

Naturally

LOUISA COUNTY NEWSLETTER

NEWS ABOUT OUR NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

APRIL 2011 VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 *Creature Feature*
- 7 *Go Wild, Go Birding, Go Hiking!*
- 8 *Upcoming Events*
- 12 *Book review: Life in the Soil*
- 14 *RUSH Report*

INDEX OF CONTRIBUTORS

- 3 *Louisa County Conservation*
- 5 *Louisa Development Group*
- 6 *Iowa DNR*
- 7 *Fish & Wildlife Service*
- 10 *Soil and Water Conservation*
- 13 *Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation*

EDITED BY
Mallory Smith
Julie Ohde

Conservation Leadership Changes

Conservation doesn't just happen. It takes dedicated, passionate people who are committed to make it happen.

That fact that we have so many public conservation areas and programs in Louisa County is no accident. We are fortunate to have several government agencies and even more non-profit organizations working for conservation.

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation is one of those non-profits who has had a tremendous impact. They have raised funds for everything from habitat equipment to land purchases. Most recently they have been working to raise \$144,000 in match money for the Louisa Interpretive Center.

Executive Director Mallory Smith has been the driving force behind Tri-Rivers since 2006. Under her leadership, the organization has thrived.

During her tenure Mallory helped establish the popular Reflections oral history project, two major fund raisers (the RUSH and Running Wild) and the Paris Scholarship. She has been instrumental in the Louisa Interpretive Center project as well.

Mallory steps down at the end of April to take on other pursuits. Her leadership will be missed but she leaves behind much that will have a lasting impact on conservation in and around Louisa County.

Stepping in to the Tri-Rivers director position is Dennis Fraise of Burlington. Tri-Rivers board chair, Dan Vogeler says Dennis brings with him strong skills in community relationships, fundraising and volunteer development. Dennis is also director of Louisa Development group so he will play a dual role with Naturally Louisa County.

Another leader stepped down from Tri-Rivers earlier this year. Kathy Vance of Morning Sun resigned after serving for six years. Kathy was both a valuable board member, helping determine priorities and direction for the organization, and a tireless volunteer. She was vital to the success of the Reflections project helping with planning, conducting most of the interviews, editing audio files and making presentations. Kathy will continue to serve as co-chair of the Louisa Interpretive Center fundraising committee which has raised over \$100,000 for this new and innovative environmental education facility that will break ground soon.

Mary Beth Carey has filled the vacancy left by Kathy. Mary Beth is a long time supporter of environmental education and conservation and has served for years on the Louisa Interpretive Center Advisory committee.

We thank Mallory and Kathy for their leadership and dedication, while we welcome Dennis and Mary Beth aboard.

From the Editors

What does dedication to conservation look like? Read this issue from cover to cover and you'll see what it means for many of your friends and neighbors in Louisa County.

For children, interest in conservation is discovered, developed and explored - page 9 offers summer camp opportunities for ages 3 through 18. For families and friends, outdoor recreation opportunities offer the chance to enjoy nature as a group and learn from one another. Pages 4, 7 and 8 offer some ideas for people so inclined.

If you like to work with the earth, rather than take from it, you'll find the tips on pages 6 and 11 helpful, you will likely enjoy Don Kline's book review on page 12 and should visit the business profiled on page 5.

Along the same lines, but on a larger scale, there are some CRP management ideas on page 10 that farmers will find useful.

You will also find stories about those who have chosen to commit time, energy and money to conservation: Young adults who choose to give a year of their lives to AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a young lady who is headed to Iowa State University with two local scholarships and lots of ambition, a volunteer board member stepping down after six years of service and another one enthusiastically filling the vacancy, and the money raised in one night by 137 conservation supporters and one encouraging auctioneer.

Julie

Editors:
Julie Ohde & Mallory Smith

Mallory

A note from Mallory: This will be my last newsletter as co-editor. It's been a great experience working for Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation and I'll miss it. Many thanks to the board of directors, volunteers, supporters and people at collaborating agencies who have made this job fun, interesting and rewarding.

AmeriCorps in Louisa County

By Emily Fisher, AmeriCorps NCCC member

An AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team has been in Wapello since March working with Louisa County Conservation (LCC), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services and Iowa DNR

The members of "Oak 6," as we are called, range in age from 18 to 24 and come from ten different states. Only three of us had been to Iowa before starting training at Vinton in February.

One of the main goals for our team is to assist the agencies with prescribed fire. Through the middle of April, we have helped burned over 2,400 acres. In addition to performing prescribed burns, we are also helping LCC with environmental education programs in the county schools. With the burn season coming to a close, we will be concentrating on invasive species removal, natural resource preservation and more environmental educational programs. We will also help host the Iowa River Water Trail Float Trip and Dedication on May 7 in Johnson County.

Another part of the NCCC program is independent service projects. So if your organization could use help on weekends, we are available through May 13.

AmeriCorps NCCC, administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, provides opportunities to members, who work to improve the environment, enhance education, increase public safety, help with disaster relief, and assist in other unmet human needs. NCCC members must be 18-24 and complete at least 1,700 hours of service during the 10-month program.

For information about AmeriCorps NCCC, call 800-942-2677, or visit www.americorps.gov/nccc.





Creature Feature: Cricket Frog

By Jon Hesson, AmeriCorps NCCC member

When I think of the cricket frog I am always blown away by the pure volume such a small frog can project. They are also agile jumpers, and can leap at prey with precision and grace. I had the pleasure of actually having my friend, Christopher the Cricket Frog come along with me for a program with some first graders from Morning Sun Elementary, the kids loved it, probably because they also have a natural affinity for jumping and eating.



