

Summer 2025

# Conservation Connection

## Johnson County Conservation Newsletter

### Nest Boxes for Wildlife

**Kristen Morrow** - Naturalist

2025 has been the year of nest boxes for JCC. Our team has been adding a variety of nest boxes to several different JCC properties to help cavity-nesting wildlife.

Cavity-nesters utilize holes in trees to make their nest in and raise their young. Woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, tree swallows, wrens, bluebirds, wood ducks, mergansers, and owls are examples of some of the cavity-nesting birds we have here in Iowa. Of these, only a few species such as Northern Flickers and Pileated Woodpeckers are primary cavity-nesters, meaning they can excavate a nest hole themselves with their strong beaks. The rest are secondary cavity nesters, meaning they will reuse a cavity that was excavated and used previously.

Nest boxes can be a useful tool to help cavity-nesting birds. As we have lost mature old growth forest, we have lost old dying and dead trees that birds use to make their cavities in. This has caused population declines across the board for cavity-nesting species. Increasing forest habitat and protecting old growth trees should always be a prioritized part of the solution to help conserve these species, but reestablishing that kind of habitat takes time. Nest boxes can help fill that habitat void and give wildlife more opportunities for successful nesting seasons to start growing their populations.

This spring, JCC added more duck huts, tree swallow boxes, and a purple martin colony to our properties. Our ranger staff added 13 new duck huts, making for a total of 32 duck huts on JCC land. You can find these by waterways in Kent Park, Cangleska Wakan, Pechman, and Cedar River Crossing. You can spot tree swallows peeking out their boxes at the new "Tree Swallow Trail" around Kent Park Lake, and in early May, purple martins discovered their new housing at the entrance to Kent Park! Read more about our nest box projects on pages 4-6.



JCC Seasonal Ranger Olivia Mayo installs new duck huts at Pechman Creek Delta. Duck huts are positioned over water so fledglings can jump straight into their new wetland home.

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## A Brief from Brad



Start your engines, summer is here!

Summer is an exciting and busy time of year for the Conservation Department. Camping is in full swing; day use is increasing at all our parks as people seek out their favorite outdoor activities, and of course it can't be summer without construction.

The Conservation Department has three projects currently under construction:

Contractors are closing out Phase 1 of the Kent Park Shower House, completing the final seedings, planting trees, and installing the storm water bio-cells along the entrance road. The design and engineering team is working on incorporating the design features from the original plans into a prefabricated building structure, which is intended to yield some cost savings for the project. The shower house project has been a long-haul and everyone is ready for it to be completed. Depending on the building manufacturers schedule, a structure could be installed as early as this fall, but it is more likely to be installed next spring. The contractor will need to complete the remaining electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and mechanical work to complete the project, but we'd like to remain optimistic that the shower house could be open by next summer at some point.

The Cangleska Wakan Celebration Barn kitchen and restroom remodel is the second of our current construction projects. This project entails the remodeling of the restrooms and kitchen area of the Celebration Barn to provide year-round climate control for these spaces. Contractors have been busy removing walls and insulation to expose the old framing. This work resulted in the contractor identifying a few other problems that will need to be addressed during construction, but they have remained on track and have completed a lot of the framing work. Plumbers have also been busy accessing the existing lines under the concrete floor and rerouting lines to new connection







**Left page:** Improvements to the Celebration Barn at Cangleska Wakan will make the barn accessible for public programs, staff offices, and reservations year round.

**Left:** Construction workers excavate the underpass for the Clear Creek Trail to cross under Hwy 6 by Kent Park. **Bottom:** Portions of The Clear Creek Trail along Half Moon Avenue have been graded and poured.

points for sinks and appliances to be installed.

The Clear Creek Trail Extension to F.W. Kent Park has been moving along quickly. Contractors installed a small detour at the point of the underpass on Highway 6 and have already excavated and begun constructing the underpass structure. Once the south side of the underpass is completed, contractors will move the detour to the south side and complete the construction of the underpass on the north side. At the same time the contractors have been installing culverts, preparing driveways, and grading the trail route along Half Moon Avenue. A small portion of the trail on the west side of Half Moon Avenue has already been poured. The space remaining between the trail edge and the roadway edge will be filled with hot mix asphalt to provide a different surface from the road and trail. The trail crossings on Half Moon Avenue and Copi Road NW will also be paved with hot mix asphalt to differentiate them from the chip seal road surface. The Conservation Department appreciates everyone's patience during this project as it has created some inconvenience for residents on Half Moon Avenue NW. There is a lot of retaining wall work to be completed at both trail project areas. The design and engineering team for the trail project are also begin to work on Phase II which will complete the route to Kent Park and is expected to be completed next construction season.

