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EDITED BY

*Lana Artz-McComb*

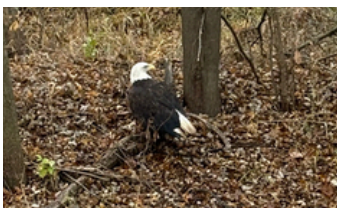
## Bald Eagle Rescue In Louisa County

By: *Lana Artz-McComb, Naturalist*

Bald Eagles soar through the skies of Louisa County and are a common sight year round. Here is the, still on-going, story of one.

LCC received a call about a Bald Eagle that was on the ground on a property in NE Louisa County. The caller reported that the eagle had been in the same spot for more than a day.

Staff followed procedures and called the Fish & Wildlife Service first, who gave LCC the go ahead to try and collect the eagle.



The eagle could not fly but managed to run through the tall grass before being safely captured with a sheet by leather gloved hands.

RARE (Raptor Advocacy Rehabilitation & Education) located in Johnson County is a volunteer run organization with the permitting and training to help birds of prey including eagles.

Staff drove the Louisa County eagle to RARE where she, as we learned, was triaged. The results came back that she had a healthy body with plenty of fat indicating that she hadn't been grounded for long.

X-rays showed a broken foot but, most concerningly, blood tests came back with mid-high levels of lead in her system. Her reading was 24.6 (65 is off the charts). Read more about lead and raptors on Page 3

The Louisa County eagle was taken to RARE on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> and is still doing well in their care as of this writing. We hope she can recover from her injuries and lead poisoning to be released where she was found.



Learn more about RARE and how you can support this volunteer run organization by visiting their website: [theraregroup.org](http://theraregroup.org)



## LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION

### Leveling Up the Landscape

In 2024, former Naturalist Sarah Martinez secured the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fish Habitat Grant to spearhead major improvements at Virginia Grove's pond. These awarded funds have already begun laying the foundation for projects to enhance water quality and promote better fish habitat in the area.

The pond has been previously surrounded by dense trees and brush along the shoreline, inhibiting wind action and increasing erosion. This had led to an increase in winter fish kills in the past. In addition, the abundant presence of string algae blocked sunlight from hitting the water's surface, reducing oxygen for the species below the surface. This posed issues for fishermen and wildlife alike.

To help solve these challenges, in November of 2025, LCC staff installed the Airmax Solar Series Direct Drive Pond Aeration System. Located near the northwest bank of this 4-acre pond lies a freshly installed solar panel. This panel helps provide the energy needed to keep the aeration system running effectively.

In the future, plans to install rock terraces and fortify the shoreline will help create additional habitat for fish and prevent soil from eroding into the water. With the new installation, added oxygen will begin to improve the water quality to create a new prime fishing location for many to enjoy.

As the landscape starts to level up, stop by Virginia Grove to see the changes for yourself!



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**LOUISA COUNTY  
CONSERVATION**



12635 Co Rd G56, Suite 101

Wapello, IA 52653

319-523-8381; [conservation@louisacountyia.gov](mailto:conservation@louisacountyia.gov)

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Shawn Maine  
Josh Hardin



### Lead Poisoning in Raptors

The rescued Louisa County Bald Eagle was lucky that she only had mid-high levels of lead poisoning and was grounded in a place where a person noticed her.

If she had been grounded in a more remote location she would have slowly starved to death as the physical and neurological symptoms would have made it impossible for her to find food.

In a study conducted from 2011-2014, 59% of bald eagles admitted to rehabilitation facilities had lead in their blood. 93% of wild bald eagle excrement. ([Marolf, B. et.al, 2014](#)). samples tested positive for low levels of lead. So how are the bald eagles getting lead in their system?

The answer requires an understanding of human hunting practices and the food chain. As illustrated below, people who hunt using lead shot and fish using lead weights leave trace amounts behind in the wild. Shot disperses within an animal and the practice of field dressing leaves behind meat with fragments of lead. Lead fishing weights make their way into the bodies of fish.

Raptors that feed on carrion (dead animals or animal scraps) or hunt, consume small quantities of lead. Overtime, the lead concentration builds up in their system until physical and neurological symptoms overwhelm the bird.



The Louisa County Bald Eagle had characteristic green feces produced because lead damages the liver causing excess bile.

#### Lead Poisoning

Nearly all cases of lead poisoning in raptors are from ingestion of fragments of lead ammunition.

