

Summer 2022

Conservation Connection

Johnson County Conservation Newsletter

A Record Year for Prescribed Burns

This year, Johnson County Conservation's Burn Crew conducted prescribed burns on a whopping 723 acres, a record year for acres burned, and far surpassing the previous record year of 2018, in which 601 acres were burned. The areas burned included Kent Park (493 acres), Cedar River Crossing (206 acres), and Malinda Reif Reilly (25 acres). One of the factors that aided in the record year was the cold spring we experienced. The cooler weather prolonged the burn season, as JCC's Burn Crew aims to burn when temperatures are cool and fire sensitive animals, like reptiles and amphibians, are still mostly inactive.

In addition to the record number of acres burned, the burn crew celebrated a historic

event - the burn at Malinda Reif Reilly Fen and Prairie. This property was added to the county's public lands in 2020. The 100-acre parcel comprises a mixture of prairie, fen, and a hay field slated for future restoration. As far as we know, the land has not had a fire pass over it since European colonization. We're excited to see how the 25-acre prairie section responds to the fire. The prairie is currently dominated by non-native fescue grass, but many rare prairie flowers hold out on this never-tilled piece of land, including Hills Thistle, recorded no where else in Johnson County. It's always a thrill to discover if other native prairie holdouts reappear on degraded land following the revitalization of a fire.



Natural Resource Management Specialist Jeremy Rieck uses a drip torch to ignite a prescribed fire. For a deep dive into the details of prescribed burns and their history in Johnson County, check out the article on page 6.

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A Note from the Director

Larry Gullett - Executive Director

Happy Birthday!

2022 is the 50th birthday of the Clean Water Act, one of the most transformative environmental laws ever passed. The act, formally called the Federal Water Pollution Act, was enacted with bi-partisan support, actually Richard Nixon vetoed the legislation and the Senate and House of Representatives overrode his veto! Where have the good ole days gone?

Traveling east along Interstate 80, one crosses the Cuyahoga River just outside Cleveland – a beautiful area with deep valleys and forested hillsides. The Cuyahoga became the poster child of the clean water movement as the river itself caught fire at least a dozen times before Congress took action. One description of the river identified that “if you fell into the river, God forbid, you immediately went to the hospital!” Sometimes it is easy to forget where we came from when those memories are so distant. Before the act was passed, water quality was largely left up to the states.

The original act targeted industrial and municipal pollution and the dredging and filling of all wetlands. Congress intentionally exempted agriculture and focused on point sources of pollution, pollution entering from a specific point as opposed to sheet flow across a landscape. At that time, the rural fabric of America was small family farms and diversified agriculture, not the industry we have today. Instead of each farm having about 20-60 hogs and some cows and chickens, most of today's ventures have 5,000 to 20,000 head living in confinements.

In Iowa, and around the nation, one of the most common discussions focused on further improving water quality includes establishing nutrient standards for water bodies. There is monumental opposition to adopting nutrient standards, mostly based on preserving the checkbook and not the water. As leaders in the clean water movement near the end of their careers one of the most common regrets they all have is not standing up for the environment rather than the pocketbook. Even with the incredible success of the Clean Water Act, some 50 years later, more than 50% of the nation's streams, 70% of lakes and 90% of our coastal zones, still do not meet standards

of the act. There is no way to grasp fully the degradation of the streams and lakes unless you have had the experience of testing and monitoring water quality and life within the water. Once a person spends time turning over rocks in a stream and studying the myriad of life and doing this over time, you begin to grasp the magnitude of what our impacts really are.

While we have a lot of work to do, take time to celebrate the successes of what we have accomplished by attending one of the education programs we offer to get people on and in the water! The Great Iowa River Race and Iowa River Clean-up are two great events to celebrate our local watershed. If you can, get out to kayak on your own at Kent Park Lake or head out to explore the wetlands at Cedar River Crossing or Ciha Fen. There are many places in Johnson County to celebrate the progress we've made towards clean water.



Courtesy of Cleveland Press Collection at Cleveland State University Library.