The cricket frog is recognized by its tiny size, extensively webbed feet, and the cricket-like mating call. Cricket frogs vary in size from 1 to 2 1/2 inches, and are typically more aquatic than other frog species.

Males are distinguished from females by a darker throat region and a lighter yellow vocal pouch. The males chirp is most pronounced during mating season. Amplexus - a fancy term for mating in frogs - occurs in warm shallow waters. The female cricket frog lays hundreds of eggs which hatch within just a few days.

The population of this species is dwindling and is even considered endangered in Minnesota and Wisconsin. This decline may be attributed to changes in water chemistry as a result of pesticides and chemicals, loss or alteration of wetlands, and the fact that cricket frogs are an annual frog, reproducing only once in their typical one-year lifespan.

The good news is that research has demonstrated cricket frogs will live in man made habitats, preferring muddy shorelines, wetlands, and mostly fish free environments.

Fire!

By Jordan Strayer, AmeriCorps NCCC member

Iowa's ecosystem was once made up of vast grasslands. Before European-Americans began to settle in Iowa, 85% of the land was covered with prairie. Now less than 0.1% remains. Most of the loss is due to conversion of the prairie to agricultural land and development of cities.

Any remaining or restored prairie is tough to keep as grassland without some type of intervention—trees and other woody plants, as well as non-native grasses, will take over quickly. Before settlement, wildfires were part of the natural cycle that helped keep the woody vegetation at bay. But once houses and barns were established on the prairie, people fought to suppress fires.

One solution to maintaining grasslands is to light fires intentionally. Which leads to questions like — Don't grass fires turn into wildfires and damage personal property? How can burning the environment help preserve it?

A "prescribed fire" is when someone starts a controlled burn to reach a certain goal. The objective may be to limit fuel sources to reduce the likelihood of a wildfire or to preserve the natural habitats of native species or to reduce woody vegetation. The safest and most effective way to conduct a prescribed fire is to start with a well written burn plan, which spells out the goals, control measures to be taken and the ideal conditions for conducting it.

There is a lot to think about before lighting a controlled fire. Things to take into consideration are the temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, smoke management, and how intense the fire will be. In addition, burn breaks must be established. These factors and others must be considered to prevent the controlled fire from turning into a wildfire.

Landowners thinking of burning their property should consider taking a class on controlled burning. The wildfire professionals at Louisa County Conservation and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service sponsor classes for landowners.



Camping Notes

As this newsletter heads to the printer, the Mississippi River continues to rise, closing both Flaming Prairie Park and Snively Campground. Call or check www.NaturallyLouisaCounty.com for closures at all Louisa County public areas.

Fees at Louisa County Conservation campgrounds will now be \$12/night for all sites. This includes Snively, Virginia Grove and Flaming Prairie campgrounds. In addition, to help staff be more efficient, a penalty will be charged if LCC staff has to collect fees from campers. Avoid the penalty by registering and paying promptly!

Camping coupons are a great way to pay, plus you earn free nights. Stop by the LCC office or Louisa County Recorders office to get yours.

Canoes Available

Canoes and kayaks will be available to the public at Snively Campground on the second weekend in June, July and August.

The boats may only be used at Odessa Wildlife Complex and cannot be transported by vehicle to other accesses. You do not have to be a registered camper to borrow a canoe or kayak.

We are still working on the details so watch local papers (and www.lccb.org) to find out more.



LOUISA COUNTY CONSERVATION

12635 County Road G56, Suite 101
Wapello, IA 52653
319-523-8381 Fax: 319-527-2131
lccb@lccb.org www.lccb.org

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday
10 am - 3 pm

LCCB STAFF

Julie Ohde
Katie Hammond
Kathy Dice
Mary Gish
Jeff Snyder
Kenny Moore



BOARD MEMBERS

Roger Edwards
Sherry Humphreys
Brad Moss
Jay Schweitzer
Stan Staats

Thank you!

Our list of folks to thank includes people who taught hunter safety, folded newsletters and helped at school programs and field trips.



Monsanto Off-the-Job
Safety Committee
Oak 6 AmeriCorps NCCC
The Monsanto Company
Becky Beaver
Dave Boysen
Doug Brown
John Guyer
Jerry Heater
Paul Kay
Tracy Lott
Ben Schlader
Jay Shafer
Eric Tackenberg
Mike Todd
Connie Veach

Louisa Interpretive Center Progress Report

Before the end of summer the landscape will begin to change at the site of the future Louisa Interpretive Center.

This phase of the work will include construction of two wetlands, a small pond and an entrance road. Also created will be some of the mounds that will eventually become interpretive kiosks. Then, once the dirt is all moved and the entry paved, the area will be seeded to native plants.

Cornerstone Excavating of Washington, Iowa plans to start on the project once conditions are favorable.

Shive-Hattery continues to work on detailed drawings of the planned building as well as on the LEED certification, which spells out the conservation and sustainability measures that will be implemented throughout the project.

Meanwhile, Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation continues to seek donations to be used as a match for the \$568,000 Scenic Byways grant being used to fund this phase.



Making Neighbors Green With Envy

By Kathy Vance, ISU Extension Louisa County

Geoff Proffit and Ryan Kinneberg run a business in Southeast Iowa which results in a product you have surely noticed – probably without ever knowing that they were the ones “making” the product. They run a business that results in something that makes you look twice when you drive by or walk on it. They run a business that helps you win that secret competition in Iowa called “competitive lawn growing and mowing.” And they run a business that may make you “green with envy,” but absolutely makes the world we live in a little bit greener. Together Proffit and Kinneberg run the lawn care business *Hedge Above, LLC*.



Hedge Above has been around since 2005 when Proffit started the business with a client list of 12-14 yards. He took care of about five acres of grass with a push spreader, 5-gallon backpack sprayer and one lawnmower. The business has grown a bit since then.