Species that scavenge more, like eagles and vultures, are at the highest risk, but any species can be effected.

Lead poisoning causes neurological symptoms like head tremors, ataxia, leg weakness, seizures, and death

#### How You Can Help

Switch to lead-free ammunition and fishing tackle. Tell your friends and family who hunt or fish to make the switch as well.

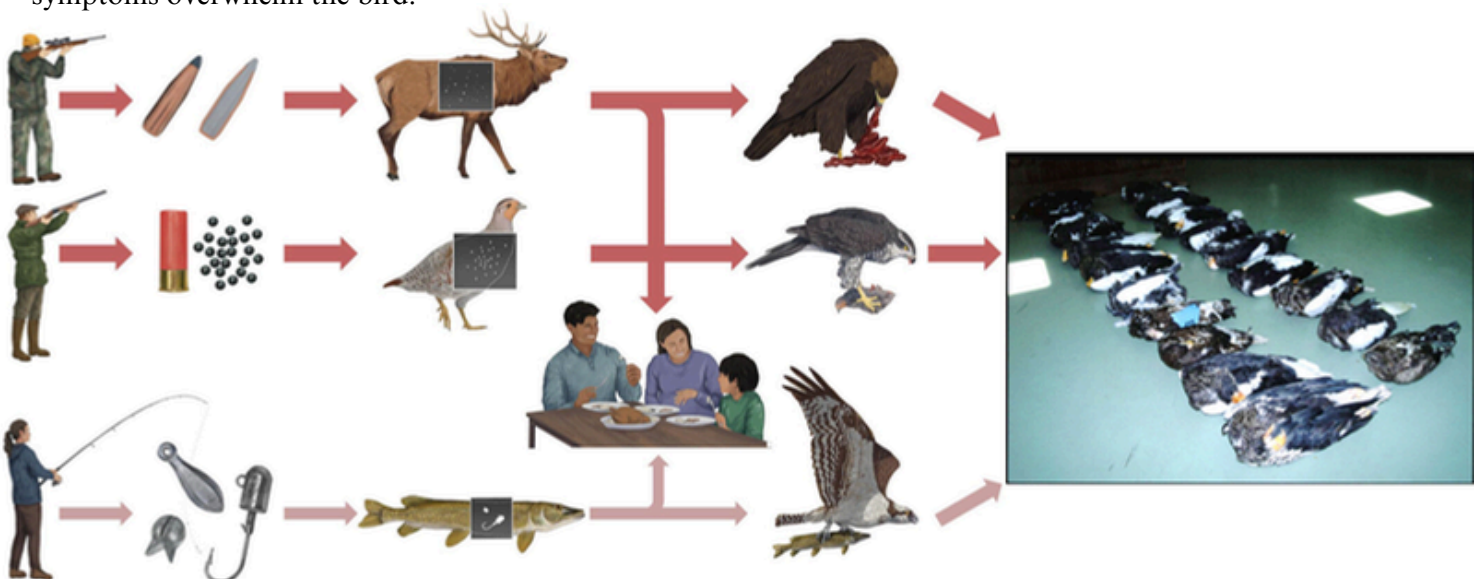


Image Source: Katzner, T.E., Pain, D.J., McTee, M., Brown, L., Cuadros, S., Pokras, M., Slabe, V.A., Watson, R.T., Wiemeyer, G., Bedrosian, B., Hampton, J.O., Parish, C.N., Pay, J.M., Saito, K. and Schulz, J.H. (2024), Lead poisoning of raptors: state of the science and cross-discipline mitigation options for a global problem. *Biol Rev*, 99: 1672-1699.

## ISU EXTENSION AND OUTREACH



Woodland owners and land managers have a unique opportunity to sharpen their skills this spring by participating in a hands-on training program in SE Iowa.

### Master Woodland Steward Program

Louisa County  
317 Van Buren St  
Wapello, Iowa 52653

Adair Lents [alents@iastate.edu](mailto:alents@iastate.edu)

4:30 pm — 7:30 pm

7 in person sessions

\$125.00 a person

### IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY Extension and Outreach

Participants will progress through a series of seven modules, which cover forest planning and potential, tree growth, site considerations and long-term forest management.

