

Naturally LOUISA COUNTY

Rich in Nature, History and Culture

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EDITED BY
Lana Artz-McComb

Multi-Lingual Hunter Education in Louisa County

By Katie Hammond - Staff Writer, Wapello Republican

Louisa and Muscatine Counties partnered together to host a multi-lingual Hunter Education Class in Columbus Junction on three consecutive Fridays in January, the 10th, 17th and 24th from 6:00 -9:00 pm each night. I believe the first one took place in 2012, with this being the 5th or 6th multi-lingual hunter ed class we have held. Since our instructors all speaking English, in any given year we have translated the class to Chin Burmese, Spanish, and French. This year we were prepared to offer the class in Creole as well, however the only translation needed was Chin.

As usual, the idea for the class came from requests from within the Chin Community. Hawi Kham was a student in the first class we held. Since then, he has been my go-to person whenever I needed a Chin translator. Over the years I have called on him many times to assist, and he has also asked my help when he needed to understand a rule or law. The Burmese community enjoys the taste of wild game and enjoys hunting to put fresh food on the table.

The class was organized by Lana Artz-McComb, a Naturalist with Louisa County Conservation, Mandy Grimm the

Columbus Junction librarian, and me. Mandy believes that the multi-lingual Hunter Ed class is an incredible service to our community. "We live in a beautiful area where outdoor activities are widely enjoyed, and this allows our newest residents to safely and correctly participate in those as well."

One of the things that makes teaching/ learning hunter education in another language so difficult is just the topic itself. Mandy agreed, "Wildlife isn't the same from region to region, so learning what can be harvested and developing an appreciation for conservation was so exciting for all the participants." Iowa hunting and fishing rules are difficult.

Many animals cannot be hunted at all, while all those that can have different season dates, times, bag limits, and possession limits. There are also different licenses needed depending on what you hunt. For example, hunting deer requires a hunting license, a habitat stamp/ fee, a valid tag for the specific season, and if you are successful, you also must report your harvest.

When a person can speak, read, and write English well, it is possible (but still slightly challenging) to pick up a copy of the "Iowa Hunting Trapping, & Migratory Game Bird Regulations" and digest the information cover to cover.

Continued on page 2



www.LouisaCountyConservation.org

FRONT PAGE CONT.

The familiar refrain is that one should always call their local DNR Conservation Officer if they have questions. A Conservation Officer would much rather answer your question, even if it seems dumb, than write you a ticket later.

The laws change annually through legislation and DNR rulemaking, requiring even veteran hunters and anglers to pick up a copy each year and view the season dates, limits, and what has changed. New, just this past year, if you harvest a buck, you must provide measurement of the main beam length. This helps them to determine the number of juveniles vs. mature bucks being harvested. Hunting in Iowa is a privilege, and it requires an outdoors-person to stay vigilant, and have an understanding for the wildlife they are hunting and all associated laws.

Part of the difficulty of the class is learning the names and laws for all the game species. I think back to my high school Spanish class. We learned one word for duck, “el pato.” However, to hunt ducks in Iowa, you need to know the difference between species of ducks, including those that can look similar: mallards vs. shovelers; canvasbacks vs. redheads; snow geese vs. trumpeter swans. Accidentally, or purposely, killing the wrong species, or too many, could land you in a heap of trouble.

A group of 18 adult students successfully passed the class after listening to two nights of lecture, then participating in a gun handling skills test, and the 50-question test. Much of the class was taught by Iowa DNR Conservation Officers, Derrick Slutts assigned to Muscatine County, Joe Fourdyce assigned to Louisa County, and Paul Kay assigned to Des Moines County, although I helped quite a bit too.

We had a great translator, Hawi Kham, who had taken the class previously. Accolades to these officers



Pictured (l-r): Hawi Kham (translating), Derrick Slutts, Joe Fourdyce, No Cung, Ceu Pom, Lal Mawi, and Peter Thawng.

One of the requirements for passing Hunter Education in Iowa is to complete a hands-on, gun handling skills test.

