

# Earthtones

Spring 2020

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## Gobble, Gobble, Gobble, We're Strutting Into Spring

We are quickly approaching my favorite time of year, and I do not mean spring. Sure, Spring is nice, everyone enjoys warmer temperatures, sunshine, and the rebirth associated with it. However, undoubtedly, my favorite time of year is turkey season! Anyone who knows me, would tell you that the wild turkey is my favorite wildlife in our Iowa woodlands. Because it is the season to have wild turkey on the brain, I thought it would be appropriate to share some cool facts about wild turkey in Iowa with all of our readers!

First, there are five different kinds of turkey species in the United States. In Iowa, we have the Eastern Wild Turkey, the largest of all five U.S. subspecies. In Iowa, turkey can weigh up to 30 pounds. The turkey population was once wiped out in Iowa. In 1910, the last known wild Iowa turkey was seen in Lucas County. It was not until the 1960s, that the bird was reintroduced successfully back into the wild; birds were transplanted from Missouri.

Initially, officials believed the turkey populations would be isolated to the major woodland areas of Iowa. However, not too long after, the Eastern Wild Turkey adapted to Iowa's diverse landscapes. The first modern turkey season in Iowa was held in 1974. While there is a fall turkey hunting season, most Iowans prefer the spring seasons. Hunters in Iowa have the option of hunting four spring seasons. They may hunt gun 1, 2, OR 3, and 4. If they are brave and seek a challenge, they may choose archery only, and hunt all four seasons. Only male turkeys may be harvested in the spring, while both hens and males may be harvested in the fall.

You had me at gobble, gobble, gobble. Turkeys make approximately 27 different calls. The cluck, yelp, purr, and gobble are the ones we think about the most. Purring is a soft, rolling call turkeys make when content. It is usually heard by feeding birds. It is not loud, but means "everything is okay." Kee-kee Run is a call of lost young turkeys (poults). It is often heard in the fall, and means "I need you." Cluck consists of one or more short, staccato notes. The cluck includes two or three single-note clucks. It is generally used by one bird to get the attention of another.

The yelp is used by the adult hen. It is a series of loud calls that orders her flock or young poults to assemble. It means, "come here and gather up." The infamous gobble is one of the principle vocalizations utilized by male turkeys in Spring to let the ladies know he is near and available to mate. The putt is a one-note alarm call. It can also be several sharp notes in rapid fashion, and usually means "danger." Finally, the cluck and purr call is what is heard when the birds are content. It is a cluck followed by a rolling, almost staccato call.

A turkey can see seven times better than humans, and can hear about ten times better, with no external ear flaps. Their eyes have rods and few cones, so their eyesight is black and white.

(Continued on Page 2)

This gives them excellent eyesight, since they can see multitudes of grays and can distinguish shapes and movements more easily. Furthermore, if you find turkey scat in the woods shaped like the letter J, it came from a male. Female scat is a rounded plop.

Turkeys have 18 tail feathers. Specifically, the male turkey's body feathers are tipped in black, giving them a shiny appearance from a distance. Females have buff colored feathers that allow them to stay hidden while incubating their ground nests, which include 10-12 eggs that incubate for 28 days. An adult male turkey is called a Tom, while a young male turkey is called a Jake. Both have beards made of modified feathers that have a hair-like appearance. However, approximately 7 percent of females will also have beards. The little flap of skin on the top of a turkey's head is called a snood, for those looking for a fun new word to use!

