



The Web

Newsletter of the Iowa Association of Naturalists
Summer 2020

Virtual Learning

Like most environmental education programs in the state, as of early March, Dickinson County had field trips planned, spring and summer programs ready to go and camps filling quickly with campers.

Then the unexpected happened, and our entire community, state, country and world changed.

When the Dickinson County Nature Center temporarily closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff didn't want to simply cancel programs and close the doors. We knew that people would still be looking for a way to learn and engage with nature, and we decided that we could still provide a venue for that online.



Online education

First, we wanted to provide something for the families looking for educational and entertaining ways to fill their time when school was not in session. That meant providing learning opportunities online each weekday.

Our environmental educators Bryanna Kuhlman and Ashley Hansen put together a plan of videos that they could film at home, while social distancing at the Dickinson County Nature Center and outside at our parks. Topics ranged from glacial landmarks to animal myths to butterflies, bats, and moths.

Some of the topics are general, and some are timely for the season. Leading up to Geologists Day in April, Kuhlman did a series about rocks and minerals, and Hansen made a video about the Lyrids meteor shower prior to its peak.

Utilizing phones and computers, videos were filmed and uploaded to Google Drive so that I could access them and use simple editing software to put together full videos and sometimes add photo overlays or definitions on screen. On a Mac platform, iMovie is a simple and free program to use, and Animotica is an inexpensive option that has worked well for us on PCs.

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Virtual Learning, cnt.

Posting online

Once the videos were created, we have offered people several ways to view them.

-Facebook: Each video is uploaded to Facebook and also includes more activities or ways to delve deeper in the description. The naturalists might have a challenge --- like making a craft to go along with the lesson, and then we will include a link to instructions or to the template on our website. We also link previously written blogs on our website that have information that goes beyond what is included in the video.

-Instagram: Each video is also uploaded to Instagram on the same day that it is scheduled to come out on Facebook. Instagram and Facebook have different audiences, so this allows more coverage.

-YouTube: Although our YouTube channel does not get many views, it is the way that our WordPress website allows videos to be linked. So we upload to YouTube and then use that link on our website's videos page.

-Website: In addition to linking each video on the Dickinson County Conservation Board's website's videos page, the videos are also utilized in blogs about the topic. People learn in different ways, so by providing written and video options, you're more likely to reach more people.

Virtual programs

In addition to providing daily education, staff had a hard time just giving up the programs that had been planned for months.

Kuhlman and Hansen brainstormed how to adjust educational programs and make them virtual. Options included going live on Facebook for Storytime with a Naturalist and a question-and-answer session for the Earth Day Celebration. It also meant pre-recording Nature Tots and Family Nature Night so families could participate even if people couldn't gather together.



Staying flexible

Video views have ranged from several hundred to thousands, and on the third week of providing daily content, Dickinson County Conservation's videos had almost 9,000 views.

In a "Who We Are" video series spotlight on our educators, Kuhlman and Hansen talked about the need to stay flexible in education.

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, and it is a way that our educators have never had to be flexible before. However, staying flexible, learning as we go and trying our best to provide education in unconventional ways has helped Dickinson County Conservation to stay in the public's eye, to stay relevant and to keep fulfilling its mission of fostering an appreciation of our natural world, even when we can't reach people in person.

Name that Nature Center

Submit guesses to Michelle Berns at
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!

Last newsletter's winner: *Karen Phelps*
Winter 2020 correct answer:
Mahaska County
Environmental Learning Center



Nature Craft: DIY Terrarium



Materials:

- Clean, clear glass/plastic container with lid
- Small stones, rocks, or pebbles
- Charcoal granules
- General potting soil
- Small plants (ferns, ivy, violets, pothos, moss, etc.)
- Spray bottle with water
- Spoon or stick

Instructions:

1. Mix the small rocks with charcoal and place a 1-inch layer at the bottom*
2. Add approximately 3 inches of soil, depending on your container
3. Using the spoon or stick, dig small pockets in the soil
4. Insert the plants in the pockets, leaving space between plants
5. Firmly pack soil around the plants. Make sure all roots are buried
6. Mist plants and soil lightly
7. Place the lid on the container and seal
8. Set near a sunny window and watch it grow!

*If you do not have charcoal, add an extra inch of small rock for drainage

Decorate it!

Try adding natural elements like small pine cones, rocks, bark, twigs, or small figurines to enhance your terrarium.

Make sure that the materials used are not subject to mold

Announcements

Iowa PBS & Science Phenomenon

In 2019, Iowa PBS was awarded an Iowa DNR REAP-CEP grant to advance our work in developing the Iowa Science Phenomena website. As part of that grant, Iowa PBS will be working with Iowa Naturalists, Conservationists and Environmental Science Educators to develop informational resources about NGSS-phenomena best practices for conservation/environmental education professionals.