The DNR provides dummy ammo and blaze orange guns that do not have firing pins, as added safety to be used for gun handling exercises. The students must determine the type of gun, what type of ammunition it requires, how to operate the action, how to use the safety, all while maintaining control of the muzzle.

They also demonstrate safe ways to cross a fence and carry their weapon while walking in a line.

& Kham, they did a fantastic job teaching safety, rules, and regulations, and sharing their passion for natural resources. The officers even added information on fishing laws, to help participants enjoy their favorite hobbies, in a safe and legal way.

Are you looking for a Hunter Education Class?
All classes, information, and much more can be found at GoOutdoorsIowa.com.



Symbolic Migration

By: Sarah Martinez, Naturalist

For the second year in a row, Louisa County Conservation participated in the Symbolic Migration Project with second or third graders from Louisa Muscatine, Morning Sun, Roundy, and Wapello elementaries.

This program, a project through Journey North, brings students from across the county and all of North America to create symbolic (paper) monarch butterflies to send to Mexico. These symbolic butterflies build bridges of communication between participants in Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

Louisa County Conservation spent time in second and third grade classrooms exploring the extraordinary journey monarchs make each year and the importance of their continued conservation and protection. There was a 59% decrease in the Eastern Monarch Butterfly population during the 2023-2024 winter season. Students also collaborated with each other to decorate one large butterfly folder to represent their school and community and colored their own butterflies with pictures and little messages to be sent as well.

These paper butterflies are delivered to youth who live around the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Mexico. The mailing of the symbolic butterflies' flight is timed to correspond with the real monarchs' journey south.

All four Louisa County butterflies arrived at Narciso Mendoza Elementary in the La Mesa Community, near the La Mesa Sanctuary. This sanctuary lies within the state of Michoacán, providing the unique hibernation microclimate within the Oyamel forests

that are vital for monarch overwintering.



Come springtime, as the real monarchs prepare for their journey back North, students in schools surrounding the sanctuary will make their own symbolic monarchs to be sent right back to us in Iowa!



To read more about the Symbolic Migration Project and the journey our butterflies took, visit www.symbolicmigration.org and type in any of our area school's name into the search bar, to read the blog.



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LOUISA REGIONAL SOLID WASTE AGENCY

Worm Teachers

By: Sarah Martinez, Naturalist

Decomposers play a crucial role within an ecosystem, acting as nature's "clean-up crew". They break down dead organisms and other organic material, recycling nutrients back into the environment, making it once again available for new plant growth, and the prevention of decaying matter build-up. Common examples of decomposers include bacteria, fungi, and certain insects like worms, isopods, millipedes, and even cockroaches!

In order to teach about the importance of decomposers, as naturalists, we must bring the critters of the outside, inside, especially during the bitter winter months of Iowa.



With the help of our environmental education compost bin, as well as our other E.E. decomposers, we are able to bring solid waste education to Pre K, 1st, and 3rd graders throughout the whole county, (we also do the occasional adult composting program too). In the 2024-2025 school year, Louisa County Conservation has done seven solid waste and decomposer programs, across all four county elementary schools, teaching more than 250 students.



Pictured to the left, above, and below are Kindergarteners from Morning Sun Elementary, 1st grade students from Wapello Elementary, and 3rd grade students from Roundy Elementary exploring decomposers from the LCC worm compost bin and millipedes, roly-polies, and Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches.



LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION does programming for the LOUISA REGIONAL SOLID WASTE AGENCY?

Louisa County Conservation provides educational outreach, in partnership with the Louisa Regional Solid Waste Agency (LRSWA), that brings topics in waste reduction into schools and to your communities!

Do you have a program idea not listed below?
Let us know!

Topics: The 3 Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), decomposers, DIY compost bins, upcycling, sustainable practices

For program inquiries or any questions, please contact us at conservation@louisacountyia.gov or call us at 319-523-8381.