These projects will bring important additions to Johnson County Conservation holdings and improvement of facilities for the public to use. We look forward to welcoming you all to check out these project upon their completion, in the meantime, get outdoors and enjoy everything Johnson County has to offer.





# Nesting for the Future:

## Purple Martin Conservation in Kent Park

Hailey Ragan - Seasonal Naturalist

At F.W. Kent Park, a new purple martin gourd colony has been installed near the park entrance to support purple martin populations. These vibrant cavity-nesting birds are cherished across both North and South America.

Purple Martins have a long history with humans. Native Americans have been providing nest sites for them for hundreds of years. They may have observed that purple martins acted as sentinels, warning of nearby dangers. They may have also enjoyed the insect-control the birds provided. To attract them, they crafted gourd birdhouses and hung them in trees or on poles near their settlements. Early European settlers adopted this tradition, eventually developing multi-compartment houses to accommodate the birds. Today, purple martins east of the Rocky Mountains have become entirely dependent on humans for nesting sites.

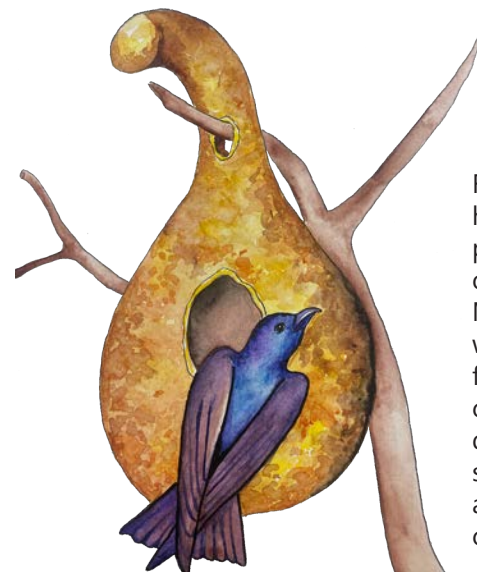
Females lay one egg per day, producing a clutch of one to seven eggs. After about 15 days of incubation, the eggs begin to hatch—often at staggered times. Young martins fledge around 26 days after hatching and remain with their families until it's time to migrate south.

Purple Martins are migratory, traveling between North America and the Amazon Basin in Brazil. Their migration routes vary: some fly through Mexico and Central America, others cross the Gulf of Mexico, or island-hop through the Caribbean. Before heading south in late summer or early fall, they often gather in large communal roosts. They return back to Iowa by late April or early May, and second year adults return to their previous nest sites while new adults may need to strike out for new nest sites.

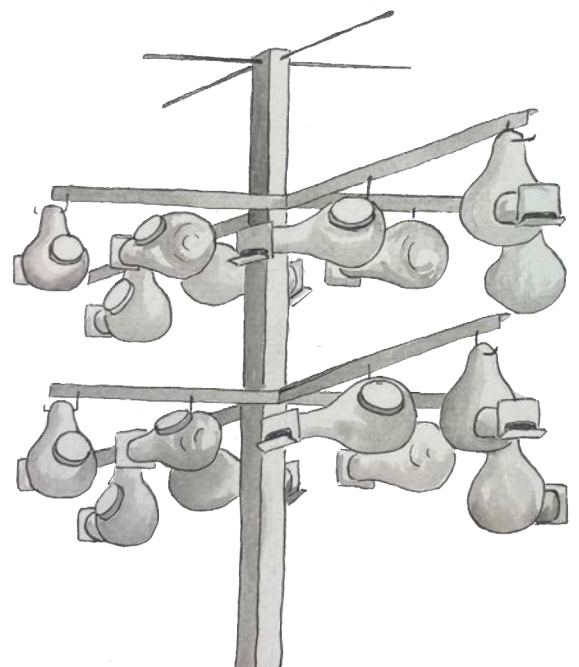
Purple martin populations have decreased by over 25% in the last 50 years. With their dependence on human-provided housing, putting up nest colonies is a vital part of their conservation.

