

Earthtones

Winter 2022

How to Safely Enjoy the Outdoors this Winter

Winter can be a difficult time for many of us, especially with the shorter days and cooler temperatures. However, one of the best ways to make things easier, is to get outside. Washington County Conservation has many parks and outdoor recreations areas that can be enjoyed, even in winter. Here are a few fun winter activities to enjoy outside this winter!

Go on a backyard adventure! Turn your backyard and neighborhood into your outdoor discovery zone. Try putting up bird feeders for winter birdwatching! There are many fun and easy DIY birdfeeders and houses out there, that all ages will enjoy. You can also look for signs of wildlife, such as tracks or scat!



Take a hike! Walk for miles at any of our parks and natural areas. In fact, the second phase of the Kewash Trail paving is now complete! Don't be afraid to check it out! Be sure to bundle up before you go. Enjoy viewing wildlife, along with the solitude of the "off season."

Enjoy a scenic drive. Load up the car and visit a nearby state or county park! With dozens of parks and recreation areas to choose from, late fall and winter provides unique viewing and scenic beauty. Bring your own snacks but consider staying close to home as to avoid hazardous conditions.

Pedal a trail! Cool-weather biking can be an invigorating way to explore Iowa's immense trail system. Or consider the newest trend in winter biking, and conquer winter on a fat-tire bike! Again, check out the new pavement on the Kewash Trail or venture off onto a more natural trail.

Cast a line! Winter provides Iowan's with many opportunities to ice fish! There are several natural trout streams, as well as trout stockings across the state. Of course ice fishing also provides an opportunity for many anglers to catch all types of game fish.



Finally, grab some cross country skis, snow shoes, or sleds, and get out there! Our outdoor recreation areas provide many opportunities for both cross country skiing and snowshoeing, as well as sledding. Whatever activity you choose to do, be sure to stay safe out there! Be prepared for the weather conditions, stay hydrated and fueled, and always have an emergency plan in place. If you venture out, be sure to share your experiences with us! We would love to hear them!

By: Megan Jorgensen, Naturalist

Story Walk Installed on Kewash Nature Trail

What is a story walk? A story walk is a way to combine physical activity with literacy. Pages of a book are transformed into signs that are then laid out on a trail, inviting families, caregivers of children, teachers and others, to read a story as they hike the trail.

I first heard about story walk trails on a library website. With all of the improvements both the Washington County Conservation Board (WCCB) and the Keota Unlimited Committee have been making to the Kewash Nature Trail, a story walk trail would be a perfect addition.



Sadly, the cost of a story walk trail was over the library's budget. Fortunately, the State Library of Iowa offered the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant to libraries throughout the state. If awarded, the grant money could be used for certain amenities and improvements, such as a story walk trail.

Before moving forward, I contacted Director Zach Rozmus with the WCCB and the Keota Unlimited Committee. Both were excited about this project. Next, we applied for both the ARPA Grant and an Alliant Energy Foundation Community Grant. We were awarded both grants, and moved ahead with the project. We received the reading platforms in August. After meeting again with the WCCB and the Keota Unlimited Committee, installation of the reading platforms occurred in late October by the WCCB staff.

Reading platforms were installed 150 feet apart, beginning at the Keota trailhead of the Kewash Nature Trail. With the help of a few additional volunteers, we finished the project on November 7th. The first book to be featured on the trail, is "Let's Go on a Hike," by Katrina Liu.



