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EDITED BY

Lana Artz-McComb

Teamwork Makes the Prairie (Dream) Work!

By: Sarah Martinez, Naturalist

Over the course of the last six months, Louisa County Conservation has partnered with Morning Sun Elementary School to restore the quarter-acre prairie behind the school. From seed collecting, to invasive species removal, burn site prep, and a lesson in fire ecology and prairie conservation, the students, teachers, and staff of Morning Sun Elementary and the entire LCC staff can say this was truly a team effort! The first step in this project was a 5th and 6th grade field trip to Wilson's Prairie.

Phase One: Seed Collection

The first step in this project began at Wilson's Prairie, located in the northeastern corner of Louisa County. Wilson's Prairie is believed to be native, remnant prairie, meaning the original prairie landscape and native plant community are still intact. The soil has never been tilled or planted. The fifth and sixth graders took a field trip in October to explore this unique parcel of prairie and collect seeds from native plants, seeds that would later be transplanted to the freshly burned prairie at the elementary school. Students also learned about plant identification and the importance of prairies to migrating monarch butterflies.



Morning Sun Sixth Graders with Jacob Ewart



Morning Sun Fifth Graders with Lana Artz-McComb

Phase Two: Burn Site Prep

While students got busy in the classroom, the LCC maintenance staff got busy prepping the prairie for burning later in the spring. A forestry

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mulcher was used to create a fire break around the perimeter of the quarter-acre prairie. Along with this, several trees were cut down and removed from the site. Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students rejoined LCC staff to lop woody invasives and further establish the fire break by raking in excess plant material and move potential fire hazards from the area, such as barrels and soccer nets.



Phase Three: The Burn!

Ahead of the main event, Louisa County Conservation provided prairie education sessions, where students K-6th grade learned about fire ecology, prairie plants underground, things with wings in the prairie, and how Iowa prairies used to be home to herds of bison. These sessions provided valuable background into the importance of preserving and restoring prairies in the state of Iowa.



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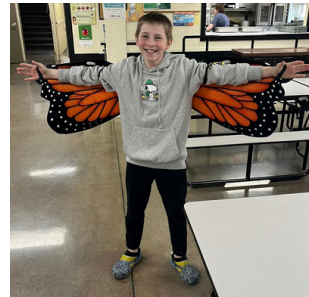
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Finally, it was time to burn! Teachers, staff, and students from all grade levels, PreK through 6th grade, gathered outside to watch the prairie burn. Burn boss, Jacob Ewart talked to the students through each step of the burning process before the start of the burn. An extra walkie-talkie was left with the observers so students could hear the radio chatter throughout the entire burn.



Phase Four: Reseeding the Prairie

The final step in this project was to take the seeds previously

collected from Wilson's Prairie and transplant them into the newly burned Morning Sun prairie before a big rain. This was carried out by the fifth and sixth graders.

This project was the perfect combination of environmental education and habitat management. A huge THANK YOU to all the teachers, staff, and students at Morning Sun for helping us at every phase of this project. It was a team effort and we truly appreciate it!



PORT LOUISA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Refuge Tour Loop Openings

By: Nate Barnett, Port Louisa Wildlife Biologist

The tour loop on Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge will be open on the second Saturday of each month through September. Last year, the refuge reintroduced regular auto tours as “Flyway Fridays.” This was held on the third Friday of each month. After gathering feedback, staff decided to open the tour loop on Saturdays instead. Each opening is planned to run from 7 am until 30 minutes after sunset, but we encourage you to keep an eye out for possible changes in that schedule on the Port Louisa Facebook page.

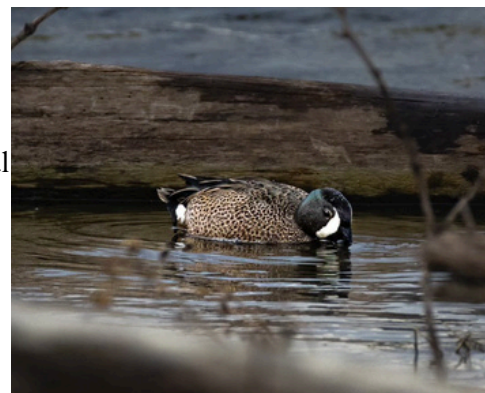
After a dry start to the growing season, things have finally taken off. The refuge hasn’t been this green since before last year’s midsummer flooding. We hope you stop by throughout the summer to see how the different wetland communities on the refuge rebound from last year’s growing season inundation. Flooding, drawdown, prescribed fire, mowing and tilling have all been utilized to try to expose as much ground as possible trapped below a second straight year of flood debris. You’ll still see some mats of flood debris as you make your way around the tour loop. All cars, trucks, and road-legal side-by-side UTVs are welcome but ATVs are not permitted. While you can explore the entire refuge on foot, vehicles are required to stay on the tour loop road. (**Note:** In the event of flooding, the refuge may be closed for public safety considerations.)

With spring migration mostly over, many of your bird sightings will be of summer residents. Keep a close eye out, because that means you may also spot their young nearby. Whether it be poults, ducklings or colts, they’re growing here on the refuge in the summer.

Birds aren’t the only thing breeding on the refuge this time of year. Please keep in mind that most of the wildlife on the refuge cannot simply fly away. Thousands of snakes and turtles will be crossing roads on the refuge in search of a place to nest. We ask that you pay attention to the road during your visit so they can make it there safely.



Copperbelly
Water Snake
(*Nerodia
erthrogaster
neglecta*)



Blue-winged teal
(*Spatula
discors*)

Ahead of each monthly opening, the refuge will share detailed information on our Facebook page. We hope to see you here every month watching the refuge change throughout the season with us.

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://www.fws.gov/refuge/portlouisa)
facebook.com/portlouisaNWR

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.

