

# Conservation Connection

## Johnson County Conservation Newsletter

### Fifty Acres Added to Cedar River Crossing

On October 30th, 2023, the Johnson County Conservation Board closed on acquisition of an additional 50 acres to the Cedar River Crossing area. The new site surrounds the Sutliff Operations Center along the Sutliff Road. The area, currently in row crop production, will be restored to prairie and savanna, adding to the wildlife habitat corridor in this area, and also improving water quality within the watershed.

Providing large areas for wildlife along river corridors is important because animals such as waterfowl and other birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals shift their daily routines based on availability of suitable habitat for reproduction, feeding, and safety from predators and human disturbances. Providing large and varied habitat corridors increases survivorship and their ability to find mates and reproduce. Habitat corridors like the one at Cedar River Crossing will become even more important as climate change requires wildlife to shift historical home ranges in response to the changing local conditions and extreme weather.

Restoration of the new 50-acre site will have a significant positive impact on the local water quality in the Cedar River, especially when combined with a prior 144-acre wetland restoration in another section of Cedar River Crossing. Restoring the site to deep-rooted prairie and savanna species will slow rainwater absorption and infiltration, and the root systems will soak up water and replenish groundwater. The deep roots will also hold soil in place and reduce soil runoff into the Cedar River. When the river is in flood-stage, the flood waters can spread out into this natural system without adding further pollution into the water.

This acquisition was possible thanks to the support of the conservation program by Bob and Chris Clark of rural Sutliff, Iowa. The Clarks have been key supporters of the restoration of the Cedar River corridor and providing space for our northern operations center, which provides close access to managing six areas in the northeastern portion of Johnson County.



Cedar River Crossing is a 610-acre property in northeast Johnson County. This photo shows a large prairie-wetland restoration that was completed in 2019. Similar restoration work will be conducted at the new 50-acre acquisition just north of the area shown.

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## A Note from the Director



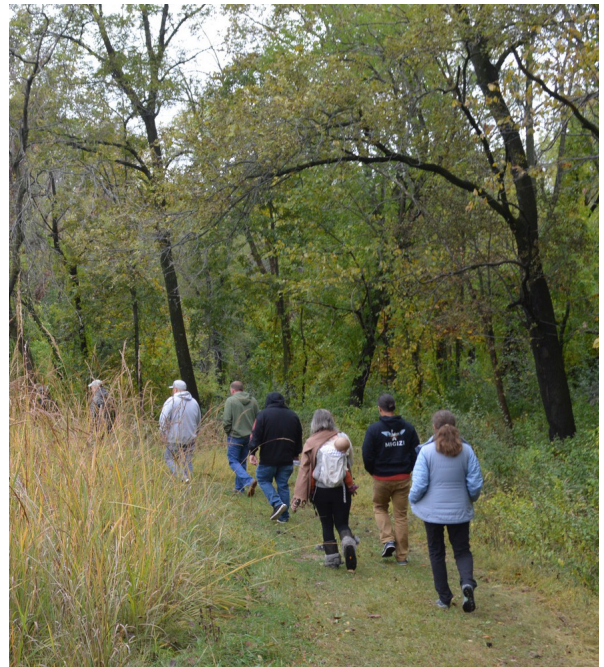
On October 14th, 2023, the Johnson County Conservation Board and staff held a special gathering with members of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska. The gathering took place at Two Horse Farm and Cangleska Wakan, and included a traditional meal, drumming, singing and sharing of stories throughout the afternoon and

evening. Seven acres of property at Two Horse Farm were donated to the Iowa Tribe by Erin and Brian Melloy. As part of the donation process, the Johnson County Conservation Board entered into a management agreement with the tribe so the public has full access to the property.

