

# Earthtones

Spring 2015

---

## *The Significance of the Insignificant*

Everyone wants to matter. We might want it in different ways, like with fame, fortune, or good deeds. Some seek relevancy on a small scale, among neighbors and friends, where others desire the wider importance of state, national, or international impact.

Plants and animals, though not consciously aware of it, also maintain varying levels of significance. Studying food chains and webs in school, we learn what affects one species has a domino effect on others.

As we examine the interactions of species on a more complex level, we discover that not all species matter equally. We also learn that not all interactions are positive either. As we fight invasive species—such as starlings, garlic mustard, and multi-flora rose—no doubt remains the effects these have on the landscape dominate over native species. Of course, that doesn't mean we like it.

When it comes to support—financial, legislative, or otherwise—we tend to veer to those species that matter to us personally. That might mean species we have watched in our own backyards or those that impress us, with cuteness, or strength, or just simple charisma.

Look at the panda, practically the poster child of endangered species. Yet scientifically, the main reason for saving the panda is not its importance to the bamboo forest. Rather, by protecting the bamboo forest for the panda, you save many other rare species as well. Helping pandas help everyone else.

On the other hand, some species' disappearance could have far-reaching consequences on the land where it lives. These animals, however, tend to be less attractive and interesting to most. In some cases, they may also be disliked, feared, or hated.

For example, bats provide millions of dollars worth of insect control in the United States and yet many people will still proclaim proudly when they eliminated a discovered bat with their tennis racket. (Of course, a bat in an occupied building can be a health issue and precautions should be taken.)

As bat populations drop in North America, experts fear the consequences. If we lose natural controls on certain insect populations, how might we directly or indirectly be harmed? White Nose Syndrome, the most recent threat to bats, may be the worst yet. Mortality rates average 80% but the disease occasionally has wiped out some entire colonies.

Additionally, beneficial insects, such as bees, are also taking a hard hit. Bees may not top the list of favorite insects, but their necessity as pollinators cannot be denied. Honey bee businesses add millions to the economy by pollinating many of our fruits as well as livestock forage. Colony Collapse Disorder remains a serious threat to the industry.

I guess the saying is right. Little things DO mean a lot. The question is, will we keep putting money where our heart is, or will we take into consideration where the science is as well?

*By Pamela Holz*

## *Welcome, Linda Finke!*

At the beginning of January, the County Supervisors appointed Linda Finke to the Conservation Board. Linda replaces Liz Kaufman who served for ten years. Linda, in her own words, introduces herself:



I was born and raised in rural Washington and come from a large family. I have been married to Randy Finke for 21 years and have lived in rural Crawfordsville for 13 years now. My son Josh and his family live in Atkins and my daughter, Katelyn, lives in Crawfordsville. I have worked for Peoples Savings Bank for 18 years as a Real Estate, Ag and Consumer Lender and have been in the banking business for a total of 26 years. I also volunteer as the Clerk for the Crawford Township Trustees.

I have a great love for the outdoors and have been a frequent visitor to all of the county parks for many years now. My passion is educating young and old as to the importance of preserving the land and gain respect for the wildlife as well as doing the necessary conservation practices to maintain them for years to come. It is such an honor for me to be on the WCC Board as I can hopefully make a difference in the preservation and the continuing work in our conservation efforts of our great recreational parks. My ideas for the future of WCCB is to expand on educating citizens from inside Washington County as well as bringing people from other parts of Iowa to show them what our wonderful parks have to offer.

I'm excited to be on the Board and put my love for the outdoors to use and help others enjoy it. I especially love to kayak, hike and ride bikes.

## *Tree Projects*

*Thanks Boy Scouts!*

This past fall, we completed the Iowa Living Roadways grant that funded the tree plantings along the Ainsworth-Marr Park Trail. Six different sites were chosen to add shade to the trail, wind protection, visual screens, habitat, food sources, and beauty to the trail. Depending upon the species, goals, and layout of the area, we planted trees or seeds.

The total project included over 860 trees and 30 gallons of seeds, mostly acorns and other nuts. More than 450 hours of labor, both by staff and volunteers, contributed to the \$17,000 net effective value of the project.

Lance Mills and Garrett Fedler both received Eagle Scout ranking through work on three of the sites. Volunteers braved a chilly November Saturday to finish planting before temperatures dropped below freezing.

As these trees mature and the seeds sprout, park visitors will be sure to appreciate the time taken for these projects.



## ***Snake Exhibit Leaves in June***

Only a limited time is left to view the Snake Exhibit at the Conservation Center. In mid-June, the exhibit will be packed up and taken away.