Louisa County Transfer Station

Drop Off Recycling and Waste Disposal

Monday thru Friday...8:00am – 4:00pm

Saturday...9:00am – 12:00pm



14048 70th Street, Wapello, IA 52653

Questions? 319-523-5013

louisacountyia.gov

Noah's Nature Nook

Hi! I'm Noah, and I love animals and insects!

The Northern Pike's range in Iowa spans the upper 2/3rds of the state, most commonly found in natural lakes and large rivers. However less common, there is documentation of Northern Pike being caught where the Mississippi River runs through Louisa County.



Here are five interesting facts about the Upper Mississippi River resident, the Northern Pike:

❖ **They are one of the fastest growing freshwater fish.**

Northern Pike grow continuously throughout their whole lives, some reaching up to 4.5 feet long and weighing over 60 pounds! However, the average size depends on the region and age of the fish. The state record in Iowa is 3.75 feet long (45 inches) and 25 pounds.

❖ **The 'water wolf'.**

Northern Pike a carnivorous fish that must consume large amounts each day to uphold their dietary needs. Their diet consists mostly of fish, however they are not picky eaters, and will eat just about anything smaller than themselves, including smaller pike.

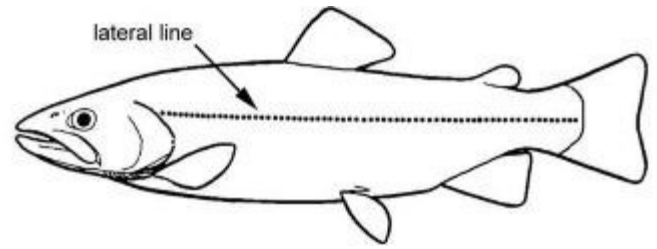
❖ **They are long-lived.**

In the wild, Northern Pike typically live between 7-10 years, however the oldest Northern Pike ever reported lived to 75 years old in captivity!

❖ **A sixth sense.**

They have highly moveable eyes, allowing

them to see in nearly any direction. They also use its lateral line to detect vibrations in the water, making them excellent hunters.



❖ **They are fast.**

Pike have a layer of mucous around their scales that protects them from parasites and physical damage, while also reducing their friction in the water. They can reach swimming speeds up to 10 miles per hour!



Northern Pike can vary in color depending on the aquatic environments they inhabit. Fish from clear lake will usually be light green, while others from dark sloughs and rivers will be dark green to gray. Pictured above is a drawing of a Northern Pike, done by our very talented artist, Noah!



LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION EVENTS



Hunter Education

Thursday, March 6 and Saturday,
March 8

6:00pm - 9:00pm and 8:00am -
4:00pm

Langwood Education Center

Free

This is a two day class and participants must attend both days in order to pass. If you just need to attend a field day, please contact us to let us know and get information for Saturday.

Hunter education is a mandatory program that is designed to introduce students to several life-long skills that are important to many different types of outdoor recreational opportunities. The course teaches students basic survival and first aid skills, water safety, wildlife identification, the basics of wildlife management, hunting laws and firearm/archery safety. Hunter education also stresses the importance of individual responsibility and outdoor ethics.

Iowa law requires that anyone born after January 1, 1972 must be certified in hunter education before they are eligible to purchase an Iowa hunting license.

Boater Education

Saturday, March 29 and Saturday, April 5

8:00 am - Noon; Louisa County Complex

\$10/book

(siblings, parent/child, etc. may share a book)

Youth 12+ and/or Adults

A two day boater education course taught by members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. This course covers the basics of operating a vessel, legal requirements for boating, boating emergencies, and more. Must attend both days to pass the course. Adults are welcome to audit with their child.

Did you know that, per Iowa Law, it is illegal for a person aged 12-18 to operate a vessel propelled by a motor of more than 10 horsepower by themselves UNLESS they have completed this course?

[Online Registration available.](#)

Minimum of 5
people needed to
hold the course.



Summer Camp Registration

Monday, April 14th

9:00am

Unless specified, all camps are held at Langwood
Education Center.



