



SUMMER 2017

# The Web

Newsletter of the Iowa Association of Naturalists

## *Hands-On Nature, No Substitute*

*By Dave Bakke, Naturalist, Muscatine County*

As the spring field trip season heats up, the questions abound: What is this? What is it doing? Why? Where would I find...? Sometimes I can answer these questions right off the top of my head and, if I have time, I can let my fingers do the wiping and swiping to fact check nature knowledge. Wow, times have changed! Just in the conservation field scientific names have changed the abundance of species have fallen, risen, or stayed the same depending on numerous factors and even plant and animal facts have changed as technology has allowed us to learn more about nature, at a faster pace than ever before. I meet kids who can spout more facts than I can about a variety of animals (most of which live in far away lands), but are ignorant of what lives in their own backyards. Ok, that last one has not changed, but you get my point. When I started in this field, I often took a backpack on nature hikes. It held various “do dads” that might be helpful on a hike: magnifiers, plastic bags to collect whatever seemed necessary to collect, and books—specifically field guides for birds, animal tracks, insects, wildflowers, trees, etc. I used them all. Over the years, I have stopped carrying most of these as I learned to identify many of the critters and plants common in my area. Now, with my phone, I can use online guides or apps, snap photos instead of drawing stick figure-field sketches, and write notes (slowly



and clumsily) for later use back in my office. People occasionally call me with “What is this?” questions complete with a detailed description of a bird at their feeder, footprint, or some kind of wildlife damage. I often give them an answer off the top of my head, but sometimes I will ask if they have a picture of the critter or damage. And, by golly, many of them do, and they are happy to send it along to me. I tend to be a visual person, so photos are my friends.

Continued on next page

### In This Issue

Nature Craft.....	Page 3
Grapevine News.....	Page 3
Upcoming Workshops.....	Page 4
My Favorite Green Thing.....	Page 4
Book Review.....	Page 5
2016 IAN/ICEC Awards.....	Page 6-7
Summer IAN Workshop 2017.....	Page 8-9

Sometimes visitors give me a helping hand. Several times on hikes we have found something I can't identify or a student asks a question I can't answer. To keep things moving, I have used the old "We'll check that when we get back to the nature center" chestnut. Only to find that on the way back, one of the parents has used their phone to find the answer to our question. I always thank them and appreciate their help while I'm finishing something with the kids. I find parents like to be helpful. If my hands are wet or dirty (as they usually are), I am happy to have them look up pictures of tadpoles to help us determine if we are actually looking at a tree frog tadpole. Plus, their online skills are often better than my own. Actually, I am pretty sure most of the kids are faster than I am as well. There have been a few times when parents rushed to be the first to find the answer and ended up with conflicting information. This led to a small discussion on targeting a search



question to get the information you really want. This would be a learned skill for some of us. I remember a few years ago when there were discussions regarding whether to bring electronic devices on field trips. Some were in favor, some against, and some were just not sure. At that time small laptops or tablets were becoming more common in schools and the concern seemed to be whether they would take away from the outdoor experience. In Muscatine, we didn't see many of those devices coming on field trips, and when they did it was part of a science project that students were working on. Admittedly, I have been slow to adapt to newer technology (Can you see fellow naturalist Michelle Berns nodding vigorously?), but I see the value. Many conservation professionals take their phones, tablets, or laptops into the field, so why shouldn't students? Honestly, we rarely see anything but phones on our field trips, and they frequently prove their value.

In our world, the most powerful phones are not very useful for catching frogs and tadpoles, fishing, building shelters, swinging an insect net, exploring a creek, trying paddling sports, or any of our best outdoor adventures. But, the data they collect is priceless: a smiling kid holding up a fish or showing off a tadpole, a mom or dad sitting in a shelter built with their child, or the bug-eyed look of a kid sharing a handshake with a crayfish!



## Nature Craft: Bee Abode

By Emily Herring

Here is a craft that covers the six basic must haves of any craft. This craft is: easy, quick, reuses materials, inexpensive, good for many ages, and it helps pollinators. The perfecta!

