

Fall 2025

Conservation Connection

Johnson County Conservation Newsletter

Launch of the Outdoor Youth Corps

In the summer of 2025, Johnson County Conservation launched the Outdoor Youth Corps (OYC), a new conservation-focused teen job program. OYC is an extension of the Youth Empowered to Serve (YES) program and is made possible through a partnership with Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County and with support from the City of Iowa City and Heritage Trees of Johnson County. The program aimed to expose teens to a wide range of careers in conservation, build community, and connect youth to local resources.

For six weeks this summer, six Johnson County teens participated in training, work projects, and experienced much of what Iowa outdoors has to offer. Amongst other things, teens facilitated public outreach on raptors and reptiles at both

Kent Park and at community sites including the Coralville Food Pantry and the Iowa City Public Library. They helped prep materials and event space for conservation events, such as our popular Moth Night and the Native Plant Series. And, they assisted with the installation of bird-friendly window strike deterrents at our education center.

Networking and career exposure was a key program component. Teens met with a wide variety of professionals working in conservation or other “green fields”, including land managers, wildlife rehabbers, outdoor educators, urban planners, science communications professionals, park designers, researchers, and professors.

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During the first week of Outdoor Youth Corps, teens assisted the Iowa City Parks & Recreation Department and US Fish & Wildlife Staff in removing invasive mullein plants from Iowa City's sand prairie.



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A Brief from Brad

Time to Keep the Promise: Fund Iowa's Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund.



In 2010, Iowans made their voices heard loud and clear. Nearly two-thirds of voters—63%—approved a constitutional amendment to create the **Iowa Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund**, a permanent and dedicated funding source to protect our state's land, water, and outdoor heritage. This was no narrow margin; it

was a supermajority. It showed that Iowans of all political stripes value clean water, healthy soil, thriving wildlife, and outdoor spaces where families can connect with nature.

Yet, more than a decade later, the Trust Fund remains empty. Why? Because the legislature has never taken the final step—raising the state sales tax by three-eighths of a cent, as outlined in the amendment. Until that happens, the fund sits dormant, and the projects that could transform Iowa's natural resources remain underfunded or out of reach.

The Trust Fund is more than a line in the constitution. It's a forward-looking investment plan that directs dollars where they are needed most:



The trust is meant to support wildlife habitat, water quality, soil conservation, and recreation.

- **Water quality improvements** to reduce pollution and protect drinking water sources.
- **Soil conservation practices** that help farmers keep topsoil in place and boost long-term productivity.
- **Wildlife habitat restoration** that supports hunting, fishing, and biodiversity.
- **Parks, trails, and recreation projects** that strengthen rural and urban communities, attract businesses, and improve quality of life.

Other states have moved ahead with dedicated conservation funds, and they are reaping the rewards. Meanwhile, Iowa is falling behind—despite having a plan overwhelmingly approved by its own people.

Funding the Trust isn't just about protecting natural resources; it's about keeping faith with Iowans. When citizens vote by such a wide margin to establish a conservation fund, it is a mandate. Leaving the Trust Fund empty undermines that mandate and delays the work needed to address some of Iowa's most pressing

challenges: impaired waterways, eroding soils, and shrinking access to outdoor spaces.

Iowa's legislators have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to act. By funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, they will honor the will of the people, protect our state's heritage, and create a lasting legacy for generations to come.

It's time to keep the promise. It's time to fund the Trust.

JCC Staff Updates: Promotions & New Faces at JCC

Dave "Gus" Gustafson – Operations Superintendent

Gus started with the department back in 2004 as a Field Worker I and has worked his way up through nearly every operations role we have. Over the years he's served as Field Worker II, Utilities Person, and most recently Assistant Operations Supervisor. His knowledge of our operations program runs deep, and we're thrilled to see him step into the Operations Superintendent position.



Jeremy Rieck – Natural Resource Manager

Jeremy also joined in 2004, starting as a Vegetation Technician (later called Natural Resource Management Specialist). He's played a huge role in growing our natural resource management program from a small two-person crew to today's team of eight. Along the way, he's become a certified Arborist, trained himself in GIS mapping, and built a wealth of knowledge that will serve him well as Natural Resource Manager.



