

IOWA NATURAL HERITAGE

FALL 2024

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.



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16 Iowa's Wildest Classroom

In a state more altered than most, our recreational areas are vestiges where children can play and explore their big questions through different nature-based education models across the state.

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From the first gift to the forty-first, INHF's donors continue to see the value in giving.

INHF Land Acknowledgement:

As a land trust it is important for us to continuously acknowledge and understand the full scope of history that has brought us to reside on, protect and steward this land. The land between two rivers is home to many indigenous people, historically and today. We acknowledge the value of indigenous communities and work to honor them on the land.



ON THE COVER
A fox squirrel stands at the ready on a branch. Squirrels are nature's hoarders, caching nuts like acorns and walnuts through the summer and into the fall.
Photo by Chris Ewan



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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Be an advocate for nature

Don't let conservation be an afterthought. Over the next few weeks, our country, our state and our local communities will be making decisions about who will represent us and other important ballot measures. Conservation issues rarely top the list of what influence people's decisions at the polls. But that doesn't mean they aren't important.



JOE MCGOVERN
President

If candidates and policy makers hear from you now — hear that protecting our natural resources is important to you — they are more likely to enact good conservation policy when they get to work. So, the next time you take a poll, attend a forum or talk to somebody knocking doors, make sure to tell them that clean water, healthy land and outdoor recreation are important to you and our quality of life in Iowa.

If legislators haven't heard from us about the importance of our land, water and wildlife, how can we expect them to represent our interests?

Advocacy has been vital to INHF's mission since we were founded with the help of Gov. Robert Ray 45 years ago. We were established to be the partner that would help create new public parks, trails and wildlife areas in Iowa. Because of supporters like you, we have been able to protect critical places around our state, creating opportunities for outdoor recreation and preserving biological diversity. Additionally, we have been nonpartisan advocates for nature, championing programs and policies that prioritize our precious natural resources.

INHF just released a new edition of *Nature's Advocate*, a guide to help you connect with legislators in an effective way. We provide information about conservation programs and the legislative process. But the most important takeaway is that advocacy is personal. Policy makers need to hear *your* story. They need to know why nature is important to you.

I am grateful for your partnership, your support of INHF's mission, and your story. Your voice speaks for the land and makes our conservation community stronger.

Joe McGovern

A family hikes along the ridgeline in the Loess Hills in western Iowa. *Photo by Deb Shoning*

Iowa's landscape is like a living work of art: full of vibrant colors and unique textures, there is always something beautiful and new to spot whenever I step outside.

I look up and take in the sky. Bright blue at midday, speckled with fluffy, white clouds and streaks of vivid greens, reds and oranges left by hummingbirds as they dart through the air. When it rains, the atmosphere shows off its signature party trick — the rainbow. By evening, you don't want to miss the sky's display as it lights up with purples, oranges, pinks and every color in between. From my vantage point in the prairie, it seems as though the earth goes on forever.

I look down and realize there is a whole world beneath my feet. Hearty wildflowers like stiff goldenrod, prairie blazingstar and wild rose fight for sun and food, staking their claim on the landscape. When I look closer, I spot beetles, flies and caterpillars, each contributing their unique colors and markings to the brilliant visual exhibit.

I look around at leaves that have turned a rusty red, orange, yellow and purple and reflect on nature's adaptability, the perfect example of resiliency. I take one last gulp of fresh air before I have to return to life's commotion, consoled by the knowledge that anytime I need a break, nature and all of its colors will be waiting.

— CLARA WODNY
Communications Intern



The sun casts a warm glow over the forest floor, highlighting the reds, golds and browns of oak leaves. Photo by Thomas Scherer

Are You Ready to be Nature’s Advocate?

Public policy and funding have a significant impact on how Iowa’s parks, trails and wildlife areas are used, managed and protected. Developed to help our supporters and partners advocate for Iowa’s natural resources, INHF’s Nature’s Advocate guide has been updated ahead of Iowa’s 2025 legislative session. It and other tools on our website can help you shape your own advocacy plan and build confidence in speaking up for conservation. Contact INHF’s Public Policy Director & Counsel Anna Gray at agray@inhf.org to get a copy for yourself, your friends or your neighbors.

INHF Welcomes New Staff Member



Growing up on his family’s farm in a small Missouri town laid the groundwork for Rylan Boyer’s connection with nature, one he’s very excited to share in his new role as INHF’s Volunteer Coordinator. He’ll be watching for ways to pair individuals’ and organizations’ time and talents with INHF’s mission, leaning into his passion for building relationships.

“I look forward to helping existing and future supporters find meaningful ways to get involved in our work, whether that’s through photography, writing, land stewardship or political advocacy,” Rylan said. “I’m excited to build on our already robust and successful program.”

Glenn Pollock Wins Hagie Award

Glenn Pollock has been selected by INHF as the 2024 Hagie Heritage Award recipient. The award recognizes Iowans who have demonstrated extraordinary personal service and commitment to improving the quality of Iowa’s natural environment, while encouraging others to do the same.

Pollock’s nature-centered upbringing inspired a lifelong commitment to protecting and restoring Iowa’s natural landscapes. He is a founding member of the Iowa Prairie Network and the Loess Hills Preservation Society, as well as planner for the long-running Iowa Prairie Conference and Loess Hills Prairie Seminar. His efforts as a longtime volunteer with Pottawattamie County Conservation include leading prairie walks, conducting plant surveys, restoring prairie and installing stations to gather wildlife data.

Pollock was recognized at the Iowa Nature Summit held at Drake University on Thursday, October 10, where he received an award of \$1,500 and a hand-carved acorn sculpture by Dennis and Linda Schlicht, commemorating his commitment to protecting Iowa land for generations to come.



UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER 26
Field Day with Practical Farmers of Iowa
Mondamin

Learn the basics of establishing prairie. Participants will have the opportunity to pick, clean and sort your own prairie seed to take home.

NOVEMBER 14
Weimerskirk Woodland Restoration
Bellevue

Assist with valuable land stewardship work at an oak hickory woodland — we’ll celebrate with a beverage at River Ridge Brewing afterwards!

NOVEMBER 19
Estate Planning Basics Webinar
Online

Join Paul Morf, INHF board member and estate planning attorney, for a discussion on the process of estate planning.

DECEMBER 18
Brush Removal Workday
Snyder Heritage Farm Elkhart

Soak in the final days of fall and help the oak savanna thrive. Volunteers will remove invasive brush with hand tools.

JANUARY 10
Winter Workday
Adam’s Fen Waucoma

Volunteers will remove brush and non-native plants to restore native habitat.

JANUARY 14
Winter Workday
Snyder Heritage Farm Elkhart

Volunteers will remove brush and non-native plants to restore native habitat.

SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 20, 2025
Celebrate Iowa’s Outdoors
Iowa State Capitol

Network with legislators, partners and allies, and meet other Iowans passionate about protecting spaces for outdoor recreation, water quality and wildlife habitat. The day will feature fun, interactive displays and engaging speakers — all focused on celebrating Iowa’s outdoors.

For a full event listing, visit inhf.org/events

QUARTERLY PROTECTION REPORT

An quick look at new INHF protection projects and land transferred between **May – July 2024.**

Newly protected areas

Linn County
103 acres near Ely in Linn County. Its mix of woodland, grassland and agricultural land all fall within the Lake MacBride watershed, making its preservation as open space important for water quality. *(Bequeathed to INHF by Jim and Katie Miller)*

Land transfers to public partners

Kirke Woods Wildlife Management Area
The final 204 acres of a 684-acre tract of upland woodland and floodplain near Bevington in Madison County. Three miles of the North River meander through the floodplain with quality oak-hickory woodlands above. Provides lasting water quality benefits, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities within a short drive from the Des Moines metro. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)*

Howard County
80 acres of woodland bisected by approximately one mile of the Upper Iowa River near Chester. Riparian habitat provides food and shelter for a variety of Iowa wildlife including Baltimore Oriole, Green Heron and mink. Protection maintains the river’s scenic nature and ensures improved water quality for those downstream. *(Owned and managed by Howard County Conservation)*

Big Wall Lake Addition
142 acres of restored wetland and prairie near the northeast shore of Big Wall Lake. Helps buffer the lake from development, improves the quality of water entering the lake and provides more important habitat for migrating waterfowl and other wildlife. *(Owned by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)*

Ochee Yahola Park Addition
20 acres of remnant wetland and grassland near Northwood in Worth County. Maintains habitat for native species like Sora, Yellow-headed Blackbird and blue flag iris, and builds on an existing complex of contiguous protected land. *(Owned by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)*

Bell Branch Wildlife Management Area
510 acres of woodland and upland habitat near Ottumwa in Davis County. High quality stands of oaks and hickories provide nesting and roosting habitat for the Indiana bat — a federally endangered species — and other sensitive Iowa bat and bird species including Red-headed Woodpeckers and American Woodcock. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)*

Perkins Marsh Wildlife Management Area Addition
31 acres of grassland and agricultural land near Graettinger in Palo Alto County. Protection safeguards the water quality and habitat of the adjacent remnant wetland at Perkins Marsh. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)*

Little Sioux Savanna
161 acres of mixed habitat along the Little Sioux River near Milford in Dickinson County. Expands existing public land to provide more outdoor recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat and water quality benefits. A portion of land value was donated by Susan Hamdorf, Lana Sensenig and Paul Smith. *(Owned and managed by Dickinson County Conservation)*

Shimek State Forest Addition
62 acres of upland woodland adjacent to Shimek State Forest and Lacey-Keosauqua State Park in Van Buren County. Connects existing public land to form a more complete corridor for use by wildlife and people and provides critical habitat for the federally endangered Indiana Bat and many bird and other wildlife species who depend on woodlands. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)*



INHF recently transferred 80 acres of woodland in Howard County, protecting the scenic nature of the Upper Iowa River and improving water quality downstream.

MAJOR PROJECT UPDATES

Good things take time — protection projects may span years, or even decades! Wondering about the status of a recent INHF project? We have some updates on a handful of parks, trails and wildlife areas we asked you to support.



Brenton Slough, Polk & Dallas counties

The 1,114-acre wetland and woodland complex has long been recognized as an exceptional place, particularly among birders, wildlife watchers and the Brenton Family who cared for it for over 100 years.

INHF purchased Brenton Slough in July 2023 and has since been actively raising funds to transfer the land to Polk County Conservation who will manage the area with a natural resource focus, facilitating light recreation where appropriate.

Through the generosity of hundreds of individuals and organizations and the successful receipt of several grants, INHF has reached 75% of our \$8 million fundraising goal — just \$2 million left to go before this natural wonder can be opened to the public. Find more updates at www.inhf.org/brenton-slough.

Iowa River’s Edge Trail, Hardin & Marshall counties

The dream to create a 34-mile trail along the Iowa River corridor between Steamboat Rock and Marshalltown began in 2013 when INHF purchased the section of discontinued railroad. Following the transfer of the corridor to Hardin County Conservation and Marshalltown, INHF has remained involved as a fundraising and community partner alongside Trails Inc. and the all-volunteer Hardin County Trails Commission. More than five miles between Steamboat Rock and Eldora have already been paved thanks to public grants and generous donors. A recently awarded \$2 million grant from the Iowa DOT’s Transportation Alternatives Program will be leveraged to repair a bridge and pave the next six miles to Gifford with work anticipated to begin in 2025.

With about 24 miles left to pave (a \$19 million project), INHF and partners are continuing to pursue grant funding to cover building and maintenance costs. A flurry of giving this summer raised nearly \$2.7 million to qualify as match for a \$12 million Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program grant, which would finish the trail. Announcements for grant awards are expected this fall.

Iowa 4-H Camp, Boone County

The wooded hills and valleys of the 1,011-acre former 4-H camp holds a special place in the hearts of all its visitors. Declining attendance led to the camp being listed for sale in 12 separate parcels, and INHF — knowing that the camp’s natural resources needed to be protected — made an offer on and ultimately purchased the entire property in 2019.

Though the camp was safeguarded from development, it wasn’t impervious to the derecho the following year that substantially changed the landscape, damaged buildings and downed massive oaks.

Most of the property has transferred to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, whose staff are still working on the substantial clean-up job the derecho left in its wake. Though portions of the property are open and accessible from adjacent public land, the main entrance will remain closed until building removal is complete, when it can again offer ample outdoor recreation opportunities and places for quiet contemplation.



The Narrows Preserve, Dickinson County

Protected in 2021 with the aid of hundreds of donors, The Narrows Preserve and its excess of 2,000 feet of East Okoboji Lake shoreline will forever remain undeveloped. INHF’s focus to return the land to its natural, historical state as a prairie and oak savanna ecosystem is in full swing, creating critical, contiguous habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife. While it may be periodically closed during certain restoration projects, The Narrows Preserve is otherwise open for the public to enjoy as a natural space.

The land’s natural grade and flow has been restored through terrace and fence removal and the grassland has been prepped for prairie restoration to begin next year. In accordance with regulations that protect Iowa’s bats, remaining tree removal along the shoreline will take place this winter. While this tree removal will be striking, it will restore a more natural shoreline less susceptible to erosion. Substantial completion of the restoration efforts is slated for spring 2026. Learn more at inhf.org/narrows-restoration-update



High Trestle Trail & Raccoon River Valley Trail Connector, Dallas County

These two beloved and well-traveled rail-trails INHF helped create were finally connected in August, realizing a goal alive at INHF for decades. INHF started working with Dallas County Conservation in 2016 to secure all the 17 needed pieces of trail corridor along the nine mile stretch between Perry and Woodward, with the last piece transferred in 2022.

