

# IOWA NATURAL HERITAGE

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

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**ON THE COVER**  
Bluebells bloom on the woodland floor at Backbone State Park in Delaware County. Backbone, which is just south of Strawberry Point in northeast Iowa, was Iowa's first state park, dedicated 100 years ago in 1920. Read about how INHF has helped to expand Iowa's state park system on pages 10-13. *Photo by Gary Hamer*



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

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# The healing power of nature

About a week after much of Iowa began staying home to help slow the spread of COVID-19, Chad Graeve, a natural resource specialist and park ranger for the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, sent me this message:

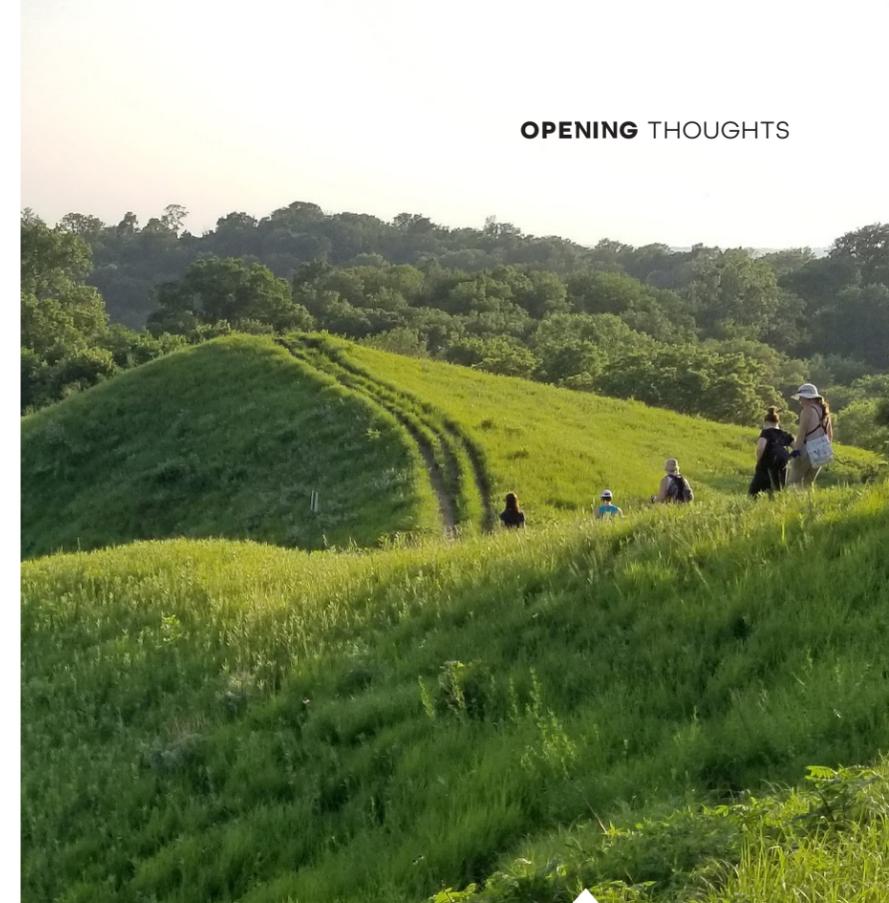
"I've been noticing increased usage of Hitchcock [Nature Center] all week long. We're usually pretty quiet in the parking lot during the week and packed on the weekends. This week has brought steady usage, even with rotten weather. I've been interacting with visitors and they are people that need to get out of the house and have a desire to be active. On Tuesday I was conversing with one man and, as I always do, I asked him if he had been to Hitchcock before. He responded, 'This is my second time. I was here on Friday and I left having never felt better. So, I'm back today.'"



JOE MCGOVERN  
President

INHF helped protect this Loess Hills gem and create Hitchcock Nature Center in the early 1990s. It has grown into one of the most popular county parks in western Iowa and is a place of refuge for native Iowa plants and wildlife. It has become evident, especially lately, that it is also a place of refuge for people.

I have heard from so many people in recent weeks that getting outdoors has been healing for them, especially their mental health. According to a recent Google mobility study, Iowa has seen a 134% increase in usage of parks since social distancing guidelines were implemented. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



has reported a similar spike in trail use across the country.

You have likely long-known how important outdoor recreation is for Iowans, but in these challenging times there has been increased awareness of the vital role that nature plays in our well-being. While our day-to-day lives have changed drastically, what INHF accomplishes with your help has remained steady.

We are still working with landowners and partners to protect Iowa's special places. We have continued to engage with volunteers — from a distance — to accomplish important work on the land or from the comfort and safety of their homes. We have stayed in touch with lawmakers to advocate for policy that improves the natural health and beauty of our state and expands access to the outdoors for Iowans.

Because of your generous support — even in difficult times — our critical work of protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife has continued. No matter what the future holds, nature, trails and parks will still be there, always inviting and ready to renew us.

**People hike at Hitchcock Nature Area** in the Loess Hills of Pottawattamie County in the spring of 2018. *Photo by Lance Brisbois*

**Get outdoors safely and responsibly**

While getting into nature can be a refuge during the COVID-19 pandemic, INHF is encouraging people to be safe and responsible when choosing where to go. Learn more at [inhf.org/safe-outdoors](http://inhf.org/safe-outdoors)

**“The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility.”**

– Wendell Berry

Spring is my favorite time of the year. New life abounds as trees bud, plants emerge, baby wildlife begin appearing everywhere, and morels eventually peek through the leaf litter offering a short-lived woodland treat. Spring brings with it new beginnings and a fresh start from the previous year’s happenings.

During this time of uncertainty, I find my soul yearning for the peace and clarity nature offers those who take the time to listen even more than usual. I look forward to watching the spring ephemerals make their appearance during my walks in the woods. I long to wade through the prairie, the tall grasses dancing as I brush by them in the summer sun.

Without public lands, I would not be able to accept the gifts nature offers that I — and so many others — so desperately need right now. I would not be able to enjoy all the newness spring has to offer.

Public land is a constant that offers stability in times of unease. This year marks the centennial of Iowa State Parks. When everyday life returns, Iowa’s public lands will still be there, just as they have been for the past 100 years, providing opportunities for enrichment and reminders of our own resilience.

— HEATHER JOBST,  
*Senior Land Conservation Director*



**Pasque flowers**, one of the first flowers to bloom in Iowa’s prairies each spring, bow in the wind at Cold Water Spring State Preserve in Winneshiek County. *Photo by Ross Baxter*



**INHF staff burns** at Snyder Heritage Farm. Prescribed fire replicates natural processes on the prairie that help native species thrive. *Photo by Derek Miner*

## ON FIRE

Each spring, INHF takes to the prairie to conduct prescribed burns across the state. At the time of press, the burn crew, which includes INHF staff and several experienced volunteers, was approximately halfway through its spring burn season, which typically runs March–May pending weather. As of mid-

April they'd burnt **323 acres on 11 properties in 10 counties**, renewing native plants, removing invasive species and reinvigorating soils on remnant, restored and reconstructed prairies across the state.

## Gift to Iowa's Future Day

More than 3,800 acres of land in 24 counties with an estimated value of \$4.8 million was permanently protected through donations of land or land value by Iowa landowners in 2019.

The individuals, businesses and organizations associated with more than 30 donations were scheduled to be recognized at Gift to Iowa Future Day, an annual event honoring those who made gifts of land, land value or conservation easements in the previous year, at the Iowa State Capitol this spring. Gov. Kim Reynolds, Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg, Iowa DNR Director Kayla Lyon and INHF President Joe McGovern were all scheduled to speak at the event.