Noah's Nature Nook -

Armadillos in Iowa?

By: Noah Brown, Guest Contributor

Yes! Armadillos occasionally visit Iowa. This cool looking mammal has been spotted in southern and central Iowa.



Here are a few interesting facts about armadillos:

- 1) There are over 20 species in the world. Some are only six inches long, but others can grow up to five feet in length. (The only species seen in Iowa is the nine-banded armadillo, and it can grow to be about the size of a large house cat)
- 2) Their leathery, armor-like shell is made of bone and keratin—the same material as our fingernails.
- 3) To swim in deep water, armadillos swallow air to inflate their stomachs. In shallower waters, they can also hold their breath and walk across the bottom (holding their breath for up to six minutes!)

4) When scared, armadillos can jump vertically 3-4 feet into the air!

5) Despite their clunky appearance, armadillos can run up to 30 miles per hour!

The Iowa DNR doesn't think there is a breeding population of armadillos in the state. However, this could change if our winters continue to be mild.

Editor's Note

Armadillos have been wandering north for decades. Currently, the Iowa DNR has no plans to manage armadillos because they don't pose a threat to the ecosystem given that they can't survive our harsh winters.

Wildlife technicians with the Iowa DNR have maintained a list of annual sightings since 2016. Any armadillo sightings can be reported to james.coffey@dnr.iowa.gov. They request first-hand reports with specific location and any photos, if available.



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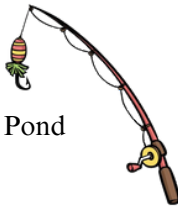
LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION EVENTS

Free Fishing Friday



Friday, June 6
5:30 pm-7:30 pm

Virginia Grove Recreation Area Pond
Free!



The first full weekend in June is always a free fishing weekend in Iowa. Join us for an evening of fishing at Virginia Grove, no license needed. LCC staff will have bait, fishing poles, and tackle plus expertise to help you get started. Bring your own pole if you'd like!

Summer Programming with LCC

Wednesday, June 4th- Thursday, July 31st

Wapello: *Keck Memorial Library*, Wednesdays at 10:00am-11:00am

Columbus Junction: *Columbus Junction Public Library*, every other Tuesday at 10:00am-11:00am and Thursday at 2:00pm-3:00pm starting June 5th

Morning Sun: *Mellinger Memorial Library*, Mondays at 2:00pm-3:00pm

Letts: *Letts Public Library*, every other Thursday at 2:00pm-3:00pm starting June 12th

Fruitland: *Drake Park*, every other Tuesday at 10:00am-11:00am starting June 17th

Grandview: *Academy Park*, every other Thursday at 10:00am-11:00am starting June 19th

Burlington River Days - River Olympics

Saturday, June 14
11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Downtown Burlington Riverfront

Burlington River Days is happening June 12-14 in downtown Burlington celebrating everything we love about the river. Proceeds from River Days goes to the Partners for Conservation Foundation. Louisa County Conservation will be participating in the River Days Olympics on Saturday. Participate in outdoor recreation themed challenges hosted by local organizations. Participants will get prizes with top scores being awarded medals at 5:00 pm. Join LCC to test your trivia knowledge about the Mississippi River!

BurlingtonRiverDays.com for more information and tickets



Langwood Adventure Day

Saturday, August 9th
9:00am-12:00pm

Langwood Education Center
Free!



Langwood Adventure Day 2025 will be an end of the summer celebration this year! Join us for a morning of FREE outdoor adventures for the whole family. Paddle in canoes or kayaks, fish or scoop with nets in the pond, test your aim with archery, BBs, or atlatl....try something new and enjoy your time outdoors!

Family Campout

Wednesday, August 13th overnight to August 14th
4:00pm Wednesday overnight to 10:00am Thursday
Langwood Education Center
\$15/family

LOUISA COUNTY
CONSERVATION



12635 Co Rd G56, Suite 101
Wapello, IA 52653

319-523-8381; conservation@louisacountyia.gov

LCC STAFF

Jacob Ewart
Lana Artz-McComb
Dani Boysen
Sarah Martinez
Tanner Hollingsworth

BOARD MEMBERS

Elizabeth Kling
Sam Wilson
Joellen Schantz
Shawn Maine
Josh Hardin

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

LouisaCountyConservation.org

Online reservations are available for more programs:

MyCountyParks.com/County/Louisa.aspx

Call our office: 319-523-8381

TRI-RIVERS CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

2025 Scholarship Recipient

Paris Family Scholarship and Tri-River's Directors' Scholarship

Kamdyn Hammond is the 2025 recipient of both the Tri-Rivers Directors' Scholarship and the Paris Scholarship. Kamdyn will be a sophomore at Iowa State University in the Fall.

The Directors' Scholarship provides financial support to area students who share our commitment and appreciation of natural resources and conservation.

The Paris Scholarship honors William J. Paris' lifelong love and appreciation for the area's natural resources and his commitment to conservation.

Tri-Rivers would like to wish all our graduating seniors well as they look towards their futures. Applicants wishing to be considered can find scholarship information available in January at www.Tri-Rivers.org.



12635 Co Rd G56, Suite 106
Wapello, IA 52653
319-523-8381; tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov
www.tri-rivers.org

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.

MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN LOUISA COUNTY

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 County Road G56, Suite 106
Wapello, IA 52653

Please earmark my donation for:

- Langwood Education Center
- Louisa County Trails Council
- TRCF Scholarship
- Environmental Education
- Use my donation where needed most
- Other _____

General Donations are payable to:

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation

Endowment Funds are payable to:

Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine
(for Iowa Tax Credit)

- Tri-Rivers Endowment Fund
- Trails Endowment Fund
- Paris Scholarship Endowment