With the connector complete, cyclists and other trail users can now enjoy two loops — one 86 miles with a spur to Jefferson, and the other a massive 118 miles — putting more Iowa towns on the map for outdoor recreation and tourism.



Little Sioux Scout Ranch, Monona County

INHF purchased the former 1,776-acre scout camp in early 2023 after the Mid-America Council of the Boy Scouts of America sought a buyer that could open the property to the public, maintain the memorial to the four boys who died in the 2008 tornado and honor and share the history of Little Sioux Scout Ranch as a scout camp. Its vast and unique landscape in the heart of the Loess Hills offers unsurpassed opportunities for outdoor recreation and is home to several state listed endangered, threatened or special concern plant and animal species.

While it remains closed to the public while access and management plans take shape, the goal to transfer the Little Sioux Scout Ranch into public partner ownership was accelerated by a successful application for funding from the U.S. Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program earlier this year. Watch for updates at inhf.org/lssr.



Wildcat Bluff addition, Benton County

Already a popular park for its renowned frisbee golf course and other outdoor recreation opportunities, Benton County Conservation (BCC) recognized just how much more they could provide for their community when the 184 acres adjacent to Wildcat Bluff Recreation Area came up for sale. BCC sought INHF’s help in purchasing the property in 2023, and, with the help of generous donors and a match effort by The Myers’ Family Conservation Fund, have already nearly met their \$1.3 million fundraising goal. Just a few thousand dollars are needed to close the remaining gap before Wildcat Bluff can more than double in size.

BIG HEART at BIG WALL

Big Wall Lake at the heart of a far-reaching legacy

BY ZOE STONETREE | Conservation Programs Intern



Photo by Ross Baxter, INHF

“He was a unique individual,” Mitch Weller says about his father, Milton Weller. “He believed tremendously in people. When he advised students on where to go in life, most of them followed the path.”

Milton W. Weller taught in the Department of Zoology and Entomology — now the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management — at Iowa State University from 1957 to 1974. During his tenure at ISU, Dr. Weller published dozens of scientific articles on birds, especially Iowa’s resident and migratory wetland species. He also advised thirty graduate students. This number would nearly double over the course of the next twenty years as Weller pursued professorships at the University of Minnesota and Texas A&M University, where he held the prestigious Caesar Kleberg Chair in Wildlife Ecology until his retirement in 1994.

In 1997, Dr. Weller received the Aldo Leopold Memorial Reward for distinguished service to wildlife conservation — the highest honor bestowed by The Wildlife Society. Many of his publications, including several books, are still used to teach on waterfowl and wetlands today.

As Dr. Weller’s teaching and research progressed, his focus shifted toward the marsh and wetland systems where many of his early study species made their homes. After Weller passed away in 2017, Mitch Weller chose to honor his father’s legacy through a gift to INHF, dedicated specifically to protecting Iowa’s wetlands. As it happened, Big Wall Lake — where INHF has worked on land and water protection projects for more than a decade — was both a field site and a personal retreat of his father’s for many years. Mitch’s gift allowed INHF to secure an additional 140 acres surrounding the lake to the northeast.

“When it turned out that the Big Wall Lake project was there,” Mitch says, “I knew that was a special interest.”

The largest glacial lake in Wright County, Big Wall Lake has a long-standing reputation among researchers, waterfowlers and birders as a hotspot for migratory wetland birds, who often use the lake as a “stopover” to rest and refuel as they move through Iowa. Despite the

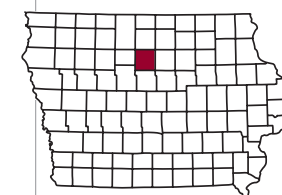
area’s reputation as a bird haven, the recent history of the lake tells a more complicated story. Most of the land surrounding Big Wall Lake was privately owned and farmed throughout the twentieth century. Between 2012 and 2020, INHF collaborated with several conservation-minded landowners to protect and restore 647 acres surrounding the lakebed and eliminate two agricultural drainage wells. INHF’s projects built upon the work of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), whose wetland easement program had previously funded restoration and ag drainage well closures on over 550 of those acres. These efforts have improved water quality, added wildlife habitat and increased public access to the lake.

The new Weller Tract will be owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as part of the Big Wall Lake Wildlife Management Area. Like the rest of the established Big Wall Lake WMA, the addition will be open to the public for hunting, hiking, kayaking and more. Among the addition’s unique features are its especially intensive wetland and prairie restorations.

“The donation from the Milton Weller family allowed us to bump that prairie species count way up,” says TJ Herrick, Iowa DNR Facilities Engineer, about the newly restored

Weller Tract of Big Wall Lake WMA

Wright County



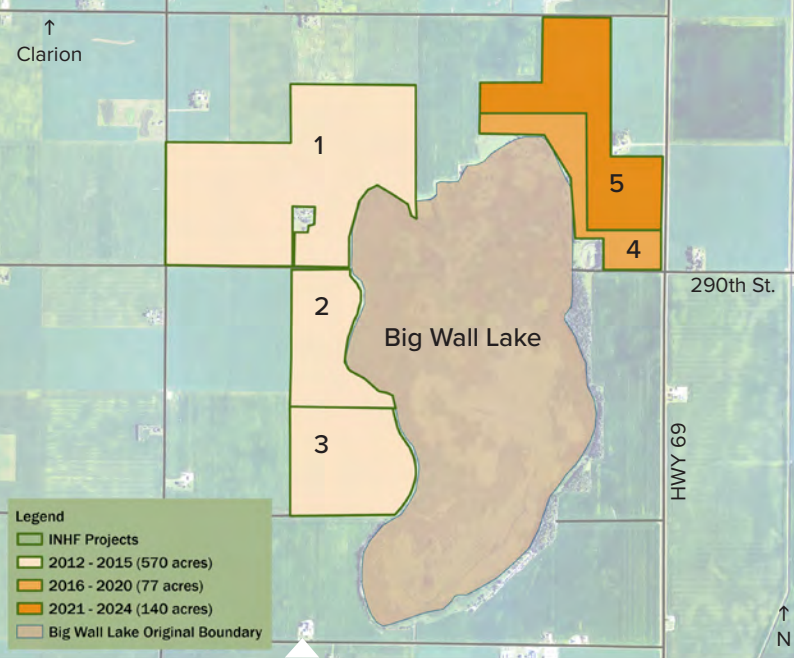
LAND: 647 acres that buffer Big Wall Lake

SPECIAL FEATURES: Wetland restoration that will increase habitat for waterfowl

PARTNERS: Iowa DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Weller Family and INHF

Dr. Milton Weller was an expert in migratory birds and wetland systems. His family’s donation in his honor will help provide important habitat for birds like this Sora (*Porzana carolina*). Photos provided by Mitch Weller and Larry Reis.