Unfortunately, the event was canceled in

the interest of slowing the spread of COVID-19. However, INHF was able to recognize the ten landowners it had the privilege of working with in 2019 on social media. All 2019 land donors will receive a certificate signed by the governor via mail and be honored at the Gift to Iowa's Future Day 2021 event.

"Gift to Iowa's Future Day is a special moment for all of us," said INHF President Joe McGovern. "It's important that we take the time to recognize and celebrate the generosity of these donors. It's truly an honor to work with landowners that provide wild places for our current and future generations."

**A full list of land donors that worked with INHF in 2019 is available at [inhf.org](http://inhf.org).**

## Hagie Award nominations

Know an outstanding conservationist that goes above and beyond? Nominate them for the 2021 Lawrence and Eula Hagie Heritage Award. The Hagie Heritage Award recognizes Iowans who have demonstrated extraordinary personal service and commitment to improving the quality of Iowa's natural environment and who encourage others to do the same. Applications are due July 1, 2020. Visit [inhf.org/hagieheritageaward](http://inhf.org/hagieheritageaward) to learn more and view a complete list of past honorees.



## 2021 INHF nature calendar

Iowa is beautiful. We want to see it through your lens. Submit your best shots of Iowa's outdoors for INHF's 2021 wall calendar. Professional and hobby photographers alike are welcome and encouraged to participate. Submissions are due July 1, 2020. Visit [inhf.org/photos](http://inhf.org/photos) to view submission guidelines, pay rates, photo rights, etc.

## QUARTERLY PROTECTION REPORT

A quick look at new INHF protection projects and land transferred between **December 2019–February 2020**.

### Newly protected areas

#### Butler County

38 acres along Boylan Creek in the northwest corner of Butler County. Protection will provide high quality habitat for neotropical migratory birds, deer, pheasant and mink. Will also provide water quality benefits and greater infiltration during flooding events. *(Will be owned and managed by Butler County Conservation Board)*

#### Raccoon River Valley Trail extension

Secures approximately 1 mile of right of way for the planned extension of the Raccoon River Valley Trail between Herndon and Coon Rapids. This is a key link in what will eventually be part of the Great American Rail Trail. *(Will be owned and managed by the City of Coon Rapids)*

#### Central Iowa 4-H Camp

1,011-acre former 4-H camp, also known as Clover Woods, situated along the Des Moines River in Boone County. Contains high quality oak-hickory woodlands, more than a dozen miles of hiking trails and ancient Native American burial mounds.

#### Melinda V. Reif Reilly Fen & Prairie

100 acres of upland prairie, pasture and fen just north of Solon in Johnson County. Fens, the rarest type of wetland in Iowa, are fed by groundwater and provide habitat for rare plant and animal species. *(Will be owned and managed by Johnson County Conservation Board)*

#### West Fork WMA Addition

135 acres just northwest of Emmetsburg in Palo Alto County. Protects wetland habitat between Deer Creek and Five Island Lake, and expands protected land around the adjacent Prairie Gold Wildlife Area. *(Will be owned and managed by the Iowa DNR)*

#### Dallas/Guthrie counties

84 acres along the Middle Raccoon River in Dallas and Guthrie counties. Protects a mixture of mature and restored woodland that will benefit wildlife habitat, including rare bat species, and water quality. *(Owned and managed by INHF)*

#### Cerro Gordo County

114 acres along the Winnebago River in Cerro Gordo County. Protects important wildlife and plant habitat in the oxbows, wetlands and oak savanna along more than a mile of the river. Adjacent to the county-owned Kingfisher Hollow Access. *(Will be owned and managed by Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board)*

#### Eagle Prairie Preserve

Addition to the Eagle Prairie Preserve property that was completed in cooperation with Clayton County Conservation Board. Includes remnant wetland and prairie habitat. *(Owned and managed by INHF)*

### Land transfers to public partners

#### Elk Lake WMA

160 acres of remnant and restored prairie, wetland and pasture in northeast Clay County. Protects wildlife habitat and provides water quality benefits to the Little Sioux River, one of Iowa's five Protected Water Areas. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa DNR)*

#### Vincent Bluff Addition

5-acre addition to Vincent Bluff State Preserve, a prominent remnant prairie bluff overlooking Council Bluffs. Protects grasslands, increases outdoor recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat in the area. *(Donated by The Woodbury Company II. Owned by the City of Council Bluffs and managed by the Loess Hills Preservation Society)*



**120-acre Lansing Wildlife Management Area** addition in Allamakee County. *Photo by INHF*

#### Valley View Trail

1.7 acres of wildlife habitat along the Valley View Trail, a 7.2-mile trail spanning the eastern side of Council Bluffs that also connects to the Wabash Trace Nature Trail. Protection increases wildlife habitat and enhances trail user experience. *Donated by Availa Bank. (Owned and managed by the City of Council Bluffs)*

#### Tieville Bend WMA

222 acres of Missouri River floodplain in western Monona County. Restored wetlands and prairie uplands provide outstanding habitat to migrating birds, including waterfowl. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa DNR)*

#### Heritage Hills Addition

206 acres of mixed habitat in southwest Warren County that will provide excellent wildlife habitat and numerous outdoor recreation opportunities. This is the fourth tract transferred in this 704-acre unit of Heritage Hills WMA. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa DNR)*

#### Lansing WMA Addition

120 acres of woodland in northeast Allamakee County. Provides outstanding woodland habitat, especially for Neotropical bird species like Cerulean warblers and Acadian flycatchers, maintains scenic beauty and enhances public hunting opportunities in the area. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa DNR)*

#### North Bear WMA

113 acres of woodland, restored prairie, cropland and cold-water trout stream in northeast Winneshiek County. Protects wildlife habitat, including 3/10 mile of North Bear Creek, which supports a self-sustaining Brown trout population, and opportunities for public recreation. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa DNR). Read more about this property on page 19.*

#### Buffalo Creek WMA Addition

8 acres of pasture in southwest Delaware County. Once restored to prairie, the property will benefit water quality in nearby Buffalo Creek, increase wildlife habitat, particularly for pollinators, and expand public access to Buffalo Creek WMA. *(Owned and managed by Delaware County Conservation Board)*

#### Big Grove Schwab/Burford Area

34 acres of woodland in northeast Johnson County. Protects community supported agriculture, an ephemeral creek, trails and hand-built wooden double-round and stone barns. This is the second and final tract transferred in this 132-acre complex, which is adjacent to several other protected properties in the area. *(Owned and managed by Johnson County Conservation Board)*

#### Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge Addition

49-acre in-holding within Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Jasper County. Once restored to tallgrass prairie, the property will provide excellent upland wildlife habitat, expand contiguous habitat and benefit water quality of nearby Walnut Creek. *(Owned and managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service).*

#### Loess Hills WMA Addition

163 acres of Loess Hills habitat in central Monona County within the Turin Special Landscape Area. Protects high quality native and restorable Loess Hills prairie, Bur oak woodlands and scenic vistas, and expands outdoor recreation opportunities in the area. *(Owned and managed by the Iowa DNR)*



# A place in the woods

Preserving a sense of wildness within city limits

BY KATY HEGGEN  
Communications Specialist | kheggen@inhf.org

**Dutchman's breeches** bloom in the woodland on the Weitz property in Polk County. Photo by Genna Clemen

**Weitz Conservation Easement**  
Polk County



**LAND:** 27 acres of quality woodland and wildlife habitat

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** Views of the Raccoon River, native flora and fauna

**PARTNERS:** Weitz family and INHF

As he hikes the woodland surrounding his home one spring afternoon, Fred Weitz names each wildflower he passes. It's a trait he inherited from his mother, and an interest he's continued to cultivate over the years.

