



THE PRAIRIE STAR



Oxbow Wetlands Add Beauty and Habitat to Caldwell Park

by Laura DeCook, Environmental Ed Coordinator

The oxbow wetlands near the Environmental Learning Center are now complete and are easily visible looking southwest toward Spring Creek. Formed from a former bend in the stream, oxbow wetlands create calm, shallow habitats that support a wide variety of plants and wildlife. They also act as natural water filters and help manage flooding, adding both beauty and ecological value to Caldwell Park. Feel free to step off the trail for a closer look—if you’re lucky, you might spot wildlife such as frogs and turtles beginning to move in!

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The nature playscape continues to draw families looking to enjoy the outdoors during the warmer spring weather. On many nice days, visitors can be seen stopping by while biking along the MCRF Trail or bringing their children to stretch their legs and get some fresh air. The playscape is open daily from dawn to dusk.

MCCB UPDATES

New Fish Habitat to Enhance Fishing at White Oak Lake

by Laura DeCook, Environmental Ed Coordinator

In summer 2026, durable Mossback artificial fish habitat structures will be installed throughout White Oak Lake. Placed near popular fishing areas and in deeper water, these structures will create lasting habitat for baitfish and predator species. By improving fish habitat and angling opportunities, we hope to inspire everyone to enjoy the outdoors and become lifelong stewards of Iowa's natural resources.

This project is funded by a Fish Habitat Grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and is being led by Mahaska County Park Ranger Steve Nugteren.



Interactive County Park Signs Are on the Way!

by Laura DeCook, Environmental Ed Coordinator

The Mahaska County Conservation Board recently received a REAP-CEP grant to bring new interpretive, directional, and interactive signs to local parks. These signs will help visitors find their way and learn more about the wildlife, habitats, and history around them.

You'll start seeing the new signs go up this summer! One of the coolest features is a QR code you can scan to watch short videos (with closed captioning) about what you're seeing—so you can watch, listen, or read along.

We're also working on a digital park badge program, where visitors can earn unique badges for each park they visit. It's a fun way to explore more and keep coming back!

Take a look—this is an example of one of the new park signs and digital badges you will start seeing soon!



NATURE NOTES

Wild Turkey Nesting Season: A Hidden Part of Spring

by Laura DeCook, Environmental Ed Coordinator

Spring is a great time to explore the outdoors, whether you're mushroom hunting, looking for wildflowers, or enjoying the fresh air. While you're out, remember that wild turkey hens may be nesting nearby.

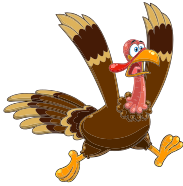
Unlike many birds, turkeys nest on the ground in areas with moderate cover. Their nests are shallow depressions that hold about 10–15 eggs. Hens lay one egg per day and begin full-time incubation after the last egg is laid so all chicks hatch around the same time.



If you happen to come across a nesting hen, quietly leave the area to avoid disturbing her. If a hen is repeatedly flushed from her nest, she may abandon it, leaving the eggs vulnerable to predators and reducing local turkey populations.

After hatching, young turkeys—called poults—are able to move and feed on their own within a day. Healthy habitats with good cover and plenty of insects are important for their survival.

By being mindful of nesting areas this spring, you can help protect wild turkeys and support their success in the wild.



*DID YOU KNOW THAT WILD TURKEYS CAN RUN 12 MILES PER HOUR
AND CAN SOAR FOR OVER A MILE?*

Online Rentals

MYCOUNTY PARKS.COM

**You can now rent cabins, shelter houses,
and the ELC community room online!**

<https://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Mahaska>



Eveland Access Cabins (Apple & Birch)

Address: 1681 – 290th St., Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577

To view pictures of the cabins and to find rental information, visit our website www.mahaskaconservation.com.



Park Shelter Houses

- **Eveland Access Campground** (electric)
- **Nicholson Park** (non-electric)
- **Russell Wildlife Area** (non-electric)
- **White Oak Conservation Area** (2 non-electric)



Community Room at Environmental Learning Center

Address: 2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577

To view pictures of the community room and to find rental information, visit our website www.mahaskaconservation.com.

PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES



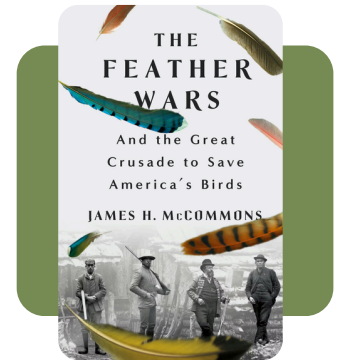
May

11 “The Feather Wars” Meet Author James H. McCommons

6:30-7:30 pm (Doors open at 6 pm)

Environmental Learning Center

Mahaska County Conservation and the Book Vault are partnering to host author James H. McCommons at the Environmental Learning Center. McCommons will discuss his new book *The Feather Wars*, which explores the history of early bird conservation efforts and the people who fought to protect wildlife, including Oskaloosan John F. Lacey. Books are available at Book Vault and will also be sold at the event. The event will be held in the lower level of the ELC. Parking and entrance are on the south side of the building. **Registration is NOT needed. Doors open at 6 pm to save a seat.**



June

3 Nature Playscape Lunch & Learn “Frog-Tastic Facts”

12:00-12:45 pm

Playscape Pergola

Bring your lunch and join us outdoors in the Nature Playscape pergola! Enjoy a relaxed, family-friendly program while discovering fun and fascinating facts about frogs - like how they absorb water through their skin, use their powerful legs to jump up to 20 times their body length, and serve as important indicators of environmental health. All ages are welcome. **Pre-registration is NOT needed. Just hop on over and join us with your lunch!**

4 B.A.R.K. Ranger Hike

6:00-7:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Join us for a fun, dog-friendly hike at Caldwell Park! We'll meet in the amphitheater area next to the Environmental Learning Center before heading out on the trail. Please remember that all dogs must remain on a leash at all times. All dogs will receive a B.A.R.K. Ranger certificate, and Mahaska County B.A.R.K. Ranger dog tags will also be available for purchase for \$10 each (cash or check payable to FMCC). **Pre-registration is needed. Sign up with the QR code at the top of this page.**



6 “Reel In the Fun” Fishing Event

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Ponds at Lacey Sports Complex

Meet us at the ponds at Lacey Recreation Complex for a friendly competition with awards for the longest fish, smallest fish, and most fish caught! No fishing license is needed since it is Free Fishing Weekend in Iowa, making this a perfect opportunity for families and beginners to give fishing a try. Fishing poles and bait will be provided, or you're welcome to bring your own gear.

8 Volunteer Training

1:00-2:00 pm or 5:00-6:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

If you would like to join our volunteer team or renew your volunteer status, come to our fun one-hour training at the Environmental Learning Center. **Please sign up for one of two sessions by scanning the QR code at the top of the page, contacting our office at (641)673-9327, or emailing decook@mahakacountyia.gov.** Volunteers are asked to attend a training once every three years.



10 Nature Playscape Lunch & Learn “Plants to Know: Invasive & Toxic Plants”

12:00-12:45 pm

Playscape Pergola

Bring your lunch and join us outdoors in the Nature Playscape pergola! Enjoy a relaxed, family-friendly program while learning about invasive and toxic plants—like how some invasive species spread quickly and outcompete native plants, how certain plants can be harmful to people and pets, and how to identify common species found in our area. All ages are welcome. **Pre-registration is NOT needed. Just drop in and join us with your lunch!**

June cont.



17 Nature Playscape Lunch & Learn “Mammals of Iowa”

12:00-12:45 pm

Playscape Pergola

Bring your lunch and join us outdoors in the Nature Playscape pergola! After lunch stick around to learn about the fascinating mammals that call Iowa home! Participants will have the opportunity to see and touch real pelts from a variety of local wildlife while learning about each animal's habitat, behavior, and role in the ecosystem. This hands-on program is a great way to connect with Iowa's wildlife and gain a deeper appreciation for the animals around us. **Pre-registration is NOT needed. Just drop in and join us with your lunch!**

24 Nature Playscape Lunch & Learn “Firefly Magic: Bioluminescence”

12:00-12:45 pm

Nature Playscape Pergola

Bring your lunch and join us outdoors in the Nature Playscape pergola! After lunch, discover the magic behind nature's glowing lights! We'll explore the basics of fireflies and learn how and why they glow. Participants will be introduced to bioluminescence—the natural ability of living things to produce light—and how fireflies use their flashes to communicate. We'll also learn about the firefly life cycle, their habitat, and why they are important to our ecosystem. Through fun activities and demonstrations, we'll bring the glow of fireflies to life—even in the daytime! **Pre-registration is NOT needed. Just drop in and join us with your lunch!**