Although the obvious features of the exhibit are the giant snake skeleton and informative displays, we also have several hands-on activities for visitors to try. These include snake games, building a hibernaculum (and learn what one is!), sensing like a snake, snake measurements and math, snake skins, scavenger hunts, resource books, reading books, various handouts, and more. We keep adding more so you never know what you might discover on your visit.

We also temporarily moved our mama and baby fox snake into the exhibit hall for better viewing. However, if you're interested in a close encounter with one of them, you need to tell us something you learned in the exhibit. We also hope to add more native snakes as hibernation ends. Most would be strictly for display and not educational handling.

We'll be offering a program on snakes on Saturday, May 9 where we will go into more detail with the exhibit, with Iowa snakes, and with snakes in history and prehistory. See the Calendar on Page 4 for more information.

You can also request an individual program for your group, class, troop, etc. To do so, please contact the conservation center at 319/657-2400 or e-mail [wccbnaturalist@iowatelecom.net](mailto:wccbnaturalist@iowatelecom.net).



**Washington County  
Conservation Board**

**Office:** 319/657-2400  
**Fax:** 319/657-2500  
**E-mail:** [wccb@iowatelecom.net](mailto:wccb@iowatelecom.net)  
**Website:**  
[co.washington.ia.us/departments/conservation](http://co.washington.ia.us/departments/conservation)

**Members:** Lyle Moen  
 Craig Capps  
 Bill Nickell  
 Barb Donkersloot  
 Linda Finke

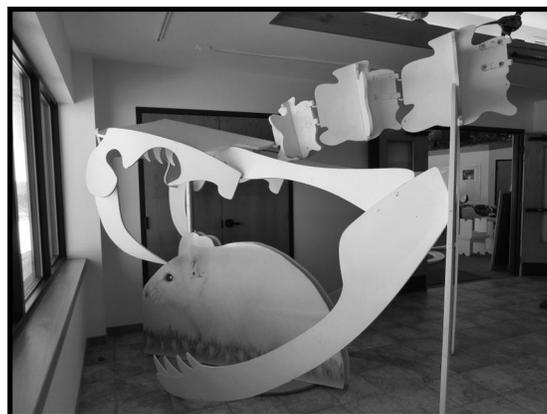
**Staff:** Steve Anderson, Exec. Director  
 Pamela Holz, Naturalist  
 Fritz Engel, Maint. Technician  
 Kathy Dolan, Center Coordinator  
 Mark Even, Park Ranger

Washington County Conservation Board meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. at the Conservation Education Center. Visitors are welcome.

*The WCCB is an Equal Opportunity Employer.*

**If you would like a copy of  
this newsletter in larger  
print, please contact our  
office.**

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.



## Spring Calendar

The Washington County Conservation Board meets the second Thursday of each month. Meetings are held at the Conservation Education Center in Marr Park at 4:30 p.m.

Fri., April 10                      7:30 p.m.                      Marr Park

### *Night Prairie Burn*

We will be burning the north prairie, next to the highway this year. An educational program will begin the evening with the fire being lit at 8:00 p.m. The educational program will begin at the maintenance shop, near the entrance of the park. Depending upon weather conditions, this prairie can burn quickly, so those interested in watching will not want to be late.



Fri, Apr. 17                      2:00 p.m.                      Washington Public Library

### *Dollar-A-Day Boys!*

Michigan based author Bill Jamerson will present a music and storytelling program about the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC helped put food on the table for families that had little other income during the Great Depression. In return, this federal program, in southeast Iowa, worked on soil conservation, park development, planted trees, dug ponds, and much more. Members of the CCCC are encouraged to bring mementos and memories of their own experiences to share. This program is co-sponsored with the Library.

Sat., April 18                      10:00 a.m.                      Marr Park

### *STEM Wonders: Insects Around Us*

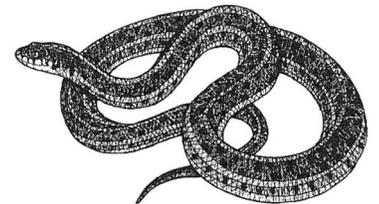
Last of the STEM series, this adult-child program will look in depth at insects, spiders, and other creepy crawlies. Perhaps we might even find some alive emerging after the long winter. Designed for preschoolers (aged 3-5), this program is based on Pint-Sized Science and funded through the governor's STEM Advisory Council. The Council's goal is to encourage Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math in Iowans.