This September, former students and family of Dr. Weller joined together with project partners for a dedication of the Weller Tract. Right, Mitch and wife Bobbie Weller stand near the rock dedicating the property. The map above shows the Weller Tract in orange, parcel #5, along with the other additions INHF has helped protect. *Photo by Joe Jayjack, INHF*

prairie. “I think we’re above 120 species — but, probably more importantly, we’ve seeded it at a seeds-per-square-foot that’s substantially higher than what we could normally do.”

As of spring 2024, the DNR has completed prairie seeding, supplemented with funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, on portions of the addition outside of the wetland restoration area. In August 2024, Ducks Unlimited completed work on their comprehensive wetland restoration plan, disabling tile drainage throughout the property and removing multiple human-made berms, allowing the lake to expand closer to its historic limits. Meanwhile, the construction of new berms will allow the area to retain water and create wetlands without encroaching onto adjacent farmland. This extensive restoration was possible thanks to engineering, design, surveys, investigations and leadership from Ducks Unlimited.

Waterfowl may be the biggest beneficiaries of these restoration projects. Restoring wetland and upland areas will create more nesting habitat for a wide variety of species.

“Big Wall Lake is the largest freshwater marsh in central Iowa,” says Dr. Jim Dinsmore, Professor Emeritus of Animal Ecology at Iowa State University — and former undergraduate student of Milton Weller. “A lot of people don’t realize how important that upland area is, and Big Wall Lake was very much suffering from a lack of upland areas. And now, about half the area around the lake is in public ownership. That will make a huge difference for the lake.”

Jim Dinsmore is among a group of students of Dr. Weller who have kept in touch through regular reunions. Last spring, a group of

former students came together from around the country for one such gathering. They chose Big Wall Lake as their meeting place.

“My father had the ability to pick the right people, and to drive them,” says Mitch, who also made the reunion trip to Big Wall Lake. “But he always treated them like family. They were his kids.” It is a testament to Dr. Weller’s impact as an educator that so many of his students — some of them now in their eighties and nineties — continue to gather to celebrate his legacy.

Offering his own account of Dr. Weller’s impact, Jim Dinsmore reflects on an important conversation during his time as an undergraduate student.

“I was doing well at Iowa State, but I didn’t know what I was going to do with my education.”

Dr. Weller’s advice set Jim on a new trajectory — one he would share with many other students in Weller’s sphere of influence.

“He changed my life,” Jim says, “Once I got done talking with him, I realized there was a life path available for me. He told me what it was.”

The 140-acre addition to Big Wall Lake was formally dedicated to Milton W. Weller earlier this fall. Like the relationships Dr. Weller shared with and forged among his students, Mitch Weller’s gift reveals the mark of a life focused on the land, water and wildlife that make up our home places.

“The Big Wall Lake area was Dad’s happy place,” Mitch emphasizes. “Had he been able to take this trip and see everything that everyone involved has done, he would be very, very pleased.” 🐾

GROWING ACORN CREW

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow. If you’re familiar with INHF’s Acorn Crew initiative, you know that this proverb guides the program. Acorn Crew recognizes the potential youth hold to be nature aficionados and advocates, and in turn, supporters of INHF. Together, with families and partners across the state, we’ve been working towards unlocking and nurturing this potential with Acorn Crew events and activities.

ACORN CREW KITS: Through the help of many generous donors, we were able to produce five Acorn Crew kits that include identification books, binoculars, compasses and more to help families at INHF outreach events engage further with nature. Debuted at the start of the year, they’ve already proven to be a big hit!

ACORN CREW BOOKLET: Our Acorn Crew booklet, which is a free hand-out available at outreach events and programs, has also been polished and updated this year. The booklet features fun nature-based activities for kids of all ages and includes all original illustrations from INHF staff and interns. The booklet also includes a coloring page map that spotlights some of INHF’s historic projects.

SCHOOL OF THE WILD: In addition to these public facing Acorn Crew activities, INHF staff partnered with Polk County Conservation and the University of Iowa’s School of the Wild program to administer a week-long, immersive nature curriculum this fall. Learn more about the School of the Wild program on page 16.

WINTER SOLSTICE CALENDAR: Finally, to close out a year of Acorn Crew, our staff are creating a winter solstice calendar! Think of your typical advent calendar but with a focus not on receiving gifts, but finding them in nature. This will take place in the form of a poster and sticker sheet that folks of all ages can appreciate.

Looking for more Acorn Crew? Watch our events page at inhf.org/events for upcoming events and subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter to enjoy seasonal topics and activities in each issue. You can also find coloring pages, scavenger hunts and more at inhf.org/acorn-crew.

Students learn about soils with INHF’s Emily Martin through a School of the Wild partnership in October (below). Above, families participate in a program with INHF and Iowa Young Birders at Snyder Heritage Farm. Participants were able to use the Acorn Crew kits (pictured right) during the program. *Photos by Sydney Algreen-Hunter*



PRAIRIE DOCTOR

The Eckoffs have spent 25 years restoring a remnant prairie and oak savanna, soon to open to the public.

BY CLARA WODNY | *Communications Intern*

Eckoff Nature Preserve

Warren County



LAND: 80 acres of remnant and restored prairie, oak savanna and woodland

SPECIAL FEATURES: Highly diverse prairie with notable species including purple milkweed and Indian pipe

PARTNERS: Warren County Conservation, Eckoff family and INHF

When Ron and Barb Eckoff purchased a plot of land in Warren County almost 25 years ago, they didn't have any substantial experience with conservation or land stewardship. Ron had recently retired from a 35-year career in public health and his wish list was simple: to find 20 to 40 acres south of Des Moines to "tinker around on." Now, they have restored a total of 116 acres, including valuable remnant prairie and oak savanna.

Their first 75 acres, bought in 2000, earned the name "Twin Oaks" after a pair of large, charismatic Bur oaks at the center of the property. At the time of purchase, Ron and Barb didn't have a plan for the future of the land, which had been used for grazing by the previous owners. They decided to start by exploring the landscape, trusting that a project would follow. They were in for an exciting surprise.

"I didn't have any idea what I was going to do with it," Ron said. "One day I noticed some strange-looking grass that turned out to be big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*). This was the first indicator that there could be something special here."

The Eckoffs were thrilled to discover sections of what they believed to be remnant prairie and oak savanna, both very rare — and necessary — resources. In Iowa, only 0.1% of remnant prairie and even less remnant oak savanna remains, making protection of these areas of the utmost importance. Their excitement gave way to action, and Ron began devoting his time to learning about prairie plants and restoration practices.

After taking a self-study ecology course through Des Moines Area Community College and doing extensive research on his own, Ron was ready to seek advice from the experts. In 2004, he purchased a "day in the field" with Drake professor and renowned ecologist Dr. Tom Rosburg at a silent auction. The one-day rapid survey documented 165 vascular plant species, including 130 native prairie and oak savanna species.

