



# Polk County Conservation's 2014 Family Nature Programs

Polk County Conservation manages 20 parks, wildlife areas, and recreation trails throughout the county. As well as performing park maintenance, we also provide free or low cost educational programs. Most of the following programs are designed for families with children of all ages. We additionally offer recreational trips for adults and outdoor skill training for people 12 and older. For more information about our programs, parks, or a map to the locations of these programs contact the Conservation Office at **(515) 323-5300** or [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org).

## Catfishing Basics

**Thursday, September 18 @ 6:00-9:00 p.m.**  
**Yellow Banks Park, meet at boat ramp**

Have you always wanted to catch a flat head or channel cat? In this hands-on class you'll learn about catfish biology, what and when they eat, where to find them, and more. After the program, we'll go out on a sand bar and fish for catfish. Bait, hooks, and sinkers will be provided. Bring a fishing pole if you have one, bug spray, chair or bucket to sit on, and flashlight or lantern. Participants 16 years and older must have a valid fishing license. Pre-registration is required; deadline is September 12. Fee: \$5.

## Youth Waterfowl Fun Field Day

**Saturday, September 20 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**  
**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Area 3**

Come learn the basics of waterfowl hunting while having lots of fun. Sessions will include dog training, calling, decoy setup, waterfowl identification, gun and blind safety, rules and regulations, and waterfowl ecology. Youth will also shoot clay "ducks" on our trap range. Door prizes and snacks provided. Partners of this event include: Ducks Unlimited, Iowa DNR, and Mid Iowa Retrievers. Pre-registration encouraged. Fee: \$5. Ages 6-18 (youth must be accompanied by an adult).

## Stargazing

**Friday, October 3 @ 7:00-8:30 p.m.**  
**Yellow Banks Park, Shelter #1**

Turn your eyes to the sky to view the autumn constellations. Local astronomers will provide telescopes.

*This publication is being provided as a courtesy to inform you of other community activities and opportunities available and is not associated with any school district.*

## Amazing Place Eco Challenge

**Sunday, October 5 @ 1:00-5:00 p.m.**  
**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

Do you enjoy watching "The Amazing Race"? Have you dreamed of participating in daunting mental and physical challenges in exotic locations? Well wish no more and sign up for "The Amazing Place Eco Challenge" at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. This family-oriented event is designed to challenge participating teams in a variety of ways. Teams of two to six players\* will canoe, geocache, eat exotic cuisine, be tested on their knowledge of Iowa wildlife, find their way through a prairie maze and just plain have a blast working their way through a series of outdoor-oriented challenges.



Teams need to begin their challenge no later than 3 pm (to insure 5 pm finish). Events begin at the Longhouse. Advance registration at [www.mycountyparks.com](http://www.mycountyparks.com) is strongly recommended. Those who do pre-register will receive an incredibly cool "Amazing Place" bandana. Cost is \$5 per team. Don't forget to include your team's name when you register – be creative! Teams that complete the challenge by the 5 pm deadline will be entered in a drawing for \$100 cash grand prize. Need not be present to win. Refreshments will be provided to finishers.

Hayrack tours for early finishers and non-participants will run at 3:00, 3:40 and 4:20 pm. Tours will highlight the diversity of plants and animals that use Chichaqua Bottoms and ongoing restoration efforts on this 8,000 acre wildlife area.

\*Families with more than six members (parents and children) may participate as a single team.

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## Spiders

**Tuesday, October 7 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

What has eight eyes, fangs, and spins silk? Spiders, of course! Discuss the fears and myths about these eight legged animals.

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

**Saturday, October 11 @ 5:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Shop**

Would your child like to experience the thrill of waterfowl hunting? This mentored hunt in a controlled waterfowl hunting area at Chichaqua can provide this opportunity. Start the morning with a "hunter's breakfast" in the shop. Youth will be placed in groups of two and teamed with an experienced waterfowl hunter and a conservation officer to serve as mentors. Mentors will provide the dogs, decoys, calling skills and guidance. Youth need to provide their own gun, ammunition, and waders (PCC will provide if youth do not have them.) Pre-registration required; deadline is October 8. Fee: \$10. This hunt is for youth ages 12-15 only. Youth must have completed hunter education class and attended a Waterfowl Fun Field Day.

## Fall Colors Hike

**Saturday, October 18, 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

**Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at pond parking lot**

Come enjoy the season! A naturalist will lead a nature hike through the woods and explain the brilliance of fall colors.



## Owl Prowl

**Friday, October 24 @ 6:00-7:30 p.m.**

**Thomas Mitchell Park, meet at pond parking lot**

Join a naturalist for a lively campfire program to learn about owls. After a discussion about these flying predators of the night, we will go for a hike and learn how to call three different owl species.

## Walk for Wildlife

**Saturday, October 25 @ 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt**

Enjoy a family walk through the park or extend your trip with a 5 or 10-kilometer Volkssport walk. You can also try geocaching along your walk, GPS units will be available. Girl Scouts of America are also invited to take part in the day, there will be a number of badge requirement activities available. It's almost Halloween; wear a costume that allows you to walk. Walkers can start anytime between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored by the Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association. \$2 registration fee payable at the event. Pets on a 6-foot leash are welcome.