Weitz, who led The Weitz Company, a Des Moines-based construction company that has been a fixture in the city since its founding in 1855, may be more widely known for his business, community and philanthropic leadership than his knowledge of native flora and fauna. But the man whose family built some of Iowa's most iconic buildings also holds a deep love for its outdoors.

## At home outdoors

Weitz grew up on a small acreage on what was then the southwest edge of Des Moines. As a child, his days were spent exploring the woodland that surrounded the family's home.

"We went all over the place," Weitz recalled. "My parents got a little tent house, and in the summer my siblings and I would stay out there. We played around in the woods and down by

the old farmhouse on Welker Avenue."

Years later, Weitz set out in search of something similar for his own family, a bit of nature tucked into the city. He found it along the banks of the Raccoon River on the southeast side of West Des Moines. Though the land is less than a 15-minute drive from downtown Des Moines, it feels a world away.

Oak, hickory and walnut trees envelop the majority of 27-acre property, the canopy spilling down the rambling hillside to the river below. Ephemerals arrive each spring, their short-lived blooms scattering bursts of color across the woodland floor. A quarter mile of the Raccoon River runs along the north side, its waters visible from the house on the hill when the branches are bare.

## A place of their own

Weitz and his wife, Emily, purchased the property in the early '60s, built a home shortly thereafter and raised their four children under the oaks.

"When the kids were young, they'd go down and spend the day playing on the river," Weitz

said. An avid paddler, Weitz did his fair share of playing there too, dropping his canoe in at a little spot he carved out along the bank. Other afternoons were spent walking the "loop-the-loop" trail overlooking the river, Weitz's favorite way to experience the property.

Over the years, the couple restored the woodland, removing barbed wire and old structures left behind from its foregone days as farmland. Native plants thrive here, largely uninhibited by invasive species. Deer, wild turkey, opossums and other wildlife amble along, unbothered by passersby.

Located in the heart of a large complex of protected land including Raccoon River Park, Brown's Woods and Walnut Woods State Park, the woodland preserves a sense of wildness not only on the Weitz property, but the public lands that surround it, which return the favor in kind. Together, these three public lands, which are owned and managed by the City of West Des Moines (Raccoon River Park), Polk County Conservation (Brown's Woods) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Walnut Woods State Park), create a regional complex of protected land spanning 1,375 acres – one of the largest in the immediate metro area.

## Permanent protection

The ways in which his land is tied to and, in a way, part of the parks that surround it is not lost on Weitz who once walked their trails and now, at age 91, the roads regularly. However, it was a heartbreaking experience involving the land that first inspired Weitz to seek out this peaceful setting that led to he and Emily's decision to permanently protect it.

"That property I grew up on, my experience with that is why we ended up deciding to place a conservation easement on this place," Weitz said. "My father ended up selling the land, and the fella that bought it subdivided it and developed the woodland. That hurt, so as I thought about what would happen to our property when we're gone, I thought about that. We had a choice. I could subdivide it myself or I could put a conservation easement on it. I opted for the easement."

Weitz enjoys having the peace of mind knowing that stretch of riverfront — and all

the memories held in place by its banks — will be protected forever. He's hopeful that his neighbors may consider doing something similar. But for now, he's content to simply step outside and take it all in.

"I just enjoy being in the woods," he said. "I still get out there, not as much, but from time to time. We feel very lucky." 🍂

**The Weitz easement** borders the Raccoon River and sits in the middle of a complex of protected public land. At bottom, Emily and Fred Weitz with their daughter Sarah, far left, and INHF Conservation Easement Director Erin Van Waus, far right. Photos by INHF





# Celebrating 100 years of IOWA STATE PARKS

BY KATY HEGGEN & DARIA MATHER  
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“Its sides are in places precipitous, the rock cliffs rising sheer for more than 80 feet. Erosion and secular decay have carved the rocks into picturesque columns, towers, castles, battlements and flying buttresses.”

State Geologist Samuel Calvin wrote these words more than a hundred years ago about the “backbone,” a steep, narrow ridge of bedrock that rises above the river that carved it, at Backbone State Park along the Maquoketa River in eastern Iowa. Dedicated in 1920, it was Iowa’s first state park, established just three years after the Iowa Legislature passed an act to create Iowa’s state parks system.

In the years since, 72 state parks and recreation areas, ten state forests, 95 state preserves and 492 wildlife management areas have been established across Iowa; though in a state with less than 2% of publicly accessible land, their creation has rarely come easily.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) was founded in 1979 in part because important natural lands were being offered for sale and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and county conservation boards (CCB) who protect public lands across the state could not act quickly enough to purchase and protect them. It was heartbreaking to watch prairies, woodlands, river corridors, wetlands and wildlife — especially those adjacent to existing public lands — go unprotected.

INHF quickly began working with private landowners across Iowa who wanted to sell or donate their land for conservation, and the DNR and CCBs to identify, purchase and hold special places until the state and counties could secure funding. Many of these lands are now part of the Iowa State Parks and Iowa’s County Conservation systems. INHF’s work has evolved considerably in the past four decades, but this work remains an integral part of our mission to this day.

Here’s a look at a few of the state parks, state recreation areas and state forests INHF has helped protect or expand in the last 40 years.

## Pine Lake State Park Hardin County

INHF additions:

**2001:** 74 acres

**2004:** 15 acres

Located along the Iowa River, Pine Lake State Park is among Iowa’s earliest state parks. Established in 1929, it features a mix of landscapes including woodland, wetlands, lakes, river and remnant prairie. You can experience all of these habitats on the trails running through the park or by way of the Iowa River as this park is part of the Iowa River Greenbelt region.

These habitats allow for native plants and animals including white pines and rare ferns to thrive in the park. Many of the 250-year old giant pine trees for which the park was named were lost in a 2009 hailstorm. Thankfully, with help from private donors, the Iowa DNR has been able to plant new pine trees. Visitors can see the seedlings throughout the park.

In 2001, INHF helped to protect a 74-acre addition to Pine Lake State Park. An additional 15 acres were protected and added to the park with the help of INHF in 2004.

## Pammel State Park Madison County

INHF additions:

**2001:** 71 acres

Dedicated in 1928, Pammel State Park was one of the first state parks in Iowa. Named after Louis H. Pammel, the architect of the Iowa park system, it features outstanding woodland vegetation, the Middle River and a limestone ridge known as the “backbone,” a 100-foot high natural ridge that runs through the park.

Pammel State Park is home to a diversity of native woodland plants and animals including some of the oldest recorded oak trees in the state. Many grow from the craggy surfaces along the limestone backbone. Some of the best quality walnut stands in central Iowa can also be found here.

This park, which has been managed by the Madison County Conservation Board since 1989, has something for everyone, including picnic grounds, a lodge built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, yurts and a river ford built in the 1920s, which is the only access to the west side of the park.

In 2001, INHF helped protect a 71-acre addition to the now 350-acre park.

## Waubonsie State Park Fremont County

INHF additions:

**2005:** 722 acres

Waubonsie State Park on the west side of the state lies in the heart of the Loess Hills. Named for Chief Waubonsie of the Potawatomi tribe, the park is much the same today as it was when it was purchased in 1926.