The gathering was part of the returning of lands to the Ioway people since they were pushed out of the state in 1832. Johnson County is situated in the heart of the original homeland of the Ioway people. It is hoped that in the future, the Ioway people can share their stories, drumming, singing and philosophy of their relationship with the land with the people in Johnson County – helping us understand and improve our relationship with the earth. During the gathering, the Ioway people and officials from Johnson County shared gifts and extended their gratitude to one another. The Ioway people are planning to return next October and will again share their stories and songs with us. If you are interested in helping us with this project, through a financial donation or as a volunteer, please contact officials with the conservation department at 319-645-2315.



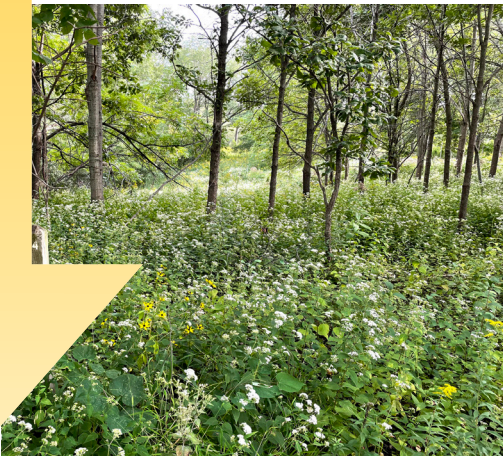




**Bottom left:** Attendees welcome the Ioway people back to Johnson County. **Clockwise from top left:** Singers with the Ioway Drum pose at Cangleska Wakan; Irma White and Melissa Roby cooked traditional food for the attendees of the gathering; participants hiking at Two Horse Farm to the land owned by the Iowa Tribe of Nebraska and Kansas; attendees gathered on the seven acres owned by the Iowa Tribe at Two Horse Farm; people key to the process of returning land back to the Iowa Tribe were honored during the gathering; Nate Scates, drum keeper with the Iowa tribe, explaining the meaning behind their songs.



# Let the Sun Shine Down



**Photos from top:** A Fecon used to clear invasive shrubs; a forest that hasn't yet been cleared, showing a thick shrub layer that chokes out native species; an adjacent forest that has been cleared of invasive shrubs; the end goal - an open understory forest with native wildflower growth.

Hikers at Kent Park this fall may have noticed intensive conservation work taking place in the forests in the northeastern corner of the park. JCC's Natural Resource Crew was working to open up the forest to more sunlight and clear out invasive species along the way. Many of the forests in Iowa today suffer from overgrowth of the forest understory, and adding to the unhealthy state, many understories are composed of invasive species such as honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose.

Using large machinery such as the Fecon (a land clearing and vegetation management tool), brush hogs, and chainsaws, the crew can clear large areas at a time. Removing the invasive species and thinning tree density in the forest allows more sunshine to reach the forest floor. The sunshine and new space to grow helps native wildflowers to establish. Diversity and abundance of native plant communities are the basis of an overall healthy ecosystem. The native flora also have deeper root systems, helping to hold soil in place and prevent erosion and soil pollution into our watershed. While forest clearing can look counterintuitive to conservation, it is actually a vital step in recreating a healthy system.

It can take many years of cyclical clearing, paired with prescribed burns, to extinguish the invasive understory and seed bank. The goal is to eventually reach a stable forest that can maintain an open understory through periodic prescribed burns alone. If you have seen open forests in Kent Park, or enjoyed seeing spring wildflowers under the forest canopy, you are seeing the results of sustained forest management.



# JCC Staff Updates

## Jacob Moss - Custodian

I've lived in Iowa for most of my life but was born in Rochester, MN. I always liked being outside more than inside. My dad was responsible for introducing me to the outdoors, and we did our share of camping and fishing whenever we got a chance. We also did our fair share of traveling with the family, going to exciting places as far as Oregon and California. Out of all the trips we went on, the Boundary Waters trip up north in Minnesota was my favorite. I had some of my favorite fishing experiences there and enjoyed the peace and quiet.

