

Conservation Connection

Johnson County Conservation Newsletter

Introducing: Two Horse Farm

Frances Owen – Naturalist

In 1978 when Pat and Enid Cancilla purchased what would come to be known as Two Horse Farm, they envisioned a country home they could preserve and at the same time, make their own. Originally from Canada, they expected their family might live on the property for many generations, and treated both the buildings and the land surrounding them as an extension of their family. You can feel the love and appreciation for this special place from the moment you turn down the long and winding lane off Sugar Bottom Road.

Initially, the home located on the property was very primitive. The original house, thought to have been a Sears Roebuck & Co kit house built around 1890, had running water and electricity, but no plumbing. The land around the house was still farmed, and at the time was planted in crops like corn and hay. Enid had a background in historic restoration and was interested in maintaining the character of the house and old barns on the property, which is exactly what they did. A seamless addition to the original house, finished in 1992, increased the number of bedrooms and bathrooms and made it more practical for their family. Enid took great care to ensure all of the trim and structural details matched the original house perfectly on the inside and out.



Above: A view of the 1992 addition to the farmhouse. The summer kitchen is seen on the left side.

Outside the home, this 83-acre property boasts a corn crib built in 1909, a summer kitchen close to the house, and a larger barn built in 1913. The summer kitchen would have been used to cook and can foods for later use while remaining outside the main home during the heat of the summer. Summer kitchens were used historically to prevent heating up the home before air conditioning was available. The barn was recognized by the Iowa Barn Foundation as a barn of distinction, due to its great condition and in large part, to the preservation work that has been continued by Enid and Pat's daughter Erin, and son-in-law Brian Melloy.

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A Note from the Director

Larry Gullett - Executive Director



Elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter you will find a feature article about the recent acquisition of the "Two Horse Farm". The project would not have happened without the generosity of Erin and Brian Melloy and their family's commitment to protecting the earth. The name "Two Horse Farm" comes from the number of horses it would have taken to farm

a property this size – roughly 90 acres. The project evolved from the recent donation/purchase of the nearby Cangleska Wakan, from Dick Schwab and Katherine Burford.

After the Conservation Board completed the Cangleska Wakan project, Erin and Brian Melloy contacted officials to inquire about protecting their property and adding it to the public lands system. The naming process of Cangleska Wakan (the name refers to the sacred hoop and interconnectedness of all things), included input from indigenous tribes to authorize use of the name. Representatives from the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska suggested that if the opportunity ever arose to obtain a property owned by the Iowa Tribe, it would be very meaningful to them as a place to connect to their homeland.

Pictured Right: Poles mark the center, and boundary of the seven acre circle donated to the Iowa Tribe. The many colored flags on the poles are symbolic, and represent earth and water, among other things.



The donation and bargain sale concept of the Two Horse Farm project allowed that dream to become reality. Erin and Brian Melloy were integral in making this happen, and they donated seven acres of the original Two Horse Farm to the Iowa Tribe. The high point of land on the property, blanketed in prairie and overlooking the Iowa River Valley (named after the Iowa people), was formally transferred to the Iowa Tribe on September 12, 2022

All those involved with the project including the Melloy and Cancilla families, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, IDNR REAP Grant Program, Johnson County officials and members of the Iowa Tribe are all hopeful this cultural sharing of resources along the Iowa River will lead to a better understanding of our relationship with

the earth and all the other creatures we share it with. The property is a great place to walk, contemplate and enjoy being outdoors.



Above: The seven-acre donation to the Iowa Tribe consists of restored prairie and woodland, overlooking the Iowa River Valley.

JCC Staff Updates!

