

Earthtones

Spring 2016

The Call of the Flower

How do I love thee, flowers? You influence so many aspects of our lives. We use you to show our love to another. To decorate our yards and tables. Your lovely colors and beautiful blooms appear in art, jewelry, and even poetry. Your fragrances are bottled in perfume, candles, air fresheners, and cleaners. Some we even eat, or rather, your resulting fruit.

Truly, flowers improve the quality of our lives. However, the purpose behind flowers has absolutely nothing to do with us. The reason behind the vibrant colors, the variety of shapes, and the stimulating scents is pure selfishness; flowers exist so the plant can reproduce.



Seed production (method of reproduction) occurs in flowering plants after pollination, or after pollen from the male parts (stamen) of the flower reaches the female parts (pistil). While a few plants self-pollinate, most have to receive pollen from another individual flower of the same species. Since plants are immobile, they must use carriers, such as bees and butterflies, to transport the pollen.

Just like flowers don't exist purely for our benefit, these pollinators won't pollinate strictly for the benefit of the plant either. Flowers either use bribery or trickery to become pollinated.

Bribery generally comes in the form of nectar. This sugary water gives a good burst of energy or can be converted into honey by honeybees. The flower is

shaped in such a way that the pollinator must travel past the pollen to reach the bribe.

Flowers aim for the highest amount of pollination, preferably with the least amount of effort. If they are not picky about their pollinator, and many different species can carry the pollen, then they have a higher chance of their pollen traveling. The negative side of being such a broad generalist is that the flower has also increased the possibility of the pollinator visiting other species of flowers instead of more of its own species.

On the flip side, highly specialized flowers may only be suited for a handful of pollinators. If those pollinators aren't available during blooming time, the flower is out of luck here as well.

Years ago, beekeepers began sounding the alarm about their colonies dying off. Commercial beekeeping is a billion dollar industry and helps pollinate many of our food crops. Honeybees, though, are not native to North America. When we also started looking at our native bee populations, we realized they aren't doing any better than the honey bee. Butterflies and other common pollinators are struggling as well. In fact, scientists are calling the situation a pollinator crisis and if something isn't done, they fear we may face food shortages.

Finding a workable solution may be difficult as several factors may be involved in these decreasing populations. Hopefully, we will be able to work together for the common good and help out pollinators, our wildflowers, and our crops.

A Busy Year in the Making

No matter what your favorite family or individual outdoor activity, we hope that the Washington County Conservation Board has been and will remain a positive influence on the quality of your life. More than 50 years ago we were created with that purpose, and continue to strive every day to meet it. The season of this newsletter (now through June), represents a huge array of opportunities.

Likely one of the first activities to come along will be morel mushroom hunting. As our soil reaches the critical temperature, we need only moisture to make this a banner year. Since we manage more than 1,100 acres of mixed forest, opportunities abound! Some better bets this year might be the areas where we have completed prescribed burns (Sockum & Fern Cliff) or harvests (Clemons & ERWA). Maps that state “mushroom here” would be popular, but likely quite difficult to keep stocked. The truth is, that nearly everyone that hunts mushrooms hard enough on our properties during the appropriate time ends up with rewards. Some are mushrooms, others are looking at flowers, a fun hike, and a myriad of potential positive surprises.



Marr Park, with all of its available activities, is already quite busy. The shelters are reserved for most weekends already, and we look forward to patrons coming for this and all other options. This past year we were able to pave another segment of the road, complete the amenities adjacent to the Ainsworth to Marr Park Trail, and do a number of other minor upgrades. I mention it specifically because I hope it is a destination for your family at least a few times this year!

Our Kewash Nature Trail has been the subject of many discussions and activities over this past year, including “exciting rumblings” on both ends. Contingent upon grant receipts, truly great things could start happening in the near future. We also plan to begin enhancing the trees areas along the trail and to expand our regular maintenance.

Our Foster Woods County Park has been expressed as a priority for a make-over intended to have it better serve our patrons, and thus to have more patrons served there! Thanks to everyone that has participated in this planning. Good things are on the horizon, exactly what still being determined. This will be a multiple year evolution, and you can still participate!

By June, area schools will be out, camps will have started, and people will be heading into summer. Please, do make us part of it!

Fishing is already good on most WCCB properties, and will continue to get even better through the month of June. Best bets for 2016 for panfish include Crawford Pond, the Schmitter Heritage Area, and Foster Pond. For Foster Pond, this will be the first year that the fish reach harvestable size since it was renovated in 2011. A Fish Habitat Grant will assist with further enhancement at Willow Pond this summer-just in time for the fish to truly reach an exciting size in 2017. If you are interested, we have brochures and are always willing to help.



*By Steve
Anderson*

Pollinator Pair Quiz

The continued existence of many plant species are dependent upon pollination for reproduction. Thus, many use nectar as enticement to possible pollinators who visit, eat, and collect pollen as a consequence. The pollen is, hopefully, transferred to another flower as the pollinator seeks out more sweet treats. However, other plants use trickery, such as pretending to be a female insect and creating an enticing trap.

Can you match up these pollinator-plant pairs. Most are not pollinated solely by the answer. However, there is one “best” answer. Answers on page 4.