What you need:

- Twine
- Nail
- Hammer
- Clean metal soup can with one end removed
- Bamboo shoots with holes 3/8 to 5/16 (or you can use rolled up paper or straws)
- Pruning shears - if bamboo is not already precut
- Paint (optional)



- Step 1. Take your metal can, nail, and hammer and puncture a hole at the top of the unopened end.  
Step 2. Run your twine through the hole and tie a loop around the can.  
Step 3. Cut bamboo shoots to approximate length of the can and place them into the can so they are snug and secure.  
Step 4 (optional). Paint your can to decorate. Starting with a primer spray paint makes painting designs easier.  
Step 5. Hang in a protected area, for example, under eaves and in the opposite direction of prevailing winds.

This type of bee house is made to host Mason Bees. They are active in the spring to early summer, so make sure you leave the house up for at least two summers, as they may not use them the first year. The ends of the shoots will be covered in mud, when eggs have been laid inside them.

Here in Iowa there are many species of mason bees and there are 130 in the United States. They receive this name because oftentimes their nests are composed entirely of mud. They are important pollinators, solitary and are often metallic in color.

### Grapevine News

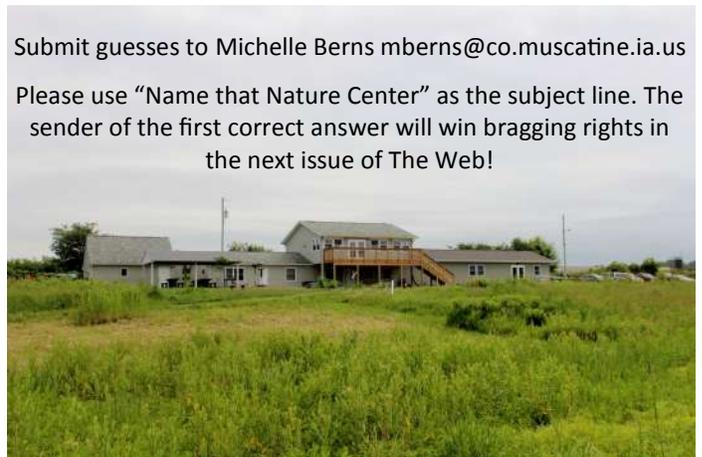
**CONGRATULATIONS JEAN!** At a meeting in Dallas, Texas, Jean Eells received special recognition from the National Organization of Professional Women in Natural Resources Conservation Service, WIN for outstanding leadership, partnership, and support for her work in training conservation professionals to improve conservation delivery to women landowners and producers.

**WAY TO GO MARY!** Mary Skopec was appointed executive director of Iowa Lakeside Laboratory in December 2016.

### Name that Nature Center

Submit guesses to Michelle Berns [mberns@co.muscatine.ia.us](mailto:mberns@co.muscatine.ia.us)

Please use "Name that Nature Center" as the subject line. The sender of the first correct answer will win bragging rights in the next issue of The Web!



## T-shirts, Get Your T-shirts!

We still have some of the new IAN t-shirts left, and they will be at the workshop available for purchase! We have a few mediums, and several large, XL, and 2XL available for purchase. If you pre-ordered a t-shirt and were not able to pick it up at the spring workshop, they are still on hold for you. Contact Mary Bulger [mbulger@co.iowa.ia.us](mailto:mbulger@co.iowa.ia.us) with any questions about t-shirts.



### Upcoming Workshops

- Summer IAN '17 - Jackson County (August 2-4)
- Quad Cities Pollinator Conference (September 13-14)
- Midwest Wild Harvest Festival (September 29-October 1)
- Midwest Environmental Education Conference (October 11-14)
- Fall IAN - Warren County (November 7-9)