Ed Kringle – Assistant Operations Superintendent

Ed began his career with us as a seasonal staff member before being hired full-time in 2011 as a Field Worker I. In 2015 he became our Trails Field Worker II, where he's been instrumental in maintaining and improving our trail systems. A University of Wisconsin–River Falls graduate with a degree in Conservation, Ed grew up in Rice Lake, Wisconsin and now lives in Swisher with his wife and two boys. We're excited to see him bring his experience and leadership to the Assistant Operations Superintendent role.



Gabe Trimpe – Field Worker I

Gabe joins us as a Field Worker I, stepping into a position left open when one of our staff advanced to a new role with Linn County Conservation. He brings valuable experience from his time with the City of West Branch Public Works Department, where he was involved in a wide variety of community maintenance and operations projects. We're excited to welcome him to the team and look forward to the energy he'll bring to our operations crew.



Gage Hazen-Fabor – Natural Resource Specialist

Starting September 2, Gage will take on the Natural Resource Specialist position at F.W. Kent Park, filling the spot left by Jeremy Rieck's promotion. Gage is no stranger to our department—he previously worked with our natural resource crew as a seasonal staff member. Most recently, he served as the Park Ranger/Naturalist for Iowa County Conservation. His experience and familiarity with our lands make him a perfect fit for this role.



Looking Ahead

Between these promotions and new hires, the Johnson County Conservation Department is in great hands. Combined, Gus, Jeremy, and Ed bring over **50 years of service** to the department. Please join us in congratulating them—and in welcoming Gabe and Gage to their new roles.




**Saturday,
October 11, 2025**

THE IOWA RIVER CLEAN-UP RETURNS

After a four year hiatus, the Iowa River Clean-up is back! This volunteer event was started in 2011, and in the eight years that it has been held (with some years missed for floods and droughts), volunteers have removed over 60 tons of trash from the river, including 1021 tires! Canoes and life jackets are provided but spaces are limited. No prior experience is required, and all ages are welcome; minors must be accompanied by an adult.

The Iowa River Clean-up is hosted by Johnson County Conservation, the City of Iowa City, City of Coralville, and City of North Liberty.

To learn more and sign up for this year's event, scan or click the code.



Canoe volunteers will paddle nine miles of the Iowa River, between Sturgis Ferry Park in Iowa City and Hills Campground in Hills, Iowa. Throughout the day, they'll stop at sand bars to dig out tires, traffic cones, waterlogged tents, couch cushions, and more, to haul downriver for proper disposal.

Land volunteers arrive in the afternoon at the take-out at Hills Campground, and help to unload all of the junk and debris from the canoes. They help sort tires and metal for recycling, and junk into the trash trucks. They also help to wipe down gear and load canoes at the end of the event.





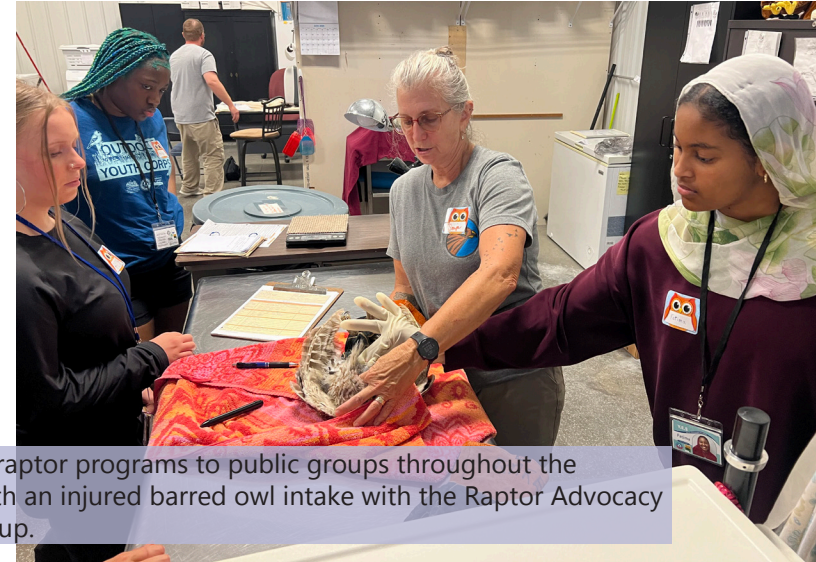
Top left: OYC teens tried out stand-up paddle boarding at Kent Park lake midway through the program. **Top right:** Teens search for monarch eggs and caterpillars at Cedar River Crossing while assisting with the Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program. **Bottom left:** Teens toured the new mountain bike trail at Terrell Mill with IC Parks & Recreation and, thanks to World of Bikes, were able to ride the trail, too! **Bottom right:** OYC teens interpret results of water quality testing at Clear Creek in Coralville. OYC met twice with staff from the Iowa Flood Center, as well as University of Iowa professors and researchers. Teens learned about watersheds and water quality.