30 Nature Documentary “Ghost of the Mountains”

1:00-2:30 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Few animals capture the human imagination quite like the snow leopard. With its striking beauty and endangered status, this elusive creature serves as a powerful symbol of the impact humans have on the natural world. This documentary explores the life and habitat of the snow leopard, while also highlighting the challenges faced by filmmakers as they journeyed into remote landscapes to capture this remarkable animal in the wild. **Pre-registration is needed to reserve a seat. Save your seat by signing up with the QR code on this page.**



July

9 Paws-itivity Fun Selfie Scavenger Hunt

6:00-7:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Grab your dog and your cell phone and join us for a fun and unique outdoor adventure! As you explore, use the scavenger hunt list to find different items and snap a selfie with your dog at each stop. After the event, some of our favorite photos will be shared on Mahaska County Conservation's Facebook page! We will meet at the amphitheater next to the Environmental Learning Center. All dogs will receive a B.A.R.K. Ranger certificate, and Mahaska County B.A.R.K. Ranger dog tags will also be available for purchase for \$10 each (cash or check payable to FMCC). **Pre-registration is needed. Sign up with the QR code at the top of this page.**

23 Fun with Blank Park Zoo

5:45-6:45pm

Environmental Learning Center

The Blank Park Zoo is returning to the ELC! Join us for a fun and WILD time as we learn all about animals. More details coming soon—be sure to watch the Mahaska County Conservation Facebook page for updates! **Pre-registration is NOT needed. Just stop in early with your family to look around the ELC, play on the nature playscape, and get your seats!**



PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES



July cont.

30 Evening Fossil Hunt 6:00-7:00 pm

Russell Wildlife Area

Join us for a hands-on fossil hunt and discover pieces of ancient life hidden beneath your feet! Search for fossilized horn corals, brachiopods, trilobites, and clam shells—remnants of a time when this area was once covered by water. Digging tools, collection baggies, and identification sheets will be provided. This fun, treasure-hunting experience is perfect for anyone who loves exploring and getting their hands a little dirty. **Pre-registration is needed. Sign up with the QR code at the top of this page.** Russell Wildlife Area is located at 2254-200th Street, New Sharon, IA 50207. We will meet at the double gates next to the first pond seen by the road. Follow the lane to the south side of the pond.

August

6 Sunset Picnic at the Nature Playscape 6:30-7:30 pm

Playscape Pergola, Environmental Learning Center

Grab your picnic basket and head to the Nature Playscape! Enjoy a meal surrounded by nature, then join in on some fun outdoor games **for all ages**. This is a great way for families to unwind, play, and explore together. We'll meet at the playscape pergola by the Environmental Learning Center. **Pre-registration is NOT needed. Just drop in and join us with your picnic food!**



SAVE THE DATE!
YOUTH OUTDOOR FIELD DAY
2026

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2026
8:00 AM – NOON

Fun activities for kids and families to learn about the outdoors:

- HONEY BEES**
- FISHING**
- .22 SHOOTING**
- BOWFISHING**
and so much more!

RUSSELL WILDLIFE AREA
2254 200th St., New Sharon, IA 50207

MAHASKA COUNTY CONSERVATION
FISHING EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT PROGRAM

FREE FISHING EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR CHECKOUT!

You can now borrow rods and tackle at:
Environmental Learning Center
2342 Hwy. 92
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

Monday-Wednesday: 12:30-4:30 pm
Thursday-Friday: 12:30-7:00 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
(641) 673-9327

EVELAND ACCESS CAMPGROUND
CAMPGROUND SHELTER HOUSE

FREE MOVIE NIGHT!
START TIME: 7 PM

MOVIES FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES!
POPCORN & DRINK PROVIDED
FREE MOVIE
BRING LAWN CHAIR
SNACKS WELCOME!