## My Favorite Green Thing

*Amy Loving, Education Coordinator at Nahant Marsh*



Photo Credit <https://recipe.krtsy.com/stinging-nettle-recipes/>

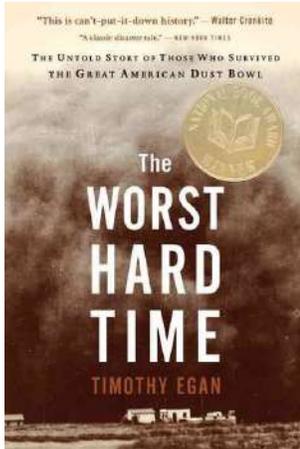
Stinging nettles! Oh the glorious time of year when the nettles emerge! I have been busy lately harvesting and collecting nettles in an effort to keep my freezer supplied for the year. Or as long as they last. When people first hear me talk about eating nettles, they often think I'm crazy....they sting! Well folks, I am here to tell you that they are delicious. My grandma was the person who introduced me to nettles, along with several other wild foods. Her instructions for harvesting and preparing are still my go-to methods. According to Grandma, wearing thick gloves (In her case, no gloves because she says they don't bother her), pinch off the

first four inches of the plant and fill up a paper bag. The best time to harvest is spring, although in area where they have been mowed you can harvest them as long as the plant has not flowered. I have been able to get nettles well into summer; flowering is typically June - September. A word of caution - some sources say that nettles may contain certain compounds after they flower, so be sure to harvest the plant before it flowers. Once your paper bag is full, it's time for washing. Dump the nettles into the sink, fill with water, and using a wooden spoon or tongs, swish nettles around to clean. Repeat rinse if needed. Next, use a lettuce spinner or colander to remove excess water. If you feel ambitious, you can remove the stems. I tend to leave them on as I don't mind the extra texture. Freshly cleaned nettles can be refrigerated in a Ziploc bag for a few days. Nettles can be steamed and cooked similar to spinach and kale. Nettles can be added to a variety of dishes like soups, eggs, potatoes, pasta, rice, and the list goes on. I like to add fresh ginger, red pepper flakes and salt for a tasty side dish or make into a pesto. Nettle leaves can also be used to make a very nutritious and medicinal tea. The tea is useful for all sorts of ailments from improving kidney function to relieving allergy symptoms. It also boosts your metabolism, contains high levels of flavonoids, and has antibacterial and antifungal benefits. These and many more are the reasons nettles are my favorite green thing.

# Book Review: *The Worst Hard Time*

By Timothy Egan

Reviewed by Miriam Patton, Palto  
Alto Naturalist



Some of you may remember watching the PBS documentary on the Dust Bowl a while back. Parts of it included interviews by author Timothy Egan, who had researched families from Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas that lived through the worst of those times.

At its height, the Dust Bowl covered one hundred million acres, even parts of Iowa.

American meteorologists ranked

the Dust Bowl the number one weather event of the twentieth century, and Historian Donald Worster wrote, "In no other instance was there greater or more sustained damage to the American land." More than a quarter million people left the region in the 1930's. Egan's book, [The Worst Hard Time](#), however, records the stories of those who stayed.

In the 1920's, the southern plains had been intensively farmed in order to make money during a rising wheat market. Then prices crashed, and a long drought followed. The soil hardened and started to blow. The "dusters", as they called the storms, continued for nearly ten years. Egan records the memories of people who stayed: roads blocked by huge soil drifts, coughing up black mucus, not being able to see your hand in front of your face at times, turning on car headlights in the middle of the day, radios shorting out because of the static, fence posts buried, and tying a rope to yourself before going out to the barn.

In 1933, President Roosevelt assigned Hugh Bennett as the director of a new agency first called the Soil Erosion Service, whose goal was to figure out a way to stabilize the soil. Bennett looked at local control, with all farming communities setting up a conservation district. Public funds would help build ponds and everyone would agree to follow strict conservation practices like rotating crops, letting the land go fallow, and stopping old methods of plowing.

A big dust storm in May 1934 started in the Dakotas and moved east. It dropped an estimated six thousand tons of soil on Chicago overnight and traveled on to Boston and New York where it was 1,800 miles wide. Streetlights in New York City

came on at noon. People at the top of the Empire State Building couldn't see Central Park. Ships at sea waited to come in to shore because they couldn't see, and soil fell on ships 300 miles out in the Atlantic Ocean.