Since 1995, Project Martin Watch has monitored

Purple Martin reproductive success across the continent.



For hundreds of years, Native Americans have provided hollowed-out gourds for purple martins to nest in (left). Today, only purple martins west of the Rocky Mountains still nest in natural cavities, while eastern populations rely on humans for nest sites. Modern purple martin colonies consist of a dozen or more durable plastic gourd-shaped containers set on a pole (right). Purple martins are social birds and prefer nesting in congregations.





# A Home for Tree Swallows

Nick Timmer - Seasonal Naturalist

After three weeks of monitoring the new nest boxes on the tree swallow trail, I finally got a glimpse of the birds I'd been waiting for. I heard them first, a sudden, high-pitched chittering and gurgling from somewhere up over the lake. Squinting into the sun, I watched as three birds, in a high-speed frenzy, zipped and weaved around each other before disappearing as quickly as they came. Blue-green on top and white below, with squared-off tails ... definitely tree swallows. "Come down," I whispered, "check out a nest box. Make yourself at home! We've been waiting for you."

You may have noticed the new nest boxes spaced out at regular intervals around Kent Park Lake. Crafted by hand by Jim Walters, head of the Johnson County Songbird Project, these boxes are actually short sections of PVC pipe, painted to look like birch and mounted to thin poles. These Gilbertson-style nest boxes were originally designed for bluebirds, but they are equally attractive to other cavity-nesting birds. Jim has used this style of nest box to attract breeding tree swallows at multiple volunteer-monitored tree swallow trails throughout Johnson County, and we hope the lake trail will be similarly successful.

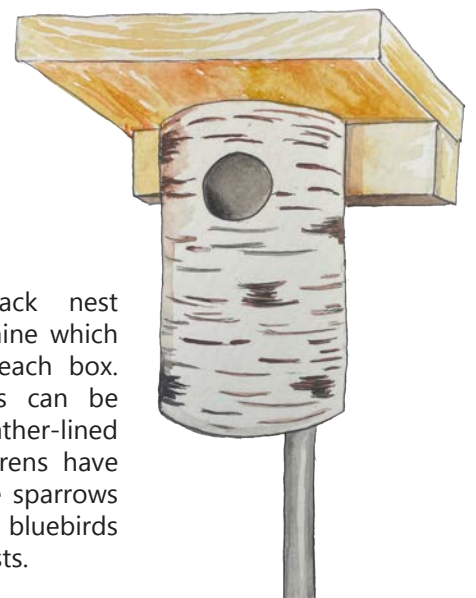
Why are we putting up nest boxes for tree swallows, specifically? Simply put, tree swallows, like other aerial insectivores, are in trouble. Aerial insectivores are a group of birds including swallows, swifts, flycatchers, and nightjars that catch and eat insects in flight. The population of this group of birds is in steep decline in North America. Six out of eight North American swallow species have declining populations. Tree swallow numbers have declined 30% since 1966, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

There are likely multiple reasons for these declining numbers, but all of them are related

to habitat loss and degradation.

The first reason for declining tree swallow populations has to do with their nesting needs. Tree swallows are secondary cavity nesters. This means they only nest in cavities, but cannot make their own. In natural environments, they are largely dependent on cavities excavated by other birds, such as woodpeckers. The loss of trees generally, and the downing of dead standing trees specifically, means fewer natural cavities for tree swallows to nest in. Furthermore, they must also compete with aggressive, non-native species such as house sparrows and starlings for the natural cavities that remain.

The loss of healthy wetlands is another factor contributing to declining tree swallow populations. Studies show that tree swallow nestlings need a diet high in wetland insects like dragonflies, damselflies, and mayflies. These insects spend the first



Trail monitors track nest materials to determine which species are using each box. Tree swallow nests can be identified by a feather-lined nest cup. House wrens have twiggy nests; house sparrows have messy nests; bluebirds have grass-lined nests.

part of their life cycle as aquatic insects and are high in the omega-3 fatty acids that tree swallow nestlings need to thrive. Unfortunately, Iowa's wetlands have been greatly reduced to make way for agriculture and other forms of development, and many remaining wetlands are polluted.