MAHASKA COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
PARTNERED WITH MAHASKA COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
the Y

PROGRAMS FOR KIDS



April

8 Homeschool Science Lab “Fossil Dig”

10:00-11:00 am

Russell Wildlife Area

Join us at Russell Wildlife Area for a hands-on fossil hunting adventure! This unique spot is a great place to discover fossils of ancient marine life from long ago. Kids will have fun digging in the dirt, getting a little messy, and sorting through their finds to choose their favorite fossils to take home. Please wear clothes and shoes that can get dirty. Registration is required, so be sure to sign up soon! **Pre-registration is needed, and you can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page. A minimum of 5 kids are needed to hold the program.** Russell Wildlife Area is located at 2254-200th Street, New Sharon, IA 50207. We will meet at the double gates next to the first pond seen by the road. Follow the lane to the south side of the pond.

May

6 Knee-High Naturalists “Nature Hike”

10:00-11:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

This free program is designed for children ages 5 and younger. This month, we’ll go on a nature adventure! Join us for a short, kid-friendly hike at Caldwell Park where we’ll look for animal tracks, bugs, and other fun things in nature. Designed for children ages 5 and younger, this is a great way to explore outdoors together. Please wear sturdy shoes for walking on grassy trails. **Pre-registration are needed, and you can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page. A minimum of 5 kids is needed to hold the program.**

June

Sign up for summer day camps!

Space is limited.

Animal Adventures
June 16 • Environmental Learning Center

Pollinator Party
June 17 • Environmental Learning Center

Meet Live Animals!
Nature Hike • Fun Animal Activities

Learn about butterflies and bees,
nature crafts, exploring

Time: 9:00–11:30 AM • Cost: \$10 per child

Location: Environmental Learning Center
Limit to 15 kids each day
An adult needs to attend with child.

For ages 5 and younger

Nature Detectives
June 23 • Russell Wildlife Area

Predators & Prey
June 24 • Environmental Learning Center

Solve Nature Mysteries
Tracks • Fossil Dig • Animal Signs

Explore Food Chains
Fun Predator-Prey Games!
How Animals Survive

Time: 9:00–11:30 AM • Cost: \$10 per child

For ages 6–9

Field To Table: Fishing Edition
June 18 @ Russell Wildlife Area

Go Fishing,
Learn Casting,
Clean & Cook Your Catch!

Wildlife Tracking & Forensics
June 25 @ Environmental Learning Center

Animal Tracking,
Trapping & Wildlife
Investigation!

Time: 9:00–11:30 AM • Cost: \$10 per child

Ages 10–17 • \$10 per Child • 9:00–11:30 AM
Limited to 15 kids each day

PROGRAMS FOR KIDS



July

1 Knee-High Naturalists “Water Wonders”

10:00-11:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

This free program is designed for children ages 5 and younger. This month, get ready to splash and explore! Kids will enjoy hands-on water stations to discover which objects float or sink, try painting with water, and cool off with fun water play activities. Dress to get wet and come ready for a fun, interactive morning exploring the wonders of water! **Pre-registration is needed, and you can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page. A minimum of 5 kids are needed to hold the program.**

22 Prehistoric Skills: Atlatl Throwing

10:00-11:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

Step back in time and try your hand at one of the oldest hunting tools in the world! Participants will learn the history of the atlatl—a spear-throwing device used by ancient cultures thousands of years ago to hunt large game—and discover how it helped early people survive. After learning the basics, kids will practice proper technique and develop their skills by throwing atlatl darts at targets. The atlatl works by extending the arm, allowing for greater speed and distance than throwing by hand alone. **Pre-registration is needed, and you can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page. A minimum of 5 kids are needed to hold the program.** Note: This skill is easiest for kids ages 6 and older.



August

5 Knee-High Naturalists “Let’s Go Fishing!”

10:00-11:00 am

Russell Wildlife Area, Pond 1

This free program is designed for children ages 5 and younger. This month, introduce your little one to the fun of fishing! Kids can enjoy time by the water with a parent or caregiver while learning the basics of fishing in a relaxed, hands-on setting. No experience is necessary! Staff will be on hand to help out. Fishing poles and bait will be provided, or you’re welcome to bring your own gear. We recommend bringing water to drink, a snack, and a lawn chair or blanket to sit on while fishing. Come enjoy a fun and memorable outdoor experience together! **Pre-registration is needed, and you can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page. A minimum of 5 kids are needed to hold the program.** Russell Wildlife Area is located at 2254-200th Street, New Sharon, IA 50207. We will meet at the double gates next to the first pond seen by the road. Follow the lane to the south side of the pond.



PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS



April

5 Coffee Club

9:00-10:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

Drop in and join us for fresh coffee and tasty treats on a Coffee Club day. We talk about upcoming programs, volunteer opportunities with Mahaska County Conservation, and about everything in nature. **This month, bring a cup or mug with flowers on it to take part in a door prize.** Registration is not needed, and we meet upstairs in the Discovery Lab.

24 O.W.L.S. “Inventions Inspired by Nature”

1:00-2:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Adults of all ages are welcome to join the O.W.L.S. (Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls) program. Nature has inspired many of the inventions we use every day. In this program, discover how people have looked to plants, animals, and natural systems for creative ideas and solutions. We’ll also explore how people learned to make maple syrup from tree sap and finish with a sample of homemade maple syrup. **Pre-registration is needed to reserve a seat. Please call (641) 673-9327, email decook@mahaskacountyia.gov, or register online using the QR code at the top of this page.**

May

8 Coffee Club

9:00-10:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

Drop in and join us for fresh coffee and tasty treats on a Coffee Club day. We talk about upcoming programs, volunteer opportunities with Mahaska County Conservation, and about everything in nature. **This month, bring a coffee cup or mug that is the WIERDEST one you own to take part in a door prize.** Registration is not needed, and we meet upstairs in the Discovery Lab.

22 O.W.L.S. “Picnic in the Playscape”

12:00-1:00 pm *(Note the time change!)*

Nature Playscape Pergola, Environmental Learning Center

Adults of all ages are invited to join O.W.L.S. (Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls) for a relaxing picnic lunch at the Nature Playscape gazebo. Bring your own lunch and drink, enjoy the outdoors, and connect with others. After lunch, learn about upcoming projects and events from the Mahaska County Conservation Board—we’re excited to share what’s happening in our parks! In case of rain, the picnic will move indoors. **Pre-registration is needed. You can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page, by calling (641)673-9327, or emailing decook@mahakacountyia.gov.**



June

5 Coffee Club

9:00-10:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

Drop in and join us for fresh coffee and tasty treats on a Coffee Club day. We talk about upcoming programs, volunteer opportunities with Mahaska County Conservation, and about everything in nature. **This month, bring a coffee cup or mug that has a story behind why you have it to take part in a door prize.** Registration is not needed, and we meet upstairs in the Discovery Lab.

PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS



June cont.

26 O.W.L.S. "Nature: A Native Plant Walk & Drawing Session"

1:00-2:00 pm

Nature Playscape Pergola, Environmental Learning Center

Adults of all ages are welcome to join the O.W.L.S. (Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls) program. We will take a walk around the nature playscape, then take a closer look. After exploring native plants together, we'll gather for a fun and low-pressure drawing session inspired by what we've seen. No experience needed—just curiosity! We'll provide all the supplies and guide you through simple techniques to help you get started. *Pre-registration is needed to reserve a seat. Please call (641) 673-9327, email decook@mahaskacountyia.gov, or register online using the QR code at the top of this page.*



July

10 Coffee Club

9:00-10:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

Drop in and join us for fresh coffee and tasty treats on a Coffee Club day. We talk about upcoming programs, volunteer opportunities with Mahaska County Conservation, and about everything in nature. **This month, bring a coffee cup or mug that has RED, WHITE & BLUE on it to take part in a door prize.** Registration is not needed, and we meet upstairs in the Discovery Lab.

31 O.W.L.S. "Honeybees & Beekeeping"

1:00-2:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Adults of all ages are invited to join the O.W.L.S. (Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls) program. This month, guest speaker Bri Marshall will represent the Back-to-Basics Bee Club as the Honey Queen and share her knowledge of honeybees and beekeeping. Come learn about the fascinating world of bees, their importance to our ecosystem, and what it takes to care for a hive. *Pre-registration is needed. You can sign up using the QR code on this page, by calling (641)673-9327, or emailing decook@mahakacountyia.gov.*



August

7 Coffee Club

9:00-10:00 am

Environmental Learning Center

Drop in and join us for fresh coffee and tasty treats on a Coffee Club day. We talk about upcoming programs, volunteer opportunities with Mahaska County Conservation, and about everything in nature. **This month, bring a friend with you to take part in a door prize.** Registration is not needed, and we meet upstairs in the Discovery Lab.