Waubonsie State Park features classic Loess Hills peak and saddle topography, which is highlighted by seven miles of foot trails and eight miles of equestrian trails winding through the park. It is also a site on the Lewis and Clark Historical Trail. The seven-acre Lake Virginia offers opportunities for fishing, boating and picnics.

In 2005, INHF purchased the 722-acre former Wa-Shawtee Girl Scout Camp as an addition to the park. This expanded not only the park, but year-round recreational opportunities to include seasonal and year-round cabin accommodations and a day-use lodge.

## Stone State Park Woodbury County

INHF additions:

**2005:** 63 acres

**2006:** 98 acres

**2007:** 63 acres

**2008:** 40 acres; 24 acres

**2009:** 58 acres; 70 acres

**2012:** 23 acres; 29 acres

Stone State Park lies in the bluffs along the Big Sioux River in northwest Iowa near Sioux City. Like Waubonsie State Park, it also features loess hills land formations and is on the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.

The park’s unique landscape can be explored via 15 miles of trails accessible to hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, each offering a different view worth exploring.

Stone State Park is a sanctuary for many wildlife including wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, coyotes, red foxes and a variety of birds and butterflies that also thrive here.

Over the years, INHF has helped protect nearly 415 acres of the park’s 1,543 acres through a series of additions protecting remnant prairie, woodland and grasslands.

**Mines of Spain State Recreation Area**  
Dubuque County

INHF additions:

**1980:** Establish 1,260 acres

**2011:** 52 acres

Featuring stunning natural beauty and historically significant landmarks from which it draws its name, Mines of Spain State Recreation Area just south of Dubuque is a popular place to explore Iowa's outdoors.

Stretching 1,439 acres along the bluffs overlooking the city, the park features a diverse mix of woodland and prairie, over 15 miles of hiking trails and breathtaking views of the Mississippi River Valley Below.

The area, which has been designated as a National Historic Landmark, was INHF's first major protection project. The owners of this much beloved bluff did not want to deal directly with governmental agencies, which had long sought to acquire the site, but were willing to sell the land to INHF for conservation. It was dedicated in 1981. INHF helped protect a 52-acre addition to the park in 2011.

**Stephens State Forest**

Lucas, Clarke, Appanoose, Monroe and Davis counties

INHF additions:

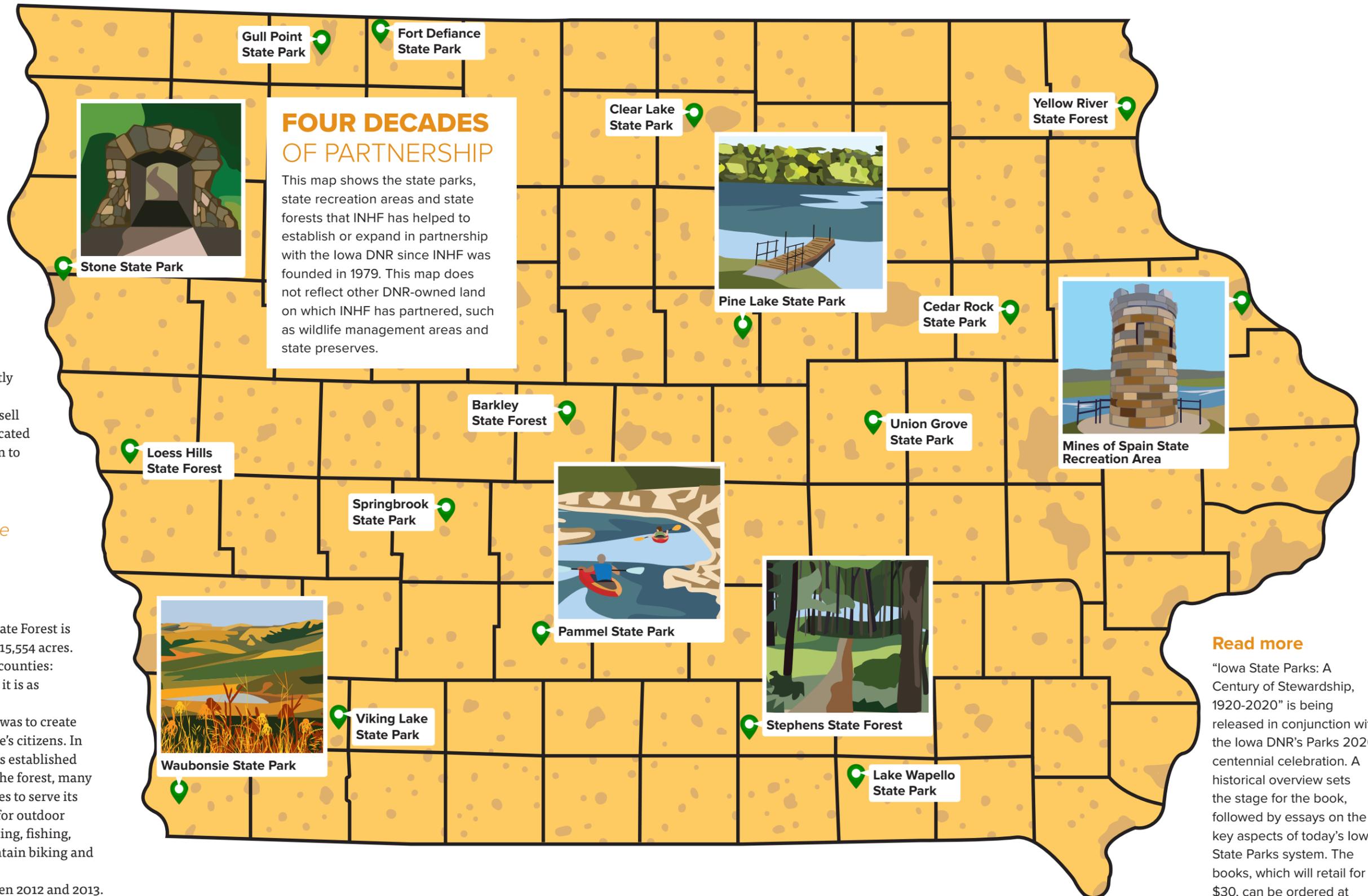
**2012:** 130 acres

**2013:** 111 acres; 227 acres

Located in central southern Iowa, Stephens State Forest is the largest of Iowa's ten state forests covering 15,554 acres. Spread across seven units encompassing five counties: Lucas, Clarke, Monroe, Appanoose and Davis, it is as diverse as it is dense.

The original intent of the forest's founders was to create an example of forest management for the state's citizens. In the late 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps established hardwood and conifer plantings throughout the forest, many which remain today. While the forest continues to serve its educational purpose, it is also a popular area for outdoor recreation activities including as hiking, hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, cross-country skiing, mountain biking and camping (opportunities vary by unit).

INHF helped protect three additions between 2012 and 2013.



**Read more**

"Iowa State Parks: A Century of Stewardship, 1920-2020" is being released in conjunction with the Iowa DNR's Parks 2020 centennial celebration. A historical overview sets the stage for the book, followed by essays on the key aspects of today's Iowa State Parks system. The books, which will retail for \$30, can be ordered at [uipress.uiowa.edu](http://uipress.uiowa.edu).

# HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

TWO FAMILIES WORK TOGETHER TO TRANSITION A BELOVED FARM

BY CAROLE TEATOR  
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**K**roul Farms is a well-known landmark along Highway 1 in eastern Iowa. Midway between Mount Vernon and Solon not far from Iowa City, the farm, its market and garden center are a destination for those looking for bedding plants in the spring, fresh vegetables in the summer, pumpkins in the fall and firewood in the winter.