Today Proffit estimates they service 100-120 accounts which cover 3.5-4 million square feet of turf. And the business now includes a partner, Kinneberg, two crews, four trucks, six mowers, two Z-Spray sprayers, a core aerator, plus trimmers, edgers, leaf blowers and a brand new retail location.

In October of 2010 Proffit’s father-in-law, Rocky Corwin closed the Boat Shop located at 100 S Highway 61 in Wapello. Coincidentally, the partners had been looking to upgrade their business operation from the shed on Proffit’s property. The former Boat Shop seemed the perfect fit, and as long as there was a shiny showroom, why not use that too? It was the perfect combination of preparation meeting up with opportunity.



HEDGE ABOVE LLC
LAWNCARE & LANDSCAPE
making your neighbors green with envy

101 Highway 61 S
Wapello, Iowa 52653
319.527.4228
www.hedgeabove.com

Store Hours:
M-F, 9:00-5:00
Sat, 8:00-noon

The *Hedge Above* retail shop in Wapello caters to the do-it-yourself lawn care provider. Beneath painted barn board signs you can see all of the products needed to take care of a lawn, from fertilizer to pest control. The store also sells all types of lawn care hand tools and has larger equipment for rent. While you may be awed by the beautiful golf courses and football fields that *Hedge Above* maintains, Kinneberg and Proffit insist that an award winning lawn is within anyone’s grasp.

So far the store has exceeded projections says Proffit. So what’s the next step in their business plan? The partners think somewhere down the road they may open another shop toward the western edge of their service area.

For now, however, the sunshine and rain means there’s a lot of grass for them to take care of. And if you are the one taking care of your own lawn, someone on staff will also be minding the store, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday. Look for the *Hedge Above* sign on Highway 61 South in Wapello.

LOUISA DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Dennis Fraise
Director of Business Services
319-753-0690
fraise@louisacomm.net

Official tourism contact for Louisa County
Member of Eastern Iowa Tourism Association

www.louisadevelopmentgroup.org

Landscape Green-and make it work for you!

By Lisa Louck, District Forester

Spring is upon us and as we look around our scenic surroundings we see the fields and woodlands waking up for the year. Another place we want to enjoy the display of growth and color is in our own back (or front) yard! This year, as we think of ways to improve the color, habitat, and aesthetics of our yard, let's also consider using native plants, grasses, and trees - let's "Green-scape!"

For any addition of plants, grass or trees there are wonderful native options to fulfill your needs. The first step in improving landscape with natives may be to remove unwanted vegetation. In my own yard, I have invasive creeping Charlie groundcover, cocklebur, and exotic honeysuckle shrub that I want to treat and remove before planting anything. A second step might be to evaluate problem areas in your yard such as wet/eroding areas, sandy areas, and overly brushy areas. Then ask yourself, "How can well placed native plants, grasses and trees help these issues?" A third step is to determine what you are lacking, such as color, diversity, or wildlife habitat. (I happen to be lacking all three!)

With our issues and desired outcomes in mind, we can get started improving our home habitat. Native grasses have deep roots and stabilize soil so they will be a great addition to my sloping area with creeping Charlie/cockleburs. Once the unwanted plants are removed, I can plant seed in the larger area I have to fill. This larger area is outside my back fence, so I won't mind the wild look of this open field as it takes a couple years to become the "prairie" look I want. This area outside my normal traffic area will also be used for food and habitat by birds, small animals, and even an occasional deer.

The smaller area inside my fence might be better suited for native grass/forb plugs (small starter plants). These are expensive, but I can place individual coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, little bluestem or Indian grass or exactly where I want for a more manicured look. Choosing at least three species will increase the variety for different birds and small animals. I also can count on natural seeding and spread from these natives so starting with a few and letting the plants fill themselves in will help on cost.



The shrubs and trees I am considering for my yard will also add color and diversity. Currently I have a lilac, many volunteer honeysuckles, and a burning bush. Unfortunately, the honeysuckle is very invasive and the burning bush has also been spreading to our woodlands in recent years. We can help control the spread by at least removing what we can from our yards.

There are countless native shrubs and trees of all sizes, colors, textures, and shapes that can fill the gap left behind. Choose varieties with berries, fruits, and seed to benefit whatever wildlife you are wanting to encourage.

Whatever your goals, let's try a greener way to improve our yards this year! Contact your District forester, NRCS or the State Forest Nursery for more information.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Wildlife Biologist

Andy Robbins
319-523-8319
Andy.Robbins@dnr.iowa.gov

Conservation Officer

Ben Schlader
563-260-1225
Ben.Schlader@dnr.iowa.gov

Forester

Lisa Louck
319-523-2216
Lisa.Louck@dnr.iowa.gov

Fisheries Biologist

Chad Dolan
319-694-2430
Chad.Dolan@dnr.iowa.gov

Environmental Protection

Dennis Ostwinkle
319-653-2135
Dennis.Ostwinkle@dnr.iowa.gov

www.iowadnr.com



Go Wild, Go Birding, & Go Hiking!

The 2011 theme of “International Migratory Bird Day” is “Go Wild, Go Birding” which was chosen to focus on reaching out to involve youth, their families, and communities in learning about birds, bird watching, and bird conservation. Launched in 1993, International Migratory Bird Day is the largest-known bird conservation and education event in the Western Hemisphere.

The 2011 National Trails Day theme is “Made with All Natural Ingredients” and Americans are encouraged to get outside, connect with local outdoor clubs, community groups, and federal land managing agencies to experience, appreciate and celebrate nearby natural places. This event will engage thousands of people across the country with activities planned in all 50 states!

Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge has chosen to combine these two terrific national field days into a single event for all ages on Saturday, May 21 from 7:00 AM – Noon. The following programs will be featured throughout the morning:

Songbird Banding: Get an up-close perspective of birds in the hand and learn about migrating birds.



Throughout the morning, refuge biologist Jessica Bolser, will catch, identify, and band birds.

Birding Hikes: Grab your binoculars and field guides and put on your hiking boots for guided birding treks along refuge trails. Experts will be on hand to provide ID tips and interesting facts about the birds of the area.

Wild Geocache Rally: Whether you are new to Geocaching or not, join us for the Wild Geocache Rally. At check in, you’ll receive a GPS unit and a question and answer sheet with cache coordinates. Seek out the caches for fun surprises and clues to answer the questions. Turn in your completed answer sheet with correct answers for another fun prize! (Feel free to bring your own GPS device.)

Odessa Paddling Trips: Dip your canoe and kayak paddles into the waters of Odessa to experience a different kind of trail...a water trail. On these short, guided tours you will experience refuge wildlife from the water perspective, while learning about Port Louisa and the National Wildlife Refuge System.



The entire family is encouraged to join us for one, or all, of these active, fun-filled programs. Exact times have yet to be determined so please contact the refuge at 319-523-6982 to have an event flyer sent to you or go to www.NaturallyLouisaCounty.com. For more information about International Migratory Bird Day visit www.BirdDay.org and to learn more about National Trails Day, go to www.AmericanHiking.org.

Friends of Port Louisa

A group of conservation supporters has formed the “Friends of Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge.” The organization’s goal is to raise awareness of the refuge and what it has to offer the visiting public.

The group’s first project was to secure a Community Foundation of Louisa County grant to help fund an interpretive sign. It has recently been installed at the refuge headquarters overlook deck - be sure to stop by and check it out!

While a formal membership drive will begin later in 2011, you can join today. Regular memberships are \$25/person or \$40/family. All proceeds benefit activities at Port Louisa NWR.

For more information or to become a member, call the Refuge at 319-523-6982 or email the Friends group at info@portlouisafriends.com. The group is also looking for people who are interested in serving on the board and helping shape the organization.



PORT LOUISA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

10728 Cty Rd X61,
Wapello, Iowa 52653
319-523-6982

Office Hours: M-F, 7:30-4:00 PM
Refuge Manager: Cathy Henry
midwest.fws.gov/portlouisa

UPCOMING EVENTS

Iowa River Water Trail Float Trip & Dedication Ceremony

Saturday, May 7, Johnson County

Join the Iowa River Water Trail partners to celebrate the dedication of Iowa's newest official water trail. This segment runs from Iowa City to the Mississippi River but we won't be paddling the whole stretch that day!

You can paddle the morning, afternoon or all day - with a stop at the dedication ceremony and lunch - of course. Or just join us on dry land for the ceremony at Hills Access, just east of the town of Hills.

Registration fee is \$25 per person and includes lunch as well as boat rental and shuttle service, as needed. Paddlers who don't need any of those services may participate without registration, but all proceeds from the day's event will go toward the water trail.

Schedule of Events

8:00	Early Bird Paddle <i>Iowa City to Hills, 9.5 mi</i>
11:30	Lunch & Dedication <i>Hills Access</i>
12:30	Afternoon paddle, <i>Hills to River Junction, 9.8 mi</i>

For more information or to register online go to:

www.IowaRiverWaterTrail.com

Or call

Louisa County Conservation at
319-523-8381

Observation Deck Dedication

Friday, May 6, 1:30 pm

Port Louisa NWR, Muscatine Slough Parking Lot

Join the Friends of Port Louisa NWR, refuge staff and sixth graders from Morning Sun and Wapello Elementary Schools to celebrate the completion of this wildlife observation deck.

NOTE: may be rescheduled due to high water. Call 319-523-6982 to check the status.

Go Wild, Go Birding, & Go Hiking!

Saturday, May 21, 7:00 am - noon

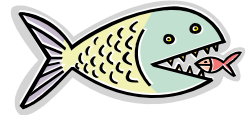
Stop in for all or part of the morning and enjoy bird banding, geocaching, paddling and more.

See page 7 for more details!

Fish 'n Fun Day

Saturday, June 18, 2011

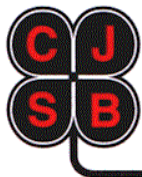
8:30 am - 12:15 pm



The fun begins with a casting competition followed by training sessions and a fishing derby. Prizes will be awarded for the largest fish, most fish, and smallest fish. Participants should bring their own fishing equipment and bait, as only a limited number of poles will be available to check out for the day.

The whole family is encouraged to attend. Children under age 12 must have an adult stay.

The first 75 kids to register will receive a free tackle package. To register, call the conservation office at 319-523-8381 or email lccb@lccb.org. This event is co-sponsored by Louisa County Conservation and ISU Extension, Louisa County.



**Columbus
Junction
STATE BANK**

134 Main St
Columbus Junction, IA 52738
(319) 728-2436
Member FDIC

Petro & More



Gas, pizza and a full convenience store
Across from All Vets Memorial on Highway 61



Owners: Dennis & Ann Shepard

319-729-9900

2011 Summer Nature Camps

Looking for a way to get your kids outdoors this summer? Sign them up for a nature camp!

Most camps are held at Langwood Education Center near Grandview. Cricket Camp is at Chinkapin Bluffs near Columbus Junction and River Raiders is on the Upper Iowa River near Decorah.

Registration has begun and space is limited, so sign up today! Details, registration forms and fees can be found at www.lccb.org or at your local library.