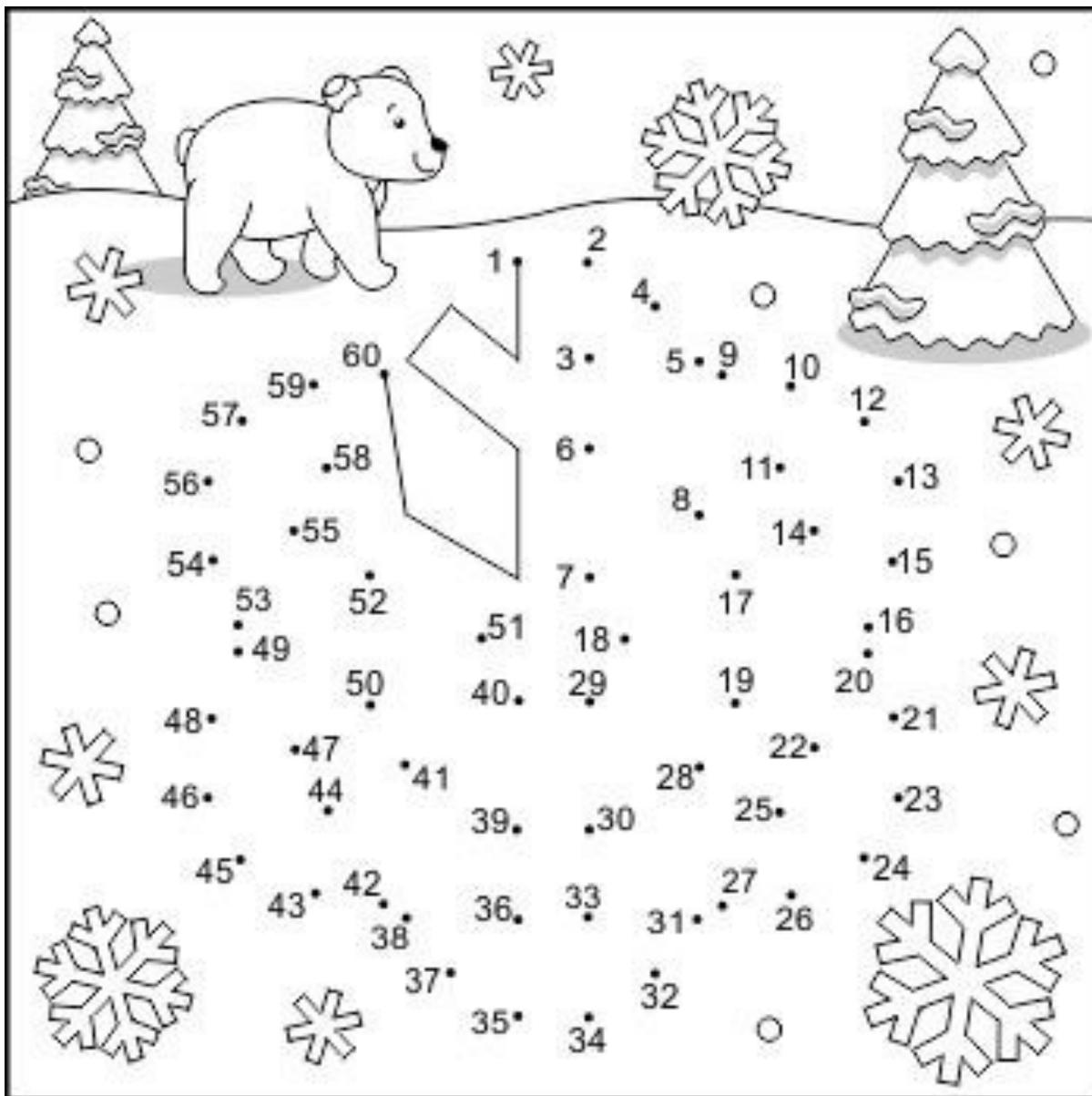
At this time, we are not sure how often the stories will be changed out. However, we will have the book "How to Catch a Snowman," by Adam Wallace and Andy Elkerton, installed just in time for the winter season. We hope you can get out and check the story walk out!

By: Toni Greiner, Director at the Wilson Memorial Library in Keota, Iowa



Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to show the picture. Then color with your favorite crayons or markers!



Winter 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.

Wedns, Dec. 28th-30th **9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.** **CEC**
Winter Wilderness Camp

New to 2021, Winter Wilderness Camp will give kids the opportunity to explore the outdoors in the winter. Camp will run from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. all three days. The cost of the camp is \$20 and is open to those in 3rd grade or older. Registration is required. Forms can be found online or in the office. Give us a call at 319-657-2400 if you have any questions!

Sat. January 22nd **8:00 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.** **Marr Park**
Youth Ice Fishing Clinic

In collaboration with Washington County ISU Extension & Outreach, we will be hosting a youth ice fishing clinic. Participants will have the opportunity to learn all about ice fishing. They will receive their own equipment! The event is limited to 20 kids. Registration is required with a \$20 fee. Give us a call at 319-657-2400 if interested in registering.

Sat., January 22nd **1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.** **CEC**
Snow Shoeing and Sledding!

Join us at Marr Park for an afternoon of snow shoeing and sledding! This event is free and open to the public. We will have hot chocolate in the center to help us warm up! Should the weather not cooperate, we will move the event to Saturday, February 5th.

Thursday, March 24th **6:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m.** **CEC**
Crafty Conservationists: Spring Make N' Take

Created with the crafty in mind, participants will get a choice between three spring projects to make and take home with them.

This event is for adults only. Registration and a fee of \$10 are required to reserve a spot. Forms will become available on February 1st on our website, Facebook page, or in the office.