Mark your calendars! Registration will remain open until all spots in each day camp are filled. Spots typically fill up fast, so make sure to register early to secure your camper's spot!

Spring Break Picnic in the Park

11:00am-1:00pm

Monday, March 17th; Eden Park

Friday, April 18th; Virginia Grove Recreation Area

Celebrate Spring Break at a park near you! Have lunch with the box turtles, feel furs and skulls, and enjoy the fact that Spring is here!

Bring your lunch and a drink. Be sure to dress for the weather (we do still live in Iowa...)



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

LouisaCountyConservation.org

Online reservations are available for most programs:

MyCountyParks.com/County/Louisa.aspx

Call our office: 319-523-8381

LOUISA COUNTY
CONSERVATION



12635 County Road G56, Suite 101
Wapello, IA 52653

319-523-8381; Conservation@louisacountyia.gov

LCC STAFF

Jacob Ewart
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Dani Boysen
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Tanner Hollingsworth

BOARD MEMBERS

Elizabeth Kling
Sam Willson
Joellen Schantz
Shawn Maine
Josh Hardin



Louisa County Conservation 2025 Summer Nature Camps

Camps include nature exploration, hiking, games, crafts, and other hands-on activities. Included in the camp registration fee are a daily snack and camp t-shirt.



Registration Information

Registration begins on **Monday, April 14th at 9:00am**

Unless specified, all camps are held at Langwood Education Center

Contact Lana at lmccomb@louisacountyia.gov or 319-523-8381

Online registration and payment can be made through
MyCountyParks.com

Caterpillar Camp

June 2nd-6th, 8:30am-11:30am

Entering K-1st Grade, Cost \$40

Let's learn about animals! Explore furs, skulls, feathers, and scales as we learn all about the animal kingdom.

[Families are invited for fishing day on Friday!](#)

Tadpole Camp

June 9th-13th, 8:30am-11:30am

Entering 1st-2nd Grade, Cost \$40

Nature, nature, all around! What will we see today? Bring all 5 senses and get ready to explore up, down, under, and through all habitats at Langwood.

Nature Detectives

June 23rd-27th, 8:30am-12:00pm

Entering 2nd-3rd Grade, Cost \$45

Take an up close look at plants, animals, soil, and the critters that live in the pond! Grab your magnifying lens and get ready to focus on the tiny things.

River Paddlers, Louisa County

July 1st, 9:00am overnight to July 2nd, 4:00pm

Entering 6th-8th Grade, Cost \$65

Wanting to get more comfortable on the water? Paddle the beautiful Iowa River through Louisa County and spend the night at Langwood Education Center.

Outdoor Explorers

July 9th-11th, 9:00am-2:00pm

Entering 3rd-4th Grade, Cost \$50

Hike and paddle your way through every corner of Langwood! We'll explore the woods, prairie, and pond to learn about the secrets of nature.

River Raiders, Upper Iowa

Training day: TBD

Trip dates: July 15th-17th

Entering 8th-12th Grade, Cost \$90

Campers will paddle, camp, and cook outdoors during this three day, two night trek (plus an additional training day in June).

[Priority is given to youth going for the first time.](#)

Please email us to be put on the waiting list.

Great Escape

August 6th-8th, 9:00am-2:00pm

Entering 4th-5th Grade, Cost \$50

Practice your outdoor skills by building a campfire, practicing archery, and paddling in both canoes and kayaks!

LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION

New Interpretive Panels for 2025

By: Lana Artz-McComb, LCC Naturalist

Thanks to generous grants and corporate support, Louisa County Conservation will be installing interpretive panels at two parks in Spring/Summer 2025.