I graduated from Washington High School in Cedar Rapids in 2012. I earned two scholarships after high school and carried that success to Kirkwood Community College where I joined the Parks and Natural Resources Program. After two years with Kirkwood, I transferred to Upper Iowa University where I finished my degree in Conservation Management in 2016. During that time, I was a very busy person. I worked at Hy-Vee (right after high school) part time as a Dairy Clerk/Stocker. I spent plenty of time as a helpful smile and eventually said my goodbyes as of this year. I also was fortunate to be hired by Linn County Conservation as a seasonal park attendant employee. I enjoyed

my time with LCCB, working on a variety of different projects and learning so much from my co-workers and supervisors.

I accepted a seasonal job with Johnson County Conservation as a seasonal park ranger in 2020. I spent 3 seasons with Johnson County while also spending time with Linn County after finishing my time with JCCB. As a seasonal with Johnson County, I was able to gain new experiences and memories with Aaron and Charlie. That lead me to a full-time job with Johnson County Conservation as the new Custodian.



## Chelsea Cozad - AmeriCorps Assistant Naturalist

I've always loved nature and felt happiest while being outdoors, but I didn't begin my journey in conservation as a career until I went back to school for my bachelor's degree in my late twenties. Johnson County turned out to be the perfect place for my family to relocate –the many public parks and preserves found throughout the county have been remarkable from both a learning and recreational standpoint. I have been lucky to have multiple opportunities to perform land stewardship work in the area over the past few years, which has deepened my appreciation for the land as well as my passion to protect it. This position with Johnson County Conservation gives me a chance to help spark that passion and excitement for the natural world in others.





## Sabrina Peyton - Natural Resource Management Technician

I grew up in northwest Indiana's suburbs of Chicago where I studied geology at Indiana University Northwest. I started gaining field experience while assisting with water quality research in the Lake Michigan watershed. Two research projects kept me outdoors – water quality and deer trail tracking – and this is when my love for field work was born.

Next, I made my way to Iowa where I found my first opportunity working in the field as a natural resource seasonal technician with Johnson County Conservation. After that concluded, I found my next opportunity as a Soil Health and Water Project Coordinator for Poweshiek County. As a project coordinator I learned all about how conservation plays a role in agriculture and that I really don't like the smell of freshly applied chicken poop. So, I made my return to Johnson County Conservation as a seasonal for one more season until I got my new title as a Natural Resource Technician.

I'm excited to be here and looking forward to contributing to county conservation!



## Tim Kurt - Natural Resource Management Technician

I was born and raised in south central Wisconsin in a town called Sun Prairie. As a child our family vacations took us to northern Wisconsin where I discovered the joys of fishing, hiking and enjoying the outdoors. As I grew older, I would go on long hikes through Ice Age-made trails that Wisconsin has an abundance of. I eventually met my wife Sarah and moved to western Iowa, where I got to explore Iowa's gem: the Loess Hills. I also got my start in this field of work by working for Nebraska and South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks. Sarah's career as a podiatrist brought us here to Iowa City. I've worked for many years with JCC as seasonal staff. I'm looking forward to a career here improving the natural areas of this county.



## Natalie Stowe - Natural Resource Management Technician

Natalie, previously a full time custodian for Johnson County Conservation, has been hired as a Natural Resource Management Technician. Congratulations Natalie!



## Michelle Wiegand - Naturalist/Education Specialist

I grew up in Iowa City and developed a deep connection to nature as a young child. I was lucky enough to attend several area summer camps, including YMCA Camp Wapsie, where I became a summer camp counselor and the camp's first female program director. My time as a camper and counselor at Wapsie gave me an early lesson in the positive impact a relationship with nature can have in a young person's life and also how early exposure to nature can instill a conservation land ethic.