Brittny Bandy: New JCC Office Assistant

I was born in Orange County California and spent my youth exploring the Mojave Desert and Sierra Nevada Mountains with my family. I moved to Iowa in middle school and spent my teenage years learning what Midwest Comfort is and making it a part of my own personal lifestyle and culture. When I am not going on an adventure with my son, Arlo, and partner, James – you can find me buried in a book, gardening, or recreating outdoors- especially in the winter! I am very family focused and enjoy the simple easy moments in life the best. My early career was focused in luxury customer service, where I learned invaluable skills that I take with me everywhere in life. After realizing my passion lies with conservation I earned my AAS in Parks and Natural Resources at Kirkwood Community College and continued on to earn my BA in Sustainability and Leadership in Natural Resource Management through Oregon State University. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of amazing organizations like the Iowa Raptor Project, Iowa Women in Natural Resources, and participate in reviving

Kirkwood's Women in Conservation Club as well as act as President in the Kirkwood Conservation Club. I worked for three years as a Park Ranger with the US Army Corps of Engineers at Coralville Lake before finding my way to Johnson County Conservation as the Office Assistant. As the Office Assistant I am able to use both my knowledge of conservation and my customer service skills to accommodate visitors and peers alike, as well as have more quality time to spend with my family.



JCC Staff Updates!

Natalie Stowe: New JCC Custodian

My hometown is Williamsburg, Iowa. As far back as I can remember my Dad and I would spend time fishing, hunting pheasants, mushroom hunting or anything outdoors. One of my favorite things about pheasant hunting has been our hunting dogs. We have had a Vizsla, Brittany and a German Shorthair Pointer, all of which were great dogs with unique hunting styles. We also spend many days afield fishing walleye and crappie.

My love of the outdoors led me to study Parks and Natural Resources at Kirkwood followed by a pursuit of a Bachelor's Degree in Conservation Management at Upper Iowa University (UIU). I graduated from Kirkwood Community College in 2019 and received my Bachelor's Degree from UIU in 2021.

I've enjoyed internships with Colorado Parks and Wildlife working as a sworn Park Ranger and Maintenance Technician for 2 summers. I also interned with the Butler County Conservation Board as a Naturalist.

I am excited to begin my full time career here with Johnson County Conservation where I worked as a seasonal on the Natural Resource Management crew. Kent Park is a beautiful well-maintained park that I am very proud to be associated with.

The previous custodian, Alicia Claus-Bartels will now be stationed at Two Horse Farm as a Field Worker.



Awards



Streb Construction Company, Inc., McClure Engineering Company, and the Johnson County Conservation Board were presented the 2021 Iowa Concrete Paving Association Award for Iowa's "Best" Recreational Trails PCC Paving Project (pictured left) at the 58th Annual Concrete Paving Workshop held in Des Moines in February. Thank you to the Iowa Concrete Paving Association for this honor and thanks to Streb Construction Company and McClure Engineering for the outstanding work on this project.

JCC received the National Honor Award (pictured right) for projects under \$5 million from the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists, based in Annapolis, Maryland. Stanley Consultants and the JCCB were both recognized. This is a very prestigious award and we are grateful.



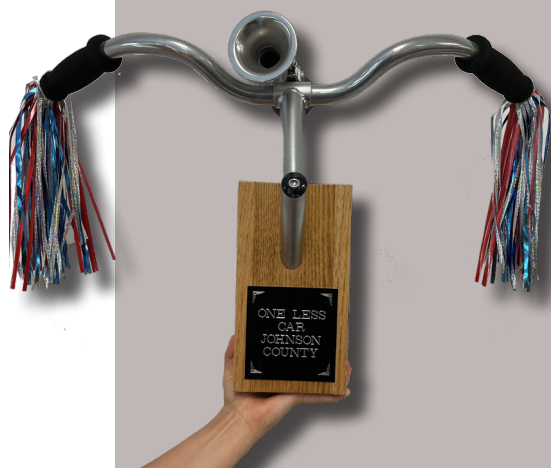
In 2021, the Johnson County Conservation was awarded 1st Place in the over 20,000 population category. Pictured left is the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, Johnson County Conservation staff and the Johnson County Conservation Board. Everyone in this photo played a vital role in this achievement and the continued success of Johnson County Conservation. This is only the 2nd time Johnson County Conservation has been awarded the 1st place award.

Solar Progress Throughout JCC Areas

This fall, installation of solar arrays at Hills Campground and Access and the Conservation Education Center (CEC) parking area in Kent Park was completed. The array at Hills Campground is a 10.88 kW system, while the array at the CEC is a 17.8 kW system. The arrays at both sites will produce a large portion of the energy needs for each area. Next on the list: solar arrays will be installed as part of the Kent Park campground renovation, with both rooftop and ground-mounted arrays installed near the new showerhouse. So far, the three other solar arrays installed by JCC have produced 97.24 MWh in their year of use, the equivalent of saving 75.28 tons of CO₂ emissions or planting 1138 trees.