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Through the partnership with NCJC, teens also participated in weekly financial literacy and life skills classes, received job coaching, and additional support.

Teens worked closely for up to 28 hours for six weeks together, so building a strong team and providing opportunities for enjoying memorable, outdoor shared experiences was crucial. Teens participated in formal team building experiences, including visiting the University of Iowa's Challenge Course facility, but also enjoyed activities together such as kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, and orienteering. Not only did these outdoor recreation experiences provide a fun way to bond, they taught them outdoor skills and exposed them to additional programs our education team facilitates for the public.

It was also important to us to help teens build connections to their wider community. Our partnerships with the Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County and the City of Iowa City naturally lent itself to that goal. Teens received job coaching and additional support from NCJC, when needed. Teens learned about Iowa City's parks and recreational facilities and networked with their staff. Teens who were not already connected to United Action for Youth had the opportunity to meet with UAY staff and learn about their services. Teens spent several days working on projects at the Iowa City Public Library's Digital Media Lab, met with their amazing staff, and visited their teen hangout space. Meeting with professionals at higher education institutions allowed teens to envision continued pathways to careers in conservation.



Left: OYC teens facilitated reptile and raptor programs to public groups throughout the summer. **Right:** OYC teens assisted with an injured barred owl intake with the Raptor Advocacy Rehabilitation & Education (RARE) Group.

In a time when youth and adults spend more time indoors and engaged with technology than ever before, beyond the technical skills, job training, and work experiences, these teens deepened their relationships with the natural world and learned about the physical and mental health benefits associated with spending time in nature. We are grateful to the many partner groups that

helped launch a successful first year of the OYC program. Most importantly, we are inspired by the incredible group of six teens who we had the pleasure to work alongside this summer. The “kids” are all right! Please enjoy reading a reflection from one of our Outdoor Youth Corps program participants, Chanel Pennell, below.

THE WORLD FEELS BETTER

Chanel Panel- 2025 OYC Participant

One day, once I’m settled, I’ll be gazing at the sunset, looking across the horizon as I reminisce about life, finally considering all the life-changing moments I’d had. One of those times will probably be that I’d been a part of Outdoor Youth Corps (OYC). I’d remember being a part of helping with conservation and all the great things I got to do. Not only had I helped the environment and explored new options going forward for my academic career, but I also got to build outstanding bonds with my fellow peers that will last a lifetime. If I never see my fellow OYC peers in the future, at least I know that the world is better because they exist.

Being in OYC everyday was planned and yet, I always experienced the unexpected. Whether we were walking through wetlands or seeing different prairies, whether it was hosting programs with rambunctious children or falling off a paddleboard because I got splashed in the face, whether it was the team building or the fun (yet chaotic) card games: I got so much out of this program. When I walk and see monarchs

I’m back in the wetlands, when I walk downtown and see the University of Iowa Hydraulics center, I remember lessons about watersheds. I got to know my community more and in doing so I feel more encouraged knowing that others care, others are trying to do what they can to help the environment, I’m not alone.