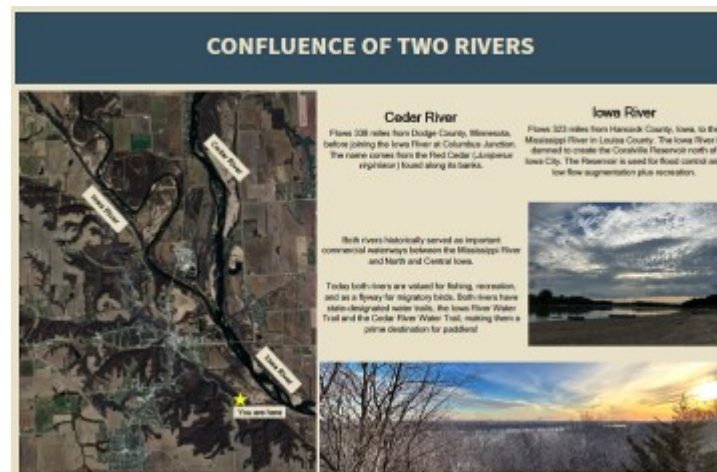
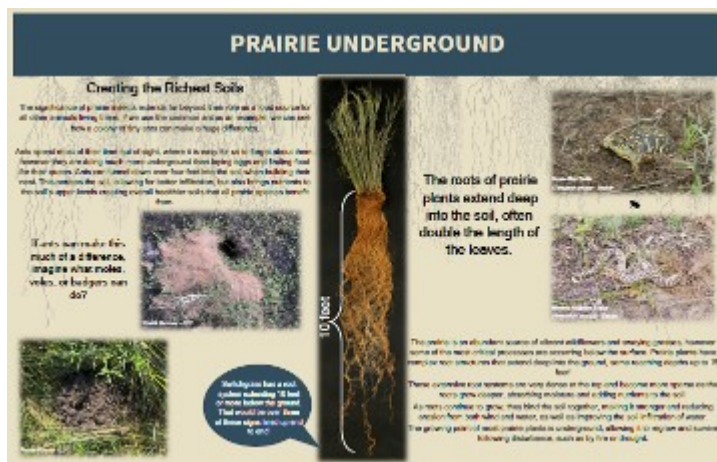
Orion Renewable Energy Group, LCC donated the funding for a series of nine interpretive panels for placement along the border trail at Wilson's Prairie. These panels will highlight the unique remnant prairie area including the flora and fauna found within. The panels seek to encourage visitors to take a closer look at the area around them as they explore the prairie.



A grant from the Columbus Junction United Fund will be used to install 4 interpretive panels on the newly reconstructed overlook platform at Chinkapin Bluffs Recreation Area. The overlook panels take visitors through the sights and sounds of the area plus educate about the trees thriving on the Iowa River bluffs.



Grand opening events will take place at both parks.



Let's Talk about EE

By: Lana Artz-McComb, LCC Naturalist

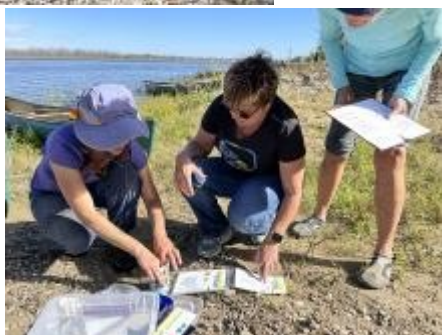
Environmental Education is an integral part of Louisa County Conservation Board's mission. The LCC Naturalists see every Louisa County preK-6th grader at least twice every year plus work on projects with secondary school classrooms. LCC hosts summer camps each year including two overnight river paddling trips. Both outdoor and indoor public programs are sprinkled in throughout the year, often in conjunction with our community partners (public libraries, cities, other organizations).

Did you know that we can do programming for YOUR community organization or club? All programming is free for Louisa County groups and can be hosted throughout the county or at one of our areas.

Animals, plants, water, earth science, history, birds, and outdoor recreation are just a few of the subject areas that we love! We've never been stumped by a program request....so contact us today!



Firebuilding



Water Quality



Archery

How Old is that Fish?