Conservation Department Wins One Less Car Competition!



This May, the Conservation Department won the annual One Less Car Competition, a county-wide employee competition to encourage alternative transportation for work commutes. The Department won thanks to the human-powered efforts of Blake Harris and Mike Alexander, who biked to work on multiple days. Blake completed a 34-mile bike commute to his office at the Sutliff Operation Center, and Mike completed several 20-mile bike commutes to his office at Pechman Creek Delta. Officially, the Conservation Department tied with the Board of Supervisors Office, who logged some serious carpool miles. Way to go, all!



Interested in taking a more active role in climate action/education? Become a Climate Ambassador! The City of Iowa City's Climate Ambassador program will be accepting applicants from Sept. 12 - 30 for the next session, which runs from Oct. 13 to Dec. 1, 2022 (no meeting the week of Thanksgiving). As with previous trainings, group meetings will last 60-90 minutes each week. Those interested can learn more and apply to participate on the Iowa City Climate Ambassador's webpage:

<https://tinyurl.com/22dz35d8>



Climate Fest - Sept 21-24

Head to Iowa City's Climate Fest to learn about climate action that the city is taking, and steps you can take in your own life! For more information about this multi-day event, visit: <https://www.icgov.org/ic-climate-fest>.

Wednesday, Sept 21

5-8 PM at Big Grove Brewery, Iowa City

JCC and other area conservation organizations will staff booths to teach about the vital conservation work taking place to help slow the climate crisis. JCC will have information about the role of prairies in climate change and will have free native prairie seed.

Introducing: Two Horse Farm continued from page 1



Above: An endangered Rusty Patched Bumblebee caught at Two Horse Farm. She was trapped inside the vial for less than five minutes for identification before she was released on site again.

At first, row crop agriculture continued on the site but it wasn't long before Enid and Pat's other daughter, Jodeane, was convincing them to take the surrounding crop land out of agricultural production. This switch from agriculture, back to native vegetation became a labor of love for the entire family, and their lasting legacy. They began small, a piece at a time. Reseeding the prairie was a family affair and everyone, including Enid and Pat's grandchildren would participate in Prairie Stomps. These were family parties with music and dancing to stomp the new prairie seed into the ground. They also began consulting conservation professionals to help them apply prescribed burns to the property to further enhance the vegetation. At this point, the family has reconstructed approximately 16 acres of prairie on the property.

During the past eleven years, Erin and Brian Melloy continued to work on not only planting native vegetation, but also removing the many non-native plants that now plague Iowa landscapes. They have worked tirelessly to remove large stands of honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and oriental bittersweet from the surrounding woodland.

In addition to the reconstructed prairie, this property boasts just over 60 acres of primarily

oak and hickory forest. Its proximity to Sugar Bottom, the Coralville Reservoir, Lake Macbride State Park, Big Grove Preserve, and Cangleska Wakan (another JCC property), means additional protections for water quality and connected wildlife habitat corridors.

This site hosts several rare plant species as well as the endangered Rusty Patched Bumblebee. Two Horse Farm is open to the public and has a little over two miles of mowed trail starting just south of the house. Additional signage and distinct parking areas will come in time. Come out to enjoy the beauty and solitude of this new public property. Johnson County Conservation will be leading four guided hikes through the fall to introduce people to the site. You can find out more about these and other public events starting on page 9.



Above: A garden borders three sides of the house and boasts an impressive array of species including many natives like the bluebells and dutchman's breeches pictured above. **Below:** A water garden, installed to celebrate Pat and Enid's 50th wedding anniversary. Chairs within the garden provide a quiet place for relaxation in nature.