My life is so much brighter because I get to relive everything I’ve done in OYC just by casually going about my day. I found out so many more things about myself while in this program. We did a ton of things: creating art/setting up programs, getting rid of invasive plants, and lots of learning. Through this we all lifted each other up as a team. It was really life-changing being a part of a good team, being encouraged to ask questions, and sharing what we’ve learned to the community. I don’t know what the future OYC teens may be like, but all I know is that if this program continues, this world will become a whole lot brighter than it would’ve been had it not existed.

Lessons from the Wilderness

Abigail Burns - 2025 Idaho Wilderness Trek Participant

Spending six days backpacking with a group of 13 people in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness taught me a lot about living in the moment, especially when out in nature. Being in a wilderness area forced me to stay present in the moment in a way that I had never had the chance to do before. This was primarily because distractions were minimal. I am a rising senior, so there is always something I need to be doing, whether it's studying for standardized tests, researching colleges, or adding activities to my calendar. But out in the wilderness, all those other obligations disappear, at least temporarily, and you only focus on keeping the trail clear for future hikers, making it to the top of the next rise on a steep trail, or helping out with campsite chores.

Learning to stay in the moment also brought me a greater appreciation for nature. On the second day of the trek, we found huckleberries off the side of the trail. I immediately fell in love with picking them, not just because of the sweet, tangy flavor, but also of the novelty of picking berries out in the wilderness. There was something immensely appealing to me to

go searching for the huckleberry bushes; they were not arranged in neat little rows like at a berry farm, but rather scattered haphazardly in pockets; finding each one felt like discovering a little treasure.

While on the trek, I also learned to value the considerable amount of work that goes into maintaining a trail. I had previously never thought about all the different tools that are needed to keep the trails clear. We used hand saws and loppers to clear vegetation and larger saws to clear fallen trees off the path. We learned how to plan out the best way to cut apart trees and how to stay safe while doing it. Additionally, we used pulaskis to help repair drains to carry runoff away from the trail so that water would not pool.

I also enjoyed learning how to do all the little things that needed to be accomplished around our campsite, like setting up tents, cooking the food, and hanging bear bags. Hanging the bear bags was one of my favorite things to do around camp. I enjoyed breaking off into a small group to throw the paracords over a branch



Banner: Half of the crew treks across Friday Pass, looking out over the vast roadless wilderness. **Right page, clockwise:** The crew spent an hour watching a beautiful sunset together one evening; everyone poses on the last morning after a night of steady rain; food bags dangle from high up in a pine as a precaution from black bears; the author Abigail shows off a handful of huckleberries; a participant uses a pulaski to dig drainage routes along the trail.



high enough on a tree. Sometimes it would take a while before we could get the cord over, but I always had fun with the attempts and with encouraging others with their tries. Even doing these little tasks made me feel stronger and more independent.

Two of my favorite moments on the Idaho trek were when we had moments of silence. The first was when we had a period of alone time for 2 ½ hours. I love being around other people, but after several days in the wilderness together, it's nice to have some time to yourself. I used my time to video a vlog that I would eventually send to my parents once I had cell service again, journal, and observe various wildlife on my way back to camp. The silence helped me stay in the moment and appreciate the nature around me. The second moment of silence was on the top of Grave Peak, the highest point in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. After we had finished our lunch, we had a period of quiet for about half an hour. After a busy morning of hiking, this silence helped me relax and slow down; it made me feel refreshed for the hike back down to camp.

On our hike back down, we came across an adult group on their way up. Their trek leader has been leading treks through the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness for many years, and he stopped to talk to us. He explained that the



federal government has rescinded the Roadless Rule, opening protected wild areas of our public lands to road development for the extraction of resources. As I looked around me at the huge expanse of wilderness, his words brought tears to my eyes. He told us it was up to us to help protect the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and others like it, and that we are the future. He said something like, "Once you know it, you can never not know it." I understood what he meant - after being in the wilderness for days, I couldn't imagine seeing it segmented by roads, infiltrated with vehicles. Hearing this and experiencing the serenity of the wilderness helped me further cement my resolve to help preserve the earth to the best of my ability.

I am so glad that I applied to go on the Idaho trek and grateful that I was selected. I knew people who had gone on this same trip in the past, and they only had positive things to say about it. And now I am happy that I am able to share my own positive experiences with potential trek members. It is an experience that I will never forget.