Cricket Camp

3-4 yr olds
June 8-10

Nature Detectives

Entering 2nd-3rd
June 27-July 1

Jr. Naturalist Camp

Entering 4th-6th
Aug 1-4

Polliwog Camp

Entering K-1st
June 20-24

Fishing Camp

Entering 3rd-5th
June 13-17

River Raiders

Entering 7th-8th
July 27, Aug 10-12

Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Trek

June 25-July 2

Ages 14-18

Cost: \$400 (scholarships available)

Katie Hammond from Louisa County Conservation will be leading this wilderness trip through Iowa State 4-H. This trip explores the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northeast Minnesota. If you have a bit of canoeing experience, and the strength and spirit to explore, this trip may be for you! You'll paddle across lakes, portage your canoe, fish, read maps, use compasses, live in a tent, cook meals and learn about the ecology of this magnificent area. Everything, including transportation from the Iowa 4-H Center near Madrid, is provided.

Registration for this program is through Iowa 4-H. Visit their website at www.extension.iastate.edu. Local scholarships are available. Contact Katie Hammond at 319-523-8381 for information about the scholarship.

Unless otherwise stated, all registration and program information for upcoming events can be found by calling 319-523-8381 or by visiting www.NaturallyLouisaCounty.com.



Cooperative North American Shotgun Education Program

Saturday, June 25, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Langwood Education Center

This program is designed to educate hunters on how to become more effective wing shooters. There will be both classroom and hands-on instruction to help hunters learn about shooting techniques and hunting strategies.

Participants must be 16 or older, have completed hunter education prior to the workshop and bring their own 12 or 20 gauge shotgun for the live fire activities. Ammunition will be provided.

For more information contact Ben Schlader at 563-260-1225. Class space is limited! Register online at the IDNR website: www.iowadnr.gov/training.

Eat the Weeds

Tuesday, June 28, 7:00 - 8:30 pm
Louisa County Extension Office, Wapello

Frustrated by a weedy garden or lawn? Join the Master Gardeners of Louisa County to find out which of those weeds can actually be eaten. It's sweet revenge to devour the frustrating plants that keep persisting in your lawn or garden. We'll have a slide show of common edible weeds, followed by a walk to nearby lawns and gardens to sample a few varieties.



Looking Ahead . . .

July 11-22: Summer Rec

July 25-29: Louisa County Fair

August 18 & 20: Hunter Safety Class

August 27: Running Wild

CRP Mid Contract Management -Improving Wildlife Habitat

Landowners with Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts are required to apply mid-contract management practices to their CRP land including disking, burning, spraying or interseeding to help establish plants and to assure an early successful plant growth stage.

The time period for applying these practices depends on the individual practice. However, according to John Myers with the NRCS, these activities cannot be performed during the nesting or brood rearing season, May 15-Aug 1.

“CRP mid-contract management will increase plant species and structural diversity,” said Myers. “It will also provide wildlife early use of the vegetation, habitat for declining species, and remove duff and control woody vegetation.”

Myers says managing plant communities is beneficial, if not essential, for grassland birds like meadowlarks, quail and pheasants. “More diverse grasslands provide all the habitat requirements for multiple species in a small area,” he said.

Prescribed burning is used to remove excess litter, which may reduce the quality of wildlife habitat. Controlled fire can also allow germination of seed bearing annuals and wildflowers, increase plant species diversity, control unwanted woody cover, and open up CRP stands for movement of small animals and birds.

Adding introduced legumes such as alfalfa, ladino or red clovers, or native legumes and forbs such as black-eyed susan, partridge pea, white or purple prairie clover, or tick trefoil, will add diversity and structure to an existing cover.



Spot spray to control noxious weeds to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife, and that provide insect food sources for grassland nesting birds.

- Shallow Disking
- Prescribed Burning
- Herbicides
- Interseeding

For more information about CRP mid-contract management, please visit your local USDA Service Center or go online to www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CRP.html.

SWCD Scholarship Winners

The Louisa County Soil & Water Conservation District has awarded two \$500 scholarships to local high school seniors in 2011.

Rachel Pierce, daughter of Curtis and Linda Pierce, will graduate from Columbus Community High School in May. She will be attending Iowa State University in Ames. Rachel plans to major in Global Resource Systems.

Dexter Bieri will graduate from Louisa-Muscatine High School in May. He is the son of David and Joni Bieri. Dexter plans to attend the University of Iowa in Iowa City to obtain an Engineering degree that will allow him to work in an Ag related field.

The Louisa County SWCD wishes both Rachel and Dexter the best of luck at college!



NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD)

260 Mulberry St., Suite 2, Wapello, Iowa 52653
319-523-6411 Fax: 319-523-3605
jamie.grimes@ia.nacdnet.net

District Conservationist

Drew DeLang

Soil Conservationist

Kristen Fenderson

Buffer/Conservation Technician

Duane Lewis

Soil Conservation Technicians

Mark Delperdang

AmeriCorps Habitat Specialist

Holly Wilkens

District Secretary

Jamie Grimes

SWCD Commissioners

Mary Boysen, Wapello

Sam Willson, Wapello

Chris Ball, Oakville

Dan Vogeler, Columbus Junction

Lee Harris, Morning Sun

Conserving and Saving

By Jesse Barden, AmeriCorps NCCC member

In the current economic climate many people are looking to save money. One thing that can be done to save both those hard earned dollars and help the environment is to adopt more energy efficient practices. Some steps require large upfront investments but pay for themselves in energy savings over time. There are also small adjustments that can yield surprisingly large results.

You might feel compelled to start with the big stuff - like solar panels or replacing all your old appliances with Energy Star rated ones - it's tough to come up with the cash. Fortunately, many easy (and free!) steps can be taken to reduce your electric bill. Let's start with the basics.

Turn it off. It is surprising how many people leave the lights, TV, or computer on when they are not even in the room.