Another unique feature of Two Horse Farm is that it houses birds cared for by R.A.R.E. (Raptor Advocacy Rehabilitation & Education). This partnership began in 2015, when R.A.R.E. was founded by a group of volunteers including Jodeane Cancilla. The large barn has been modified inside with flight cages to provide a safe place for injured raptors to heal and regain strength before they are released back into the wild. Nearby, a modified corn crib (pictured right) houses non-releaseable birds the group uses for education. If you are interested in learning more about R.A.R.E. or would like to become a volunteer for their organization, visit: theraregroup.org



Above left: A rare showy orchis found blooming on the property. **Above middle:** Shooting star. **Above right:** Maidenhair fern. **Right:** Mullein Foxglove is a rarely found inhabitant of savanna. **Bottom:** Three streams flow intermittently throughout the property.



Cedar River Crossing Parking lot is open!

The new parking lot at the North Access for Cedar River Crossing is now open. This is also the access to the west end of the Sutliff bridge. But more is coming:

Landscaping and planting along the new roadway will be completed by November 15th.

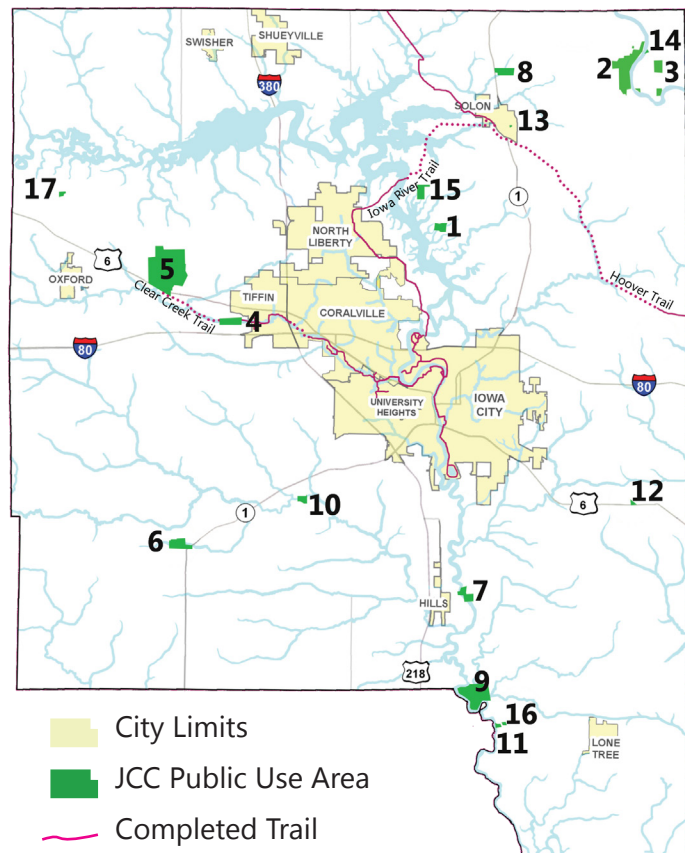
The new restroom, close to the entrance off of Sutliff Road, will be complete by December 1st.

The final park signage and landscaping complete by May 1, 2023.



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. Two Horse Farm	83 acres
16. Walker Park	3 acres
17. 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.

September

Fall Migration Bird Banding Event

Saturday, September 24, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Join federally-certified bird banders for a chance to see birds up close and learn about avian data collection! You'll also learn about fall migration, bird adaptations, and how to bird identification. This is an open house event, so come and go as you please. Bird banding is weather dependent so keep an eye on our Facebook page in the event of weather related cancellations or delays.

Pack Hike at Two Horse Farm Hike

Friday, September 30, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Two Horse Farm (2257 Sugar Bottom Road NE, Solon, IA 52333)

Bring your four-legged best friend on a hike into one of our newest public properties. Enjoy all the sights, sounds, and smells! Dogs need to remain on a six-foot leash at all times and pet waste removed. No dog - no problem! This walk is for humans too.

This hike is designed for infant kiddos, carried kiddos, and up to preK/elementary-aged kiddos, and their accompanying parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, and friends. The hike will be kid-paced, led by little legs and guided by their discoveries. We may cover a mile, we may cover a tenth of a mile – you never know!

CEC Open Hours

Saturday, Oct 22, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Come out to explore the CEC and enjoy the splendor of peak fall colors throughout the park. The CEC will be open for free self-guided exploration. The Storybook Trail will be up, and spooky pumpkins will be hiding amongst the prairie and forest as part of the Annual Pumpkin Scavenger Hunt.