Top photo: A crew of firefighters battles the blazing Cuyahoga River. The river, choked with industrial pollutants, caught fire over a dozen times in the decades before the Clean Water Act was passed, and these fires served as inspiration for the legislation. **Bottom photo:** A sunset blazes above the reconstructed wetlands at Cedar River Crossing. Though there is so much work left to be done, exploring and enjoying places like these is one way to honor and celebrate the progress towards clean water that we've made.



Subscribe to JCC's New Volunteer Newsletter!

Interested in getting involved with JCC and lending a hand? The best way to stay aware of current volunteer needs is to subscribe to the new Volunteer Newsletter. This will be sent out via email on an as-needed basis, likely several times per year.

To subscribe and read more about current volunteer needs, **click or scan** the QR code to the right.



Current high-need volunteer tasks include: CEC Hosts, Raptor Program Assistants, and Great Iowa River Race Helpers.

Outdoor Skills:

Marci Trana - Naturalist

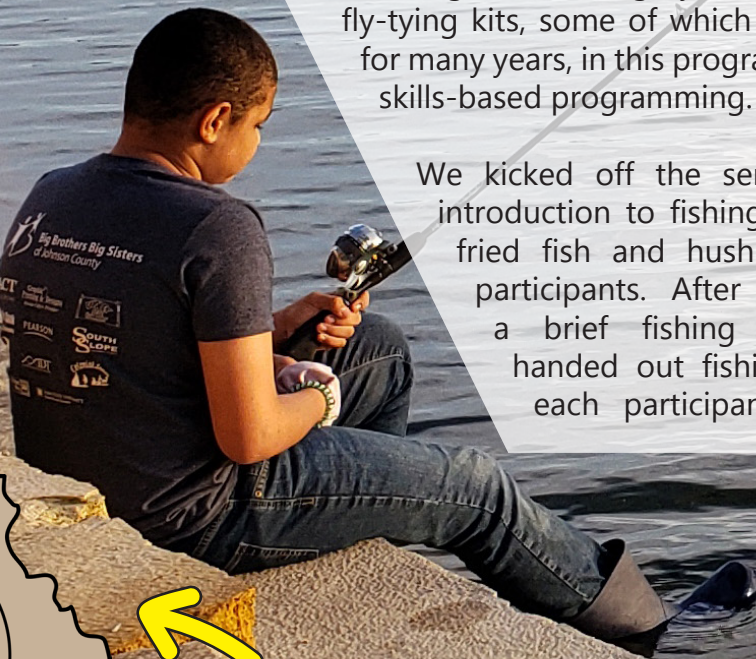
Johnson County Conservation's environmental educators have always prioritized introducing new skills and drawing in people who would not typically have access to immersive environmental education. Creating access to these programs, for those in the public who have no previous connection to them, is not without its challenges. Recruiting individuals or families to try something new evokes many strong feelings from excitement to fear. In addition to structural barriers, we know some of the emotions (anxiety, fear, and uncertainty) cause us to lose reach to potential participants.

This is why we continue to seek out new ideas and community connections that may lead to increased trust with individuals, families, and groups. When we

succeed by making these connections, the outcomes amaze us. As educators, we find profound enjoyment as we see faces light up with the new-found confidence of someone who just mastered the basic skills of fishing, archery, fire-making, or any other new outdoor skill.

Over the past year, we launched a program series in pursuit of recruiting beginners called "Outdoor Skills". This program was only made possible by partnering with Corridor Outdoor Adventures (Tina Elwood Gehrke) and Iowa DNR (Holly Schulte) as co-hosts. Big Brothers Big Sisters helped us spread the word to individuals and families. A small grant from the Safari Club allowed us to purchase a variety of outdoor gear including fly fishing rods and fly-tying kits, some of which will be used for many years, in this program and other skills-based programming.

We kicked off the series with an introduction to fishing. We served fried fish and hush puppies to participants. After eating, and a brief fishing lesson, we handed out fishing poles so each participant could try



Look for this logo to identify future programs

The First Year

their hand at the sport, many for their first time. Kent Park Lake did not disappoint. Each participant caught a fish, or three! Smiling faces and squeals of excitement were frequent throughout the program.