## Going Batty

**Tuesday, October 28 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**East Side Library, 2559 Hubbell, Des Moines**

Are they blind? Do they really suck blood and turn into vampires? Come learn the truth about this "grossly" misunderstood animal. Learn how to deal with them when they become an unwanted houseguest and find out what you can do to help protect this beneficial species.

## Bird Conservation in Northeast Iowa

**Wednesday, November 5 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Jester Park Lodge**

For the past 33 years, Jon Stravers, Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge - Bird Conservation Coordinator, has specialized in monitoring Red-shouldered Hawks, Bald Eagles and Cerulean Warblers along the Mississippi River. He'll share his findings, stories and pictures of these fascinating birds.

## Archery Basics

**Thursday, November 13 @ 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

**Jester Park Equestrian Center**

This class will focus on form and safety, giving students basics that will get them safely shooting, and offer a general feel for archery. The class will cover eye dominance, archery safety rules, range rules, equipment, and proper shooting techniques - "basic steps" using a compound bow. The class is suitable for those with no experience, or those that may have shot before and need a refresher. Pre-registration required; deadline is November 10. Ages 12 and up. Fee: \$5.

## Winter Birds

Tuesday, December 2 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Jester Park Lodge

This presentation might make you the envy of the neighborhood. Learn all of the secrets to setting up a successful bird feeding station where you live. Birds you can attract, feeder types, food varieties, and placement in your yard will be a few of the topics discussed.



Black capped chickadee

## Animal Winter Survival

Monday, December 29 @ 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Franklin Avenue Library, 5000 Franklin, Des Moines

How do animals survive the winter? Learn about the different strategies animals use to survive through a long cold Iowa winter.

To register for a program, go to [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) and click on calendar.

## Cross-Country Ski Basics

Tuesday, December 30, 10:00 a.m.–Noon & 12:30–2:30 p.m.

**Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, Longhouse**

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and practice your skills on the trails. Proper clothing, equipment, and skiing techniques will also be discussed. Class will be canceled without snow. Sign up for the 10:00 or 12:30 class. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 28. Minimum age 10. Fee: \$10 (includes skis, boots, and poles.) Smallest boot size available is men's 4 1/2 and women's 6.

## Snowshoe Hike

Friday, January 2 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m.

**Easter Lake Park, Shelter #3**

Learn how easy and fun snowshoeing can be while experiencing the great outdoors. Wear warm boots. Class will be canceled without snow. Pre-registration required; deadline is December 31. Minimum age 6. Fee: \$5 (includes snowshoes).

## Don't miss the Iowa Outdoor Expo!

Saturday, September 27 @ 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 28 @ 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

**Des Moines Izaak Walton League**

Try your skills at canoeing/kayaking, archery, fishing, trap shooting, BB Guns, geocaching and much more. Free family event. Visit [www.iowadnr.gov/expo](http://www.iowadnr.gov/expo) for more information.

### Polk County

#### Conservation Board Members:

Jim Cataldo, *Des Moines*

Sara Kurovski, *Pleasant Hill*

Connie Johnson, *Ankeny*

Tom Levis, *West Des Moines*

Mike Smith, *Des Moines*

### Polk County

#### Conservation Director:

Dennis Parker

# Nature Friends

Preschoolers Exploring Nature  
3-5 year olds with an adult  
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist in a nature adventure! We will explore a different nature topic each evening through stories, sharing time, guided exploration, and art activities. Snacks will be provided. **Fee: \$7 per program**

Participate in a Park Passport Program. Attend five different programs, each located at a different park and receive a Nature Friend Explorer Pack. Participants must record program name, location and date with the speaker's initials on their passport. Turn the passport in at the Conservation Office at Jester Park or Raccoon River Nature Lodge to receive your Nature Friend Explorer Pack. One pack per child please.

**September 8** - Tyke Hike at *Brown's Woods*

**September 23** - Nutty Squirrels at *Legion Park, 4th and Vine St., WDM*

**October 6** - Migration Sensations at *Fort Des Moines Park, Shelter #2*

**October 28**- Going Batty at *Quail Cove Park, 1515 S. 52nd Street, WDM*

To register for Nature Friends programs, call the West Des Moines Parks and Recreation Office at (515) 222-3444 or visit [www.wdm.iowa.gov](http://www.wdm.iowa.gov). These programs are co-sponsored by West Des Moines Parks and Recreation and Des Moines Izaak Walton League.



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[www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org)

Follow us on:



## Park Packs

Nature-themed  
Backpacks

Free two week  
checkout

Themes include: Birds, Trees,  
Insects, Animals of Iowa,  
Geology, Life in a Pond,  
Wildflowers & Plants, Animals of  
the Night, Prairies, Geocaching,  
and Outdoor Skills.

For info, contact Lori at  
(515) 323-5380 or  
[lori.foresman-kirpes@  
polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:lori.foresman-kirpes@polkcountyiowa.gov)



Scan to download  
the Park Pack  
brochure

## Iowa Junior Naturalist Program

To earn the title of Junior Naturalist, youth, ages 6-18, must attend three conservation programs and explore the outdoors on their own. For completing the program, youth receive a certificate and an official Iowa Junior Naturalist badge.

Youth need to keep track of their activities in the Junior Naturalist brochure. To receive a copy of this brochure, visit our website and click on Environmental Education or contact

Heidi at (515) 323-5360 or  
[heidi.anderson@  
polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:heidi.anderson@polkcountyiowa.gov).