By: Vance Poulton, DNR Fisheries Management

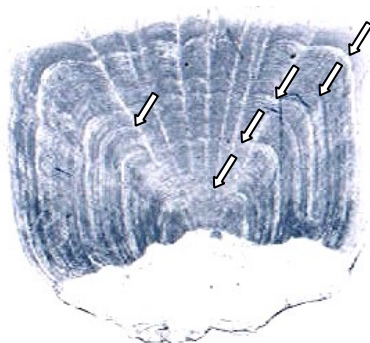
Ever wonder how old that big fish you caught was? It is fairly simple to tell the age of a fish.

Fish never stop growing during their life although during the winter their growth slows down to a near stop. The body of the fish is constantly growing so are all its bones, spines, and scales.

A fish has the same scales during its entire lifetime only replacing ones that are lost. Since the fish almost stops growing in the winter so does its scales.

During the winter the growth lines in the scales are very close together creating a ring called an annulus just like you can see in a tree stump.

Look at the image of the fish scale. See the white rings the arrows are pointing at?



Those white areas actually represent the accelerated growth of the fish as it enters springtime. The actual annuli are at the edge of the dark areas in front of the white rings. That scale was from a 17 ½ inch largemouth bass and was estimated to be six years old.

How do you age a catfish or a flathead that don't have scales? By taking a thin slice from a spine you can count the annuli there.

How old can a fish get to be in Southeast Iowa? We seldom see a fish over 10 years old. The notable exceptions are paddlefish and buffalo which can live to be over 100 years, and flathead catfish which can live to be around thirty to forty years old.

Below are some average lengths at age for three species of fish from local lakes in Southeast Iowa. The average lengths came from over 2,000 white crappies, 5,000 largemouth bass, and 15,000 bluegills that we have aged over the years and include the "good", the "bad", and the "ugly".

Average Length at Age for Southeast Iowa White Crappies, Largemouth Bass, and Bluegills

Age (years)	Length (inches):	White Crappies	Largemouth Bass	Bluegills
0		4.4	4.1	2.9
1		6.3	6.6	3.8
2		7.0	8.8	5.0
3		8.1	10.6	5.9
4		8.7	12.2	6.5
5		9.9	13.6	6.8
6		11.2	15.0	7.0
7		11.8	16.3	7.5
8		12.4	17.8	7.5
9		14.5	18.6	8.5
10			19.0	
11			20.3	

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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www.iowadnr.gov



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LOUISA COUNTY PHEASANTS FOREVER & QUAIL FOREVER

Women on the Wing Hunt

By: Holly Shutt, Louisa County PF/QF

On November 2nd, the Louisa County Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Chapter proudly hosted its 2nd Annual Women on the Wing Hunt. This event is designed to introduce women to the sport of pheasant hunting, whether they are new to the experience or looking to connect with other like-minded women in the outdoors.

Each participant was paired with a mentor and a dog handler, ensuring a safe, educational, and enjoyable experience in the field. This past fall, we were thrilled to welcome nine women to take part in the hunt, reinforcing our commitment to fostering inclusivity and confidence in the outdoors. Special thank you to the Illowa NAVHDA Chapter.

We look forward to continuing this tradition and expanding opportunities for women in upland hunting!



Save the date!
3rd Annual
Women on the Wing Hunt
November 1, 2025
For more information contact
Teri Dibbern at
teri.dibbern@gmail.com

Join PF/QF Today!

The Louisa County Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Chapter was re-established in 2019 with the first banquet in 2020. This is our biggest/busiest time of the year if you are interested in helping, we are always looking for more help. We do two highway clean ups per year, give out a food plot seed, help with the NAVHDA youth pheasant hunt, and host a women's hunt. We are interested in helping with habitat establishment or hearing about other ways we can help the community with habitat education.

Currently, we have a scholarship open for any Louisa County senior going into a natural resource field, applications can be found on our Facebook page as well as well as the schools.

Please contact Matt Shutt with ideas or if you would like to get involved – (785) 294-1954

6th Annual PF & QF Banquet

June 21, 2025
Louisa County Fairgrounds

For more information contact
Matt Shutt at 785-294-1954



Call for Scholarship Applications - Due March 15 at Noon

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation is pleased to offer two \$1,000 scholarships each year. Applicants can apply for both scholarships if they meet the qualifications and can apply and receive the scholarship more than once.