The following programs included bow fishing at Lake MacBride, shooting sports at Hawkeye Wildlife Management area's shotgun range, hunting (firearms/archery) at Kent Park's beautiful Youth Group Camp, fly tying at Kent Park's Conservation Education Center, and ice fishing at Kent Park Lake. Each program in the series was full of moments of excitement and connection. Some skills were harder to learn than others but everyone walked away knowing more than before. We were thrilled each time we saw a familiar face of someone who had attended a prior program. It was truly an honor for us to host, share, teach, and live these experiences!

We have a full series planned for the 2022/23 year so be on the lookout for more of these offerings from us (JCC) and our co-hosts (Corridor Outdoor Adventures and Iowa DNR). If you have wanted to learn an outdoor skill but have no friend or family member who is able to share this knowledge with you, these are the programs for you! To be added to the Outdoor Skills email list or to donate gear or funds to this skills series contact mtrana@johnsoncountyiowa.gov.

Left: a participant at the Intro to Fishing program enjoys a quiet moment along the shore. **Top right:** a participant with his catch at the Intro to Fishing program; **Bottom right:** Trying out the bow at the Intro to Archery program.





Fire Rx

A Deeper Look at Prescribed Fire in Johnson County

Awareness for the value of prescribed fire has steadily grown in recent years, especially with the public education campaign around fire management that has grown out of the devastating wildfires in western states. JCC has utilized prescribed fire for ecosystem management for many decades now. Following a record year of prescribed fire for JCC, we decided to share a deeper look at our fire management program, both with historical and current context. Naturalist Kristen Morrow interviewed Natural Resource Manager and "Burn Boss" Dave Wehde to learn more. As part of his position, Dave has been running JCC's fire management program since it first started in the 1980s. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Kristen Can you talk about the purpose of prescribed burns for prairie and forest management?

Dave In forest-management, one of the main reasons we burn is because our native woodland trees are fire dependent for germination, and they need full sunlight to germinate. Oaks and hickories would be in that group.

Prairies in general evolved with fire, and the plants are adapted to fire, an example of that is the volatile chemicals that many prairie species contain. Prairies in general are sunlight loving plants. They don't like to be shaded, and fire helped push the trees in the woodland edge back. Fires also help to rejuvenate the prairie. After about five to six years, a typical prairie reaches its highest fuel load, meaning that the dead vegetation is really built up. The depth of prairie thatch starts to slow down the growth dynamics of the established plants. Fire opens up sunlight again by removing the built up thatch layer, while also recycling nutrients back into a usable form. Also, the black surface of a burned prairie absorbs sunlight and creates a warm substrate. That higher temperature soil helps other species germinate.

In both systems, we're also trying to control non-native vegetation. Some of our non-native species are not evolved for fire, so prescribed fires can be really effective to keep them at bay. Fires help to expunge the seed banks, which is where seed lies dormant in the soil, in extreme cases up to 25 years. Over time, repeat burns can steadily kill that seed for some species. But

this can be tricky, because some of our non-native species evolved with fire in other parts of the world, so there's a lot to balance.

Kristen Can you describe the conditions that you're looking for on a good burn day?

Dave I'm looking for light to moderate winds, a relative humidity (RH) of 40% to 50%, and clear skies. That is an ideal day. We can modify where we burn if the conditions aren't perfect. For example, if there is lower RH and stronger eye-level winds, it may be too dangerous to be in the prairie, but in the forest the eye-level winds are a lot lighter, so it may be safe to burn there instead.



Kristen What are some of the challenges in planning a burn?

Dave We look at quite a few things: fuel load, invasive species problem, location of the burn unit, fuel type, and hazards. To elaborate a little bit more on hazards, we especially we look at issues relating to the direction, density, and the lift of the smoke being produced by the prescribed burn. We also consider the heat the fire will generate based on weather and fuel conditions. We try to avoid putting any low smoke on the ground that can affect people, or putting any smoke on a road system, which can



affect driving and cause accidents. It's all very seriously thought out. In the winter months, I prepare detailed burn plans that layout the guidelines for conducting a prescribed burn on each unit. These guidelines include equipment needs, staffing needs, weather condition parameters and other points which are all carefully considered before ignition occurs. The ultimate goal is to safely conduct the prescribed burn to meet the objectives of the burn and contain the burn within the burn unit boundaries.