I earned my BSW from the University of Iowa. After graduating, I lived in northern California and worked with families experiencing homelessness and other trauma, often incorporating outdoor recreation in my work. I returned to the Midwest and earned my MSW from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. While in St. Louis, I became involved in the outdoor and experiential education community while working with the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis County Youth Programs, and the National Audubon Society. After moving back to Iowa City, I worked with the University of Iowa's Iowa Youth Writing Project where I collaborated with JCC and the Iowa City Community School District to develop an immersive, multidisciplinary program called "Writing on the Environment." I also worked for Iowa City's Parks and Recreation

Department overseeing communications and special events, including the Iowa City Farmers Market, and spearheading the development of programs such as the Get Outside! festival, the Native Plant Symposium, and Pollinator Park Prowl.

Amongst others, I have received training in the areas of Project WILD, Project WET, and BEETLES facilitation, Certified Interpretive Guide, and Missouri Master Naturalist. I am an advocate for community access to the mental and physical health benefits of connecting to the natural world and I am passionate about increasing access to outdoor recreation for historically marginalized communities and groups who have not previously felt welcome or safe in park spaces. In my free time, I enjoy spending time in nature with family and friends, gardening with native plants, and riding my bike.



## Work with JCC this Summer!

Gain valuable career experience in a seasonal position with Johnson County Conservation! Seasonal opportunities are available with natural resource management, park operations and maintenance, rangers, and environmental education.

Positions are posted in February and March. Most positions start in April or May and run four months. Keep an eye out for postings on MyCountyParks.com at <https://www.mycountyparks.com/jobs>.





# 2023 VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Alice & Ken Atkinson



Colette Brodersen & Bill Pusteri



## CEC Hosts

Visitors are able to visit the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park on summer Saturdays thanks to the help of our CEC Hosts. They staff the building, greet visitors, answer questions, help with events, and sometimes even enhance our wildflower display with their expert plant knowledge. Alice, Ken, Colette, and Bill are four of our longest-serving CEC Hosts, each being key helpers with this task for over ten years! There are other additional CEC hosts, and we are always recruiting more!

Favorite thing about volunteering: "We enjoy meeting the wide range of visitors who are exploring the park and we do our best to answer their questions. It's especially fun to watch the kids explore the exhibits and share their joy and enthusiasm."

- Alice Atkinson

Ben Rowold



## Bluebird Trail Monitor

Ben, AKA the "Bluebird Grandpa," has been in charge of the care and maintenance of the Bluebird Trail in Kent Park since 2016. In those years, Ben has come out every week between April and September to monitor and maintain 25 bluebird boxes. Ben checks the status of each box, identifies the species using it, monitors growth of bluebird chicks, records data on each nest, removes pests, and cleans the box after use. He even repairs and repaints the boxes in the off-season! Thanks to his diligence, 100+ bluebirds fledge from these boxes every summer. You can enjoy spotting bluebirds by driving or walking along the Bluebird Trail, which is primarily along the Kent Park road loop.

## MAPS Bird Banders

Every ten days, a crew of dedicated and trained bird banders have spent a day at Kent Park conducting a MAPS (Monitoring of Avian Productivity and Survivorship) survey. This nationwide program is the gold standard for bird research.

Favorite thing about volunteering: "One highlight has been the opportunity to learn about Iowa's year-long residents in more depth. I've seen goldfinches change from their drab winter plumage to their flashy spring plumage, and more recently, was able to compare juvenile birds with adults of the same species."

- Chelsea Cozad

Mark Bowman



Arlen Breiholz



Debbie Bryant







## Trail Stewards

The trail system at Cangleska Wakan has been kept clear and open this season thanks to the biweekly visits of our three trail stewards: Jenny and JJ Miller and Craig Gibson. The stewards cut vegetation out of the trail corridor, including the thorny invasive and fast-growing multiflora rose. They also help remove logs and sticks that fall over the trail. If you've had a pleasant hike at Cangleska Wakan this summer, you have their hard work to thank!