By March of 1935, four years into the drought, soil had fallen from the sky 12 days in a row. The worst storm was yet to come. April 14, 1935 was later referred to as "Black Sunday." An estimated 300,000 tons of topsoil blew on that day. The wind picked up in the Dakotas and temperatures dropped. By the time the duster advanced into Kansas, it was 200 miles wide, 2,000 feet high, and darker than anyone had ever seen. It was noisy and people couldn't see or breathe without their goggles or masks.

Five days after Black Sunday, Bennett went before the senate to ask for more funding and a permanent agency. His timing could not have been more perfect. It was early afternoon in the middle of April and it was getting dark. Black clouds of soil from the west fell on the Capital. Within a day, Hugh Bennett got the funding and man-power he requested. More than 200,000 workers moved out to the plains to help landowners begin the task of re-establishing cover and planting trees and grasses to hold the soil.

This book is probably the one I have loaned out to the most people. The story is compelling. It seems almost like science fiction, but it actually happened. With the current state of industrialized, intensive farming practices, and more recent drought in the western states, it makes me wonder if something of this magnitude could happen again.

[The Worst Hard Time](#) is a book full of facts and figures, and also full of personal memories of the Dust Bowl era. Egan writes with great detail and empathy and creates a fantastic experience for the reader. It isn't a "feel good" book, but one that will give you a lot to think about. Look for it at your local library or call me if you'd like to borrow my copy!



Image source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/34/Dust-storm-Texas-1935.png>

## 2016 IAN/ICEC Awards

The 2016 IAN/ICEC Awards were given at Winterfest and at Spring IAN Conference. If recipients were not able to attend either of those, Naturalists were kind and delivered them to people. Congratulations to all the recipients!

### Aldo Leopold Environmental Education Award

*For Lifetime Achievement in EE Excellence and Leadership*

Miriam Patton



### Chris Holt Youth Environmental Education Award

*For an Outstanding EE Program for Youth or Conducted by Youth (Preschool-Grade 12)*

Justin Kinney



### "Ding" Darling Environmental Education Award

*For Outstanding EE Program or Event which Informs and Educates the General Public*

Quad City Pollinator Conference Planning Group



### Bohumil Shimek Environmental Educator Award

*For Outstanding Efforts by an Environmental Educator*

Becky Horton



### Sylvan Runkel Environmental Education School Award

*For Outstanding Whole-School EE Program*

Nevada Central Elementary Multi-Age Teachers and the Story County Conservation



### Outstanding Volunteer

Kaleb Kaster



**Outstanding Interpretative Print Media**

E Resources Group, Women Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN), and Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication at Iowa State University



**Outstanding Environmental Education Program (2 or less full-time equivalent naturalists)**

*For Excellence in EE Programming by an Agency or Institution*

Henry County Conservation



**Ada Hayden Conservation Education Award**

*For Outstanding Efforts to Educate About Preservation, Land Management, or Natural*

*Resource Conservation*

Polk County Conservation



**Outstanding Environmental Education Program (3 or more full-time equivalent naturalists)**

*For Excellence in EE Programming by an Agency or Institution*

Nahant Marsh Education Center





## IAN Summer Workshop 2017

August 2 – 4

Hosted by Jackson County Conservation

### Wednesday, August 2

Noon	Meet at the Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63 <sup>rd</sup> Street, Maquoketa.
12:00 – 1:00	Learn about the Iowa DNR trumpeter swan reintroduction program with captive swans and tour nature center.
1:30 – 4:00	Tour Maquoketa Caves State Park. Caving, hiking and have all your geology related questions answered by Dale Easley, geology professor at Loras College!
4:00 – 6:00	Head to South Sabula Lake Park. Clean up from caving, set up camp and relax.
6:00 – 7:00	Supper
7:30 p.m.	Evening program – TBD

### Thursday, August 3

8:30 a.m.	Breakfast at campground
9:00 – 11:30	Learn how to paddle Clinton CCB's 29-foot 14-passenger Voyageur canoes!
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 3:30	Mini mussel blitz with Scotty Gritters, Iowa DNR wildlife biologist. Aquatic macro invertebrate ID with Jackie Gautsch, Iowa DNR biologist.
3:30 – 4:30	Clean up and free time
4:30 – 6:30	Dutch oven cooking demonstration with Doug Gonner of the Iowa Prairie Rose Dutch Oven Society and supper.
7:00 pm	Campfire

### Friday, August 4

7:00 – 9:00	Breakfast. Break camp.
9:30 – Noon	Birding at Green Island and wild edibles at Bellevue State park OR outdoor rock climb at Mississippi Palisades in Savanna, IL (Additional cost for climbing is \$10/person.)