Kristen Has climate change affected your ability to plan for fires or conduct fires?

Dave I was on my first prescribed fire in 1982, helping burn with The Iowa Nature Conservancy and Indiangrass Hills. Over the years, in my experience, there seems to be more wind and springs seems cooler than what it used to be. Years ago, it seems like we could get a whole week straight in almost every year of about that same wind conditions, and now we have these pressure gradients that brings the wind way up to 50 mph. I don't remember those. You know, those winds are more associated with storms, but not these pressure gradient winds. It's different. And maybe that's a sign of that hot and cold air really causing turbulence in the atmosphere. There's something changing.

Above left: The burn crew starts each burn with a safety debrief, during which the crew reviews the latest weather forecast, reviews the burn unit in detail, and reviews crew assignments. **Above right:** A burn crew member monitors the fire, ready to spray water from the water tank if needed.



Left: Dave Wehde conducting a burn in 1988 at Valley View Prairie in Kent Park, in the early years of JCC's fire management program. Equipment and protective clothing was minimal. **Right:** Dave Wehde using a drip torch for ignition of a burn in 2006, wearing the protective clothing and gear standard for the fire crew today.

Kristen Tell me more about what prescribed fire was like here starting out? When did the fire management program start, and what was the culture like around prescribed fire?

Dave JCC's first prescribed burn was around 1984 or '85 at the Solon Prairie. And the first one here in Kent Park was in 1988. At first, prescribed fire was a really radical and polarizing idea, even or especially internally. The policy was strictly that any type of fire in the park was to be put out immediately, it was the Smokey the Bear policy here. It took a lot convincing and changing set attitudes, helped along by some enlightened board members, professors and others in the education community that helped change the mindset. In the greater community, in the beginning, people were a little shocked, you know? But I think a lot of it kind of turned into fascination and education by our naturalists helped a lot. We did a lot of programs and kind of took it to the people. We got out on the prairie and taught about bringing natural resource management into a different realm, one tied more into recreating native historical ecosystems, and fire being a natural process in the environment.

Kristen How else has the prescribed burn program changed? Clothing? Training? Equipment?

Dave In the early days, training wasn't available

either, or very little. Starting around the late 1990's some training started to become available, mostly training for western fires, but at least we had classes to go and get certifications. And most of the information can still be plugged into the grassland fires here. Clothing has changed a lot. We started out with blue jeans, a pair of boots, a pair of gloves, no helmets, no PPE. Today, we have PPE, and it's saved a lot of people's lives. We use Nomex material, which is fire resistant, and that helps shield our bodies from the dangers of not only catching our clothing on fire, but it helps to reflect the heat. Today, we wear helmets, which protect our heads from falling objects, especially the risk of burning trees, and goggles to protect our eyes from burning objects, smoke, and heat. We also use smoke masks on occasion when we need them to help filter out some of the smoke that can really be a hazard and disabling out there. It's much like the structural fire people that go into burning buildings, but our stuff is lighter weight.

Equipment over the years has changed quite a bit too. When I started out, it was pretty much just a match and a rake to light the fires. You drop a match and drag around grass to move the fire. We also started with just the backpack pump sprayers. Those were made out of metal, heavy, and they leaked all over you. And but they were pretty effective. We use these to spray water for fire suppression.

Another suppression tool used then and now is a flapper, which is a long handled staff with a broad flap of rubber that you can smother small flames with. Now, we've gone more and more to mechanical sprayers, though we still keep the backpack sprayers with us in case we need them. Recently we've gone a lot to UTV's with slip-on water units, which converts them into a little fire trucks, and we use those pretty extensively. We also use ignition devices now, like drip torches. A drip torch is a canister with a long spout that curves, and has a wick on the end that is similar to a cigarette lighter. There's a mixture of gasoline and diesel inside, and when you tip it over, the fuel passes through the spout and comes out at a point where it drips onto the lit wick, and then that just puts droplets of fire on the ground. We can move really fast with it, and it's amazing what you can do - we use a lot of different strategic firing techniques thanks to them.