In 2006, the Eckoffs were able to expand Twin Oaks with an additional 41 acres of adjacent prairie. This expansion included species that were not present on the original tract, such as pale purple coneflowers and compass plants. They purchased a second field survey with Dr. Rosburg in 2007, which added an additional 46 species to the total plant list.

Ron's willingness to learn and put in the work has made a tangible impact on the health of the prairie and savanna.

"He was always very curious and wanting to know more about the plants he was seeing, and also how to deal with the more invasive things," says Rosburg. "The most impressive part was how methodical and focused he was to do this all by himself."

Ron's method included the development of his own system for mapping the land, without the aid of modern GPS, by setting up wooden posts at regular intervals and creating a grid with a letter and number axis.

When it comes to removing invasives and encouraging healthy growth, Ron is just as meticulous. Pesky brambles that crowd out native plants are no match for Ron and his paintbrush of herbicide that ensures only targeted species are impacted.

One of Ron's favorite features of the land are the flourishing populations of butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) — a true

testament to his dedication. In 2000, there were only a handful of plants that he would have to hunt for each spring, clearing around them to increase survival. Now, part of the prairie is awash with vibrant, beautiful blossoms early each summer.

In addition to removing invasives by hand, Ron frequently carries out prescribed burns. He has built up an arsenal of equipment, occasionally enlisting his grandsons to help.

"I always offered to bring down the crew from Drake to help with burns, but he politely declined and told me to take them somewhere else," says Rosburg.

With INHF's help, the Eckoffs donated 80 of the acres they've so carefully stewarded to Warren County Conservation Board (WCCB) earlier this year. Under WCCB's management, the property will soon be open to the public as "Eckoff Nature Preserve."

When discussing the future of the land, Ron and Barb prioritized public access and education, hoping to expose others to the beauty of remnant prairie and inspire future conservationists.

"It's all about protecting the resource," adds Erin Van Waus, INHF's Conservation Easement Director and a key facilitator in the acceptance and transfer of this donation. "That commitment shines through [Ron and Barb's] actions and stewardship."

A new project for Ron, who plans to keep volunteering on the land as long as he is able, has been mowing hiking trails that wind through the prairie and savanna.

"Up until now, I didn't have any trails, you just had to walk through the prairie," says Ron. "Prairie enthusiasts will probably continue walking through the prairie, and that's great; my hope is that the trails encourage others to start exploring and get interested."

There is still work to be done before the land will open to the public, but excitement is brewing. This will be WCCB's first public property on the western edge of the county, allowing convenient access to outdoor space to a new part of the community.

"I can assure you we will continue Ron's legacy of using the area as a place for education," says Mark Wilson, the outgoing

director of WCCB.

Zach Hall, who recently took over Wilson's role, emphasizes the importance and timeliness of this project: "As urban development increases, so must our protection efforts to conserve finite natural resources," he says.

"The long-term goal is to ensure this resource flourishes. Our communities' culture and history is tied to the support of the land, and the opportunity to connect with nature provides health benefits that can't always be quantified."

Opening the Eckoff Nature Preserve to the public is a full-circle moment for Ron. Here, his passions of public health and prairie health come together as a direct result of his dedication and stewardship. 🌿

Last year, Ron Eckoff received the Hagie Heritage Award and was recognized alongside his wife Barb at the Iowa Nature Summit for his work on his own property and 15 years as a volunteer land steward at Brown's Woods. Ron's commitment to conservation is apparent by the beautiful landscapes, like the prairie and oak savanna pictured below, that will now be available for the public to enjoy as well. *Top photo provided by Iowa Nature Summit. Bottom photo by Erin Van Waus, INHF*





A student at Muddy Boots Forest School explores nature by digging around in the mud. Photo provided by the Muddy Boots Forest School.



IOWA'S WILDEST CLASSROOM



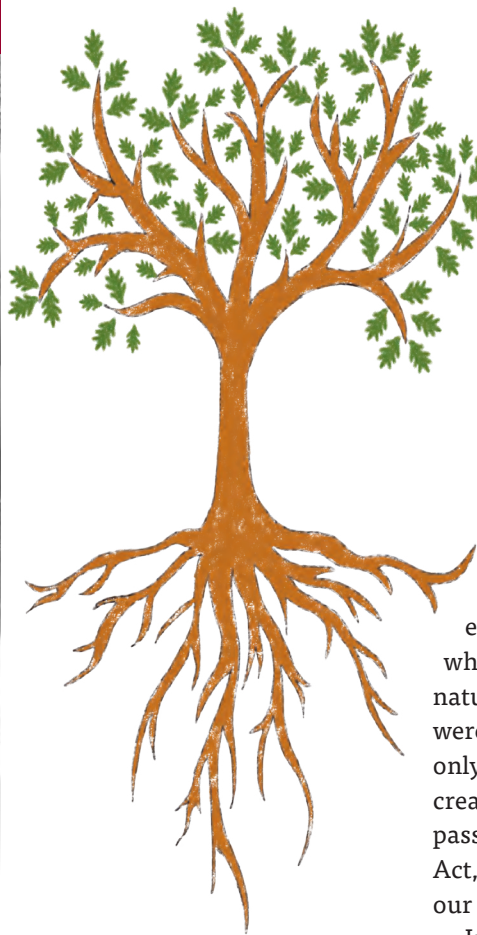
BY EMILY MARTIN
Conservation Programs Coordinator | emartin@inhf.org

Growing up in Iowa is to be intertwined with nature. We are raised in tune with the seasons — hyper-aware of when the leaves change, corn grows and our parents demand we shovel the driveway for the umpteenth time.

Despite having among the least acres of publicly available parks, Iowans recreate outdoors at a higher rate than most of the country. Our enjoyment of the outdoors runs deep, forming a key piece of our state's identity.

Yet we can't take for granted this trend will continue forever. Studies show that children spend half as much time outdoors as they did 20 years ago. Forging connections with nature from a young age has been shown to provide numerous benefits, from improved mental and physical well-being to increased problem-solving skills and critical thinking.

That's why some Iowans have turned to nature-based education, a structured education system that seeks to deepen children's connection with nature while teaching them essential skills.



Children at Creekside Forest School partake in various nature-based activities such as insect identification and natural arts and crafts. Photos provided by the Indian Creek Nature Center

Historical Roots

Environmental education owes its roots to the philosophers, scientists and educators of the mid-1700s to early 1900s who voiced the importance of learning from nature. Sciences like forestry and ecology were born out of this movement, which was only strengthened after the Dust Bowl and the creation of Earth Day. In 1990, U.S. Congress passed the National Environmental Education Act, solidifying nature's place in how we shape our children's futures.