### Workshop Details:

Workshop Fee: \$15

Meals: \$25 (includes 2 suppers, 1 lunch and 2 breakfasts)

Camping: free at South Sabula Lake Park, 1516 South Ave, Sabula Iowa. Electricity at all sites. Modern restrooms and shower house on site. Tents or campers welcome.

**Summer IAN Workshop  
August 2 – 4, 2016  
Jackson County Conservation**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

(Please indicate if this is a new e-mail address or you need to be added to the listserv.)

**Please Register me for the following pre-workshop session:**

_____ Iowa DNR Trumpeter Swan Tour, 12:00-1:00 p.m.	FREE
_____ Maquoketa Caves State Park Tour, 1:30-4:00 p.m.	FREE
_____ Rock Climbing at Mississippi Palisades in Savanna, IL	\$10

**Meals (Please check all that apply.)**

**Wednesday Dinner:**

Meat \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie \_\_\_\_\_ (Please check one.)

**Thursday Breakfast:**

Meat \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday Lunch:**

Meat \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday Breakfast:**

Meat \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Dietary Needs:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenses:**

Workshop Fee (Required)	\$15.00
Meals (includes 2 suppers, 1 lunch and 2 breakfasts)	25.00
Rock Climbing	10.00
Late registration fee after July 21	5.00

**Please make checks payable to: IAN Treasurer**

Pre-workshop Total \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Payment Form to:**

Meal Total \_\_\_\_\_

**Emily Herring**

Workshop and Membership Total \_\_\_\_\_

**IAN Workshop Coordinator**

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

**2349 233rd Street**

**Marshalltown, IA 50158**

*Please contact the workshop coordinator, Emily Herring, at [eherring@marshallcountya.gov](mailto:eherring@marshallcountya.gov) or 641-844-2833 with any additional questions. If your payment will not arrive by the registration deadline, please let Emily know by calling or emailing. If your registration form is not received by the deadline, you will be charged the \$5 late fee. No exceptions. If you cancel after the deadline, some or all of the fee will be kept.*



Like us on Facebook!



Visit us at [www.iowanaturalists.org](http://www.iowanaturalists.org).

### IAN Executive Committee



***President***

**Karen Johlas-Szalkowski**  
Warren County Naturalist II  
15565-118th Ave.  
Indianola, IA 50125  
515-961-6169 Ext 206

[karenjohlas-szalkowski@warrencb.org](mailto:karenjohlas-szalkowski@warrencb.org)

***Secretary***

**Michelle Berns**  
Muscatine County Naturalist  
3300 Cedar St  
Muscatine, IA  
563-264-5922

[mberns@co.muscatine.ia.us](mailto:mberns@co.muscatine.ia.us)

***Vice President***

**Amy Loving**  
Ed Coordinator, Nahant Marsh  
4220 Wapello Ave.  
Davenport, IA 52802  
563-336-3373

[aloving@eicc.edu](mailto:aloving@eicc.edu)

***Workshop Coordinator***

**Emily Herring**  
Marshall County Naturalist  
2349-233rd Street  
Marshalltown, IA  
614-844-2833

[eherring@marshallcountya.gov](mailto:eherring@marshallcountya.gov)

***Treasurer***

**Victoria DeVos**  
Plymouth County Naturalist  
PO Box 1033  
Hinton, IA 51024  
712-947-4270

[vdevos@co.plymouth.ia.us](mailto:vdevos@co.plymouth.ia.us)



### ***Naturalists***

Planting the seed of environmental stewardship by communicating the meanings and relationships in natural, cultural, and historical resources.