The good news is that Kent Park should provide excellent breeding grounds for tree swallows. The boxes placed around the lake will attract swallows who cannot find natural cavities in which to nest. Johnson County Conservation's commitment to maintaining high water quality levels in Kent Park lake and wetland areas will provide ample populations of wetland insects for tree swallows to feed themselves and raise healthy young.

The next time you visit Kent Park, we hope you'll take the time to walk around the lake and check out the new tree swallow boxes. Tree swallows are not shy around humans, though we ask that you maintain a respectful distance as they build nests and feed their young. As you observe a nest box, you may just see a tree swallow looking back out at you!



## Tips for Nest Boxes

Putting up nest boxes of your own can be a great way to take part in conservation efforts for native birds. However, it is important to be a responsible bird landlord. Here are some tips for nest boxes of your own:

Use a box that is the proper size for the species you wish to attract. Pay attention to the size of the opening. Non-native house sparrows and European starlings out-compete native-birds for boxes; one deterrent is to make sure the opening is too small for these birds (under 1.25 inches diameter is too small for both).

Use sturdy boxes that will keep birds warm and dry. Sloped-roof-boxes shunt rain away. Drain and vent holes are also important for bird health; there should be at least four of each.

Use a box that is easy to maintain. You should be able to open the box to remove old nest material and clean out/sterilize the box at the end of the season to prevent avian disease. You may wish to monitor for pests throughout the nesting season as well, and control for parasites, mites, gnats, wasps, and other creatures that can harm baby birds.

Position the nest box appropriately. Point the opening away from prevailing winds. Make sure that the nest box is the right height for the species you wish to attract. Different species will also prefer different habitat, so research if your space is right for the species of interest.

Install predator guards to keep out snakes, cats, and raccoons. Guards include metal stovepipe and cone baffles and wire mesh.

Rough up the inside of the box below the opening so that fledglings can crawl out.

For more great tips, building plans, and interactive tools for bird species nest information, visit Nest Watch by Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://nestwatch.org/>



# AmeriCorps Cuts Leave Hole for JCC, Conservation Overall

**Kristen Morrow** - Naturalist

For the past three years, Johnson County Conservation has served as a host site for the Bur Oak Land Trust AmeriCorps Program. Each year, our environmental education team has hosted a person training to become a naturalist, whether they are just starting their career after graduating college or transitioning into a new one. The program benefited JCC, the community, and the AmeriCorps member, and was a win-win-win for all involved.

On Monday, April 28, JCC received word that the Bur Oak Land Trust AmeriCorps Program was abruptly terminated, along with 14 other programs in Iowa and over 1,000 nationwide. This cut affected over 32,000 people currently serving as AmeriCorps members nationwide, with 568 members serving Iowa communities. This decision follows a directive from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which ordered the cancellation of approximately \$400 million in AmeriCorps grants. This abrupt cut greatly impacts the lives of the members, and our thoughts are with each of these people as they figure out their next steps while trying to make ends meet without a living stipend or healthcare coverage.

Having even one AmeriCorps member serving with JCC's environmental education program made a huge impact on our ability to serve our community. Our education team has only three full time naturalists, and though we are regularly at capacity for hosting programs, budget constraints have prevented our team from adding more naturalists to the county staff. Bringing on an AmeriCorps member allowed us to significantly expand our reach and programming opportunities.

In the spring and fall, we receive enough

field trip requests from local schools to fill every available day on the calendar. With an additional AmeriCorps member serving with our team, we have been able to regularly host two free field trips per day, with two naturalists each serving two school groups of around 50 students (a common group size for our local schools). This has allowed us to serve many more schools than we would be able to without the AmeriCorps member. This summer, we would have been able to simultaneously run multiple weeks of summer camps, the new Outdoor Youth Corps (a high school conservation job-training program), numerous free programs for local organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, United Action for Youth, food pantries, and libraries, and a ten-day backpacking trip. We can run all of these programs at once thanks to the assistance of an AmeriCorps member helping to fill out staffing and take care of daily needs at our nature center. Throughout the year, we have been able to offer a dozen more free public programs for the community,



AmeriCorps Naturalist Nick helps a student get comfortable handling aquatic insects. JCC has relied on an AmeriCorps member to help facilitate nature field trips for over 4,000 students each year.

with options spanning from hikes to birding programs, preK nature activities to weekend Open House events - again, our AmeriCorps member helps to organize and lead these events so that the community has more options for activities and times to participate, on top of what the county naturalists are able to provide.