Sat., March 26th & 27th **8:00 a.m.** **CEC**
Hunter Education Classroom Course

Washington County Conservation will be sponsoring a FREE Hunter Education Classroom course on Saturday, March 26th and Sunday, March 27th. 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! Give us a call at 319-657-2400 to register.

Washington County Conservation Board

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Fax: 319/657-2500

E-mail: wscountyconservation@gmail.com

Website: co.washington.ia.us

Members: Craig Capps
Bill Nickell
Barb Donkersloot
Stan Stoops
Kim Prier

Staff: Zach Rozmus, Exec. Director
Megan Jorgensen, Naturalist
Randi Brase, Naturalist Assistant
Fritz Engel, Maint. Supervisor
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.

Special Thanks

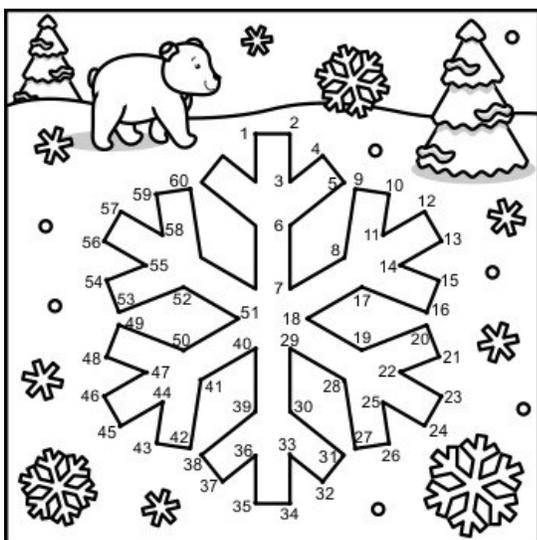
We would like to extend a special thank you to the following individuals and families for their generous donations to the Washington County Conservation Board. Their donations will help to fund important conservation projects and improvements in the future.

Linda McNeil
Ed Brinton and Family
Kenneth Hazen and Family

On behalf of the naturalists, we would also like to give an additional thank you to Mike Canas for his donation of fly fishing equipment to the environmental education program. We will be able to use the equipment to offer another unique program opportunity to the public.

Volunteers Needed

We are in need of volunteers for the public programs we offer throughout the year. If you, or someone you know, is interested in helping us out, please give us a call at 319-657-2400, or email Megan at wccbnaturalist2@gmail.com



Halloween Hike Appreciation

The weather was beautiful for our annual Halloween Hike; it was the perfect evening to learn about the origin of Native American Tall tales and traditional games. This is the largest public event we host every year, as an appreciation of the support we receive from our local communities. This year, we had nearly 300 individuals attend our event, more than double the amount we normally have. With that being said, the event would not be possible without the generosity of our donors and volunteers.

Thank you to the following local businesses for your donations:

Culligan
CG Cattle
Engel Farms
Fareway
Hills Bank
Hy-Vee
Sass Family Farms
Walmart

Thank you for the following volunteers for dedicating time helping the event run smoothly:

The Donkersloot Family
The Manning Family
Jim Blakeney
Kim Prier

We look forward to hosting our annual Halloween Hike again next year! We are always looking for volunteers for the hike and other public events we host throughout the year! If you or someone you know is interesting in joining our volunteer list, give us a call at 319-657-2400!

WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
2943 HIGHWAY 92
AINSWORTH, IA 52201

Electronic Service Requested

Winter Center Hours

Monday- Friday
8:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Closed
Saturday- Sunday

Spring Hunter Education Classroom Course

Are you interested in hunting but do not know where to start? Or maybe you have gone hunting before with a group, but want to go by yourself? The first step is to obtain your Iowa Hunter Education Certification. Washington County Conservation will be hosting a traditional classroom course on Saturday, March 26th, with a field day on Sunday, March 27th.

Hunter education is a mandatory program that is designed to introduce students to several life-long skills that are important to the many different types of outdoor recreational opportunities. The course teaches students basic survival and first aid skills, water safety, wildlife identification, and the basics of wildlife management, hunting laws, and firearm safety. Hunter education also stresses the importance of individual responsibility and outdoor ethics.

Iowa law requires that anyone born after January 1st, 1972 must be certified in hunter education before they are eligible to purchase an Iowa hunting license. A person who is 11 years old or older may enroll in a course, but those who are 11 and successfully complete the course will be issued a certificate. Classes are typically held from March 1st until November 15th.

Day 1 of our class will be spent in the classroom. Following the completion of the class curriculum, students will take a final exam and receive their certificate. Day 2 of our class will be a field day. Students will have the opportunity to shoot rifles, shotguns, and bows. If you or someone you know is interested in the class, give us a call at 319-657-2400. We will provide you with assistance registering for the class.