Sat., May 9                      1:00 p.m.                      Marr Park

### *Amazing Snakes*

Open to all ages, we will focus on the wide world of snakes. We'll have a guided tour of the traveling snake exhibit, learn all about the strange adaptations of a life without legs but with an elongated body, discover snakes of the past including the supersized *Titanoboa*, discuss Iowa snakes, and much more. At the end, for those willing and interested, we will have a meet-and-greet of the center snakes.



Sat., June 27                      1:00 p.m.                      Marr Park

### *Fairy Princess Hike*

Do you have a child that likes the outdoors but also likes to dress up as a prince or princess? Does your son or daughter find magic in the most ordinary of things? We have a hike just for them! We'll walk the Marr Park trails in search of amazing finds, both real and imagination-fueled. Participants are welcome to dress up as princesses, fairies, or both.

## Summer Day Camps

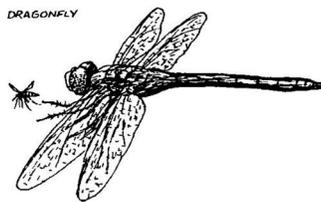
These nature camps will be designed around the natural world at Marr Park and will be fun as well as educational. Activities will include hikes, games, crafts, fishing, and exploration. Students will also create their own camp t-shirt. Light refreshments will be served each morning.

Each camp is limited to 12 students. Camp runs from 9:00 a.m. till noon, Monday through Friday. Camp fee is \$25 per student. (Exception is Tadpole Camp: see below right).

Pre-registration is required for all camps.

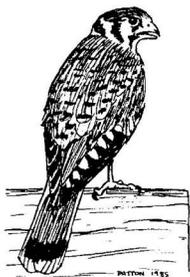
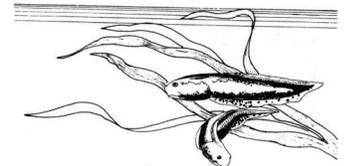
*Dragonfly Camp:* Campers will learn about habitats and their different parts.

For students entering 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> grade  
 Dates: June 8–12 or  
 July 13–17



*Tadpole Camp:* This camp is for 4-5 year olds who have yet to start kindergarten. We will focus on exploring the natural world with our senses. Parents or other adult friends are welcome as well.

Dates: M-W: June 29–July 1  
 M-W: August 3–5  
 Times: 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.  
 Limit: 8      Cost: \$15



*Kestrel Camp:*

This summer, discover the natural mysteries in your backyard.  
 For students entering 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Dates: June 22–26 or  
 July 6–10

*Mink Camp:* Theme this year is *Exploration Mars!* and we will prepare to head to outer space. Includes regular camp activities, canoeing, survival, and two-way radio exploration.

For students entering 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> grade  
 Dates: July 27–31



For more information on these camps or to receive a registration form, please call the Naturalist at 319/657-2400 or e-mail [wccbnaturalist@iowatelecom.net](mailto:wccbnaturalist@iowatelecom.net) If your child has special needs, please let us know when you register.

### *Scholarships Available*

The Washington Noon Kiwanis is offering scholarships for those with financial need.

### *Volunteers are Needed*

For safety and liability reasons, we would like at least one volunteer to assist in each camp. Anyone 14 and older can assist.

*Anyone volunteering for a week will receive a paid registration for the child of their choice.*



WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD  
2943 HIGHWAY 92  
AINSWORTH, IA 52201

**Return Service Requested**

***Spring Center Hours***

*(Beginning May 1)*

Thurs.—Sat., Mon.

10:30—6:30

Sun.

1:00—5:00

---

---

***Important WCCB E-News***

***We Need Your E-mail Address!***

In an effort to be more conservation- oriented and fiscally responsible, the Conservation Board would like to transition to an electronic newsletter. An added benefit to such formats is publishing color photographs, a costly addition in print. In order for us to do that, we need your e-mail address.

The newsletter is e-mailed out in pdf format. Acrobat Reader, which is needed to open pdf files, can be downloaded for free off the web. (Many documents online are in pdf format).

To change over your newsletter to electronic form, please send us your name, e-mail address, and mailing address to [wccb@iowatelecom.net](mailto:wccb@iowatelecom.net).

Thank you for helping with the transition.

***Web News***

As more and more people use the web to obtain information, it becomes more important for agencies to have a positive and useful online presence. As a result, Washington County has recently been moving toward an updated web design. The Conservation Board website, also in need of an upgrade, will follow the new layout and be linked in with the County.

The new website is expected to be launched in May. We hope you will find it more user-friendly and be able to easily find the information you are seeking. The new site also gives us better control over our online material, which will allow us to update the site in a more timely manner.

Watch for the new site soon!