In Iowa, nature-focused education can be traced back to at least the early 1900s when conservationists like Ada Hayden and Ding Darling advocated for a deeper understanding of the world around us. Today, there are a growing number of schools, programs and camps geared specifically toward getting young Iowans outdoors. Whether through Iowa's county conservation system, a private school or programs tied into public schools, there are more intentional ways for children to get outside than ever before. Here are just a few examples from across the state.

Creekside Forest School at the Indian Creek Nature Center

Creekside Forest School officially opened its doors in 2021 as a nature-based preschool at the Indian Creek Nature Center just outside of

Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

As lead teacher Nicole Upchurch states, routine is key to children's development. Even as the weather changes, students can expect to follow the same structure each day.

Parents are encouraged to walk their children to the outdoor classroom, checking in with them along the way. From there, children get to choose to practice their climbing skills, play instruments or a multitude of other options at activity centers. After the centers, teachers lead activities designed around the students' curiosities. By the end of the day, students explore a trail with their teacher to see how the world has changed since their last hike.

"An ideal learning environment sparks questions," said Upchurch. "Nature is a co-teacher that challenges our perceptions. An outdoor classroom is key to developing empathy, flexibility, adaptability and problem-solving."

Creekside Forest School continues to see an uptick in interest as parents and grandparents increasingly understand the role nature plays in developing well-rounded adults.

"Humans are the most connected we've ever been, but we're still disconnected. People instinctively know that nature is a way to reconnect to ourselves and others, but we forget it. We need reminders," Upchurch said.

That's exactly what Creekside Forest School offers to its students. Upchurch described leading students through "do nothing moments," a pause in the day to calm down and notice the world. For children whose brains are growing leaps and bounds every

"Nature is a co-teacher that challenges our perceptions."

— NICOLE UPCHURCH

“Every kid needs a connection to the wildness of Iowa.”

— JAY GORSH

day, reminders to slow down and look up at the clouds and trees are key to their healthy development.

“Nature school sets the foundation to learn later. The right side of our brain develops before the left side. Encouraging play and curiosity helps with that development so kids can go on to learn later in life,” said Upchurch.

Like all nature-based schools, the magic of Creekside Forest School lies in the students’ curiosities. Each day they get to bring their energy and receive individual attention to their questions. They face their fears, build confidence, work on their communication skills, form bonds and quietly contemplate, all against the backdrop of Iowa’s gentle nature and changing seasons.

“Iowa’s nature creates kids who are really good at asking questions,” said Upchurch. “My hope is that my students grow into adults who value community and see value in themselves and others and the environment. Even if we aren’t working directly in nature, being responsible and mindful to one another is incredibly important.”

School of the Wild

School of the Wild was founded by University of Iowa in 1991 as a series of “wild camps” in the Iowa City area. From 1998 to 2000, grants from the U.S. EPA Environmental Education Program and the Iowa DNR REAP Conservation Education Program funded the piloting of School of the Wild for all 17 Iowa City Community School District elementary schools. The school has spread to 42 counties across Iowa as a week-long wilderness experience for over 6,000 students annually across 100 schools. School

districts and conservation organizations work together through School of the Wild to teach students about Iowa’s ecosystems and outdoor recreation.

“We assume many kids have experienced outdoor recreation, but that’s not true,” said Jay Gorsh, director of School of the Wild. “School of the Wild is giving children that experience so they grow up knowing all the ways they can enjoy the outdoors.”

Because School of the Wild works directly with school districts to tailor the program to their needs, more Iowa students are being reached. They’re eliminating barriers like cost, time and transportation that prevent some children from connecting with nature. School of the Wild has reached over 6,000 students in the last 33 years.

“School of the Wild needs to be in every school district in the state. Every kid needs a connection to the wildness of Iowa. Iowa can be a place where we all appreciate the natural world and value opportunities to be in the outdoors while balancing the needs of humans,” said Gorsh.

The benefits of spending a week learning outdoors are apparent not only to Gorsh, but also to participants and their parents who’ve been through the program in the last three decades. One father reported back that his son became obsessed with kayaking, so they had to get the whole family out on the water in kayaks together.

Gorsh recalled a recent outing with a school to Hitchcock Nature Center, which is in the Loess Hills and offers hilly hikes. “A group of boys hiking just in front of me were chatting away. One of them said, ‘Man, I really like this hiking thing, but I gotta get in shape so I can do more of this!’ It was incredible to see a student fall in love with nature and set a personal goal to keep coming back.”

Like Creekside Forest School, School of the Wild creates a space where children can face their fears or insecurities with guidance and encouragement to keep trying. Many students come in with a fear of insects or getting lost. Being in nature helps them build confidence that lasts a lifetime.

This benefit extends to students who

have additional challenges to work through. “Students have come to us with behavioral issues who were struggling in the classroom. We give students the opportunity to succeed. I’ve watched students who were nonverbal interact with nature by touching grass and trees. You can see the changes happening within them,” shared Gorsh.

School of the Wild plans to keep expanding its week-long experience across Iowa. To do that, every school district needs access to a close-to-home wild space where students can challenge themselves and quietly reflect on the changes they’re seeing within themselves and in the world around them.

“We need to protect the space we do have so people have more options and outlets to get outdoors. Some parts of Iowa only have one county park. We need to create spaces for everyone in Iowa,” Gorsh said.

Muddy Boots

Muddy Boots Forest School started in 2018 as a series of camps for toddlers and families to access outdoor educational opportunities in Des Moines, Iowa. Kate Courtney, founder of Muddy Boots, saw a gap in nature-based education after having her own children. The Muddy Boots Forest School is the first fully outdoor forest school in Des Moines. They offer mixed-aged groups between 2 years to 3rd graders.

Like Creekside Forest School, Muddy Boots Forest School encourages students to explore their curiosities and questions. Courtney follows a predictable routine each day, a key component of stability and learning in children.

“Our goal isn’t to have all the students sitting and listening the whole day. We want to get them moving around on the trail or with crafts or games. We structure our days around themes,” said Courtney.

Muddy Boots Forest School provides experiences their students typically don’t have in their neighborhoods. Most of their classes happen at state or county parks around central Iowa, introducing a wildness not found on a typical playground. These parks have longer, uneven trails and places to explore that are

Muddy Boots Forest School provides opportunities for its students to grow in confidence and independence through curiosity, exploration and risky play. Photos provided by Muddy Boots Forest School

important for what’s known as “risky play,” according to Courtney. Risky play is a guided way for children to explore their limits and learn spatial awareness, balance, coordination and problem-solving skills. Hiking on uneven trails or climbing a few feet up on a log are examples of how children need to push their boundaries to grow.

Courtney shared that students learning from a nature-based education curriculum show advanced skills in areas like communication and constructive interactions. Because the children are allowed to explore and play in the outdoors, they must learn how to interact and respect each other.

“In one class, one of my students went from shy to one of the most confident students we had. They became the encourager of the other kids. They took off and grew so much confidence through the program,” Courtney said.