CANGLESKA WAKAN BARN RENOVATION

Seth Somerville- Field Worker

An important and necessary upgrade to the large barn at Cangleska Wakan is nearing completion. Office, kitchen, and bathroom spaces will now be climate-controlled year round. This improvement will provide more access to the public through educational events offered by our naturalists, and to groups interested in renting the space for their needs.

An indoor space as spectacular as the barn serving as a respite from the cold will be most satisfying. Giving our naturalists another location to offer unique programming year-round will better serve the people of Johnson County and anyone else willing to brave the elements. Cangleska Wakan offers great access to a variety of habitats and contiguous public land. A full

day of exploring and experiencing nature is now possible thanks to these upgrades.

One of the biggest challenges during this project proved to be the upgrade of the kitchen. We wanted a kitchen space that fit the needs of groups large and small, with the ability to configure table space and functional storage. Cangleska Wakan's kitchen area is now easy to clean and sanitize, with ample room to support many workers during the rush to feed up to 250 people during a celebration or event. It can also accommodate small educational groups as they try their hands at paper making, basket weaving, or any other nature-based activity our naturalists can dream up.



Wood panel and live edge cedar siding was removed and refinished during the process of insulating the kitchen and bathrooms at Cangleska Wakan. New walls were also built out to provide more office and kitchen space. Air handlers were installed to provide air conditioning and heat to the kitchen, office, and bathroom spaces. These improvements will allow Johnson County Conservation programming, and outside events to be held in this beautiful space year-round.



Left: New insulation is shown outside of the Celebration Barn kitchen. Winterizing the kitchen and restrooms will allow for greater public use of this facility. Seasonal staff, John Castle, is seen reinstalling the first original panel.
Right: Beautifully restored cedar siding is shown outside the kitchen at the Cangleska Wakan Celebration Barn.
Bottom: A serene scene of Cangleska Wakan's Celebration Barn and stone archway are shown in winter.

One additional benefit worthy of mention is that staff working on the property now have a climate-controlled space for projects, prep work, breaks, and lunch. This will help as we progress through the overall management plan for the property, and focus on increasing diversification of native flora and fauna throughout the park. One of the best times to manage our sensitive natural areas is during the winter, as frozen ground allows us to complete these tasks with minimal impact on the soil structure and native plant life. Our Natural Resource staff work incredibly hard in

adverse conditions. This new climate-controlled space will allow them to thaw out during the winter and cool off during the summer, which will undoubtedly impact productivity, safety, and morale.

Johnson County Conservation Board supports local residents, public institutions, and nonprofits that serve residents of Johnson county in many ways. We look forward to continuing and expanding these efforts in the newly improved space for decades to come.