Kristen Are there any downsides to using fire?

Dave There can be some. Burning in the fall has some advantages for forbs but with the loss of habitat in Iowa, I worry about removing vital habitat right before winter. You also need to be really careful not to burn too late in the spring. You want to do the best you can not to burn when reptiles and amphibians and other fire sensitive animals are active. At one time, historically, there were millions and millions of acres of continuous prairie, and there would be places where those animals could escape to survive a fire. But now habitats are little postage stamps, so there isn't anywhere to go. Sometimes we'll do burns when the relative humidity is higher, which increases the fuel moisture and causes the fire to skip around a bit, leaving little habitat refuges. This is important for moths and butterflies too, and there are many species that overwinter in leaves and stems of prairie plants, so you want

Right: Burn crew member Brad Freidhof in the role of "flapper," patrols the line, ready to suppress embers and small flames with the "flapper" tool in his hand.

to keep enough of that around each year for those species. Ultimately, we're trying to find that middle ground, maintain the habitat they need while doing as little harm as possible.

Kristen Any closing thoughts on things we didn't cover for prescribed burns?

Dave Well, we started off in prairie restoration in the early '80s, and at that time we were managing just two acres of real prairie. Then, just planting a switch grass field was something, you know. It wasn't a prairie, but these tall native grasses started to look like prairie and we started to dream about recreating a real prairie . . . and then we just went crazy with it. I never would have thought that all of the cornfield out where the Knight Prairie overlook is now would be prairie. That was all cornfield and pine trees. And now we have the prairies at Cedar River Crossing that are so big and endless. Recreating prairies got really addictive. It still is, trying to replicate something that had been destroyed when all we had left was these little prairie relics to look at. Seeing how far we've come is pretty hopeful.



Ten Common Moth Families

There are over 2,000 species of moths found in Iowa. Compare that to only 127 species of butterflies and you begin to appreciate the incredible diversity within this group of animals! The families pictured on the left side include some of the most commonly seen moths in this part of Iowa. Generally, moths can be grouped by their body shape and size.

Use the white silhouettes on the left side of the page as a guide to categorize the moths pictured to the right. Then, head outside at night and try to identify moths attracted to outdoor lights. Want to learn more about moths? Attend our Moth Night program July 23rd! More information can be found in our program guide on page 14



Tiger Moths
(Arctiinae)



Snout Moths
(Crambidae)



Geometrid Moths
(Geometridae)



The Owlet Moths
(Nocturidae)



Prominent Moths
(Notodontidae)



Plume Moths
(Pterophoridae)



Pyralid Moths
(Pyralidae)



Giant Silk Moths
(Saturniidae)



Sphinx Moths
(Sphingidae)



Tortricid Moths
(Tortricidae)