Thinking about the future of her growing school, Courtney shared, “We have great resources in our public lands and natural resources. I hope children coming through Muddy Boots gain a sense of responsibility to spread their love for nature and to be an advocate for nature.”

A Bright Future

One common theme emerged from Upchurch, Gorsh, and Courtney: a bright outlook for the future of Iowa. In a state more altered than most, our recreational areas are vestiges where children can play and explore their big questions. Nature is a fundamental part of who we are as humans and Iowans, and giving children those spaces is essential to ensuring the future of our state. Gorsh summarized it best when he said, “You can’t know to care about the river if you’ve never had an experience with a river. We’re helping kids to learn what to care about in their worlds.”

Wondering what nature-based experiences exist for the youth in your life? Ask your school if they partner with your local county conservation board.

Children at School of the Wild have fun partaking in birdwatching (left) and a prairie hike (right). Photos provided by School of the Wild

LASTING LEGACIES

From the first gift to the forty-first, INHF's donors continue to see the value in giving.

BY INHF
DEVELOPMENT TEAM
MEMBERS

Stacie Couvillon, Erin Griffin,
Taryn Samuels & Abby Hade
Terpstra

“Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: formed at the suggestion of Iowa's governor by leading Iowa citizens concerned about conservation and preservation of Iowa's natural resources.”

Brochure published by INHF in 1979

People join Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for all sorts of reasons. Some give when a land protection project is happening near them. Some give because they want to see certain habitats — like prairie, wetlands or woodlands — protected. Some give to build Iowa's trail network. Some give to keep open space and agricultural lands as part of our landscape. Some give to honor the person who taught them love of nature. Some give to boost Iowa's outdoor recreation opportunities. Some give as an act of care for the voiceless — plants, animals and future generations. And some give because they wholeheartedly support INHF's mission to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

INHF's membership program started in earnest in 1981, three years after the organization's founding. Beyond the impact of the dollars collected as part of an annual giving program, having grassroots support for public land, private land protection and good conservation legislation gives INHF the power to act on behalf of those who are concerned about Iowa's natural resources.

Throughout the last 45 years, INHF has celebrated successes that donors made possible. Acres made public. Special habitats preserved. The return of native species to restored lands. Waterways buffered. Wetlands reestablished. Recreation opportunities expanded. Family farms protected. The impact, stability and nimbleness of the organization has been tied to support given by those with a deep-rooted love of Iowa.

“I had a heartfelt connection with INHF,” explained Sue Hough, one of INHF's

first donors. Hough was also one of the organization's first employees, serving as the administrative assistant to President Gerry Schnepf. “Conservation is part of my life and in my heart from growing up on a farm in Washington County.”

Asked why she continues to donate today, Hough said, “I've seen the programs grow over the years, and more programs added. I enjoy the variety of work we accomplish and how our work helps throughout the state. Imagine Iowa without INHF. What would have been lost? What would it look like?”

In 1980, INHF completed its first four projects, protecting 1,916 acres. Last year, INHF completed 28 projects, bringing the cumulative conserved acres to more than 190,000 acres.

Beverly Lind began donating to INHF in 1983 and continues to give in honor of her late husband, Kenneth. “We're outdoor people,” Lind shared. Fond of traveling and of canoeing, they began with a honeymoon in Rocky Mountain National Park and Manitou Springs, then spent their lives traveling across Iowa and the US. “We found solace in nature,” she recalled, describing their affinity for northeast Iowa's Driftless area and their frequent scenic drives.

Why does Lind keep her membership with INHF? “Nature in Iowa remains important, state parks and wilderness areas... It's important to keep what we have. Water quality and wildlife are critical issues.”

“INHF is the go-to group when it comes to land protection,” said Robert Walton, another early donor. Walton served as the director of Dubuque County Conservation at the time when INHF was helping procure and

open Mines of Spain to the public. “Wildlife corridors, trail connections, critical habitat. This work has dramatic impact. I like that my money is used wisely and going to permanent land protection.”

“I'm simply dumbfounded by all of the ways INHF makes impacts across the state,” said Russelle Leggett. Leggett and her husband, Glenn, made their first gift in 1982. Glenn was integral to the founding of INHF and served on the first board of directors. He crisscrossed Iowa drumming up support and sharing INHF's conservation vision.

“The culture of our country has emphasized personal gain so dramatically in recent years and the fact that there is an organization that works to preserve land and water so that all humans can enjoy the natural spaces without damaging the environment — that is special,” said Leggett. “We have a social obligation to preserve those things that keep our quality of life. I support INHF to honor Glenn, and because I am continually in awe of what the organization can accomplish.”

Doug Smalley served in the Iowa House of Representatives during Governor Robert Ray's term and witnessed the idea for INHF spark and take hold. “I was impressed and thought it sounded like a group of people whose work I wanted to support and whose mission resonated with my own thinking,” he said. Smalley gave his first gift in 1983.

“People who might not always agree on all things can come together with INHF to help protect places in Iowa and help make them available for the public to enjoy,” said Smalley. “My interest in INHF has never changed. And I like the magazine because I like reading about

protection in places I visited in the past and remember as being special places in the state.”

A lengthy pamphlet printed and distributed by INHF in 1979 states, “Without awareness and action, Iowa's natural heritage is in danger of being permanently lost, threatening both our lifestyle and the vitality of our economy. We must begin to develop a well-balanced approach to management and stewardship of our natural resources... for those who follow.”

Throughout the forty-five years of INHF's existence, tens of thousands of individuals, families, businesses and organizational partners have provided support through donations, volunteer efforts and advocacy. We are fortunate to still have over two hundred supporters that have been with us since INHF's first decade, and equally fortunate to be welcoming people new to INHF every year.

“Donor support means so much to INHF. We rely on our members to be champions for nature and conservation, and their financial support allows us to act quickly when opportunities for protection arise,” said Abby Hade Terpstra, INHF Director of Philanthropy.

We are here to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife. But we couldn't do it alone. When the might of people with whom INHF's mission resonates mixes with the knowledge and resources of our organization, that's where the magic happens.

Conservation takes time, patience and dedication. It also takes quick action in crucial moments. INHF donors make both the steadfastness and nimbleness required to serve nature possible. Whether it is a first gift or a forty-first gift, each is valuable, impactful and much appreciated. 🍁

INHF is lucky to have donors who have been giving for over forty years. A handful of those donors are pictured here in front of Heritage Valley, a donor funded project that protected over 1,000 acres near Decorah. Featured donors from left to right are Russelle Leggett, Kenneth Lind, Doug Smalley and his grandson, Sue Hough, and Robert and Sandy Walton. *Photos provided by the families and the Iowa DNR.*



TRUSTING INHF WITH YOUR CONSERVATION VISION

Located just outside of Marshalltown, the 215-acre Hall Farm Prairie had been in Kathy Hall’s family for decades. She and her sister grew up watching their father implement a diverse approach on the land including a cow-calf operation and oat-alfalfa-corn crop rotation. Kathy’s father was one of the first farmers in the area to plant a wind break on their farm, and after those trees became established, the family noticed more birds on the farm and became avid birders as a result. Kathy had always been a nature lover and acquired the farm in 2015 with a desire to implement conservation farming practices and provide even more habitat for wildlife.