These tangible benefits for JCC and our community at large are clear. At the same time, the AmeriCorps program has provided a significant benefit for service members too. While working with us, they gain experience in the competitive field of environmental education, where there is a lot of interest but few jobs. Having high quality job training and experience teaching to people of all ages, creating and leading programs, and taking care of nature center education animals and displays can provide a big step-up to help members in getting hired for permanent positions. Within our fulltime JCC staff, several staff members served in AmeriCorps at the start of their career, and in those experiences our staff gained valuable skills with prescribed burns, invasive species management, volunteer organization, habitat restoration, social services, communication, and environmental disaster response.

In addition to the loss of our AmeriCorps naturalists through the Bur Oak Land Trust AmeriCorps program, on the same day, wide scale cuts were made to the AmeriCorps VISTA program throughout the country. JCC had just been approved to host an additional VISTA member for 12-month service terms, and our team had just started the interview process. This member would have focused on building after school nature programming for local schools, helped to lead the Outdoor Youth Corps in the summer so that we could further expand all of the program options across our naturalist

team, and organize more opportunities for volunteers to both do work and come together for community-building. Though this position had not yet begun, the potential was great and our team feels the loss of these exciting new ways to serve the community.

The impact of these cuts will be deeply felt within JCC's education team and scores of other environmental education teams nationwide, but the cuts are also a huge blow to conservation across the country. So many conservation organizations and agencies rely on teams of AmeriCorps members to carry out land and trail management. These service members take on much of the invasive species management, prescribed burns, wildfire mitigation, trail clearing, and tree and native planting work across America's natural lands. Locally, organizations such as Bur Oak Land Trust and Indian Creek Nature Center had utilized AmeriCorps teams for work such as invasive species management and conducting prescribed burns. The Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa utilizes AmeriCorps for their roving conservation crews that do similar work. There are dozens of other conservation corps in the country, like the Forestry Corps, Wisconsin Conservation Corps, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, Northwest Conservation Corps, and Southwest Conservation Corps. All rely some or fully on AmeriCorps to fill their teams. Some of these programs have been cut, while others are still but with uncertain futures.

Whether through helping people make lasting connections to nature or getting boots on the ground for land management, America's natural lands and conservation future needs AmeriCorps and the service its members provide. It needs voices to stand up for this program and its meaningful work.

**Top left:** AmeriCorps Naturalist Liz helps a CCA 5th grader release a banded bird; **Top right:** AmeriCorps Naturalist Chelsea teaches about cicadas to visiting 4th graders. **Middle row left to right:** Liz holds a hatchling painted turtle found during a field trip with Mark Twain Elementary; Chelsea discovers an ornate box turtle in Kent Park; Americorps Naturalist Nick holds a tagged monarch during a public volunteer event. **Bottom left:** Nick demonstrates prairie root depth during a field trip with CCA; **Bottom right:** Liz teaches preschool kids about native snakes.







# Frytown Restored

Kristen Morrow - Naturalist

Frytown Conservation Area, in the southwestern part of Johnson County, is a seldom visited chunk of public land, and few in the county even know it exists. Hikers, hunters, and bird watchers that do visit the site have gotten a front-row seat to the transformation of this land in recent years, from a forest overgrown with invasive species to an open canopy flush with spring wildflowers and loud with birds.

Frytown Conservation Area is one of JCC's oldest pieces of public property. JCC acquired this 94-acre property in 1973, and at the time it was used as pasture land and dumping ground. Indeed, even today, visitors can see ample evidence of its history as a dump, and numerous old car chassis fill in an eroded gully at the heart of the property, the junk now old enough that its removal may violate the Antiquities Act.

The site is a record of changing conservation practices over the years. Thirty years ago, thick tree plantations were planted in parts of the property with uniform stands of ash, oak, and white pine planted throughout parts of the property, some plantings even replacing relic prairie. Then, for a period of time, not much conservation work took place here at all. With so many new JCC properties coming on board, and a limited staff making up the natural resource management crew, this site took a backseat. Over the years, invasive species like bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose spread further into the understory of the forest, dominating the forest floor and soaking up all of the available sunshine.

A few years ago, our growing staff was able to start investing more time and effort into improving the health of the Frytown forest.