Favorite thing about volunteering: "Cangleska Wakan is one of our favorite JCC properties; being trail stewards has given us a great excuse to carve out extra time there for some quality outdoor time together." - Jenny

"My favorite part was spending time with Mama. One time, we found a really cool owl skull and I really liked doing that with Mama." - JJ (age 7)

## I.M.M.P. Crew

Since 2020, a crew of volunteers have helped to conduct biweekly surveys at Cedar River Crossing as part of the nationwide Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program. They survey an area of prairie the size of a football field, counting every single milkweed plant and monarch egg, larva, or adult seen. Some weeks they also count and identify total butterflies spotted and record the species of wildflowers in bloom.

Favorite thing about volunteering: "On my last day out, we found 21 monarch eggs, the most we had seen all summer. I had a great time: I made some new friends, learned more about local birds and forbs, and never got poison ivy." - Craig Gibson



## Bird Blind Stewards

Several volunteers help to keep our bird blind feeders full on the weekends. Each person or family group dedicates one weekend per month to come out to Kent Park, fill bird feeders, and tidy up the bird blind. Volunteers include: the Noiseux Family, Connie Aldridge, Jodie and Mike Theobold, Kathy and Van Martensen, and Phyllis Black.

Favorite thing about volunteering: "We do a lot of volunteering and I wanted to instill the same work ethic in my kids and make them understand the importance of giving back even in our hectic lives. The fact that it's out in nature is a bonus for us because it's a chance to have that conversation monthly with my kids about the benefits for making time for the outdoors." - Laura Noiseux





Jason Bies



Hai Huynh



## Backpacking Trip Leaders

This summer and fall, two volunteers, Jason Bies and Hai Huynh, donated their time to help lead backpacking trips for the Johnson County community. Jason, a former JCC seasonal naturalist, helped to lead the 10-day Idaho Wilderness Trek, which includes supervising and mentoring teens in a remote wilderness setting while learning new skills and engaging in rigorous trail work, being "on" for 16+ hour days, and being packed into a 15-passenger van for the long drive there and back. In September, Hai volunteered to co-lead the Women|Trans|Femme Beginner Backpacking Trip for adults. Hai helped instruct the participants as they learned new backpacking skills, including sharing her expert knowledge for fire-building and foraging. Hai also helped with the logistics and preparations before the trip.

Favorite thing about volunteering: "It's amazing to watch these teens face new challenges, and I get to be there to support them, cheer them on, and celebrate their victories, all while sharing my love of these wild places." - Jason Bies

"Nature and volunteering are my two favorite things in the world. Getting to do both at the same time is magical, especially in the presence of an amazing group of women/transgender/femme friends. We shared so much laughter, life stories, and wisdom around the campfire each night." - Hai Huynh

## Prairie Seed Harvest Volunteers

134 volunteers donated their time to help harvest native prairie seeds this fall! These volunteers attended one or more of the eight events we were able to host at Kent Park, Cedar River Crossing, and Williams Prairie State Preserve. All of the harvested seed is processed and used to supplement and enhance seed mixes used for the following year's prairie restoration projects throughout the county.

"Collecting native prairie seeds is totally rewarding and positive - it is fun and easy and it takes place in always-beautiful settings. It is satisfying because it yields tangible results and the seeds are used in our JCC parks. You get to share this task with like-minded volunteers and staff, and you just plain feel good when you do it! By collecting native seeds, we are preserving the treasure of our natural heritage."

- Lois Albrecht



## Monarch Tagging Volunteers

From mid-August through the end of September, we had 20 different volunteers come out to help us tag monarch butterflies. Volunteers visited both Cedar River Crossing and Kent Park during six different volunteer events. This citizen science project is part of Project Monarch Watch, a long-term monarch research project out of the University of Kansas. With the help of these volunteers, we were able to capture and tag 26 migratory monarch butterflies (12 females and 14 males).

Yukiko Hill



Interested in volunteering? The best way to stay up-to-date on volunteer needs and events is to sign up for the JCC Volunteer Newsletter. Scan or click the code to the right for the volunteer newsletter link.