Owl Meet&Greet

Saturday, Oct 22, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Raptology, a local raptor and wildlife education group based in Iowa City, will be providing this free owl program. After a presentation with live owls, participants can explore owl artifacts, like talons, wings, and owl pellets up close, and maybe even take a photo with an owl! No registration is needed.

October

Little Tike Hike

Thursday, October 20, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Two Horse Farm



Nature Buds – Halloween

Wednesday, October 26, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Nature Buds is a program for kids ages 3-5. It involves hands-on STEM and art stations around a nature topic. This month, we'll lean into a Halloween theme through nature.

Junior Explorers – Halloween

Thursday, October 27, 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Junior Explorers is a program for kids ages K-2nd grade. It involves hands-on STEM and arts stations and exploration around a nature topic. This month, we'll lean into a Halloween theme through nature.

Sunset Hike at Two Horse Farm

Thursday, Oct 27, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Two Horse Farm

November

Nature Buds – Seeds

Wednesday, November 16, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park
See October event.

Junior Explorers – Seeds

Thursday, November 17, 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park
See October event.

Two Horse Farm Hike

Saturday, November 19, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Two Horse Farm

December

Sunrise Solstice Saunter

Wednesday, December 21, 6:45 - 9:00 a.m.
Cedar River Crossing

The winter solstice is often seen as a time for re-birth, renewal, and self-reflection. Celebrate the first day of winter and the lengthening of daylight as we watch the sun rise over the astronomical clock in this beautiful natural area. The walk is about 2.5 miles round trip. Accommodations are available upon request to transport individuals with mobility difficulties from the Cedar River Crossing parking area to the clock.



Volunteer Events

Prairie Seed Harvests

Helping to harvest prairie seeds allows volunteers to take up an active role in the restoration of our county's native ecosystems, and all collected seed is used for JCC's restoration projects for the next year. This task is easy for all ages of volunteers, and no background experience is necessary. All locations are subject to change based on seed conditions. Updates will be shared via email with all registered participants. Events dependent on weather and dry seed conditions.

The Full Moon Seed Harvest and Adventure Seed Harvest events each add a unique element to the seed harvest experience. During the Full Moon Seed Harvest, volunteers will harvest through the sunset and moonrise, finishing up by headlamp after dark. The Adventure Seed Harvests include hiking one to three miles, both on- and off-trail, to more remote properties or areas.

Prairie Seed Harvest Dates/Locations:

Wednesday, Sept 21, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Wednesday, Sept 28, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Wednesday, Oct 19, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Ciha Fen Preserve, F.W. Kent Park

Saturday, Nov 5, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
High Point, F.W. Kent Park

Sunset Seed Harvest:

Wednesday, Oct 5, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
William's Prairie State Preserve

Wednesday, Nov 9, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.
Knight Prairie Pavilion, F.W. Kent Park

Full(ish) Moon Seed Harvest:

Monday, Oct 10, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Adventure Seed Harvests:

Wednesday, Oct 26, 9:00 - 12:30 p.m.
Cedar River Crossing, North Entrance

Friday, Nov 4, 9:00 - 12:30 p.m.
Cedar River Crossing, South Entrance

Wednesday, Nov 16, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Valley View, F.W. Kent Park

Volunteer Monarch Tagging Dates/Locations:

Come take part in citizen science and Monarch Butterfly conservation! We need volunteers to help us catch as many wild monarch butterflies as we can. The small tags (tiny stickers) label each butterfly with a unique number. Tagged butterflies will journey 2,000 miles to their winter home in Mexico. This activity is great for all ages. We will supply nets – but we need you! Events dependent on weather conditions. Updates will be shared via email with all registered participants.

