

Session Descriptions

Friday Evening Programming– Nighttime Exploration! • We will split into two groups to explore different evening activities, fire building basics and night hiking. Groups will change activities half-way through, so they get to try both! During the fire building portion, participants will focus on the basics and science of fire. Then they will try to make their own flames using different methods. During the night hike, participants will hit the trails and listen for sounds of nature at night. If it's a clear evening expect some stargazing too! • Instructors: Erica Northwick, Dallas County Conservation Naturalist & Nancy Franz, Past Story County Conservation (SCC) Board Member

S'more Potluck • Have a mouth-watering S'more recipe you are dying to share? Now is your chance! Bring your most unique, creative, delicious, or all out-weird recipes and supplies to share.



Saturday Sessions: Session 1

A. Finding Your Fire • Fire is a transformational element. While it can be devastating when out of control, without fire, we are left cold, hungry, and in the dark. This workshop session will introduce basics of fire making in the woods, teaching skills to coax the stored sunlight from wood so that you can enjoy a campfire in any condition, including rain, snow, and under starlit skies. The instructor will also provide a demonstration on creating friction fire by using a primitive bow drill set. • Instructor: Brooks Witter, Counselor & Nature Enthusiast • Number of Participants: 25

B. Seed Saving 101 • Saving seeds from the garden allows one to enjoy specific varieties for years to come, share favorites with others, and best of all – save money to buy even more plants! This session will cover seed saving basics, like how to identify when common seeds are fully mature and factors that influence which seeds you choose to save. Participants will harvest seeds in a hands-on activity, before customizing their own seed binder to take home – already stocked with some seeds for next season. If you've never saved seeds before, this is your sign! Gardeners (and aspiring gardeners of all experience levels welcome. *Optional: Bring seeds from home to swap with the group.* • Instructor: Madi Nolte, SCC Community Engagement Coordinator • Number of Participants: 20

C. Lichens of Hickory Grove Park • Lichens are a beautiful but under-appreciated component of Iowa's native biodiversity. Participate in this session and learn about what lichens are, how and where they live, and a little about the diversity of lichens in Iowa. Know something about lichens and you'll always be surrounded by friends when you're outdoors. • Instructor: Jim Colbert, SCC Board Member & ISU Emeritus Associate Professor • Number of Participants: 20

D. Books & Crafts in the Woods • Join in on a nature book discussion! We will be discussing the book Heartwood by Amity Gaige. This novel follows experienced hiker Valerie Gills as she travels the Appalachian Trail and navigates the rugged wilderness of Maine. It explores her mysterious disappearance and the search effort unfolding around her as rescuers attempt to put the puzzle pieces together. This story explores layers of family, identity, and the quiet resilience we all carry at our core. Alongside our conversation, we'll create a nature-inspired craft incorporating materials found outdoors, offering you a memorable keepsake to take home from your weekend. • Instructor: Rhaechel Ohge Fritz, Book Club Host • Number of Participants: 25

E No Session • Take a session "off" and enjoy the park how you wish.



Session 2

F. Adventure Prep • Planning and preparing for an outdoor trip can be overwhelming. This interactive session is packed with tips, tricks, lists, and options to be ready for whatever your next adventure is! Instructor: Renee Borglum, Co-owner of Crawdaddy Outdoors • Number of Participants: 16

G. Savoring Winter Outdoors • Do you wish you could more joyfully experience winter outdoors? Learn about five ways (snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, skating, and downhill skiing) to enjoy being outdoors in the snow and cold. We'll discuss why these sports are important, equipment and clothing, and tips for preparing for an active outdoor winter life. Come prepared to try snowshoeing (without snow hopefully). Excessive fun and joy will shape this time together getting ready for winter days. • Instructor: Nancy Franz, Past SCC Board Member • Number of Participants: 20

H. Exploring Native Insects and Spiders • Discover insects, spiders, and other multi-legged critters you may encounter in Iowa. Identify major insect groups and gain an appreciation for the role these animals play in healthy ecosystems. If conditions allow, we will go for a brief outing to search for insects, spiders, and/or their signs. Instructor: Bekah Beall, SCC Naturalist • Number of Participants: 25

I. Wild Edibles • There is an entire grocery story of delicious, local, wild foods just waiting outside your backdoor! This session will pique your curiosity with some common wild edibles; focusing on how to identify key features of wild edible plants and fungi, knowing when and what to sustainably harvest, how to prepare, and even sample a “taste of the wild”! Please bring a water bottle, notebook and/or camera, a writing utensil, and your curiosity! There will be recipes, notes, and ID sheets to share and take home. • Instructor: Chelsea Ewen Rowcliffe, Mitchell County Conservation Naturalist • Number of Participants: 20