Prairie Trillium



Blue Phlox



Wild Geranium



Virginia Bluebells





The crew chose a portion of the property to prioritize and got to work. The first step was removing the thick growth of invasive shrubs in the understory. With so much ground to cover, the crew uses a Fecon, a large forestry machine that cuts through the understory and turns that biomass into mulch. After clearing the understory, the crew revisits the site months later in the fall to chemically treat any regrowing invasive plants.

In just a couple years since this intensive management began, the results have been incredible. The section of forest that the crew focused on, at the heart of the property right near a bridge, is now an open forest bursting with spring wildflowers. The old oaks on this hillside draw songbirds and woodpeckers, and in April and May, bluebells, prairie trillium, phlox, geranium, mayapple, and spring beauty blanket the floor. These spring wildflowers are sensitive to available sunlight, and are easily smothered by invasive plants.

On a recent public hike, attendees noticed a thick stand of Michigan lily sprouting up from the forest floor. These plants were not seeded on the site, and the new growth is a relic population coming up on their own for the first time following the management taking place in this section of the property.

Close to the Michigan lily, a community of native grape honeysuckle, a plant that is considered rare today, winds its way around the trees close to the trail. This is the only JCC property with recorded grape honeysuckle, and one of a small number of known locations where it exists in the county. Previously, only a few of these plants were recorded on this site, but today there are over twenty climbing up the trees!



Native grape honeysuckle is found at Frytown Conservation Area.

The natural resource crew is excited to continue bringing this property back to life, and plans to focus efforts on another piece of the property, starting over with the first steps of Fecon understory clearing and chemical management. They are also hoping to conduct the first prescribed burns on this property in coming years.

You can enjoy the beauty of this revitalized forest on your own. Stop out to hike over three miles of trail that cross the forest (note: it is a popular site for local hunters, so be mindful of hunting seasons). You can also attend an upcoming Naturalist Hike for a guided tour of Frytown - check out this and more upcoming summer hikes on page 14.

**Top left:** A section of forest that is filled in with invasive shrubs. **Top middle:** With invasive species removed and treated, over time, spring wildflowers like these mayapples can return and flourish. **Top right:** A group of hikers listens for frogs while on a guided Spring Ephemeral Hike in April.



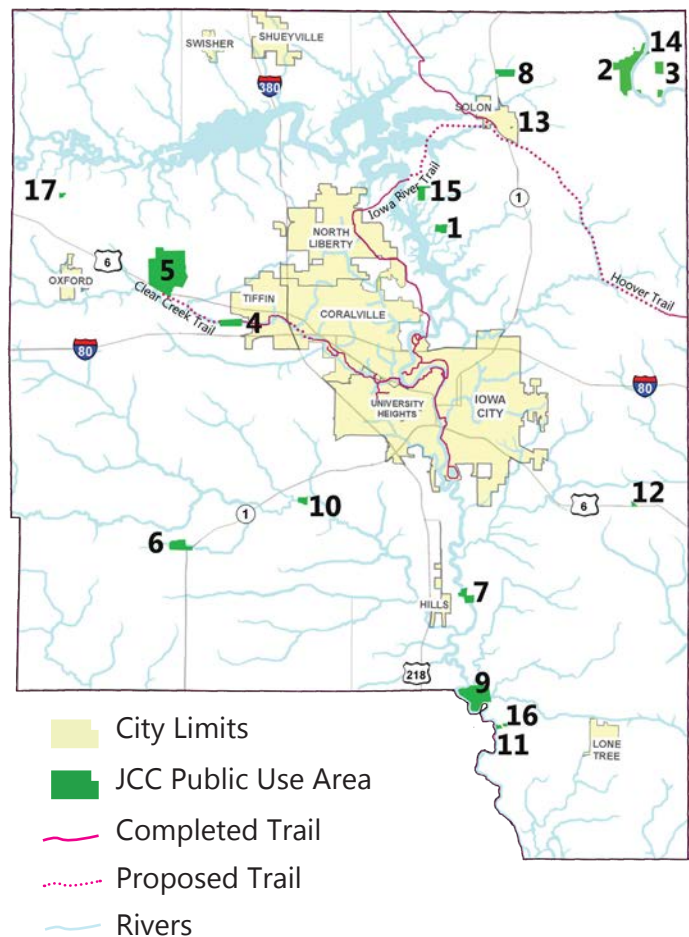
## Johnson County Pocket Prairie Program

The Johnson County Pocket Prairie Program provides plants, training, information, and technical assistance to guide participants in adding high-value native plants to their yards, creating a 10' by 10' pocket prairie. These native plantings provide critical pollinator habitat for bees, butterflies and more, and also improve soil health.