Pollinator	Plant
1. Bat	A. African lily
2. Nee eating hornet	B. Balsa trees
3. Beetle	C. Banana
4. Black and white lemur	D. Cocoa tree
5. Blowfly	E. Corpse Flower
6. Bumblebee	F. Eucalyptus
7. Elephant shrew	G. Grasses
8. Flies	H. Lily
9. Gecko	I. Mead’s milkweed
10. Hawk moth	J. Mirror orchid
11. Honeybees	K. New Zealand flax flower
12. Honey possum	L. Pagoda lily
13. Hummingbird	M. Pollinator of first flowers
14. Long tongued moth	N. Rare Chinese Orchid
15. Male wasp	O. Red Clover
16. Midges	P. Skunk Cabbage
17. Miner bee	Q. Small greenish orchids
18. Mosquitoes	R. Star orchid
19. Slugs	S. Traveler’s Palm
20. White faced monkeys	T. Trumpet Creeper
21. Wild gerbil	U. White clover
22. Wind	V. Wild ginger

Washington County Conservation Board

Office: 319/657-2400

Fax: 319/657-2500

E-mail: wccb@iowatelecom.net

Website:
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. The Conservation Center will be closed the following holidays: May 30 and July 4

Sat., April 30 10:00 a.m. Marr Park

Viewing Nature through Journaling

This creative program will feature two parts. First, you will create your very own nature journal, choosing one method from several possible styles. When we finish, we will head outside for some guided exercises to warm up our creative juices and expand the use of our senses. We'll also experiment with different methods of journaling. Lastly, you will be free to explore and journal on your own. Feel free to bring along any preferred photos, magazine pictures, or other images you would like to use as a cover and/or backing. We will adjust accordingly.

Summer 9:00 a.m. Marr Park

Summer Camps

Registration is now open for our day camps this summer. Payment must be received to confirm your child's reservation. Some camps fill quickly, so contact the Center office soon to receive your registration form. See page 5 for more information.



Sat., June 11 10:00 a.m. Marr Park

Celebrating Animal Fathers

In honor of Father's Day, this early childhood program will examine the different ways animal fathers assist in raising their young. Program will include a story, games, a short hike and a Father's Day craft. During the hike, we'll look for different animal families within the park. Children are encouraged to attend with their fathers. Meet in the Conservation Center Library.

Sun., July 17 Evening Marr Park

Will Schmitt: 99 County Tour Concert

Iowa native Will Schmitt is planning on holding a concert in each of Iowa's 99 counties this summer. Besides a singer and songwriter, Schmitt has also hiked the majority of the Pacific Crest Trail (2015) and other significant places. Details of the concert will be forthcoming. Check out our website or watch area media for more information.

- Answers to page 3:
1. C 2. N 3. M 4. S 5. E 6. O
7. L 8. P 9. K 10. H 11. U 12. F
13. T 14. R 15. J 16. D 17. I 18. Q
19. V 20. B 21. A 22. G

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.

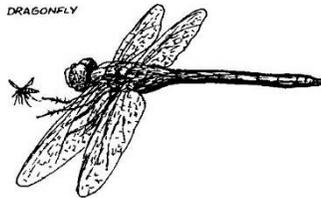
Each camp is limited to 12 students. Camp runs from 9:00 a.m. till noon, Monday through Friday. Camp fee is \$25 per student. (Exception is Tadpole Camp: see below right).

Pre-registration is required for all camps.

Dragonfly Camp: Campers will discover the different kinds of animals living at Marr Park.

For students entering 1st–2nd grade

Dates: June 20–24 or
July 11–15



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. Relatives over 18 are welcome as well.

Dates: W–F: June 8–10

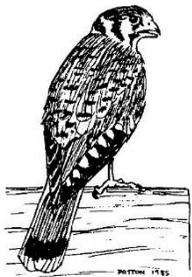
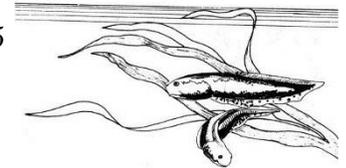
W–F: July 6–8

Times: 9:00 -

10:30 a.m.

Limit: 8

Cost: \$15



Kestrel Camp:

Activities will focus on the many ways of being naturally “Lost and Found” in this exciting camp.

For students entering 3rd–4th grade

Dates: June 27–July 1 or

August 1–5

Scholarships Available

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

Mink Camp: Theme this year is Natural Treasures. Includes regular camp activities, canoeing, survival, and two-way radio exploration.

For students entering 5th–7th grade

Dates: July 25–29



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 If your child has special needs, please let us know when you register.

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

Give a Hand to Pollinators

We need pollinators. Over three-fourths of all our crops and flowers rely on animal pollination. Several of the WCCB properties contain rare flowers dependent upon insect pollinators. Honeybees alone pollinate over \$20 billion worth of crops annually. Yet many of these pollinators are in crisis.

You can help by providing for pollinator needs in your yard. Providing food sources through flowers is the most obvious option. Native species naturally are best. Include a variety of flowers that bloom at different times, planting them in bunches. Don't forget, if you want to help butterflies, you must also provide food plants for the caterpillars.

Don't forget pollinators' other needs. Provide clean water and shelter for hummingbird nests or bee colonies. Be careful with or eliminate the use of pesticides. Every little bit increases the odds favorably for these small, but crucial, creatures.

Flower preferences of specific pollinators
Here are some broad generalities to help you pick flowers to aid specific pollinators.

Butterflies: prefer fresh smelling, bright red and purple flowers with plenty of nectar. Shape is general tubelike with a wide landing pad.

Hummingbirds: attracted to reds but without fragrance. Should be cone shaped and able to hold the bird's weight.

Bees: like white, yellow, or blue flowers with landing guides. Need only small amounts of nectar and pollen should smell pleasantly and be sticky.

Moth: night bloomers with warm colors and strong, sweet smells are preferred. Similar shape to butterfly flowers but without a lip.