



Lime Creek Nature Center  
3501 Lime Creek Road  
Mason City, Iowa 50401

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Jim Roseland - Vice-Chair

Stephen Gales - Member  
Jacquelyn Arthur - 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  
Derrick Barnes - Natural Resource Specialist  
Kolton Byrne - Natural Resource Specialist  
Mary Ermer - Office Manager

**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