Iowa PBS is looking to partner with Iowa naturalists to learn more about their needs related to phenomena-based instruction and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). This will include 2-3 informal video conference meetings with Iowa PBS staff. As a result of these meetings, Iowa PBS plans on developing supporting resources for Iowa naturalists as they work to include phenomena-based practices in their environmental education activities. To learn more about phenomena and Iowa PBS's Science Phenomena project, visit Iowa Science Phenomena Naturalist Overview.

If interested, please contact Tiffany Morgan, Iowa PBS Instructional Media Coordinator.

Office phone: 515-725-9712

Email: tiffany.morgan@iowapbs.org.

Call for Presenters!

Do you have a project or skill you want to share? Or do you know someone who would be a great presenter? Contact ExCom at iowanaturalists.org@gmail.com

Name that Creature!



Last newsletter's creature was a female Hooded Merganser!

James Wiebler from Nahant Marsh guessed it correctly!

Submit guesses to Michelle Berns at mberns@co.muscatine.ia.us.

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

Naturalist Spotlight: Abbey Conrad & Amy Campagna

Hello IAN! My name is Abbey Conrad and I am the new Naturalist/Park Ranger for Calhoun County Conservation. Prior to accepting my position with Calhoun County, my experiences were interning for Story County Conservation and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). I worked for Iowa State University's Herbarium until 2014 when I graduated with my B.S. degree in Animal Ecology. From there I went on to work for Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica as a Biological Lab Technician, and then was offered a position with the USDA working with Bovine, Porcine, and Aquatics.

A majority of my background is in aquatics and plant identification. I enjoy learning about new organisms and native plant species every chance I get. If you ask my niece, she'll tell you that I'm truly, "the frog lady." I'm not sure whether to take that as a compliment or a realization that I do tend to enjoy the little guys. If you ask my husband, he'll tell you I'm more of an ecologist because I'm truly fascinated in systems and how they can work independently or together.

Personally, this last year was a bit of a rollercoaster as my husband took a new job in April, we got married in September, and I accepted my position here in Calhoun County, so we also added a move into the mix. When I'm not at work, I enjoy spending time with my husband, Josh, and our two Labrador retrievers, Ben-Black, and Copper-Chocolate. I feel extremely grateful for all the naturalists who have stepped in to help me get up and running, since we haven't had a county naturalist in 10 years. My current project here has been getting my aquariums and tanks set up for the animals I plan to obtain. Since I have mostly an aquatic background, we're sticking with what I know, turtles, frogs, fish, salamanders, and I'm learning all there is about snakes. My hope is to be able to learn about and expand to other animals for my programming, but for now, my resources support the animals I have listed and I'm thankful for this.



Prior to joining the team at Pottawattamie Conservation, I was the Education Coordinator for Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, an organization dedicated to rehabilitating sick, injured, and orphaned native wildlife. Because most of those animals are in need of help because of things people do, public education is a big part of their mission. I spent a lot of time in schools and in the community educating youth and adults about native wildlife and ecosystems. I had the great privilege of taking care of some very special animals, too. I was also an Educator for Fontenelle Forest where I facilitated nature-based programs for a lot of fun, energetic young people.

I live on a small acreage just across the Missouri river in Nebraska where my husband and I raised our three children, now all in college, and care for a menagerie of farm animals. I'm excited about working in Iowa's unique county conservation system and look forward to connecting with all the great people and resources through IAN!

Grapevine News

Cecilia Hagen from Iowa County Conservation got married on a beautiful February day, and is now Cecilia Dirks.

Congratulations!



Upcoming Conferences

Dear IAN Members,

It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we announce the cancellation of this summer's IAN workshop. We know that this will come as an enormous disappointment. This is not a decision we have taken lightly. I encourage your region/district to do something whether it is a zoom naturalist party or a professional development meeting in your region. We need each other and nature more than ever currently. The uncertainty of all this is wearing on us.

Questions abound regarding summer camp, public programs, etc. If you plan to do an event in your region post it on the IAN Listserv. In Iowa's West Region, we've been doing some naturalist zoom parties. Our hope is to socially distance ecosystem frolic in late summer. Stay healthy friends and keep connected with your people! If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me!

Please save the dates for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 IAN!

Stay well,

Brianne Blom

bblom@co.clay.ia.us

Save the Dates!

August 5-7 Summer IAN:

Lee County CANCELED

We encourage YOU to organize something digital in your district/region instead (Zoom, professional development meeting, etc.)

November 4-6 Fall IAN:

Indian Creek Nature Center, Cedar Rapids

March 17-19, 2021 Spring IAN:

Ringgold County

July 26- 29, 2021 Midwest Environmental Education Conference (MEEC)

Luther College in Decorah, Iowa

November 3-5, 2021 Fall IAN:

Woodbury County

Overcoming Fear in Nature

Abbey Conrad, Calhoun County Conservation

Overcoming fear in/of nature can be a truly positive and uplifting thing! I'm currently working on a fear myself (the fear of snakes!) and actually just became the proud mamma of a 3-foot long by 1-inch round male fox snake. I named him after the shapeshifting and trickery God, Loki, from Norse Legends.