B.A.R.K. RANGERS



How Does My Dog Become a B.A.R.K. Ranger?

Select a Mahaska County park and complete a fun and easy activity checklist to earn your FREE B.A.R.K. Ranger certificate!



MAHASKA COUNTY B.A.R.K. RANGER

- FIND THE CHECKLIST:**
Visit www.mahaskaconservation.com and click the "Links" tab.
- GET YOUR CERTIFICATE STAMPED:**
After your visit, stop by the ELC during open hours to receive your certificate stamped with your dog's paw print!
- BUY A B.A.R.K. RANGER DOG TAG:**
\$10.00 each • Cash or check to FMCC

EARN YOUR FREE B.A.R.K. RANGER CERTIFICATE TODAY!

We can't wait to see you and your pup out on the trails!

Coming Soon! Digital B.A.R.K. Ranger Badges



This summer, you'll be able to download a digital B.A.R.K. Ranger badge that you and your dog can earn by completing the park checklist. The first badge will be a general B.A.R.K. Ranger badge, with additional badges for specific parks coming in the future. Watch the Mahaska County Conservation Facebook page for more information!

B.A.R.K. Ranger Hike

June 4, 2026

6:00-7:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Join us for a fun, dog-friendly hike at Caldwell Park! We'll meet in the amphitheater area next to the Environmental Learning Center before heading out on the trail. Please remember that all dogs must remain on a leash at all times. All participants will receive a B.A.R.K. Ranger certificate, and Mahaska County B.A.R.K. Ranger dog tags will also be available for purchase for \$10 each (cash or check payable to FMCC). **Pre-registration is needed. You can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page.**

Paws-itivity Fun Selfie Scavenger Hunt

July 9, 2026

6:00-7:00 pm

Environmental Learning Center

Grab your dog and your cell phone and join us for a fun and unique outdoor adventure! As you explore, use the scavenger hunt list to find different items and snap a selfie with your dog at each stop. After the event, some of our favorite photos will be shared on Mahaska County Conservation's Facebook page! We will meet at the amphitheater next to the Environmental Learning Center. All participants will receive a B.A.R.K. Ranger certificate, and Mahaska County B.A.R.K. Ranger dog tags will also be available for purchase for \$10 each (cash or check payable to FMCC). **Pre-registration is needed. You can sign up using the QR code at the top of this page.**



VOLUNTEER NEWS



Join Us for Volunteer Training

If you would like to join our volunteer team or renew your volunteer status, come to our one-hour training on **June 8, 2026** at the Environmental Learning Center. **Please sign up for one of two sessions by scanning the QR code below, contacting our office at (641)673-9327, or emailing decook@mahakacountyia.gov.** Volunteers are asked to attend a training once every three years.

Volunteer Snapshots

YOUTH OUTDOOR FIELD DAY - 2025



Afternoon session 1:00-2:00 pm

Evening session 5:00-6:00 pm

Give Back & Enjoy the Great Outdoors!

Mahaska County Conservation is Seeking Volunteers This Spring & Summer!

Lend a Hand and Make a Difference!

Be a Host at the Environmental Learning Center

Welcome Visitors & Share Your Love of Nature!

Become a Park Steward

Adopt a Park & Help Keep it Clean!

Join Us and Make a Difference—Volunteer Today!

CONSERVATION CORNER

New Fishing Equipment Program Launched with Help of Golden Goose Club

by Laura DeCook, Environmental Ed Coordinator

Want to go fishing but don't have the gear? Mahaska County Conservation now offers a Fishing Equipment Checkout Program at the Environmental Learning Center! Stop by the front desk to check out fishing poles and tackle.

To borrow fishing equipment, participants must be 18 or older with a valid ID. Equipment is available in limited quantities, and all Iowa fishing regulations must be followed. Children must be supervised, and equipment should be returned clean, undamaged, and on time.

This program was made possible thanks to a \$4,300 grant from the Golden Goose Club of Oskaloosa, along with support from volunteer Doug Tomlinson.

Fishing is a great way to spend quality time with kids, friends, and family—building patience, enjoying the outdoors, and creating lasting memories together. Get outside and go fishing!



Free Fishing Weekend in Iowa
JUNE 5-7, 2026
NO FISHING LICENSES NEEDED!