Replace with CFL's. You've heard it before, now replace those old incandescent bulbs. While compact fluorescent bulbs are more expensive, they are far more efficient and last longer.

Unplug. Televisions, computers, cell phone chargers, and all other appliances draw power even when they are turned off. It takes just a few seconds to unplug an appliance and the saving starts instantly.

Take the laundry out to dry. With warmer weather ahead, take advantage of the bountiful Iowa wind to air-dry clothing. And, of course, use cold water whenever possible.

Turn it down, turn it up. During winter, set the thermostat to 65° or lower. You might need a sweater but the change in the energy bill will be dramatic. To save even more, go a bit lower during the day and turn it up when you return or invest in a programmable thermostat that does the work for you. During the summer, reverse the process. You may find that 75° is surprisingly tolerable after a few days, especially when you see how much it saves you.

These steps, while they seem small, can make a large difference especially when used cooperatively. And, if you save the money you aren't spending on electric and gas bills, you could find yourself with enough to invest in the solar panels and appliances.

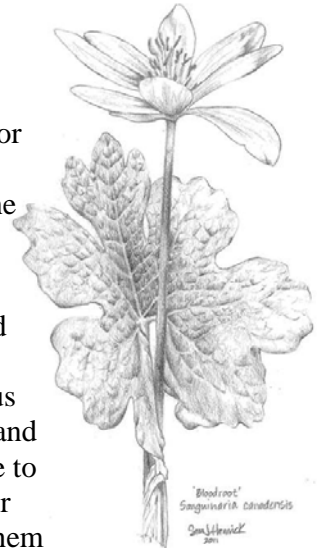
Enjoying Fleeting Beauty, Avoiding Lasting Pain

By Sara Hannick, local volunteer

We've endured another long winter and just when we can't take it any longer...spring arrives. It seems to happen magically, almost overnight...but, if you've been watching carefully, you know that this is actually a very slow process. The world around us has been groggily waking up for many weeks.

One of my favorite spring rituals is strolling along a forest trail, scanning the floor looking for the first glimpse of our abundant wildflowers. As the sun warms the soil, so begins the magnificent succession of blooms.

Unlike the popular cultivated classics, our native species may not be so obvious. They beckon us to slow our pace, focus our eyes and kneel down and admire them face to face. This allure only adds to their charm and compels one to hunt them down. "Spring Ephemerals," as they are often referred to, are fleeting in their beauty. They must be sought out before they are dormant for the season.

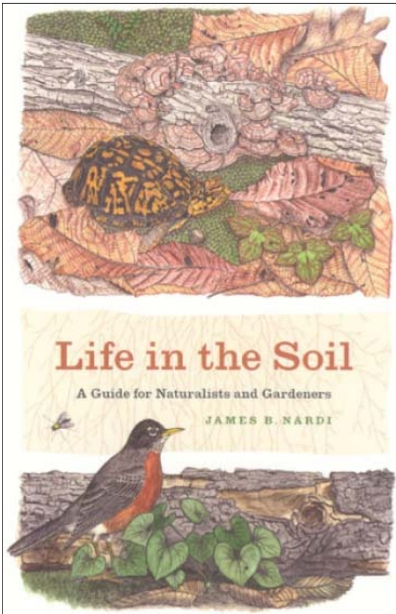


It is important to also remain vigilant of the other wonders of spring that are awakening with the wildflowers... such as Poison Ivy and Stinging Nettles. An innocent brush with these locals can put a damper on your springtime celebration. In addition, keep a watchful eye for cranky thorn species...like Black Locust and Multiflora Rose.

Just as familiarity with the beauty of our wildflowers can be rewarding, identifying the troublesome species can greatly enhance your outdoor experience. You can avoid unnecessary nuisances ranging from a simple irritation to an allergic reaction.

This spring, before you head outdoors to seek wildflowers, mushrooms, fish or just to soak up the sun, brush up on your plant identification skills. Thus heightening your enjoyment of the natural beauty we have right here in Louisa County.

Editors' note: Sara Hannick recently moved with her family to Wapello from Michigan. With majors in art and biology, she has a passion for botanical illustration. The bloodroot illustration included with this story is hers and we thank her for sharing it!



Life in the Soil by James Nardi

Reviewed by Don Kline

Well who would have thought there would be a field guide to the life in the soil. Your first thought might have been “Do you mean to tell me someone studies that?” and secondly “Why do we need to know that?” Yes, there are scientists who study soil and its organic components and one of them is James Nardi and as he shows us, if you have just been studying what is above ground level then you have missed more than half of what is going on in nature.

The first chapter in the book provides you with information about how soil is formed - how the basic mineral components of silt, sand and clay are combined with the organic components to make what we call earth, dirt or more correctly soil. Size matters in soil where we can have 10 billion bacteria and actinomycetes per square meter at the base of the food pyramid but see only one vertebrate.

The second chapter of the book delves into all those fascinating microbes and animals that live in the soil. The author illustrates with drawings, photos and interesting descriptions the many life forms from bacteria to butterfly larvae, potworms to prairie dogs and slime mold to salamanders. It is fascinating reading that gives you the scientific classification of each group, the size range and number of species and what impact they have on our lives. You will learn how important they are in the food web based on how they function (the job they perform) as part of the ecosystem. For instance, they might be diggers, decomposers, scavengers, detritivores, parasites or predators. And for me, a special feature was the author’s notes on the derivation of the Latin scientific names - now I know what those odd words mean!

I am tempted to recommend that you read the last chapter first because it ties together what is living in the soil with why it is so important to human beings. The author describes which human activities are having a great effect on our soils and points out that it is up to us to take note and make changes.

The author ends the book with several informative appendix sections on collecting and observing, a glossary, future reading from general to specific and an extensive index.