# JCC Hosts Inclusive Backpacking Trip

In September 2023, a crew of eight hikers came together for a first-of-its kind backpacking trip hosted by JCC naturalists: a Womens|Trans|Femme (WTF) trek designed for beginners. The audience of the trip was intentionally chosen to help create an inclusive space for folks underrepresented in the backpacking world to learn the basics and gain the skills to do this kind of trip on their own.

The trek took place on the Superior Hiking Trail in northern Minnesota, where we hiked 25 miles over five days. Though some days were cold and rainy, we couldn't have had more perfect conditions: peak fall colors, no bugs, no crowds. In fact, it often felt like we were the only ones in a vast wilderness.

As with all of JCC trips and programs, our goal was twofold: help people gain confidence with a new outdoor skill and help people connect deeply with the natural world. There was no shortage of "nature nuggets" on this trip, a phrase we use to describe teachable nature lessons along the way. We taught about bear hangs and water filtration one moment, and plant ID the next. A particular nature nugget highlight of this trip was the abundance of mushrooms for all to investigate, admire, and even eat! We lucked into bounties of lobster mushrooms, a choice edible mushroom that we cooked and ate with dehydrated backpacking meals. The crew also learned how to identify the myriad of trees around them, learned about different mosses and lichens, listened to the caws of ravens in our campsites, and watched from a cliff as black vultures soared on thermals at eye level.

Each day, it was clear that the trip was something magical and meaningful to each of us, and we're so thankful to be able to share these empowering and spiritual opportunities with our community.