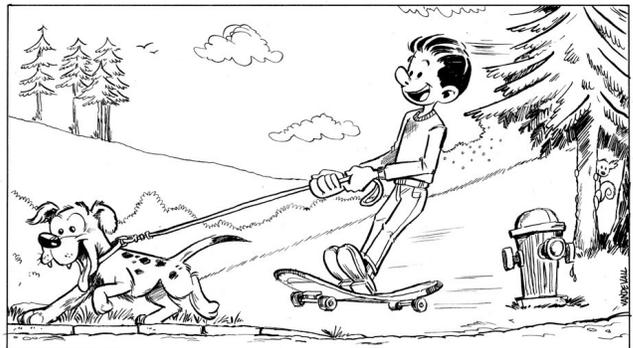
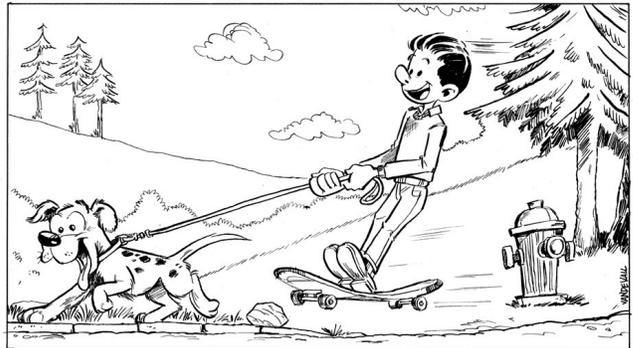
Turkeys are omnivores, who feed on plants, seeds, insects, and spiders. Their common habitat is woodlands, where they can be found roosting in trees at night to hide from predators. However, they may be found in prairies or in fields, especially during the primary nesting season. Finally, male turkeys like to do a little dance in the spring. A part from gobbling, they will strut, do a shuffle step, and rotate their bodies to get the attention of hens. They are also not afraid to fight off other males trying to get to their hen using the sharp spurs on their legs. I hope you enjoyed this article and learned some new facts about turkeys! Good luck in the 2020 Spring turkey season!



Test your eye at spotting the difference in the 2 images. Answers on page 5.

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!

Find 10 differences between the 2 pictures!



**More Than Meets the Eye**

*Executive Director  
Zach Rozmus*

For many, when they hear Washington County Conservation (WCC), they think of Marr Park and the thought doesn't expand much beyond that. Although Marr Park is very much the heart and soul of WCC since it houses our conservation center, shop buildings, and 41 site campground, Marr Park is just a piece of the puzzle that makes up who we are at WCC.

Conservation manages 18 recreation areas that accumulate to nearly 2300 acres. Much like a fingerprint, each property is unique in itself. For example: Sockum Ridge south of Washington is known for its expansive hickory and oak timber ridges. In comparison, Schmitter Heritage Area north of Lake Darling possesses what seems to be an endless supply of fishing opportunities, as well as several prairie restorations that provide a glimpse into the past of what Iowa's natural landscape once resembled.

As one can imagine, the amount of maintenance and management differs with each property as well. Maintenance and management of these properties can range from prescribed burns, timber stand improvement, invasive species control, mowing, driveway/trail maintenance, trash cleanup, etc. WCC is very fortunate to possess a team of skilled employees with diverse backgrounds both career and personal. Having a team such as this is instrumental to maintaining these properties in a way

that is as close to a native state as possible, while still allowing the public



Kewash Nature Trail  
Crooked Creek Bridge

In an effort to paint a clear picture of the land we at conservation are proud to manage, here is a full list of all 18 recreation areas. Some of these properties are more accessible than others, but I encourage all our readers to explore our parks and recreation areas offered here in Washington County, I have no doubt you'll be happy with what you find!

- Brighton River Access: 22 Acres
- Brinton Timber: 320 Acres
- Clemons Creek: 325 Acres
- Crawford Pond: 15 Acres
- English River Wildlife Area: 782 Acres
- Fern Cliff: 60 Acres
- Foster Woods: 18.7 Acres
- Foster Pond: 12.3 Acres
- Hayes Timber: 33 Acres
- Horton Timber: 12.5 Acres
- Kewash Nature Trail: 143 Acres, nearly 14 miles
- Marr Park: 125 Acres
- McKains River Access: 10 Acres
- Rubio Wildlife Area: 105 Acres
- Schmitter Heritage Area: 81 Acres
- Sockum Ridge: 215 Acres
- Statler Woods: 14 Acres
- Valley: 1 Acre



Schmitter Heritage Area

# 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.*

**Sat. April 26th**                      **1:00 p.m.**                      **Clemons Creek**  
*Afternoon Hike*

Join Washington County Conservation for an afternoon hike! We will start the hike on the Kewash trail, and end with an exploration of the Clemons Creek prairie. We will do a short program on native prairies. The hike will begin at 1:00 PM!

**Sat. May 16th**                      **9:00- 11:30 a.m.**                      **Marr Park**  
*Fly Fishing Clinic*

Join Washington County Conservation for a Fly Fishing Clinic on Saturday, May 16th, from 9:00-12:00 p.m. While this is a public event, we ask that you please email Megan at [wccbnaturalist2@gmail.com](mailto:wccbnaturalist2@gmail.com) if interested, so we have an idea how many participants to expect. This is a great opportunity for those who are interested in learning how to fly fish!