Obtuse Yellow Moth



Gray Furcula Moth



Raspberry Pyrausta Moth



Striped Oak Webworm Moth



Small-eyed Sphinx Moth



Chickweed Geometer



Pale Tiger Moth



Filbertworm Moth



Morning-glory Plume Moth



Honey Locust Moth

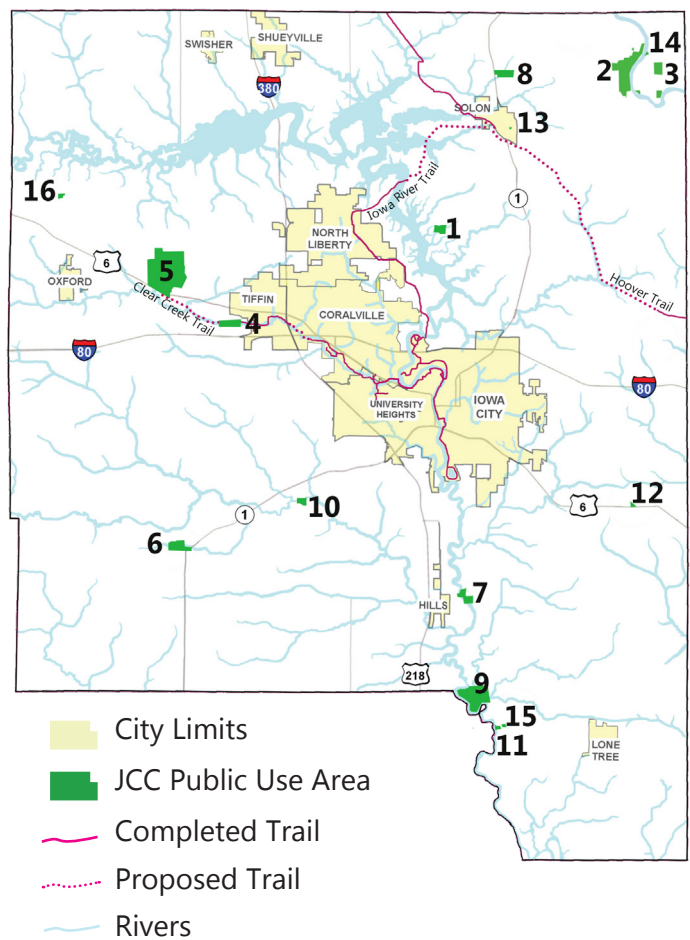


Wilderness Scholarships

The JCC Education Team strives to diversify the participation in our life-changing wilderness trips. One of the primary ways to do that is by ensuring full and partial scholarships are available and that the trip fees are not a barrier for prospective students. This year, we will be hosting two wilderness backpacking trips. One, in partnership with the United Action for Youth, will be held exclusively for underrepresented minority youth. We want to ensure each student can participate, no matter their financial means. We rely on community support to keep the scholarship fund full and available to any student who needs it. If you would like to donate to the Wilderness Trek Scholarship Fund, please email kmorrow@johnsoncountyiowa.gov or make out a check to The Friends of Johnson County Conservation, memo Wilderness Scholarships, and mail to F.W. Kent Park, Attn: FJCC, 2048 Hwy 6 NW, Oxford, IA 52322.

JCC Public Use Areas

1. Cangleska Wakan	132 acres
2. Cedar River Crossing	560 acres
3. Ciha Fen Preserve	81 acres
4. Clear Creek Conservation Area	87 acres
5. F.W. Kent Park	1,062 acres
6. Frytown Conservation Area	94 acres
7. Hills Access	40 acres
8. Malinda Reif Reilly Fen & Prairie	100 acres
9. Pechman Creek Delta	380 acres
10. Phebe Timber	27 acre
11. River Junction Access	12 acres
12. Scott Church Park	5 acres
13. Solon Prairie	3 acres
14. Sutliff Bridge & Access	1/2 acre
15. Walker Park	3 acres
16. Williams Prairie Preserve	21 acres



Paved Trail Segments Managed by JCC

Clear Creek Trail	1.3 miles
Hoover Trail	6 miles
Iowa River Trail	3.5 miles

More information about JCC public use areas can be found through our website: www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation

Program/Event Guide

How to Sign Up:

Programs are free unless a fee is listed. Sign up for all programs is online at the link below, unless stated otherwise. To sign up, **click or scan** the QR code to the right or go to: <https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation/events>. For questions or sign-up help, call **319-645-1011**.



*Do you require any specific accessibility measures in order to comfortably participate in these programs? Reach out to us at 319-645-1011 for special accommodations.

June

Nature Buds - Frogs, Bugs, and Mud!

Wednesday, June 8, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Nature Buds is a program for kids ages 3-5. It often involves hands-on STEM and arts stations around a nature topic. This month, we'll spend all of it outside and catching creatures at the wetlands edge!

Explorers - Frogs, Bugs, and Mud!

Wednesday, June 8, 2:00-3:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Explorers is a program for kids K-4. The program features hands-on science and art stations and outdoor exploration. This month, we'll spend all of it outside and catching creatures at the wetlands edge!