With a goal to protect and improve the water quality of Minerva Creek that runs through the property and empties into the Iowa River, Kathy had many conversations with INHF staff about long-term protection for the farm. Over the years, Kathy worked with INHF staff to document her vision for the protection of its natural resources as well as a stewardship plan that involved gradually reducing the farmed acres and, over time, restoring the land to prairie. Her three children helped facilitate her donation of the land to INHF in 2020, asking that we work to restore prairie, woodland and wetlands on the property and maintain it for wildlife habitat.

Through thoughtful communication, INHF has diligently worked hand in hand with a local farmer to help implement the transition that Kathy envisioned, including the farmer in the care and early establishment of the prairies. Income from the cropland and a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation helped fund four diverse prairie plantings. Today, most of the farm acres have been restored, and it is thriving. Though her passing in 2022 meant Kathy never got to see her prairies in their full glory, we think she would be pleased.

It is an absolute honor to work with families who place trust in INHF to bring their conservation vision to fruition.

— STACIE COUVILLON, *Planned Giving & Major Gifts Officer*

Leave a legacy for future generations: If you would like to create your own conservation legacy so that wildlife and future generations may benefit from your goals, contact Planned Giving & Major Gifts Officer Stacie Couvillon at scouvillon@inhf.org or 515-288-1846, ext. 45.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN HONOR OF

Bob Bredensteiner & Kim Bredensteiner
Jim Brown
Dave & Jean Dunn
Bruce Ecker
Dan & Zoe Ehlers
Alan Fredregill
Peg Armstrong-Gustafson
Lori Howe
Janssen
Jayjack Family
Sherri Keigan
Frank Olsen
Carl J. Plank & Kay K. Plank
Ronn Ritz

IN HONOR OF

Rex & Nan Ryden
Tylar Samuels
Melanie Schmidt
Marlys Svare
Patrick Swanson
Dave Wedin
Joseph H Zaletel & Linda R F Zaletel

IN MEMORY OF

James Bodensteiner
Laura “Louise” Arotheer
Alberta Brosnahan
Mary Brosnahan Terpstra
Allen Dolliver Anneberg
Jerry Finder
Estelle Hetzler

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Donna Tiller
Dr. Kent L. Webb
Wilbur L. Wilson
Tony Winter
Kenneth Shaul
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Vickie Stewart
John Ray Taylor

WANDERING THE WETLANDS

BY JORDAN McDOWELL
Design Intern

Around the first cool and rainy October evening, before the ground has begun to frost, tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) begin to make their autumn migration from underground summer habitats toward wetland territory where they’ll overwinter. Incredibly secretive, it’s unusual to find one out and about unless after heavy rainfall, which is what makes their fall travels such an exciting event to observe!

Tiger salamanders typically embark on their journeys either late at night or very early in the morning to avoid predators and to prevent their delicate skin from drying in the sun. They should be easy to spot against a white gravel road due to their dark coloring. As with other wildlife, it’s best not to interfere and let them do their thing. But if you feel like one is *really* in need of assistance, they should only be handled with clean, wet hands so as not to damage their skin.

Tiger salamanders are considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need due to the loss of wetland habitats as well as the changing climate. Some areas of the state have been shown to have an increase in population over the last 30 years due to variable conditions while others have shown an immense population decline. According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, wetlands once covered between 4 and 6 million acres across the state, but 95% of them have been drained. Wet conditions are essential for salamander migration as it helps to keep their skin from drying out during their travels, and migration is certainly important for the reproduction of these semiaquatic animals. Lucky for amphibians, we’ve had an unusually wet year to support their needs, but most years as of late have been detrimentally arid. For these reasons, it is more important now

than ever to educate and encourage everyone to support these traveling amphibians and to preserve our wetland complexes.

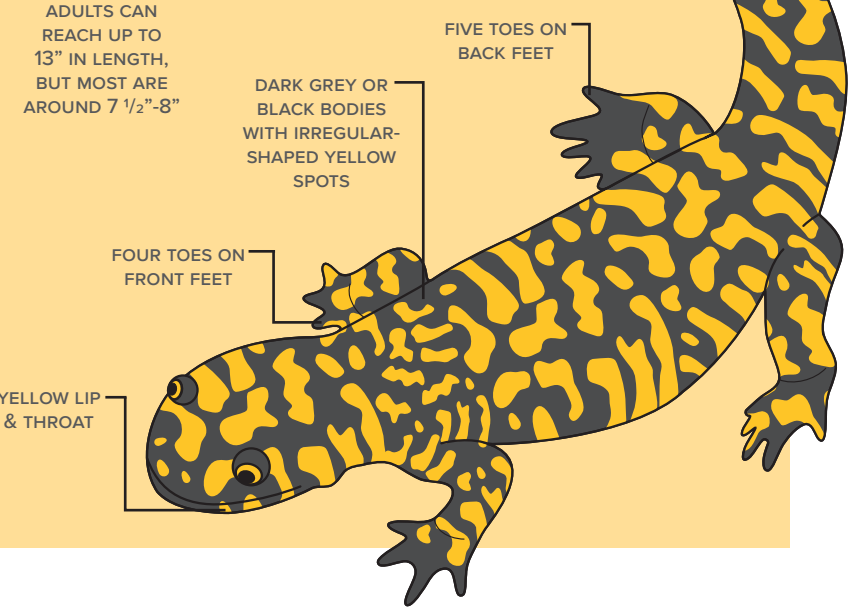
Get outdoors this fall by packing up the kids and going for a rainy backroad drive or on a hike near the wetlands shortly after the first autumn storm — keep a close eye on the road for these truly remarkable native creatures! 🐸



Photo by Larry Reis

TIGER SALAMANDER ID

Learn how to identify an adult tiger salamander in the wild! Their aquatic larvae are much paler in color and have bushy gills.



Dallas County Conservation’s Voas Nature Area sees a large population of tiger salamanders and has a notification system for those who want alerts of their migration.

To learn more, head to www.dallascountyiowa.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation.



**Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation**

505 5th Ave., Suite 444
Des Moines, IA 50309



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A family explores Hitchcock Nature Center along the new Lotus Loop trail. Nestled in the heart of the globally significant Loess Hills just 15 miles outside of Council Bluffs lies Hitchcock Nature Center. Once slated to become a landfill, INHF helped the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board protect the property. *Photo by Pottawattamie County Conservation*