**Sat. June 27th**                      **8:00 a.m.**                      **Marr Park**  
*Run Wild With WCCB*

Join Washington County Conservation for a 5K run/walk! We will also have a fun run for kids! This race will be 3.1 miles through the primitive (off road) trails of Marr Park! Take a break from running on the pavement to enjoy a 100% trail run! Medals will be awarded to the top three finishers of each of our designated age categories. To register, visit the WCCB website. A form and race waiver will be available online.

**Sat. August 15th &16th**                      **8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**                      **CEC**  
*Hunter Education Classroom Course*

Washington County Conservation will be sponsoring a FREE Hunter Education Classroom course on Saturday, August 15th and Sunday, August 16th. The first day will be spent in the classroom, while the second day will be a field day with live fire. Students must be 11 years old or older to attend. Please note, certificates do not become valid until their 12th birthday!



## Washington County Conservation Board

**Office:** 319/657-2400

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**E-mail:** [wscountyconservation@gmail.com](mailto:wscountyconservation@gmail.com)

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Randi Brase, Center Coordinator  
Fritz Engel, Maint. Technician  
Cody Smith, Ranger/Technician  
Brett Johnson, Ranger/Technician

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.

# Summer Camps

June 29th- July 1st 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.  
 June 29th-July 1st 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

## *Tadpole Camp (Pre-Kindergarten)*

This camp will introduce our youngest to nature lessons centered around wilderness-themed children's books! Following the reading of the books, the children will participate in an activity that correlates with the story. Each camp is limited to 10 registrants.

June 15th- 19th 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  
 July 27th- 31st 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

## *Dragonfly Camp (1st- 2nd Grade)*

Compete in the 2020 summer Wilderness Olympics being presented by Washington County Conservation. This camp will teach students about the wilderness, with fun-filled Olympic-themed activities. Each camp is limited to 15 registrants.

June 22nd- 26th 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
 July 13th-17th 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

## *Kestrel Camp (3rd- 4th Grade)*

Join the Corp of Discovery on an exploration of the landscapes of Marr Park. This Lewis & Clark-themed camp will introduce students to the wild, through lessons focused on the life of an early explorer. Each camp is limited to 15 registrants.

July 6th- 10th 9:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.  
 July 20th- 24th 9:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

## *Mink Camp (5th- 7th Grade)*

Discover the wilderness with a magical twist! This Harry Potter-themed camp will introduce students to the wild, through interactive outdoor lessons focused on topics of conservation. Each camp is limited to 15 registrants.

Registration forms will be located on the WCCB website beginning April 1st!  
 (co.washington.ia.us/170/conservation)



Fern Cliff



Sockum Ridge

### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!

Find 10 differences between the 2 pictures!

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WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD  
2943 HIGHWAY 92  
AINSWORTH, IA 52201

Electronic Service Requested

**Spring/Summer  
Center Hours**  
(Beginning mid-April weather  
dependent)

Tuesday-Thursday  
8:00 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.

Friday-Saturday  
9:00 a.m. — 5:30 p.m.

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## Hunter Education Classroom Course

Washington County Conservation is proud to be sponsoring a spring Hunter Education Classroom course on Saturday, August 15th and Sunday, August 16th, at the Conservation Education Center.

Are you a hunter? If not, have you ever thought about going hunting? Are you a youth or adult who has tagged along with family or friends and is ready to seek your first harvest? If so, Iowa law requires anyone born after January 1, 1972, to become hunter education certified, before they are eligible to purchase an Iowa hunting license.

Hunter education is a program designed to introduce students to life-long skills that are important to many different types of outdoor recreational opportunities. Students will learn basic survival and first aid skills, water safety, wildlife identification, and

the basics of wildlife management, hunting laws, and firearm/archery safety. Hunter education also stresses the importance of individual responsibility and outdoor ethics.

The first day will be spent in the classroom, following the curriculum. It will also include a laws talk presented by a local Conservation Officer. The second day will be a field day following a review and completion of the exam. The field day will involve live fire and a safety trail. Sign up at the Iowa DNR website under *Hunter Education*.

Students must be 11 years or older to attend unaccompanied by an adult. Please note, certificates do not become valid until their 12th birthday. For more information, please call 319-657-2400, or email [wecbnaturalist2@gmail.com](mailto:wecbnaturalist2@gmail.com).