# JOHNSON COUNTY AVIAN ADVENTURE

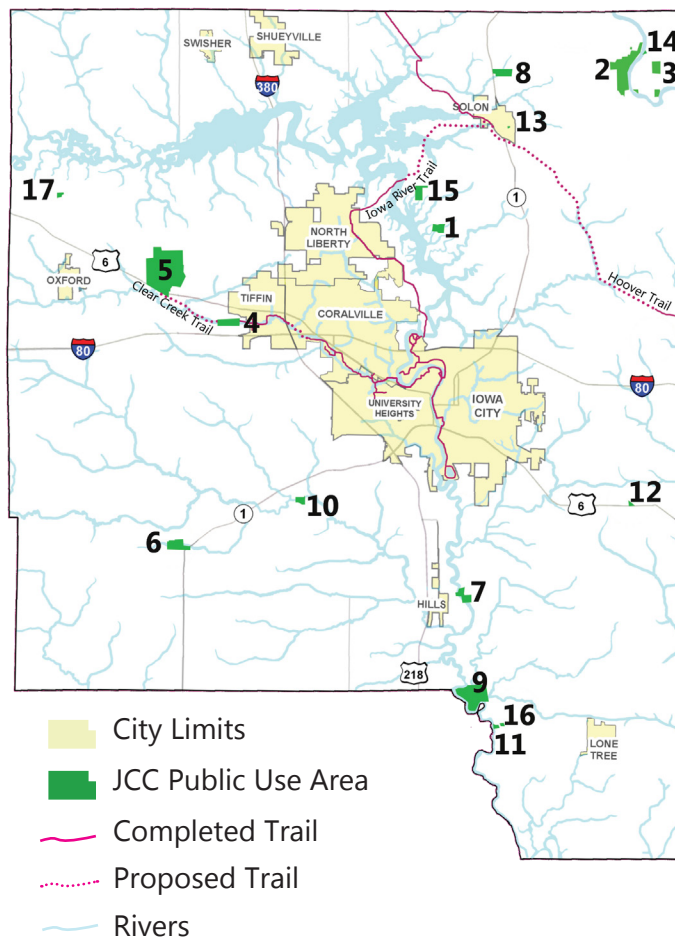
FEBRUARY 1- MARCH 24

**SEARCH, ADVENTURE, DISCOVER, & WIN!**

SCAN OR CLICK THE CODE TO THE LEFT FOR DETAILS

## JCC Public Use Areas

1. Cangleska Wakan	132 acres
2. Cedar River Crossing	610 acres
3. Ciha Fen Preserve	81 acres
4. Clear Creek Conservation Area	87 acres
5. F.W. Kent Park	1,062 acres
6. Frytown Conservation Area	94 acres
7. Hills Access	40 acres
8. Malinda Reif Reilly Fen & Prairie	100 acres
9. Pechman Creek Delta	380 acres
10. Phebe Timber	27 acre
11. River Junction Access	12 acres
12. Scott Church Park	5 acres
13. Solon Prairie	3 acres
14. Sutliff Bridge & Access	1/2 acre
15. Two Horse Farm	83 acres
16. Walker Park	3 acres
17. Williams Prairie Preserve	21 acres



## Paved Trail Segments Managed by JCC

Clear Creek Trail	1.3 miles
Hoover Trail	6 miles
Iowa River Trail	3.5 miles

More information about JCC public use areas can be found through our website:  
[www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation](http://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation)

# Program/Event Guide

## How to Sign Up:

Programs are free unless a fee is listed. Sign up for all programs is online at the link below, unless stated otherwise. To sign up, **click or scan** the QR code to the right or go to: <https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation/events>. For questions or sign-up help, call **319-645-1011**.



## Accessibility

JCC is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. We welcome and encourage people with disabilities to attend programs and events. Accommodations may be requested by contacting naturalist staff at 319-645-1011 or [jccnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:jccnaturalists@gmail.com).

## December

### Sunrise Solstice Saunter

Wednesday, December 21, 6:45 - 9:00 a.m.  
Cedar River Crossing

The winter solstice is often seen as a time for re-birth, renewal, and self-reflection. Celebrate the first day of winter and the lengthening of daylight as we watch the sun rise over the astronomical clock in this beautiful natural area. The walk is about 2.5 miles round trip.

## January

### Explorers: Fun with Fungi

Thursday, January 11, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.  
Kent Park, detailed location TBD

Come explore the beauty of fungi with us. Weather permitting, we will go on a fungi hunt in the woods and learn about the many ways fungi are helpful, followed by making mushroom grow kits to grow your own mushrooms at home! The Explorers series is a program designed for kids K-6 with an accompanying adult.

### Nature Buds - Animal Tracks

Wednesday, January 17, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Nature Buds is back! This program is for children 3 to 5 years old. The new format will feature a group story time and activity followed by a hands-on project.

### Introduction to Ice Fishing

Saturday, January 13, 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.  
F. W. Kent Park Lake (Beach)

If you have always wanted to learn to ice fish this is the event for you! All gear is provided.

### Winter Hiking Series: Malinda Reif Reilly Fen and Prairie

Sunday, January 14, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Enjoy a brisk winter walk at one of our newest properties! All are welcome to join this naturalist-led 2.5 mile hike, which will include one tiny creek crossing.

### CEC Winter Open House

Saturday, January 20, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Come out to explore the Conservation Education Center (CEC) in Kent Park for self-guided exploration inside, and enjoy a winter hike or trip to the bird blind. Winter scavenger hunt guides will also be available to enhance your trip to the park.



### **Reptile Rendezvous**

Saturday, January 20, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Meet some of JCC's education ambassadors, including turtles and snakes! A naturalist will share background information about the reptiles of Iowa and natural histories for our live reptile guests. Participants will be able to touch and/or interact with various animals. Registration not required.

### **Winter Hiking Series: Pechman Creek Delta**

Sunday, January 28, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Enjoy a brisk winter walk at Pechman Creek Delta! All are welcome to join this naturalist-led 2.5 mile hike. The terrain is flat.