Raptor Meet & Greet

Saturday, June 11, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Whip-poor-will Shelter, F.W. Kent Park

Raptology, a local raptor and wildlife education group based in Iowa City, will be providing free raptor programs! After a presentation with live raptors, participants can explore raptor artifacts, like talons, wings, and owl pellets up close, and maybe even take a photo with a raptor! No registration is needed. This event will be canceled for heavy rain, storms, or extreme heat.

Froggin' Fun

Wednesday, June 15, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Spend an evening catching and learning about frogs, toads, and tadpoles. After a short training on frog ID, we'll head out to catch aquatic critters. Tools will be provided. Participants should be prepared to get wet/muddy!

Woman/Trans*/Femme (WTF) Bikepacking

Saturday & Sunday, June 18 & 19
F.W. Kent Park

Join JCC naturalists and the Iowa City Bike Library on a local introductory bikepacking adventure. Special emphasis on conservation and holding a safe space for those who identify as woman, trans*, and femme. Registration will be with the Iowa City Bike Library and an informational session will be held on the Tuesday before the event to help participants prepare. This event is an overnight adventure, but you are welcome to bike out with the group and back on your own if an overnight stay is not feasible for you.

Raptor Program with Raptology

Friday, June 17, 7:00-8:00 p.m.
Cangleska Wakan

Come meet and learn about two different birds of prey with Raptology. This program will take place outside on the limestone amphitheater.

Outdoor Skills Series: Intro to Jug Fishing

Saturday, June 18, 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Iowa River (location details upon registration)

Are you interested in learning alternative methods for fishing? Join us for a paddle on the Iowa River and maybe catch a fish or two using a unique method. The Outdoor Skills courses are especially designed for those who do not family/friend connections to gain these skills. This series is in partnership with Corridor Outdoor Adventure and the Iowa DNR.

Story Time in the Park

Tuesday, June 21, 10:00 a.m.
Whip-poor-will Shelter, F.W. Kent Park

Read beyond the beaten path with the Coralville Public Library! Enjoy the outdoors as you listen to stories and songs about nature. The nearby Conservation Education Center will be open until noon for post-story time exploration.

Pack Hike – Summer Solstice!

Tuesday, June 21, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Cedar River Crossing

Bring your four-legged best friend on a 3-mile hike into one of the most wildlife-rich JCC properties. Enjoy all the sights, sounds, and smells! Dogs need to remain on a 6 foot leash at all times and pet waste removed. We will finish at dusk – a great way to celebrate the first day of summer!

Queer Hikers of Iowa

Wednesday, June 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

JCC is partnering with Queer Hikers of Iowa to offer the first ever QHI event in Johnson County! We will hike the trails of Kent Park and learn about some of the amazing flora and fauna along the way.

O.W.L.S. Prairie Hike

Wednesday, June 22, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Valley View, F.W. Kent Park

Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors, or O.W.L.S. is a program for folks 65 years or older, who are looking for ways to get outdoors this summer. This hike will be 1.5 miles, at a pace comfortable for all. The trail is grass and over mostly level terrain.

Grow Mushrooms on your Trash

Thursday, June 23, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Cangleska Wakan
Fee: \$5

Learn all about cultivating your own edible mushrooms at home with very little investment. Make your own mushroom grow kit, recycled from common household materials, so you can start growing your own mushrooms now!

Firefly Night Hike

Thursday, June 23, 8:45-10:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

This family event will start with free exploration to catch and observe fireflies (tools provided). The program will finish with an optional mile-long night hike through a dark forest trail to admire pure firefly magic.

Raptor Meet & Greet

Saturday, June 25, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Whip-poor-will Shelter, F.W. Kent Park
See June 11 event for details.

July

Raptor Meet & Greet

Saturday, July 9, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Whip-poor-will Shelter, F.W. Kent Park
See June 11 event for details.

Prairie Night Hike

Wednesday, July 20, 8:00-9:30 p.m.
Valley View, F.W. Kent Park

After sunset is often the best time to explore the prairie during the scorching summer heat. On this hike, we'll enjoy the sunset, cicada song, and prairie flowers at their peak. This hike will be 1.5 miles long on a grass trail. Leashed dogs welcome.