The Pocket Prairie Program is a collaboration between Johnson County and the Master Gardeners of Johnson County. The program is administered by the Johnson County Planning, Development and Sustainability Department. Johnson County Master Gardeners provides education and technical assistance throughout the process, and works with Johnson County to select, acquire, and distribute plants. A predefined set of plants is free to program participants. To learn more about eligibility and the application process head to: <https://johnsoncountyiowa.gov/johnson-county-pocket-prairie-program>.

### JCC Public Use Areas

1. Cangleska Wakan	132 acres
2. Cedar River Crossing	560 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**.



\*Do you require any specific accessibility measures in order to comfortably participate in these programs? Reach out to us at 319-645-1011 for special accommodations.

### Conservation Education Center Summer Hours:

Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Themed activities second Saturdays monthly.

### Know Your Roots: Native Tree Hike

Thursday, June 5, 5:00 p.m.

Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

## June

### Native Plant Speaker Series & Plant Sale

Sunday, June 1 & Sunday, August 3

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Learn to incorporate native plants at home to support wildlife and provide other ecological benefits. Each event showcases two regional native plant experts and a native plant sale. Troutleaf Native Plants is the plant vendor.

### Bird Hikes

Monday, June 2 & 16, 8:00 - 10:30 a.m.

Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Join a naturalist for a slow-paced birding mosey. Bring binoculars or use some provided by JCC. Hikes will be 1-2 miles; no registration needed. Weather updates posted online.

### Integrated Monarch Monitoring (IMMP)

Wednesdays, June 4, 11, 18, July 2, 9, 16, 30, August 6, 13, & 20 | 7:30 a.m.

Cedar River Crossing

We're looking for volunteers to join our monarch monitoring team to help collect critical data that supports monarch conservation on a local and national scale. More information available through the registration link above.

Learn how to identify native trees by their leaves, bark, shape, and ecological role. This program includes a slow-paced 1-2 mile hike with some hills and uneven terrain. Open to all!

### Free Fishing Weekend

Saturday, June 7, 7:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Kent Park Lake, Boat Ramp

Iowa residents may fish without a license during this weekend - celebrate that with this free event! Poles, tackle, and bait will be provided to use. Staff will be available to assist those newer to fishing. No registration required.

### Hope Hike

Wednesday, June 11 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Two Horse Farm

Being in nature and in community with others has restorative effects on our mental health and well-being. If you are experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one or any other form of grief, join us for this restorative walk in the woods. This event is being held in collaboration with the Death Doula Collective of Eastern Iowa.

### Firefly Night Hike

Friday, June 13, 9:00 - 10:30 p.m.

Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Experience the wonder of a prairie filled with flashing fireflies! This night hike will include firefly catch and release and a 1-mile hike.

### **Naturalist Hike**

Saturday, June 14, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.  
Cedar River Crossing

Join a naturalist for this 3-mile hike to take in the blooming prairie and wetland plants. The majority of the hike is over level terrain.

### **Joy Walk**

Tuesday, June 16, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.  
Two Horse Farm

Look for joy and you'll find it's everywhere, often hiding in plain sight. This evening walk is a chance to attune your senses to joy and hear from Joy Forager Jennifer New, an expert in joyful resistance.

### **Raptor Meet-n-Greet**

Saturday, June 21, 10:30 - 11:15 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Come meet and learn about two different birds of prey with Raptology. This program is come-and-go style, no registration is required.

### **Naturalist Hike**

Thursday, June 26, 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.  
Frytown Conservation Area

Join a naturalist for a guided 3-mile hike at Frytown Conservation Area. The trail is hilly and mostly grass-surfaced. Leashed dogs welcome.

### **Minecraft Meets the Outdoors**

Saturday June 28, 10:00 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

This 1-2 mile interactive hike will explore the similarities between our native Iowa landscape and Minecraft. We will be identifying native Iowa trees and flowers and relating them back to plants found in Minecraft. This program is designed for upper elementary kids.