Participants will complete 30 hours of intensive forestry training focused on managing woodlands for multiple benefits. In both classroom and hands-on field labs, participants will be provided basic information on tree identification, tree biology, land and tree measurements, woodland inventory, silviculture, forest economics, tree planting, wildlife habitat, pest management, timber marketing, wood use, government assistance programs and stewardship planning.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to [www.extension.iastate.edu/eqal](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/eqal). ADIV 20.04U August 2020

## SAVE THE DATE

### Master Woodland Steward Program

April 2026 & May 2026

Washington and Louisa County

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach



## New Club Alert!!

### WHEP: Wildlife Habitat Education Program



Next Meeting  
is December  
28th!

Sign Up:  
[www.4honline.com](http://www.4honline.com)

Scan me to follow the  
club on the band app!



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

The Louisa County 4-H Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) is a hands-on learning experience that empowers youth to explore Iowa's native wildlife, habitats, and conservation practices. Through guided activities, field studies, and team-based problem-solving, participants learn how wildlife species interact with their environment and what people can do to protect and restore natural resources.

Youth engage in topics such as habitat evaluation, species identification, land management planning, and the ecological principles that shape Iowa's diverse landscapes—from river corridors and wetlands along the Mississippi to prairies, woodlands, and agricultural edges unique to Louisa County. Members gain practical skills through outdoor surveys, habitat improvement projects, and work with local conservation partners such as the Louisa County Conservation Board, Iowa DNR, and local landowners.



☀ It's that time of year! ☀

LDG's Annual Campaign is officially underway, and we couldn't be more excited about the impact we can create together. Your support helps us continue building stronger communities, expanding opportunities, and making a lasting difference for those we serve. To see what we did in 2025, check out the direct link to the:

[LDG Capital Campaign 2026](#)

👉 Donate. Share. Support.

Together, we build better futures. 🏡☀

IOWA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Regional Director: Whitney Howell

County Director: Adair Lents

Office Manager: Ashley Milder

County Youth Coordinator: Melissa Bell

Louisa Development Group - Director: Cori Milan

317 Van Buren St.  
Wapello, IA 52653  
319-523-2371



## PHEASANTS FOREVER/ QUAIL FOREVER

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Women on the Wing Event

By: Jennifer Swope, Louisa County PF/QF

On Saturday, November 1, the Louisa County Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Chapter hosted their third annual Women on the Wing Hunt. Created to introduce women to the sport of pheasant hunting, the day included talks on habitat, bird identification, hunter's safety, trap shooting, and concluded with a pheasant hunt. Participants and volunteers also enjoyed breakfast and lunch together to create comradery amongst the women.

This year the chapter hosted six participants. Each participant was paired with a mentor and a dog handler to ensure a safe experience in the field. The chapter would like to thank Illowa NAVHDA Chapter, McManus Construction, Bayer, and Tyson Foods for their generous contributions to the event.

We look forward to continuing this tradition of introducing women to upland hunting. Be on the lookout for our 2026 event!



[Connect with the Louisa County Chapter of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever on Facebook](#)

## PORT LOUISA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### All Good Things...

*By: Ron Knopik, Wildlife Refuge Specialist*

The expression, "all good things must come to an end", is especially relevant to me now. In a couple of weeks, I will retire from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and return to my home state of Minnesota. Louisa County, with its abundance of natural areas, has been a very special place to work and explore over the years.

I arrived at Port Louisa from Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge just prior to the 2008 flooding. Since then, I've experienced numerous other flood periods and bore witness to the impact they've had on the habitats we manage. In non-flood years, we've managed to grow food for waterfowl, improve trails and signage, repair and replace infrastructure, acquire property, and employ local vendors to complete projects on the lands we manage. I've seen managers, maintenance workers, administrative professionals, and wildlife biologists come and go...whose contributions added greatly to the nearly 70-year legacy of the refuge.



### PORT LOUISA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



10728 County Rd X61  
Wapello, IA 52653  
319-523-6982

**Office Hours:**

M-F, 7:30am-4:00pm

[fws.gov/refuge/portlouisa](https://fws.gov/refuge/portlouisa)  
[facebook.com/portlouisaNWR](https://facebook.com/portlouisaNWR)

The conservation partners that I have encountered in my tenure as deputy manager and, more recently, refuge manager made working to improve habitat feel like a team effort. Katie Hammond, Jacob Ewart, and Lana McComb of LCCB have been amazing supporters of the refuge and cooperators on so many projects! The Iowa DNR folks at Odessa (Andy, Travis, Noah, and Nathan) are the neighbors down the road everyone wished they had. While Dale and Elizabeth of The Nature Conservancy never failed to partner on a habitat or species project...or show up with people and equipment to assist on a prescribed fire. Let us not forget the Friends of Port Louisa, our most ardent supporters, which include Kathy Vance, Paul Mayes, and Roger Bailey...and the rest of the Friends membership. Your support is appreciated!