I highly recommend this book because Mr. Nardi has been able to bring together much of the scientific research on soil conducted in the past couple of decades and make it interesting and usable from the casual gardener who turns over a spade of soil to a farmer who tills a thousand acres. Mr. Nardi, a Biologist with the University of Illinois and the Illinois Natural History Survey, has put together an excellent field guide that is packed with illustrations and detailed knowledge about the many microbes and animals found in soil. You need it on your bookshelf for a handy reference.



306 North Second Street
Wapello, Iowa 52653-1204
319-523-2131
Member FDIC



28 West Division Street · PO Box 96
Morning Sun, IA 52640
319.868.7636 · 319.527.7636 · FAX 319.868.4297
custserv@louisacomm.net www.louisacomm.net

2011 Paris Scholarship Winner: Rachel Pierce

The Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation board and the family of Bill Paris are pleased to announce Rachel Pierce as the 2011 William J. Paris Conservation Scholarship winner. Rachel is the daughter of Curt (CP) and Linda Pierce of Columbus Junction. She will graduate from Columbus High School this May and begin classes at Iowa State University this fall.

Rachel will major in Global Resource Systems, an interdisciplinary major offered by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences aimed at preparing students to work on complex global resource issues through leadership positions in development organizations.

The scholarship is funded by an endowment created by the family and friends of Bill Paris of Wapello. It honors Bill's commitment to conservation and education by providing support for a Louisa County resident studying in a natural resources field.

Applicants for the William J. Paris Scholarship are asked to write an essay describing how they hope to be involved in the preservation or understanding of natural resources. Below is Rachel's response.

"I am very excited to be a part of a relatively new major at Iowa State University called Global Resource Systems. This major will allow me to broaden my knowledge of the natural resource issues that are affecting people and environments all around the planet. The travel opportunities with this major are endless. Not only will I have the opportunity to learn about the multiple global issues, I will have the chance to work with and share what I have learned with people throughout the world.

Through this program, I will be able to travel to areas around the world that are in need of assistance to help tackle the harmful effects of their lifestyles on the natural habitats surrounding them. I am looking forward to immersing myself in the cultural aspects of where I plan to do my studies. To learn how others live and use their resources will help us find a resolution to their needs; whether it is to grow better produce, raise healthier animals, or improve water quality.

Preservation starts with awareness and knowledge. Many of the people are unaware of the environmental issues surrounding them. My goal is to help find solutions to their environmental issues. It is important to spread the significance of taking care of



The scholarship was presented by the Paris family at the Tri-Rivers RUSH. L to R, Rich Paris, Rachel Pierce, Steve Paris, Bev Paris and Al Paris.

the environment with everyone so that we, as a world, can maintain a healthy planet. After learning the importance of protecting our natural habitats, communities will be able to aid in the renewal of their home land, consequentially improving the lifestyle of the people and wildlife.

My senior year at Iowa State University I will be able to develop a senior project that could assist developing countries in using their natural resources to the fullest in an environmentally safe capacity. The possibilities are endless; improved water quality, habitat restoration, agricultural development, ground contamination, and much more. Through Global Resource Systems, I will have the opportunity to approach and improve the complex global issues."



PO Box 27, Columbus Junction, Iowa 52738
319-527-4530

tri-rivers@lccb.org www.tri-rivers.org

Executive Director

Dennis Fraise

Directors

Al Bohling, Columbus Junction
Mary Beth Carey, Columbus Junction
Steve Johnson, Bettendorf
Don Kline, Washington
Karen Minnis, Morning Sun
Jim Rudisill, Wapello
Jay Schweitzer, Columbus Junction
Dan Vogeler, Columbus Junction

2011 Tri-Rivers RUSH

The 2011 Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation fundraising auction lived up to its name. Newly christened RUSH, the event was alive with activity, smiles and laughter and, when the evening drew to a close, more than \$13,000 had been raised to benefit conservation projects in the Louisa Resource Area. It was a thrilling evening!



RUSH was held for the second year at Delzell Brothers showroom. The cars usually on display were moved out to the parking lot and a team of dedicated volunteers transformed the room into an elegant banquet hall. A scrumptious buffet of appetizers was provided by Johnnie B's of Wapello. Centerpieces were crafted by Tammy Noble's 6th grade class at Morning Sun School and sold as part of the fund raising effort. A new record was set for attendance at 137 with people coming from not only Louisa and all surrounding counties, but also as far away as Ames. The Mississippi Valley Callers sent a group and came in a limousine.

Twenty-four silent auction items were on display to tempt people as they arrived - all artfully displayed by Sue Nichols of Morning Sun. Top bid-getters included *This Rock Rolls* donated by Screamer Express, Inc, an internet package from Louisa Communications, and the *Farmers Helper* basket donated by The Monsanto Company.

The live auction was the evening's main event. Auctioneer Monte Delzell kept the bidding lively and the audience engaged. There was truly something for everyone with a bill of sale ranging from hunting rights

to a beautiful handmade wooden rocking horse. Bringing in the highest bids were the *Lake of the Ozarks Getaway* donated by Doug and Elizabeth Graber; *The University Challenge* (three sets of corn hole games sold separately) donated by Jim and Adam Rudisill; hunting rights donated by Cloverdale Farm (Kathy and Michael Vance and Fred and Gwen Jolly); a custom sketch donated by Al Bohling; and a catered meal donated by Bob and Paula Buckman.



RUSH wrapped up with an online auction which this year included five unique experiences sold on eBay. The top bid getter was a Trout Fishing Fly-In trip to northwest Iowa, donated by Dan Vogeler and Chris Grimm and sold to a buyer from Nebraska.