Wednesday, Sept 21st, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Two Horse Farm

Wednesday, Sept 28th, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Cedar River Crossing, North Access



Iowa River Clean Up

Saturday, Oct 8, 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Hills Campground & Access, Hills, IA

Help beautify the Iowa River! Over eight years of this annual event, volunteers have removed 65 tons of trash and over 1000 tires from a 10-mile stretch of river! Volunteers are needed both in canoes and on land to remove junk. After a full and satisfying day of positive earth work, an after party will be held at Big Grove Brewery with free drink tokens provided for all volunteers, donated by Big Grove. This event may be canceled if the river is too low/high. To sign up, go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/iowarivercleanup>

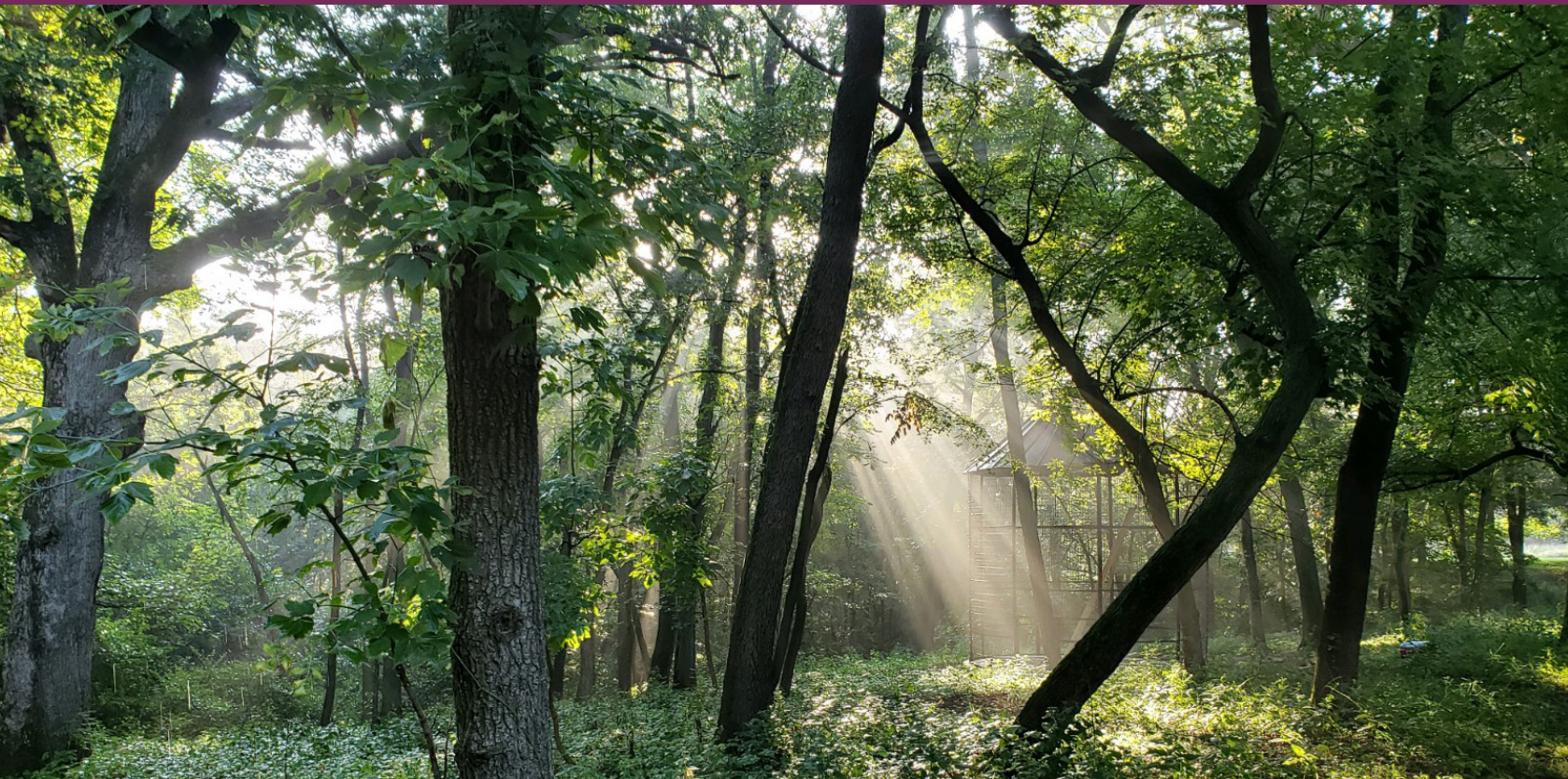


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Rays of sunlight filter through the forest canopy at Two Horse Farm. Be on the lookout for public events here to help you learn how to explore this stunning landscape.