The Kroul name is familiar to passersby for other reasons, too. University of Iowa football fans know Matt Kroul thanks to his stand-out career as a defensive lineman for the Hawkeyes from 2004 to 2008. In the years since, he spent several seasons on the offensive line for the New York Jets, was inducted into the Iowa High School Football Hall of Fame, and has been featured in several publications as an outstanding athlete who returned home to leave his mark on fields of another kind.

Matt joined his parents, John and Kaylene, on the family farm in 2012 when he and his wife Nicole decided to return to Iowa to put down roots. Recently, Matt's brother Adam also returned to farm full-time, and Matt's cousin Kyle is yet another important member of this family farm operation. Together, they are continuing the farming tradition of generations of Krouls before them, some of whom have owned these very acres along the Cedar River since the 1860s.

Land that has been in the family for so many years makes Matt and his family think about those who will follow them.

"We try and manage the land, timber and water to ensure future generations can have the same opportunities we have had," Matt said. "You also want to build a solid business so that future generations can view agriculture as a viable option for them moving forward."

## Protecting farmland and habitat

In 2018, Matt and Nicole added 145 acres to the family's farming operation when they bought a neighboring farm from Larry and Sue Koehrsen and their family.

The Koehrsens and two of their children and their spouses had owned their farm since the late 1980s. It was a place where they could work together on weekends to restore the land and spend time in nature as a family. Larry recalls many happy spring days spent planting

and caring for nearly 30,000 trees. The family also restored several acres of native grasses and wildflowers on the property, and rented some of the acres for crop production.

When it came time to sell their farm, the Koehrsens wanted to ensure that the land they had taken care of for so many years would not be subdivided for residential development, an increasing pressure in this active real estate market between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City.

Larry called Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) to discuss their options for protecting their land. Ultimately, the family decided to place a conservation easement on the property.

"We decided that a conservation easement was the gold standard of the protection options we discussed," Larry recalled. "And INHF is the gold standard of organizations to administer the easement."

**Kroul Farm**  
Linn County



**LAND:** 145 acres of quality woodland, wildlife habitat and agricultural land

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** 30,000+ tree plantings, native grasses and wildflowers, open space

**PARTNERS:** The Koehrsen family, the Kroul family and INHF





### Protection, flexibility and financial planning

Larry, Sue and their children worked with INHF Conservation Easement Director Erin Van Waus to craft language that would protect the land they had nurtured for so many years while at the same time allowing a future owner as much flexibility as possible. Longtime neighbors of the Krouls, the Koehrsens hoped those future owners would be Matt and Nicole, who they had preliminary conversations with about the land.

The neighbors stayed in touch with each other as the Koehrsens worked through the land protection process with Van Waus. Once the Koehrsens were comfortable with the terms of the easement, Van Waus reviewed the terms with Matt and his father. They had questions about a few of the requirements, which she was able to clarify. In a few cases, Van Waus was able to suggest alternative language to the Koehrsens based on the Krouls' questions. These conversations allowed both families to realize their shared vision for protecting the land while also farming it sustainably.

The Koehrsens signed the conservation easement in the fall of 2017. They donated the easement to INHF, which is responsible for protecting the land in perpetuity. As such, staff will visit the land annually to monitor the easement. Landowners are invited to and often accompany staff on these visits, which offer a nice opportunity for landowners and staff to connect, ask questions and share insights about the land.

For the Koehrsens and for many landowners, the peace of mind they feel knowing their land is forever protected is priceless. Additionally, when landowners donate a conservation easement to a qualifying conservation group, the landowner may also qualify for tax benefits based on the difference between the land's appraised value before and after completing the conservation easement.

Featuring a mix of native grasses and forbs, working lands and a market and garden center, the Krouls' land balances conservation and agricultural goals. The family has planted cover crops on many of their existing fields to benefit soil health, a practice Kroul plans to use on the land protected by the conservation easement.



Both the Koehrsens and the Krouls wanted to ensure the land would not be subdivided for residential development, an increasing pressure in this active real estate market between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City.

"Generally speaking, conservation easements reduce the fair market value of land, which may in turn reduce the selling price for a property," said Van Waus. "But that reduction in value very often is offset to some degree by a reduction in the income tax obligation for the landowner who places the easement."

### Planting new family roots

A few months after the conservation easement was signed, the Koehrsens sold the land to Matt and Nicole. The young couple were able to purchase the farm thanks to the USDA Farm Service Agency's "Beginning Farmer" loan program and because the conservation easement had reduced the land's fair market value enough to put the farm within reach.

Holding nearly 200 conservation easements across Iowa, INHF has witnessed how this type of easement can be a powerful tool for those interested in protecting and transitioning

ownership of agricultural or conservation land, particularly in areas experiencing high development pressure.

"Conservation easements can ease land transitions," Van Waus said. "Whether the transition is to heirs or to a future buyer who shares a landowner's interest in protecting the land for the benefit of wildlife, water quality, agriculture or open space."

To Matt, the conservation easement provides him comfort knowing that his family, which now includes three children under the age of six, will enjoy the land in years to come.

"It gives me a little sense of peace that the land will forever be open green space," he said.

The Koehrsens enjoy that another family will have the opportunity to wander among the trees they planted on those happy spring days many years ago. 🌿

### A QUICK LOOK AT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

You may want to consider a conservation easement if:

- At least for now, you want to continue to personally own this land and receive any income it provides
- You plan to pass this land onto someone you've chosen, or perhaps sell it
- No matter who owns this land in the future, you'd like to ensure that certain things don't happen to its natural features
- You'll feel better knowing a conservation agency or organization is able to enforce those wishes



# ANOTHER ANGLE

BY LIZ SIEPKER, *Special to INHF*

The first photo I have of myself catching trout was taken when I was four-years-old. To say that trout fishing is in my DNA would be an understatement.

I primarily fly fish for trout, which is a pursuit that will humble you for failing to learn or for not learning to fail. Although it is not my only outdoor endeavor, it is by far my favorite. I am drawn to trout because they are a finicky species and offer me a challenge. Many aspects of fly fishing revolve around constant education of fly fishing equipment, the fish themselves, entomology, and casting a fly rod. I live for these moments on the streambank.

Trout fishing also allows me to put life in perspective, slow down and focus on the little things, i.e. the difference between a day of fishing and a day of catching. I also find trout fishing relaxing. Fly fishing is not a destination of where I need to be in the sport or what I will have to

accomplish, but instead a journey of endless learning, failing and fun. In short, I fish because I simply enjoy it.

As a transplant to Iowa, I was unaware of the availability of trout fishing in Iowa until recently. Early accounts of trout in Iowa are spotty at best. But, personal accounts suggest that trout were present in local streams at the time of European settlement around the area of what is now Decorah.

The northeast corner of the state, known as the Driftless region, is home to coldwater streams capable of supporting and sustaining populations of trout. Trout have particular habitat requirements such as cold, clear and highly oxygenated water. I admire their beauty but more importantly, their resiliency over the past decades. It is remarkable to me that on any given day, you can venture to a stream in Iowa's Driftless region and catch a trifecta of trout species. The Brown trout, *Salmo trutta*, native Brook trout,

*Salvelinus fontinalis*, and Rainbow trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss*, can be found throughout streams in northeast Iowa, and that's why I love to call this place home.