The second break featured the presentation of the 2011 William J Paris Conservation Scholarship. Al, Steve and Rich Paris were on hand to make the presentation and their mother Bev stayed in the audience to enjoy the experience. Past recipient Nick Ohde reported on his experience getting a masters degree at ISU in sustainable agriculture and expressed his gratitude to the Paris family. 2011 recipient Rachel Pierce was present to be recognized along with her parents, Curt and Linda Pierce.

The Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation board of directors is grateful to everyone who helped make the 2011 RUSH a huge success. Special thanks go to Delzell Bros for hosting the event, to Monte Delzell for his auctioneering services, to the volunteers from Iowa State Bank for clerking and especially to the RUSH planning committee who did an outstanding job of planning, soliciting donations and paying attention to every detail.



Thank you's

Our thanks to the following individuals and groups for donations to Tri-Rivers RUSH, Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation and the Louisa Interpretive Center.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 92 Roadhouse | Katie Hammond |
| Bill & Charlene Aspelmeier | Marianne Hollingsworth |
| Al & Dianne Bohling | Humanities Iowa |
| Cal Bohling | Sherry Humphreys |
| Stephanie Brown | Indian Hills Country Club |
| Bryn Mawr | Iowa State Bank |
| Bob & Paula Buckman | Iowa State Bank Insurance |
| Mary Beth Carey | JD's Irish Ivy |
| Casey's of Wapello | Johnnie B's |
| Cedar Crest County Club | Jim & Terry Johnson |
| Community Foundation of Louisa County | Steve Johnson |
| Country Cakes & Cookies | Frank & Gwen Jolly |
| Brian Cummings | Just 2 Moms |
| Phillip Delzell | Mike & Cindy Klebe |
| Roger & Nancy Delzell | Don & Marjorie Kline |
| Delzell Auctions | La Hacienda |
| Delzell Brothers, Inc. | Louisa Communications |
| Kathy Dice | Lowe Insurance |
| Roger Edwards | Mary Kay Cosmetics |
| Farmers Elevator | Larry & Karen Minnis |
| Jack Estle Estate | Kenny & Debbie Moore |
| Freeman Total Fitness | Morning Sun 6th Grade |
| Friends of Port Louisa NWR | Morning Sun PTO |
| Patti Gerling | Lynn & Gary Mueller |
| Mary Gish | Sue Nichols |
| Doug & Elizabeth Graber | Tammy Noble |
| Grimm Brothers Plastics | Bill & Julie Ohde |
| | Willard & Millie Ohde |



Morning Sun 6th graders prepare the centerpieces for the Tri-Rivers RUSH fundraising auction.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bev Paris | Spirit Hollow Golf Course |
| Ginny Patterson | Stan Staats |
| Pleasant Valley Golf Course | Greg Terry |
| Riverside Casino & Golf Resort | The HON Company |
| Root Wellness Massage Therapy | The Monsanto Company |
| Jim & Laurie Rudisill | Thirsty Camel |
| Adam Rudisill | Tri Oak Foods |
| Schlutz Enterprises | Tri State Envelope |
| Jay & Sue Schweitzer | Tyson Foods |
| Screamer Express, Inc | Kathy & Michael Vance |
| SERVPRO | Kathy Wilkerson |
| Beth Shenpolk | Connie Veach |
| Ed & Sara Schrock | Dan & Sue Vogeler |
| Silpada Jewelry | Mary Zoekler |
| Mike Mullinnix & Mallory Smith | Natalie Szczech |

MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN LOUISA COUNTY

Enclosed is my donation for:

- \$25
 \$50
 \$100
 \$250
 \$500
 \$1,000
 Other _____

Name or Business _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Please earmark my donation for:

- Louisa Interpretive Center
 10K Challenge Fund _____
 Water Trails
 Scholarships
 Use my donation where needed most
 Other:

Make checks payable to:

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation

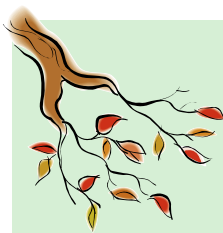
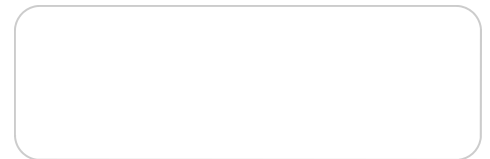
Return this form and payment to:

Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation
 P.O. Box 123
 Wapello, IA 52653

TRI-RIVERS CONSERVATION FOUNDATION RESPECTFULLY ACCEPTS AND HONORS MEMORIAL DONATIONS AND REQUESTS

**Y TRI-RIVERS
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**
PO Box 27
COLUMBUS JCT, IA 52738
WWW.TRI-RIVERS.ORG

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
WAPELLO IA
PERMIT NO 23



Save a tree!

Sign up now to get this newsletter via email. Just email us at info@NaturallyLouisaCounty.com and ask to be put on the email list.

To get on the mailing list for this **FREE** newsletter or to make address corrections call 319-523-8381 or email info@NaturallyLouisaCounty.com

If you need this newsletter in larger print, call 319-523-8381



Printed on recycled paper

Naturally Louisa County is an innovative collaboration between government agencies, private organizations and individuals interested in showcasing the natural and cultural resources of Louisa County, Iowa.

Iowa River Water Trail Float Trip & Dedication

Saturday, May 7, 2011

8:00 Early Bird Paddle

Iowa City to Hills Access

11:30 Dedication Ceremony & Lunch

Hills Access

12:30 Afternoon Paddle

Hills Access to River Junction Access

Fee: \$25/person includes lunch, shuttle and canoe or kayak (or bring your own)

Life jackets required by all paddlers!

Register online for all or part of the day at:

www.IowaRiverWaterTrail.com

Questions - contact Louisa County Conservation
319-523-8381 or lccb@lccb.org