Outdoor Skills Series: Intro to Fly Fishing

Thursday, July 21, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Location TBD, dependent on water levels
If you have always wanted to learn to fly fish but don't know where to start, this program is for you. Dust off your rod and reel or use one of ours. Learn the parts of the rod, reel, and line, a bit about different types of flies, and basic fly rod/reel casting. Then dip a line in the water and see if you can catch a fish! Space is limited; a second program will be offered on August 11 to accommodate more people. Sign up for only one of the two.

Moth Night

Saturday, July 23, 8:30-11:30 p.m.
Cangleska Wakan

Celebrate the incredible diversity of moths with us through self-guided educational activities and an illuminated night hike through the woods! We will also be sampling for moths all night in celebration of national moth week. Everyone is encouraged to learn, observe, and document as many moths as they can.

Paper Making and Painting at the Park

Thursday, July 28, 3:30-5:30 p.m.
Thursday, August 4, 3:30-5:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Come enjoy channeling your inner artist while immersed in nature! Participants will learn how to make their own recycled paper and eco-friendly painting pigments using natural materials found at F.W. Kent Park! This event is a two part series and is designed especially for kids 7-13, but any age can sign up (kids required to have an adult accompany them). Our first meeting will take place on Thursday, July 28th where participants will create their own recycled paper of varying color and texture. To allow drying time, participants will meet again a week later on Thursday, August 4th to retrieve their paper and make their own natural pigments to paint with!

August

Naturalist Hike

Saturday, August 6, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
Cedar River Crossing

Embrace your wild side for a swamp hike through the south half of Cedar River Crossing. This 3-mile hike is a quest through wetlands and tall prairie to reach a pond with thousands of rose mallow at peak bloom. Hikers may walk through thigh-high water in some places and tall natural vegetation along much of the route. Leashed dogs welcome.

Raptor Meet & Greet

Saturday, August 6, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Whip-poor-will Shelter, F.W. Kent Park
See June 11 event for details.

Outdoor Skills Series: Intro to Fly Fishing

Thursday, Aug 11, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Location TBD, dependent on water levels
See July 21 event for details.

Nature Buds - Creekstomp

Wednesday, August 17, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Cangleska Wakan
See June 8 event for details.

Explorers - Creekstomp

Wednesday, August 17, 1:00-2:30 p.m.
Cangleska Wakan
See June 8 event for details.

O.W.L.S. Forest Hike

Tuesday, August 23, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Cangleska Wakan
See June 30 event for details.

Foraged Pottery

Wednesday, August 24 31st 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Cangleska Wakan

Learn where and how to harvest/process clay locally during the first class. Then create with the foraged clay during the second class. Finished pottery will be pit fired by the instructor and should be ready for pick-up approximately two weeks after the final class.

More Nature Fun!

Explore the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park!



Summer Visitor Hours:
Memorial Day to Labor Day
Saturdays and Sundays
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM *new hours!*

Check out an Adventure Backpack!

We're excited to have three new Adventure Backpacks available for free check out during CEC visitor hours! The backpacks were created and curated by Iowa Master Naturalist volunteers Kathy Martensen and Anna Chapman in partnership with JCC naturalists. There is a "Wetland Pack," "Prairie Pack," and "Forest Hike Pack." Each is filled with guidebooks, exploration tools, and activity guides/prompts. These are designed for kids, but could be equally enjoyable for adults!



Hike the Storybook Trail!

This 1/2 mile accessible trail loops around the CEC. A new children's nature story will be posted every two weeks starting in June.

Fill out the JCC Passport!

Challenge yourself to explore each of JCC's properties, and fill out our passport along the way. People who complete the Passport can receive a nature patch reward! Download the password at: <https://linktr.ee/johnsoncountyconservation>





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Compass Plant (left) and Culver's Root (right) fill the Valley View Prairie at F.W. Kent Park. Join for the Prairie Night Hike on July 20th to enjoy both at peak bloom (details on page 13).