## **February**

### **Adventure Day at Wickiup Hill**

Saturday, February 3, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Wickiup Hill Learning Center, Toddville, Iowa

Break up winter and treat cabin fever with a day of tales of outdoor adventures! Most of the informative sessions will be focused on adult topics, interested kids 10 years or older are welcome with an adult. Topics include a presentation on thru-hiking the Colorado Trail by JCC naturalist Kristen Morrow, Almost Backyard Adventures, Whitewater Kayaking, and Iowa Rock climbing. Registration is not required and the event is free. Participants may pack a lunch; popcorn provided.

### **Winter Hiking Series: Cangleska Wakan**

Saturday, February 10, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Join a naturalist for a 2.5-3 mile hike through Cangleska Wakan and Big Grove Preserve (owned and managed by Bur Oak Land Trust). The terrain is hilly.

### **Explorers: Cool Crystal & Ice Science**

Thursday, February 15, 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Need a way to keep busy indoors this winter? Head out to the CEC at Kent Park to explore some "supercool" science themes. Children can investigate different stations around the center, and finish off the afternoon with a fun demonstration of instant ice. This particular program is best suited for kids in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

### **Luminary Night Hike**

Friday, February 16, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Experience hiking under starlight on this 1.5-mile hike. This self-guided hike will be lit by luminaries to help direct hikers along the way. Luminaries will be taken down at 9:00 p.m. The hike will be along unplowed limestone trail, and hikers may be trekking through snow. The Conservation Education Center will be open for exploration during the hours of the hike. Registration not required; check social media or the JCC website for weather updates.

### **Maple Syrup Class**

Saturday, February 17, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Cedar River Crossing

Learn about making your own maple syrup during this hands on program. We will walk into Cedar River Crossing to identify appropriate trees and set them up for collecting sap. You will get some sticky history and an introduction to different types of equipment. Interested participants can rent equipment for the season (\$5) to tap their own tree!

### **CEC Winter Open House**

Saturday, February 17, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
See Jan 20 event for details.

### **Nature Buds - Reptiles**

Wednesday, February 21, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
See Jan 17 event for details.

### **Explorers: Woodworking for Wildlife**

Thursday, February 29th, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
\$10 fee/house

Learn about the birds in your backyard and build a birdhouse! The bird house will be appropriate for several cavity nesting species including wrens, chickadees, and nuthatches. This is a great activity for families! Along with the bird house, participants can take home some native seed to enhance their backyard habitat. Power drills will be used for assembling the houses.

## **March**

### **Winter Hiking Series: Two Horse Farm**

Thursday, March 7, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Join a naturalist for a 2-mile hike through Two Horse Farm, Johnson County Conservation's newest conservation area. The terrain is hilly.

### **Nature Buds - Worms**

Wednesday, March 20, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
See Jan 17 event for details.

### **Explorers: Migration in the Mississippi Flyway**

Thursday, March 21, 3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Migration has begun! Did you know that Johnson County is located in the Mississippi Flyway; the largest flight path for migrating birds in North America? Participants will learn about why our region is vital to bird migration, how to support birds on their journey, and even try their hand at a mock migration scenario. This program is recommended for

children in grades 3rd-7th. Youth will have more success participating if they are able to do some reading and/or have a guardian/buddy to assist with reading.

### **Beginner Willow Basketry Class**

Saturday, March 23, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Location TBD

Learn how to identify, harvest, and prepare the willow stems for basket making. Participants will spend 2-3 hours making a woven basket from materials they gather. Basket making will take place outside, weather dependent.

### **Avian Adventure Trivia Night**

Thursday, March 28, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
Big Grove Brewery: Iowa City

This nature-themed trivia night will have a focus on birds and Johnson County's natural resources. The event is open to all but is especially geared toward those who participate in the Avian Adventure program which is a county-wide, bird-themed scavenger hunt taking place from February 1 through March 24. Winners of the Avian Adventure program will be announced at the beginning of the trivia event. Each trivia team also has the chance to win an additional prize by becoming the trivia night champions. Trivia teams may range from one to eight players per team.



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Hikers enjoying the luminary-lit path at the 2023 Luminary Night Hike in Kent Park.