Numerous private property easements and public land tracts offer anglers superb access to quality streams. I fish exclusively on publicly accessible property and have found ample opportunities to cast my fly to willing trout. I love to fish Waterloo Creek in Allamakee County, but when strapped for time, I fish closer to home on Trout Run in Winneshiek County. I haven't found a place yet where I wouldn't return to fish.

The Driftless region of Iowa is unique and beautiful in a myriad of ways. For me, I find that beauty in trout fishing. To be able to do the thing I love, I am grateful for primarily two things. The first is willing landowners who, through perpetual easements, have ensured that I will always have someplace

to cast my line. The second is for the conservation efforts of numerous individuals and organizations that have ensured that trout have a home in northeast Iowa and will continue to do so. These efforts cannot be understated and are crucial in establishing self-sustaining populations of trout species in northeast Iowa streams.

For what Iowa's Driftless region has to offer for trout anglers is truly a rare gem. Appreciating the uniqueness of the region and the trout fishing opportunities it provides is well worth our attention, support and protection for the here and now, and for future generations to enjoy, just like I do.

*Liz Siepker is the owner and guide of Driftless Fishers, LLC, a fly fishing service based in the Driftless region. She has fished all over the Lower 48, Alaska and Patagonia, though her fly fishing bucket list remains long. Liz received her casting instructor certification through Fly Fishers International and is a Hubbard's Fly Fishing Guide School alumna. She is an active member of the Iowa Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Fly Fishers International, the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association and INHF.*

## PROTECTING IOWA'S TROUT STREAMS

### Bear Creek, Allamakee County

Winding nearly twelve miles through Allamakee County, branches of Bear Creek, a tributary of the Upper Iowa River, are home to some of the best trout fishing streams in Iowa. In 2017, INHF purchased Camp Tahigwa, a 308-acre former Girl Scout Camp near Decorah, which includes ¾ mile of Bear Creek. This particular stretch of stream provides habitat for naturally reproducing brown trout, which thrive in clear, coldwater streams. INHF recently transferred the 308-acre property to the DNR.

### Bloody Run Creek Addition, Clayton County

The protection of 165 acres in Clayton County brought together a diverse group of individuals and organizations across Iowa and neighboring states. INHF purchased this heavily wooded property, which includes 6/10 of a mile of Bloody Run Creek, a cold-water trout stream, in 2019. The land provides convenient access to the relatively remote west end of Bloody Run Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA), a popular area for angling, bird watching and hunting. The project sparked the interest of angling and birding groups, including many new-to-INHF donors, which provided considerable support for the project. The new 165-acre addition is expected to transfer to the DNR by the end of June.

### North Bear Creek Addition, Winneshiek County

For nearly 20 years, 3/10 of a mile of North Bear Creek adjacent to North Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area has been available to anglers thanks to a handshake agreement between the landowner and the DNR to allow public fishing. When that landowner passed away in 2014, the future of the property and continued access to its coldwater trout stream was uncertain. It was with the property's outstanding natural resources and its connection to the WMA in mind that INHF explored permanent protection, ultimately purchasing 113 acres in 2015. In the years since, INHF has worked with NRCS and the DNR to reconstruct prairie and restore a section of eroding stream bank while honoring the existing public fishing access agreement. INHF recently transferred the 113-acre property to the DNR.

# PRAIRIE VISIONARY

## CELEBRATING IOWA'S PRAIRIE CHAMPION

BY DARIA MARTHNER  
Communications intern | [dmather@inhf.org](mailto:dmather@inhf.org)

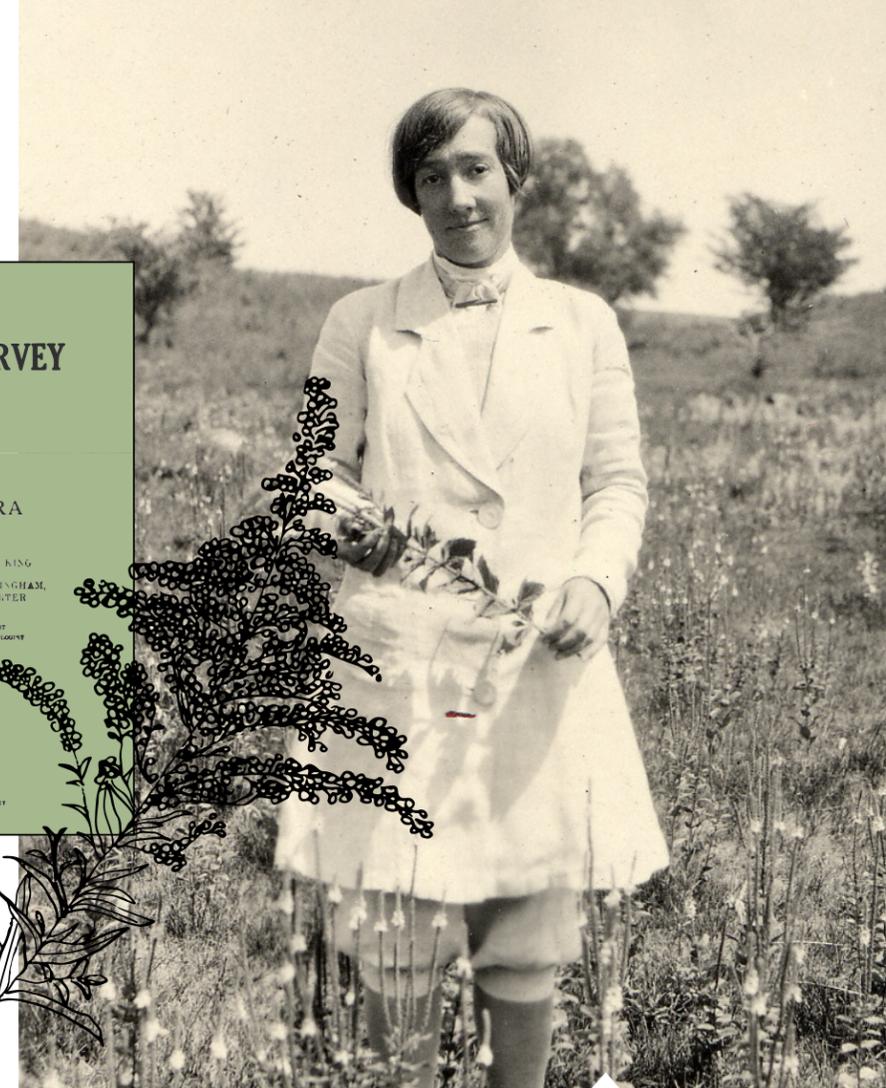
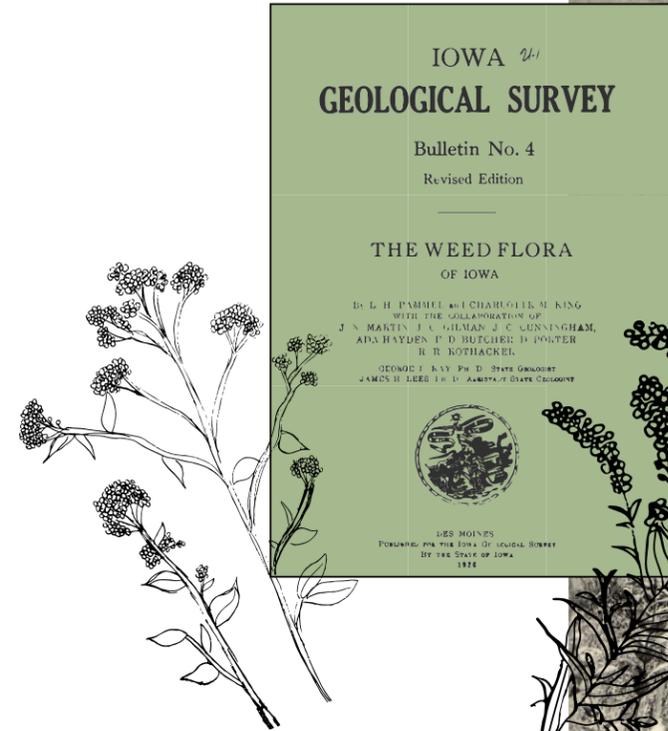
**A**da Hayden was many things. A scientist, a scholar and a fierce advocate committed to protecting Iowa's native prairies. For these reasons, she is known as the "champion of Iowa prairies."

