

EARTHTONES

A BLENDING OF NATURE'S NEWS



Summer 2024



Shower House Open for Business

The shower house project at Marr Park has finally been completed. Like with any construction project, there can be unexpected delays. We appreciate everyone's patience as we worked to finish the building in time for the camping season. The new shower house includes six individual restroom and shower rooms with doors that lock. This is different than the traditional shower house. We hope this will improve everyone's camping experience! Be sure to check it out the next time you go camping or visit the park.

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Summer Calendar

August 7th

9:00 AM

CEC

Toddler Time

Join us for Toddler Time, a program designed for the littles. This month, we will be learning all about dinosaurs. Specifically, we will go digging for fossils. We will also make some salt dough fossils for the kiddos to take home with them. If the weather is nice, we will be outside. If you have any questions or concerns, give us a call at 319-657-2400.

August 10th

8:30 AM-12:30 PM

CEC

Growing Up Wild

In collaboration with Iowa State University, we will be hosting a Growing Up Wild workshop for families and caregivers. This workshop provides hands-on activities and resources to build on a child's sense of wonder. This is a free training that will get you and your family excited about nature. To register, please call the extension office at 319-653-4811.

August 24th

8:00 AM-5:00 PM

CEC

Hunter Education Classroom Course

WCCB will be hosting a one-day traditional Hunter Education Classroom Course on Saturday, August 24th. A majority of the day will be spent in the classroom, with an exam at the end. We will shoot shotguns midway through the day. Please note: students must be at least 11 years old to participate. To register, please call 319-657-2400.

Washington County Conservation Board

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Megan Jorgensen | Naturalist

Randi Brase | Activities Director

Fritz Engel | Maintenance Supervisor

Cody Smith | Ranger/Technician

Brett Johnson | Ranger/Technician

Seth Adam | Ranger/Technician



Enjoy the Buzz; Plant Native Habitat for Pollinators

**By: Megan Jorgensen,
Naturalist**

Have you ever imagined what the world would be like without pollinators? Think about all of the plants, including our crops, fruits and vegetables, that rely on pollination for growth. Without pollinators, our world's livelihood, or ability to survive, would be threatened.

Pollinators are disappearing at an alarming rate, due to habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use, and disease. If we do not make significant changes in the way we manage our landscapes, our pollinators could disappear forever.

Saving our pollinators may sound intimidating, but there are practices, tiny or mighty, that can make a major difference for the pollinators. Whether you live in the middle of town and have limited green space, or on an acreage or farm, there are several major ways you can support the local pollinators.

Reduce the amount of lawn you have. Lawns are never going to be as beneficial for pollinators as an area with flowering plants. Let's be honest, who really enjoys mowing all that grass?! Converting part of your lawn to native prairie flowers and grasses is a great

way to help pollinators. Next, consider reducing the use of pesticides. Insecticides specifically are not designed to target one pest. Instead, they kill off everything. This includes the pollinators.

Focus heavily on planting native flowers, rather than grasses. You want flowers that produce nectar and pollen and caterpillars like to munch on. More importantly, you want flowers that bloom in Spring, Summer and Fall. Have no fear, pollinators also enjoy shrubs and trees. They can be a valuable food source for them, as well as provide shade.

Finally, it is often unrealized that many pollinators stay here during the winter. Bumblebee queens hibernate shallowly underground, for example. Other bees, caterpillars, and fireflies overwinter in leaf litter. Consider leaving an area in your yard be for the winter. If that is not possible, save your yard cleanup until the spring when the weather warms up. There are resources available to landowners. Give us a call at 319-657-2400. We'd be happy to help point you in the right direction.



Summer Word Puzzle

Directions: Decode the letters below, to reveal a hidden message.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J/K
3	L	M	N	O	P
4	Q	R	S	T	U
5	V	W	X	Y	Z

C2 E1 A3 A3 D3 D4 C2 E1 B4 E1

C4 E4 C3 C4 C2 D2 C3 E1



Chasing Fireflies

By: Megan Jorgensen,
Naturalist

Some of my fondest memories growing up in Northeast Iowa, included chasing and capturing fireflies, and putting them in a jar to better observe their glow. Like myself, you may have noticed there are fewer making their appearance at night. Where have they gone? It is estimated that 30% of firefly species in the United States and Canada may be at risk of extinction. That amounts to at least 18 species. Why is this happening?

Population decline is occurring due to habitat loss, light pollution, pesticides and insecticides, and climate change. Fireflies spend 11 months of the year in the larva stage. They hide under mulch, leaves, or other decaying organic material. There they eat slugs, snails, earthworms and other insects. Due to the development of the landscape, there not many undisturbed places. What can you do? Consider leaving your leaves be.

Pesticides and insecticides are a problem because, though no one wants unwanted pests in their gardens or flowerbeds, they kill off the firefly population's main food source. Reduce the use of these chemicals when possible.

Light pollution is another factor impacting firefly populations. What is light pollution? Artificial lights, such as street lights and outdoor spotlights, can interfere with firefly mating rituals and their ability to see each other. Fireflies also use their light to communicate with each other. Reduce your light pollution by avoiding bright outdoor lights, and leave them shut off when not in use.

Climate change has an indirect impact on firefly populations. Change in the earth's global temperature is often a cause for droughts. Droughts threaten firefly habitats by drying out wetlands, intermittent streams, and damp ravines. When this happens, insects and other food sources attracted to moisture, are not present. Being mindful of our individual contribution to climate change, is one way we can work towards reducing its impact.

The next time you decide to chase fireflies, take some photos, watch them glow, catch them if you can. If you do decide to put them in a jar, only hold them for an hour, and then let them go. It is a privilege to have them living on the landscape.

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Electronic Service Requested

Summer Center Hours

Tuesday-Thursday:
8:00 AM-4:00 PM

Friday-Saturday:
9:00 AM-5:00 PM

Sunday-Monday:
Closed

Hello summer! The environmental education team has been incredibly busy. Field trip season ended in May, and summer day camps began almost immediately. Fortunately, we have two wonderful seasonal employees with us, who have been a tremendous help. We started the summer with Tadpole Camp, our camp for preschool and kindergarteners. Throughout the rest of the summer, we have hosted a camp for 1st-8th graders. By the end of July, we will have hosted 6 camps, and reached 142 youth within the community. While we are incredibly sad summer is halfway over, we look forward to the fall and getting back into the schools. If you or someone you know may be interested in programming, please reach out to our Naturalist at wccbnaturalist2@gmail.com.

Environmental Education Updates