**“REEL IN THE FUN”
FISHING EVENT**



SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026
10:00 AM - NOON





















PONDS @ LACEY RECREATION COMPLEX
2060 STADIUM DR.
OSKALOOSA, IA 52577

✓ **FISHING POLES & BAIT PROVIDED**
- OR BRING YOUR OWN

✓ **AWARDS FOR LONGEST,
SMALLEST & MOST FISH CAUGHT**

Scavenger Hunt- Nature Walk

Can you find all 20?

 <p>bird</p>	 <p>tree roots</p>	 <p>ant</p>	 <p>spiderweb</p>
 <p>green leaf</p>	 <p>acorn</p>	 <p>flower</p>	 <p>log</p>
 <p>two similar rocks</p>	 <p>mushroom</p>	 <p>squirrel</p>	 <p>tall grass</p>
 <p>stick that looks like a letter 'y'</p>	 <p>flying bug</p>	 <p>brown leaf</p>	 <p>cloud</p>
 <p>dandelion</p>	 <p>animal footprints</p>	 <p>wild berries</p>	 <p>pine cone</p>

MAHASKA COUNTY CONSERVATION PARKS



MAHASKA COUNTY PARK

ADDRESS

Caldwell Park & Environmental Learning Center	2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Cedar Bluffs State Preserve	1235—280th, Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Cedar Creek Access	2748 Ashland Ave., Tracy, IA 50256
Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie	901 N. Merino Ave., Eddyville, IA 52553
Eveland Access Cabins	1681—290th St., Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Ever-Tru Natural Wilderness Area	Lexington Ave., New Sharon, IA 50207
Maintenance Shop	2254—200th St., New Sharon, IA 50207
Maskunky Marsh	2395 Snyder Ave., Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Nicholson Park	2791—305th St., Cedar, IA 52543
North Skunk River Wildlife Area	2236—110th St., New Sharon, IA 50207

MAHASKA COUNTY PARK

ADDRESS

Peggy's Landing	1198 River Road, Leighton, IA 50143
Peter's Wildlife	Hwy. 63, New Sharon, IA 50207
Quercus Wilderness Area	3139 Kent Ave., Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Robertson Access	1010 Hwy 146, New Sharon, IA 50207
Rose Hill Marsh & Access	3108 Ventura Ave., Rose Hill, IA 52586
Russell Wildlife Area & Vos Addition	2254—200th St., New Sharon, IA 52577
Swanson-Lomax Wildlife Area	1972—295th St., Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Union Mills Access	1355 Parkin Ave., New Sharon, IA 50207
White Oak Conservation Area	2647 Ventura Ave., Cedar, IA 52543

Mahaska County Conservation Board & Meeting Dates

Chairperson Linda Fox, Rose Hill
Vice-Chairperson Jennifer Peterson, Oskaloosa
Secretary Chuck Webb, Oskaloosa
Member Steve Dixon, Oskaloosa
Member Curt Jager, Eddyville



MCCB's monthly board meetings begin at 6:00 pm on the third Monday of each month. Public is welcome to attend. Meetings are held in the lower level of the Environmental Learning Center, 2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, IA 52577.

April 20, 2026
May 18, 2026
June 15, 2026
July 20, 2026
August 17, 2026

Dates and times are subject to change. Call MCCB at (641)673-9327 for more information.

Mahaska County Conservation Staff

Executive Director	Chris Clingan
Environmental Ed Coordinator	Laura DeCook
Park Ranger	Tommy VanRenterghem
Park Ranger	Steve Nugteren
Admin. Assistant/Naturalist	Molly Hicks
Green Iowa AmeriCorps	Ella Paulson, Sam McDowell
ELC Attendants	Kylee Eastwood, Dawn Weldon, Cindi Bossard, Caden Albright

The Prairie Star is the newsletter of the Mahaska County Conservation Board and is emailed to those persons on our mailing list. There is no charge for the newsletter. Please help us by keeping us informed of any change of email address or if you no longer wish to receive our newsletter.

Mahaska County's programs and facilities are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Mahaska County Conservation Board or the office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 29240.

Discover Nature in Iowa!



MAHASKA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER
2342 Hwy. 92, Oskaloosa, IA 52577
Ph: (641)673-9327

OPEN HOURS

Monday - Wednesday	12:30-4:30 pm
Thursday & Friday	12:30-7:00 pm
Saturday	10 am - 2 pm
Sunday	CLOSED