Wings & Wild Things Festival

A Celebration of Iowa's Natural World



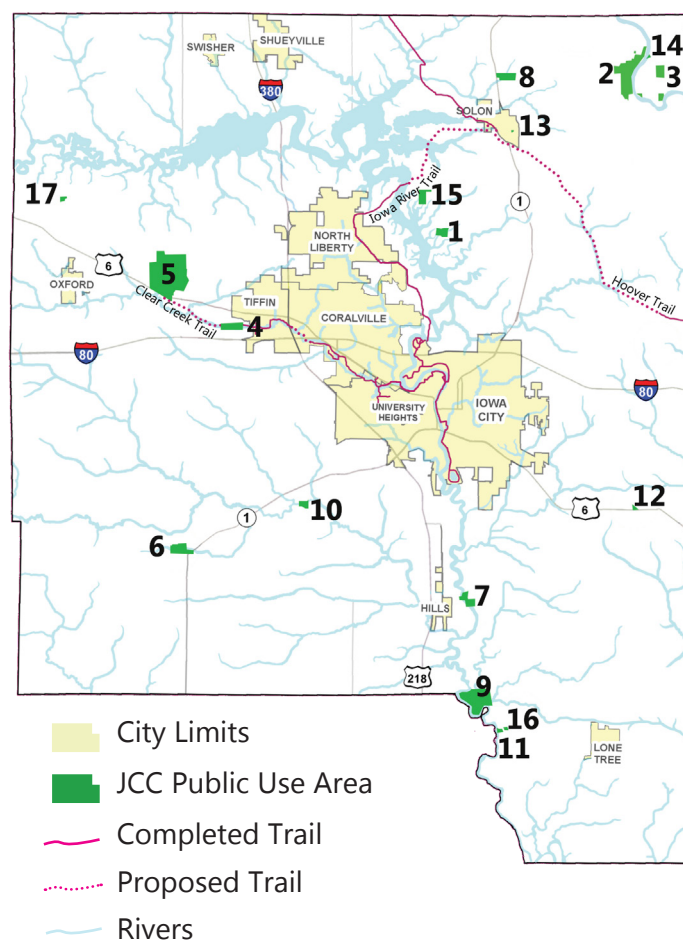
NATIVE PLANT SALE
LIVE REPTILES FISHING
RAPTOR MEET & GREET
ECO ARTS BIRD HIKES
FUNGI FORAYS FUN
SAND CASTLE BUILDING
POLLINATOR ACTIVITIES
LIVE MUSIC LOCAL FOOD
+ MORE

October 5
10 am-2 pm
Kent Park



JCC Public Use Areas

1. Cangleska Wakan	132 acres
2. Cedar River Crossing	610 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

CEC Open House - Monarchs

Saturday, September 13, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Explore inside the CEC, and check out some of the themed crafts and outdoor activities.

Nature Buds - Monarchs

Wednesday, September 17, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park

Nature Buds is a program for nature-lovers 3-5 years old. Each month features a seasonal theme, and includes storytime, a craft/STEM activity, and often an outdoor exploration/hike.

Naturalist Hike

Thursday, September 18, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Cedar River Crossing

Take in the sunset over the late fall blooms on this 2.5 mile naturalist-guided hike.

Sunrise Equinox Walk

Monday, September 22, 6:00 - 8:00 a.m.
Cedar River Crossing

Join us for a sunrise walk to the astronomical clock at Cedar River Crossing. Reach for equilibrium and celebrate day and night being equal in length. Dogs are welcome, but must remain on a leash.

Art Meet-up

Tuesday, September 23, 10:00 - 12:00 a.m.
Twin Fawns Shelter, Kent Park

Meet other artists and spend the morning creating with others. Bring your own project/materials.

October

Wings & Wild Things Festival

Sunday, October 5, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Lake at F.W. Kent Park

Celebrate Iowa's natural world! Event features live raptor meet & greets, a native plant sale, education stations, guided bird walks, fishing, eco arts activities, reptile demonstrations, and more. Grab food from local food trucks, and enjoy a day spent exploring Johnson County's Kent Park.

CEC Open House - Halloween in Nature

Saturday, October 11, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park
See Sept 13 event for details.

Nature Buds - Leaves

Wednesday, October 15, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park
See Sept 17 event for details.

Fall Foraging for Beginners and Families

Thursday, October 16, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Learn the rules for safe foraging, then head out on www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation **13**

a naturalist-guided hike, tasting and learning about wild edibles along the way.

Naturalist Hike

Thursday, October 16, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
Ciha Fen Preserve

Explore the savanna under ancient oaks on this 1.5 mile naturalist-led hike.

Arts & Ice Cream Bike Ride: Hoover Trail

Friday, October 17
12:00-5:00 p.m. (end time is approximate)
Hoover Trail- Meet at Solon Recreation & Nature Area Trailhead

Enjoy an easy-paced bike ride on the Hoover Trail. This ~16 mile ride will go from Solon to Ely and back. We will stop in Ely and have the option to grab some ice cream from Dan & Debbie's Creamery and get an artist-guided tour of the esteemed ceramics artist, Clary Ilian's studio. Participants will get a Big Grove Brewery coupon to enjoy some food in Solon after returning.