As we celebrate the centennial of Iowa's State Parks, and with them, Iowa's state preserves, forests and wildlife management areas, we pause to recall some of the visionary Iowans that made them possible. Iowans like Ada Hayden, for whom Iowa's first state preserve, Hayden Prairie State Preserve, is named.

Hayden was born in 1884 near Ames, Iowa. Her interest in native plants grew out of her experience exploring the native flora on her family's rural 80-acre farm. She met Dr. Louis

Pammel, a professor at Iowa State College (now Iowa State University) and the architect of the Iowa park system as a young adult. Pammel took an active interest in Hayden and encouraged her to study botany at the college. She did just that and received her bachelor's degree from Iowa State College in 1908.

A voracious scholar, Hayden went on to become the first graduate assistant at the Shaw School of Botany in Missouri. She received a master's degree in botany from Washington University in St. Louis in 1910, and returned to Ames in 1911 to pursue her Ph.D. In 1918, Hayden became the first woman and the fourth student, male or female, at Iowa State College to receive a doctorate degree. She became



**Hayden was adamant** that the specimens she admitted to Iowa State's Herbarium meet strict documentation standards. While curator, Hayden added between 30,000 and 40,000 plant specimens to its collection. *Illustrations by Zoe Hanna*

an Assistant Professor of Botany at Iowa State College in 1920, where she taught and conducted research until her death in 1950.

In 1934, Hayden was named curator of Iowa State's herbarium. While curator, Hayden added between 30,000 and 40,000 plant specimens to the herbarium's collection. She would also collect duplicates to be able to trade with other institutions. In 1987, the herbarium was renamed the Ada Hayden Herbarium at Iowa State University in her honor. Containing more than 600,000 specimens, it is now the largest herbarium in Iowa.

During her time at Iowa State College, Hayden published 29 academic papers, including one early in her career about the importance of protecting native prairie. The report is regarded as the first published paper to recognize the importance of protecting native prairie in Iowa. After many years of writing about prairies, Hayden became a committed conservationist and vocal public advocate for their protection.

A member of the Iowa Academy of Science conservation committee, she surveyed prairie remnant around the state and made

preservation recommendations. This work led her to campaign for establishing state prairie preserves.

Hayden Prairie State Preserve in northeastern Iowa is an outstanding example of native tallgrass prairie. At 240 acres, it is the largest prairie remnant in Iowa outside the Loess Hills. The prairie was acquired by the state in 1945 after Hayden compelled the Fish and Game Division of the State Conservation Commission to protect it. Hayden Prairie Preserve is one of 29 remnant prairies Hayden is credited with permanently protecting. Hayden worked hard to better understand and protect these prairies, which are now part of the less than .1 percent (an estimated 36,000 acres) of native prairies that remain in Iowa.

As Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation looks to the next 100 years of protection of Iowa's special places, we draw inspiration from Hayden; a woman with conviction, grit and deep love for Iowa's outdoors. She really was — and continues to be — a "champion of Iowa prairies." 🌿

**Hayden was** a pioneering conservationist, scientist and outspoken advocate for Iowa's prairies. *Photo courtesy of Iowa State University Library Special Collections and University Archives*



## LEAVING A LEGACY

“Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.” John Muir

One hundred years of Iowa State Parks. Parks built with vision, perseverance and generosity. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has been around for forty of those years, as a partner to help special places to be public spaces.

So many Iowans contribute to the betterment of their community by opening their land up to be shared with others. So many Iowans recognize the value of privately protecting their land to help create larger areas where wildlife can thrive, water can be cleansed and soil protected. So many Iowans give their time to caring for the land, sharing their knowledge freely with the conservation community and giving their dollars to causes that keep nature a part of Iowa’s landscape.

This spring, many people are seeking comfort and finding solace, a sense of place and purpose in nature. We are thankful to have space to recreate outdoors – in our parks, trails and public lands – as we navigate uncertainty. We are thankful for the vision of folks who chose to leave a legacy that Iowans now and in the future can rely on. Thank you.

— ABBY HADE TERPSTRA,  
Donor relations director

**Leave a legacy of clean water, healthy soil and beautiful outdoor places for future generations.**

To see how including INHF in your will or trust can help make your vision for Iowa a reality, contact Abby Hade Terpstra at [aterpstra@inhf.org](mailto:aterpstra@inhf.org) or 515-288-1846, ext 15.

## TRIBUTE GIFTS

### IN MEMORY OF

James Adams, Jr.  
Wally & Faye Ann Anderson  
Stephen J Atherton  
Al Atkinson  
Keith Augspurger  
Coralie Becker  
Gary Beckwith  
Melinda Cisco  
Father Tom Coenen  
Joseph Alan Countryman  
Charlie Cutler  
Missy Davis  
Dick Dearden  
Max E. Ireland  
Dorothy Dykhouse  
Helene Edel  
Mary Lou Green  
Robert “Grooves” Griffin

Dorene Hanlon  
Mary N. Hanson  
Bernie Haven  
Dr. Kenneth Hebron  
Arthur Melvin Heimann  
Marcia Henderson  
Don Hewitt  
Judie Hoffman  
Keith G Howard  
Sue Johnson  
Robert Johnson  
Al Judd  
Ken and Lois Kemmerer  
Elwood Kleese  
Harold J. Krambeer  
Janet Larson  
Glenn Leggett  
Gene Lewis  
Susan Connell-Magee

Ronald McGrew  
Richard Merrill  
Diane L. Miller  
Manny Miller  
Ila Misbach Morse  
Marjorie Moore  
Thomas Murphy  
Lester Nation  
Aaron Michael Nelson  
Tom Northrup  
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Dr. Roy W. Overton Jr  
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Paul Puelz  
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Dale Reineke  
RK Richards  
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Curtis Sinks  
Dennis Smeins  
Paul Smith  
Sandra M. Sohr  
Bob Steinfeldt  
Jane Swanson  
Peter Arie VanderMeer  
Vernon Walters  
Richard Whitcome  
Wilma Wilson

Norm Woelber  
**IN HONOR OF**  
Richard Bishop  
Carrie Buzzoni  
Andrea and Rick Carlton  
Skunk River Cycles  
Michelle Devine  
Paul and Jill von Ebers  
Mom & Dad - Pride of the Valley Farm  
Larry and Peg Fletcher  
Kathleen Goff  
Dr. Anne Hellbusch  
David and Terrie Hoefler  
Mike & Sally Hood  
Bob, Judy, Britta, Sam, John, Kate, Alden and Ilan  
Bonnie Jenison  
Larry Kock  
Tim Lecander