J. No Session • Want to explore on your own? Need some downtime? Take a session “off” and enjoy the park how you wish.



Session 3

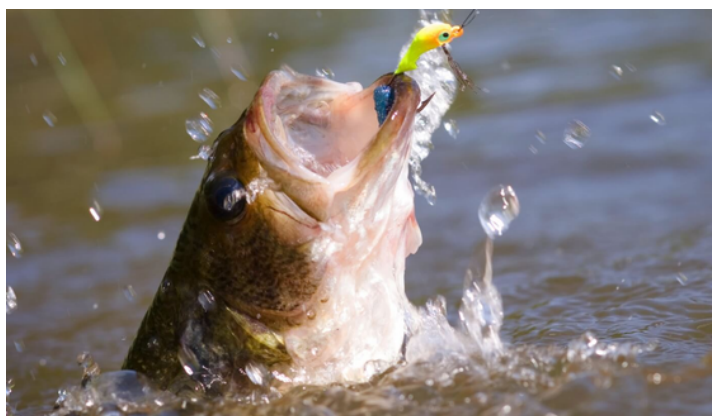
K. Archery Basics • Participants will be introduced to the sport of archery. Using compound bows and target arrows, we will discuss equipment, safety, and go through the process of shooting. After that, participants will practice their skills by shooting at targets and competing in games. • Instructor: Jerry Keys, SCC Environmental Education Coordinator • Number of Participants: 10

L. From Hook to Plate: Harvesting Your Catch • This hands-on session walks participants through the full journey from catch to plate. Learn how to responsibly harvest fish and confidently clean and prepare your catch for cooking. Along the way, we'll cover essential tools, techniques, and safety tips, helping you build practical skills and a deeper appreciation for where your food comes from. Whether you're new to fishing or looking to refine your process, you'll leave ready to turn your next catch into a meal. • Instructor: Kori Heuss, Owner of Heuss Printing • Number of participants: 15

M. The Wild & Wacky World of Fungi • Fall is a great time to seek out mushrooms, fungi and other overlooked plant-like life. In this session we will use our collective knowledge to discover what fungi are popping up at Hickory Grove and learn about the fascinating world of fall fungi. Be prepared to walk, forage, and feel free to bring a couple of mushrooms from your locale to identify (we will try!). We will learn about the wacky and wicked world of fungi. • Instructor: Judy Levings; SCC Board Member & retired ISU Extension Specialist • Number of Participants: 15

N. Getting Started with Nature Journaling • Get started with nature journaling in this hands-on, immersive workshop. Participants will learn about the practice of nature journaling (including its health benefits), personalize a nature journal, and create their first entry. Please bring a writing and/or sketching tool. • Instructors: Amie Adams; Local Writer • Number of participants: 20

O. No Session • Want to explore on your own? Need some downtime? Take a session “off” and enjoy the park how you wish.



Session 4

P. Paws on the Trail: Outdoor Safety for Your Adventure Buddy • Planning to hit the trail with your dog (or adventurous cat)? Join us for a practical, hands-on session focused on keeping your pets safe while enjoying the outdoors. This program will cover essential gear, heat and cold safety, common outdoor hazards (like ticks), and best practices for hiking responsibly with your pet. Participants will also have the opportunity to meet and walk alongside adoptable dogs from Story County Animal Control and Shelter while learning real-world handling and safety tips in a guided outdoor setting. Instructor: Anna Henderson, Story County animal Control Director • Number of Participants: 12

Q. Gill-ty Pleasures: Cooking Fish Without Fear • No more fish intimidation! In this upbeat class, you'll learn simple ways to prepare fish – including grilling, frying, smoking, baking, and even fresh, flavorful ceviche. Bring your appetite. You will get the chance to help prepare some dishes, sample some others, and have fun along the way. We'll keep it easy, approachable, and delicious so you can feel confident cooking fish anytime. Instructor: Jess Paulin, SCC Administrative Assistant • Number of Participants: 20

R. Herbal Tea Blending • Drinking herbal tea is a relaxing ritual with a myriad of health benefits. You will learn to expertly craft your own blends as a fun and economical way to drink your daily cup. This class will introduce you to a selection of herbs, focusing on their properties and therapeutic benefits. You will have time to curate and taste your own herbal tea blend. Walk away with your own unique, hand-blended herbal tea mixture! • Instructor: Sara O'Connell, Polk County Conservation Youth Coordinator • Number of Participants: 25

S. Conifer Keepsakes • Curious as to how to turn festive pine needles into a beautiful little ornament? You will learn how to do just that! This is a hands-on craft that can be recreated again and again at home once you know how. Instructor: Clair Pfantz, SCC Naturalist • Number of Participants: 12

T. No Session • Want to explore on your own? Need some downtime? Take a session “off” and enjoy the park how you wish



Event Registration



Participant Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Will you be attending Friday night program? (optional) Yes/No

Will you be camping Friday night at Hickory Grove Park? (optional) Yes/No

Would you like to have vegetarian meals? Yes/No

Dietary accommodations or restrictions?

Any additional accommodations needed:

Emergency contact person during event: _____

Emergency contact phone: _____

Event Fees

☐ Workshop Fee: (Friday-Saturday)
\$70.00

☐ Yes, I am a member of SCC
Partners (10% discount) *(\$63.00)

Total: _____

Saturday Session Choices

	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice
1 st Session		
2 nd Session		
3 rd Session		
4 th Session		

Important Event Information

- **No refunds after September 20, 2026.**
- **Registration fee includes: Friday night activities, Saturday sessions, snacks, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and a WWW swag item.**
- **Classes are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, and class sizes are limited.**
- **Participants must be at least 18 years old, ages 16-17 may attend with a guardian.**
- **Participants will receive a confirmation letter when the registration form & payment are received. Send registration form and checks payable to:**

Story County Conservation • 56461 180th Street • Ames • 50010