November

Rain Barrel Workshop

Thursday, November 13, 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park
Material Fee: \$40

Construct your own upcycled rain barrel using food-grade steel drums provided by Big Grove Brewery. We'll provide all parts to assemble the barrel/eaves hook ups as part of the program. Participants can choose to paint their barrel as part of the class.

Nature Buds - Spiders

Wednesday, November 19, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park
See Sept 17 event for details.

No School Day! Foraged Winter Wreaths

Wednesday, November 19, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Grab a friend and join us for our foraged winter wreath workshop. Create a winter wreath using natural materials collected from Johnson County Conservation sites.

Foraged Winter Wreath Workshop

Wednesday, November 19, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Grab a friend and join us for our foraged winter wreath workshop. Create a winter wreath using natural materials collected from Johnson County Conservation sites.

December

Naturalist Hike

Friday, December 5, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Two Horse Farm

Watch the sun set from the Two Horse Farm prairie on this guided 1.5 mile hike.

Clothing Swap

Saturday, December 6, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park

Spice up your wardrobe while diverting waste from the landfill. A clothing swap offers a chance to trade clothes at no cost. Clothing donations will not be accepted on the day of the event.

Nature Buds - Beavers

Wednesday, December 10, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Conservation Education Center, Kent Park
See Sept 17 event for details.

Painting with Natural Pigments

Thursday, December 11, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Cangleska Wakan

Come enjoy a relaxing evening with us as we learn a little about harvesting the colors around us to make art! We will have a selection of natural pigments already gathered for you to paint with as well as some brushes and a couple small watercolor sheets.

Volunteer Events

Volunteer Monarch Tagging Event

Wednesday, September 17, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Cedar River Crossing

We need volunteers to help us catch wild monarch butterflies for tagging! This is a great way to support monarch butterfly research. Events are dependent on weather conditions and location may be changed depending on monarch activity. Locations include Cedar River Crossing (best for older kids or adults with good mobility) or Kent Park (all ages). Updates will be shared via email with all registered participants.

Iowa River Clean Up

Saturday Oct 11, 7:00 AM - mid/late-afternoon
(times variable by conditions)
Iowa River, Sturgis Ferry Park, Iowa City to Hills Campground, Hills Access (9.5 miles)

The Iowa River Clean Up is an annual event to beautify the Iowa River. Volunteers haul out trash large and small by canoe. Since the first event in 2011, volunteers have removed over 60 tons of trash (including 1021 tires) from the river! Canoes and life jackets provided on a first served basis. Additional volunteer crews needed to help unload trash from canoes at the take out. This event is dependent on appropriate water levels.

To register and learn more, visit: <https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/iowa-river-clean>.



Prairie Seed Harvests

Help us hand harvest wildflower seeds for future prairie restoration projects! Training will be provided at the start of the program to teach volunteers how to identify target species and best harvest each plant. Unless otherwise noted in the description, most harvests require hiking ~1.5 miles. These details will be noted on the each sign-up page. The accessible harvests will require minimal walking and will focus on harvesting from wildflower patches close to parking areas. Seeds harvested will be split between JCC and the Pollinator Partnership's Project Wingspan program. All events depend on weather and seed conditions.

Wednesday, Sept 10, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Ciha Fen Preserve

Wednesday, Sept 17, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Conservation Education Center

Wednesday, Sept 24, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Conservation Education Center

Wednesday, Oct 1, 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Conservation Education Center

Wednesday, Oct 15, 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Cedar River Crossing

Wednesday, Oct 15, 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Red Haw Shelter Parking Area, Kent Park
*Accessible harvest, no hiking required

Wednesday, Oct 22, 5:00 - 7:00 PM
Cedar River Crossing

Wednesday, Oct 29, 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Dam Parking Area, Kent Park
*Accessible harvest, no hiking required

Wednesday, Nov 5, 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Knight Prairie Pavilion, Kent Park
*Accessible harvest, no hiking required

Pop-up Seed Cleaning Events may be added. Stay tuned to JCC social media for updates.



Johnson County Conservation
2048 HWY 6 NW
Oxford, IA 52322

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code to subscribe to
our newsletter.



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Monarda punctata (Spotted Bee Balm) in bloom at Ciha Fen at sunset.