## **July**

### **OYC Presents: All About Raptors w/R.A.R.E**

Thursday, July 3, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Participants will enjoy a live raptor presentation

from The RARE Group and learn from raptor-themed education stations facilitated by our youth corps teens. This program is being presented by youth in our Outdoor Youth Corps summer jobs program, in collaboration with The RARE Group.

### **Foraging for Families and Beginners**

Thursday, July 3, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Learn the rules for safe foraging, then head out on a naturalist-guided hike, enjoying and learning about wild edibles along the way.

### **OYC Presents: All About the Nesting Bird**

Friday, July 11, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.  
Whip-poor-will Shelter, Kent Park

Ever wondered how birds build their nests? Learn about bird nesting, including the different nest box monitoring programs active at Kent Park. This program will include a short book reading, followed by educational activity stations. This program is being presented by youth in our Outdoor Youth Corps summer jobs program with support from JCC Naturalists.

### **Raptor Meet-n-Greet**

Saturday, July 19, 10:30 - 11:15 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
See June 21 event for details.

### **Moth Night**

Friday, July 25, 8:30 - 11:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Celebrate moth diversity with a presentation about moths, self-guided educational activities, and an illuminated night hike through the woods! We will also be sampling for moths all night in celebration of National Moth Week.

### **From Sea Floor to Slope: Understanding Iowa's Geology**

Wednesday, July 23, 8:00 a.m.  
Cangleska Wakan

This guided hike through time explores the story of Iowa's geology, from glacial advances to the Devonian seas that once covered this region over 400 million years ago. The slow-



paced hike is 1.5-2 miles through shaded forest with some steep slopes and uneven terrain.

**Target Start: Archery 101**

Wednesday, July 30, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Youth Group Camp, Kent Park

This beginner-archery program is part of an outdoor skills series designed for 5th-7th graders. We'll go through the bow technique then spend most of the time on target practice.

**Outdoor Youth Corps Showcase**

Thursday, July 31, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

This event will showcase youth-created conservation awareness projects developed by our Outdoor Youth Corps program participants. Youth will share about their experience working with JCC this summer and staff activity tables.

## August

**Native Plant Speaker Series & Plant Sale**

Sunday, August 3, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park  
See June 1 event for details.

**Adventure Afloat: Kayaking 101**

Wednesday, August 6, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Kent Park Lake

This beginner-kayaking program is part of an outdoor skills series designed for 5th-7th graders. After learning paddling basics, we'll spend most of the program on a team-oriented Kent Park Lake Paddle Scavenger Hunt.

**Evening Paddle**

Wednesday, August 6, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.  
Kent Park Lake

Unwind your day with a relaxing evening paddle at Kent Park lake. This program is geared toward adults. All equipment provided.

**Ecoprinting**

Thursday, August 7, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
Fee: \$10

Did you know colors and patterns can be extracted from leaves and flowers? Learn a little about this relaxing process and make your own naturally printed fabric. Each participant will receive the supplies to create two bandana sized ecoprints.

**Pechman Paddle**

Friday, August 8, 8:30 - 10:00 a.m.  
Pechman Creek Delta

Wind up the slough exploring the wildlife and native plants that thrive in this unique aquatic habitat. All equipment provided.

**Raptor Meet-n-Greet**

Saturday, August 9, 10:30 - 11:15 a.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park  
See June 21 event for details.

**Experiential Education Educator Workshop**

Tuesday, August 12, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

This workshop aimed at formal and informal educators will feature up to 12 interactive sessions, a catered lunch, and opportunities for networking and learning from peers. Registration opens in late May or early June.

**Wayfinders: Compass 101**

Wednesday, August 13, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Youth Group Camp, F.W. Kent Park

This beginner-compass program is part of an outdoor skills series designed for 5th-7th graders. We'll go through the basics of how compasses work, then spend most of the program on a compass wayfinding race.

**Soap Making with Foraged Plants**

Thursday, August 14, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Two Horse Farm  
Fee: \$30

Join us in making cold process soap with locally foraged ingredients. We will walk step by step through the process and everyone will make their own soap.



Johnson County Conservation  
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Oxford, IA 52332

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A section of woodland across from the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park is packed with Michigan and Turk's cap lily. Michigan lily recently reemerged at Frytown Conservation Area following years of forest restoration work at the site.