Joe McGovern  
June Melby  
Max Mugge  
Kathleen Murrin  
Kirk and Annette Norris  
Anita O’Gara  
Joseph and Margery Petrzelka  
Dick & Carolyn Ramsay  
Jan & Rex Ramsay  
Carol Gustine Rogers  
Ben Ross  
Richard & Linda Ruble  
Robert and Janet Ryan  
Earl and Isabelle Salterberg  
Donita Schrad  
Wendy Ware & Gene Warren  
JoAnne and Mark Wilkins  
Paul Willis  
Victor Young

## CONSERVATION TIP

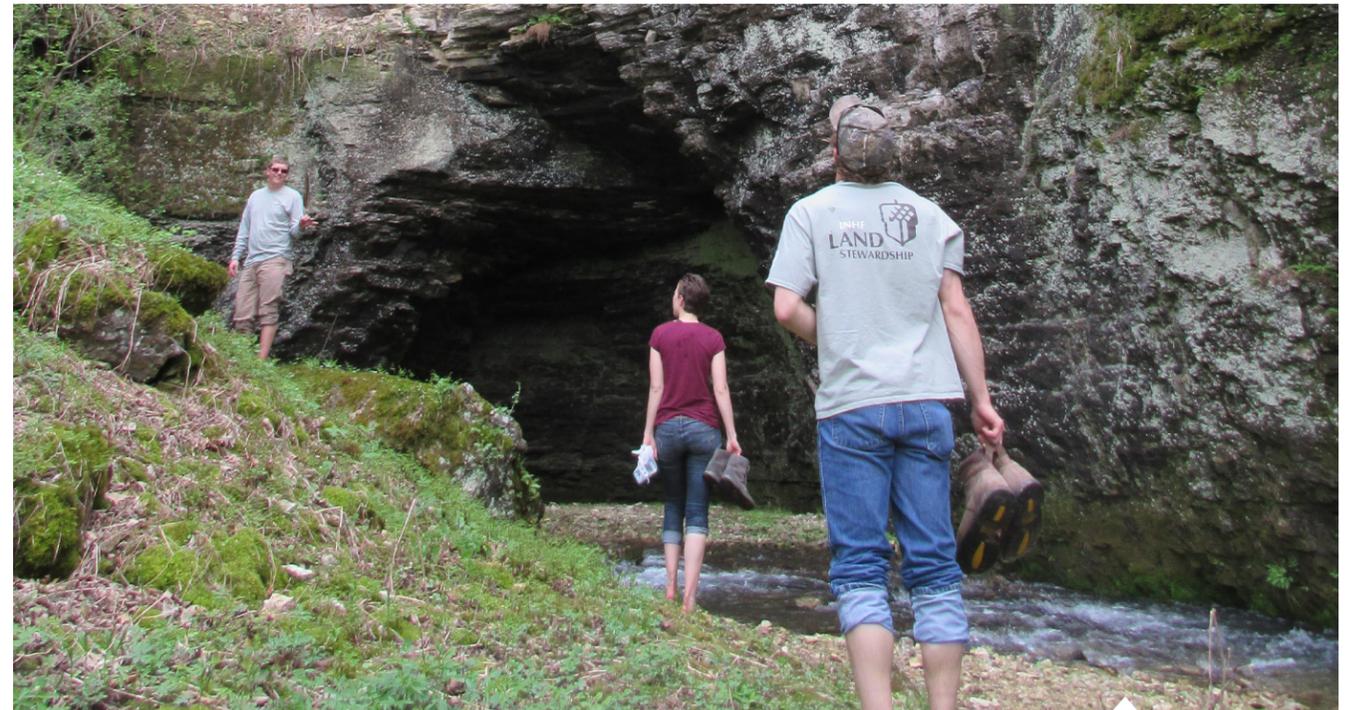
**LEADING WITH NON-LEAD:** Consider using non-lead ammunition and fishing gear, both which are better for wildlife and just as effective.

When a deer is shot with a lead bullet, for example, the bullet often fragments and leaves small pieces of lead in other parts of the deer. Hunters are taught to leave the gut pile for other animals. While the small amount of lead left in animal remains isn’t enough to be harmful to most adults, it is harmful to other wildlife. Bald eagles are especially susceptible to lead poisoning. It can cause nerve damage, paralysis, blindness and organ failure.

To protect both your family and the other wild animals in the area you’re hunting in, consider using copper or copper alloy bullets. These options expand like lead bullets, but don’t fragment like lead, which means cleaner meat.

Many companies now sell non-lead ammo. While it is a bit more expensive, you will be able to have the peace of mind that your family and other wildlife will be safe.

Additional information and resources, including a list of Iowa retailers that sell non-lead ammunition, for hunters and anglers interested in making the switch to non-lead ammunition and tackle may be found at [blankparkzoo.com/conservation/bald-eagles](http://blankparkzoo.com/conservation/bald-eagles) and [HuntingWithNon-lead.org](http://HuntingWithNon-lead.org).



Find more Iowa places to explore at [www.inhf.org/blog](http://www.inhf.org/blog)

# Walk on the water side

BY DARIA MATHER  
Communications intern | [dmather@inhf.org](mailto:dmather@inhf.org)

INHF staffers explore the creek bed in Cold Water Spring State Preserve in northeast Iowa. Photo by INHF

Looking for a way to get outdoors, cool off and avoid the crowd? Try visiting a local creek for a creek walk.

Creeks are nature’s playgrounds with water. All you need is public access to a creek, some sturdy shoes you don’t mind getting wet, a backpack with a few essentials, and a sense of adventure.

**To stay safe,** make sure you only walk where you can see the bottom of the creek. Still be careful, even in shallow areas, as rocks can be uneven and slippery due to algae growing on them.

**Make sure to wear** water shoes or old tennis shoes. Skip the flip-flops, which lack support if you slip. Apply sunscreen as if you were at the pool to avoid getting sunburned. A hat and sunglasses won’t hurt either.

**Pack a backpack** with snacks, water, sunscreen, dry clothes, towels, first-aid equipment and a waterproof bag for electronics, car keys, and anything else that shouldn’t get wet.

**As you walk** through the water, be sure to look for wildlife such as fish, turtles, snakes, crawdads and water striders. Some streams will have artifacts such as fossils, arrowheads, bones and antlers.

**Leave no trace.** Make sure to pack everything out you brought in. This includes taking your garbage home with you and not taking wildlife home with you. 🗑️

### Where to go?

**Backbone State Park** – Dundee, IA

**Fourmile Creek** – Gay Lea Wilson Trail in Ankeny, IA

**Trout Creek** – Trout Run Trail in Decorah, IA

**Brenton Arboretum** – Dallas Center, IA (Stream Stomp 7/19/2020)

**Pea’s Creek** – Ledges State Park in Madrid, IA

**Hickory Ridge Trail,** Shelter #5 or half a mile from natural playscape parking lot – Jester Park in Granger, IA



Iowa  
Natural Heritage  
Foundation

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**For many Iowans**, an unprecedented amount of time at home has brought with it a renewed appreciation for the wildlife right outside our window, some which seem to have grown a bit more bold in the absence of crowds and fewer cars. This fox family has made a home in one INHF staffer's back yard in Ames. INHF volunteer photographer Marlen Kemmet stopped by to capture some images of the foxes, and said the following, "I seldom wear a watch when photographing as I don't want to know what time it is, how long I've been there, or when I may have to quit. I had the great opportunity to photograph a male fox and two of his three kits. I waited for two hours before snapping the first image, then I shot 800 images in the next 45 minutes." *Photo by Marlen Kemmet*