Paris Family Scholarship

William J. Paris was a lifelong resident, farmer and sportsman of Louisa County who had a deep appreciation for the area's natural resources. Following Bill's death in 2009, his family chose to recognize Bill's life and his commitment to conservation by establishing the William J. Paris Scholarship. The objective of the scholarship is to provide financial support to Louisa County students who share Bill's commitment and appreciation of natural resources and conservation.

Tri-Rivers Director's Scholarship

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation strives to promote conservation and outdoor recreation in and around the Louisa Resource Area. This is accomplished through environmental education, preservation, protection and land management. The purpose of this scholarship is to provide financial support to area students who share our commitment and appreciation of natural resources and conservation.

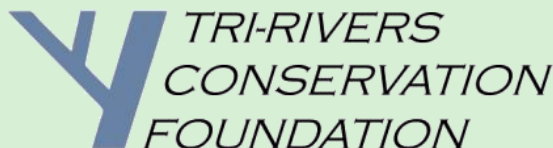
12635 CR G56, Suite 106,

Wapello, Iowa 52653

319-523-8381

tri-rivers@louisacountyia.gov

www.tri-rivers.org



2024 Director's Scholarship recipient Kamdyn Hammond with Jay Schweitzer, Steve Johnson, Al Bohling, and Don Kline

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



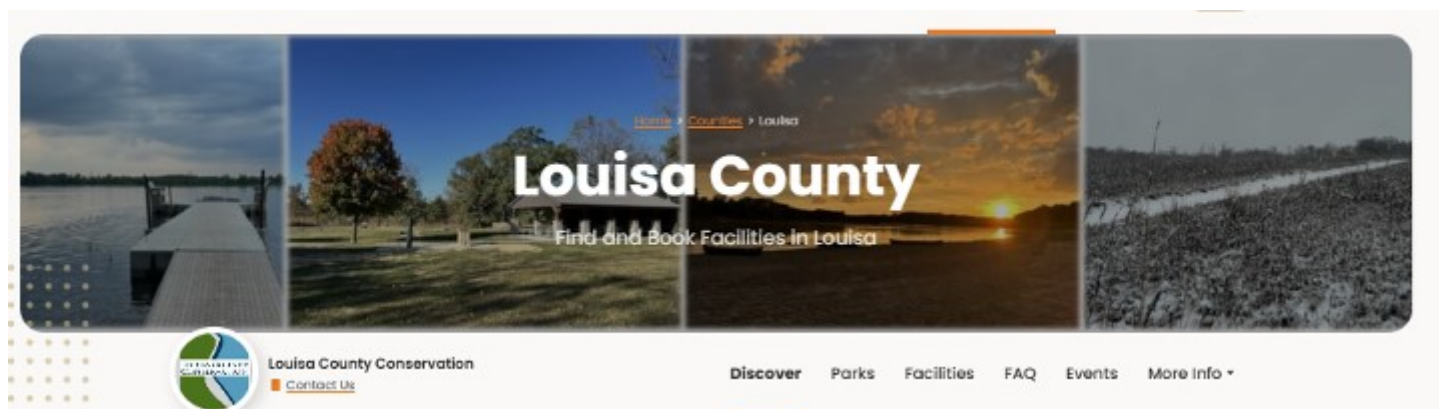
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"In the Spring I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours."
—Mark Twain

Check out the new MyCountyParks.com!

A user friendly way to explore YOUR local county parks, facilities, campsites, and attractions throughout the state. Find your next adventure today!



***Naturally Louisa County* Newsletter is now entirely digital and delivered straight to your inbox**

Printed copies of this edition can be found at partnering organizations including the LCC office, SWCD, PLNWR, and local libraries.

If you know of an organization that would like to have printed copies for people to pick up, please let us know at conservation@louisacountyia.gov or 319-523-8381.

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