Of course, the visitors and volunteers I've encountered over the years made doing what we do both worthwhile and rewarding. Up until the day he passed away, Jeff Weikert was the most active and enthusiastic supporter of Port Louisa who always made the time to greet our visitors, lend his metal-working skills, grace our walls with art, and talk habitats, waterfowl, and fishing. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the support of Jordie Beeding, Randy Smith, Dan Vogeler, Steve Yackle, Brett Shafer, Mike Gronewold, Jeri Bailey, Lisa Louck, Rodney Ellingson, Kenny Tharp, and Gary Shoppa,

To those I interacted with in the visitor center, at the Louisa Fishing Pier, on a trail, at a boat ramp, during a refuge or Langwood event, on the phone, via email, or stopped on the road with our windows down...it was a pleasure to meet and hear from you. I wish you all the best.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service.*

*For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*



## Noah's Nature Nook - Blue Jays

By: Noah Brown, Guest Contributor

Hi! It's me, Noah, and I want to tell you about the blue jay. You've probably seen this bright blue bird at your bird feeder because they tend to stick around Iowa during the winter months.



Noah Brown is in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and volunteers his time with LCC doing animal care and writing as a guest contributor for the *Naturally Louisa County Newsletter*. Noah LOVES learning about animals!



### DID YOU KNOW?

1. Blue jays have a long lifespan for a songbird, about seven years.
2. Blue jays are very vocal birds, and they can also imitate the sounds and calls produced by other bird species, including the hawk.
3. One interesting fact about blue jays is that males and females look nearly the same! It's really hard to tell one from another (unless you're a blue jay, of course).
4. Blue jays have a crown of feathers on their head. It's called a crest, and it can give clues about how the bird is feeling. When excited they might raise their crest. If scared, the crest spreads out like a brush, and when eating or resting, the crest lies flat.
5. Blue jays are related to crows.
6. Blue jays can be aggressive and territorial, but they can also be seen as protectors because they can warn other birds about incoming danger.

If you want to attract these beautiful birds to your backyard, try feeding them unsalted peanuts (in shell or shelled) and black oil sunflower seeds.

So, there you have it! Blue jays are amazing creatures. Don't you think?



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- PASTURE CLEARING

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**RIVERFORKSLC@GMAIL.COM**

## LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION EVENTS

### Winter Nature Camp

Monday, December 29  
12:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
\$2/youth  
Langwood Education Center

Release your cabin fever with nature exploration at Langwood! We will hike, play, craft, and explore. We'll have a campfire, smores, and hot cocoa! Adults are welcome to stay OR drop off their children.

RSVP:  
[conservation@louisacountyia.gov](mailto:conservation@louisacountyia.gov) or 319-523-8381

### Landowner's Prescribed Fire Workshop

Wednesday, February 11  
Conservation Education Center  
Kent Park in Johnson County

[Registration and Session Information at Tri-Rivers.org](http://RegistrationandSessionInformationatTri-Rivers.org)

Landowners interested in using prescribed fire as a management tool for prairies and woodlands should attend this class. Participants can expect to learn in an indoor classroom setting with a few outdoor sessions.

There will NOT be a prescribed burn.  
\$30 Registration Fee covers the cost of food and materials packet.

### Noon Years Eve

Tuesday, December 30  
10:30 am - Noon  
Donation Appreciated  
Chinkapin Bluffs Recreation Area

Celebrate the New Year! Come enjoy the outdoors as we hike, build stick shelters, make treats for the birds, and warm up around the campfire. We will countdown to a Noon bird seed toss and juice toast to 2026!

RSVP:  
[conservation@louisacountyia.gov](mailto:conservation@louisacountyia.gov) or 319-523-8381

### Spring Trash Clean Up

#### President Day!

Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>  
Location(s) + Time TBD

Trash and waste impact our wildlife and nature areas year-round. Following the melt of snowfall is a good time to prepare the land and species for a healthy year ahead. Come out to help in your local parks to pick up trash to be disposed of properly.

Gloves, trash bags, and any needed tools will be provided. All we need is you!

Stay tuned as more trash clean-ups will be hosted this spring on DNR, LCC, and NFWS lands.

### Iowa Prairie Network Winter Seminar

Saturday, January 24  
Ames High School, Ames, IA

[Registration and Session Information at IowaPrairieNetwork.org](http://RegistrationandSessionInformationatIowaPrairieNetwork.org)

This meeting is being highlighted because a presentation will be made at 2:00 pm on the Collaborative Conservation work being done at Big Sand Mound Preserve in Louisa and Muscatine Counties.

The IPN Winter Seminar is a perfect dose of the science and research behind prairie conservation work in Iowa.

Members of the public are welcome!

### Spring Ephemeral Tour

Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>  
10 am-11:30 am  
Location TBD

Want to learn about and see the earliest blooms of the year? Join this public tour to learn about Spring Ephemeral species and how they are a bioindicator of a healthy woodland.

**Unless otherwise stated, all registration and program information can be found at:**

[LouisaCountyConservation.org](http://LouisaCountyConservation.org)

Online reservations are available for more programs:

[MyCountyParks.com/County/Louisa.aspx](http://MyCountyParks.com/County/Louisa.aspx)

Call our office: 319-523-8381



## TRI-RIVERS CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

### Annual Appeal

As another year flies by, the Tri-Rivers Directors are reminded of how lucky we are to live in the beautiful Louisa Resource Area.

Our job, “supporting projects and people that are contributing to a sustainable environment” is a labor of love. The highlight of our 2025 was the construction of the prairie outdoor classroom shelter at the Wetland Interpretive Trail at Langwood Education Center.



Please consider a tax-deductible donation to Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation. Donations can be earmarked for your favorite projects or one of the three Endowment Funds administered through TRCF.

Donations can be made online or through the mail. Visit [tri-rivers.org/make-a-donation](https://tri-rivers.org/make-a-donation)

If you would like to be mailed the donation form you see below, please contact Dani Boysen at 319-523-8381 or email

[tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov](mailto:tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov)

Make a tax-deductible donation to support conservation efforts in the Louisa Resource Area.

Enclosed is my donation for:

☐ \$25    ☐ \$50    ☐ \$100    ☐ \$250  
☐ \$500    ☐ \$1,000    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name or Business \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form and payment to:

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation  
12635 Co Rd G56, Suite 106  
Wapello, IA 52653

Please earmark my donation for:

☐ Use my donation where needed most.  
☐ Environmental Education  
☐ Louisa County Trails Council  
☐ Katie Hammond Send-a-Kid-to-Camp  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

General donations are payable to:  
Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation

Endowment Fund checks are payable to:

Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine  
(These donations are eligible for Iowa Tax Credit.)  
☐ \*Paris Scholarship Endowment Fund\*  
☐ \*Tri-Rivers Endowment Fund\*  
☐ \*Louisa County Trails Endowment Fund\*

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation respectfully accepts and honors memorial donations and bequests.

12635 Co Road G56, Suite 106 Wapello, Iowa 52653 319-523-8381 [tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov](mailto:tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov)

### Tri-Rivers Tree Sale Every Spring

Another opportunity to support Tri-Rivers AND plant native trees happens every Spring.


Each year Tri-Rivers holds a tree sale fundraiser featuring native trees. Purchase a tree for pickup or add a little extra and someone will come plant the tree for you!

The event is planned so that people are able to plant their trees on Earth Day as a way to do good for our Blue Planet. Led by Tri-Rivers Secretary, Cindy Klebe, this project is a lot of fun, raises funds for Tri-Rivers and benefits our communities and the environment.

Tree Sale information will be posted on the [Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation Facebook Page](#)



Pictured is Dianne Bohling, Kathy Porter, Tinley and Sue Schweitzer after planting a redbud tree at Kathy's house.

 **TRI-RIVERS  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION**

12635 Co Rd G56, Suite 106  
Wapello, IA 52653

319-523-8381; [tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov](mailto:tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov)

**The Mission of Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation** is to provide funds for the protection and enhancement of the natural resources in the environmentally rich area of the confluences of the Cedar, Iowa and Mississippi Rivers in eastern Iowa. The Foundation will employ enjoyment and use of these resources to educate and instill an appreciation for good land stewardship. It will seek to distribute these funds to carefully chosen public, civic, institutional, and quasi-public programs.