He is MUCH, MUCH bigger than what I wanted to start with, since I myself am fearful of snakes. I got Loki recently and so far I have been able to handle him a handful of times on my own...but I can't bring myself to not wear gloves when handling him at this point. I think a certain level of comfort needs to be established before I'll be ready to go all in and handle him bare handed.

I'm sure there are readers and/or kids out there that are afraid of certain things in nature, (i.e. snakes, spiders, lizards, frogs, etc.) that may get some use out of the idea that nature is not all sunshine and rainbows. The power of fear is something that is embedded into a lot of people and sometimes that fear is never addressed because they are so afraid to look into the topic. I thought this would be insightful to share and may help others to overcome their fear in nature.



There's a lot going on in the Little Sioux Watershed!

Amy Crouch, Little Sioux Project Director, The Nature Conservancy

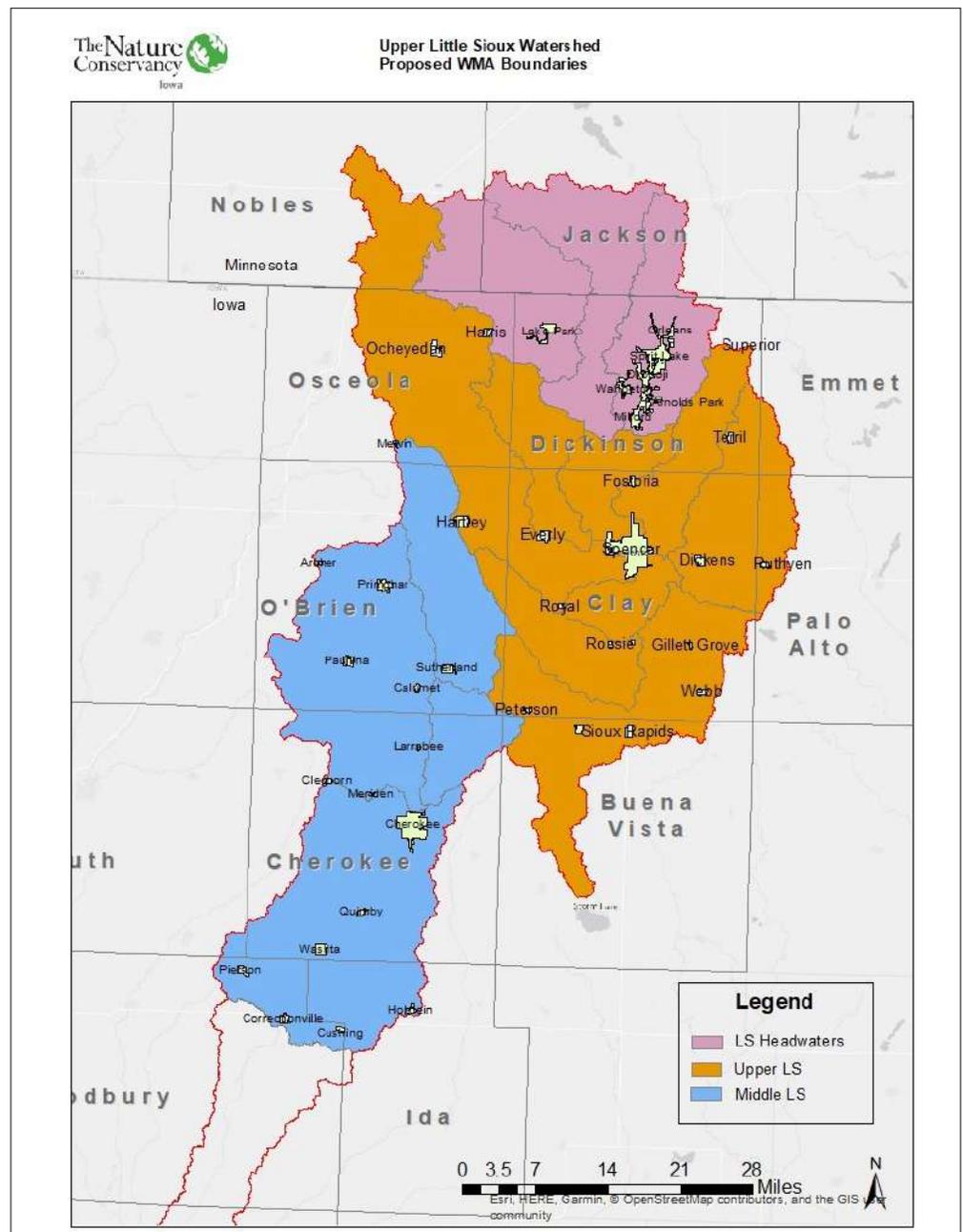
In 2007, local and regional conservation professionals, landowners, colleges, and non-profit organizations came together to develop a shared approach to managing the unique cultural heritage, native prairie remnants, streams, and wetlands in northwest Iowa's Little Sioux Watershed.

Using The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Conservation Action Planning framework, they developed a comprehensive, adaptive plan addressing the area's natural and cultural resources. Once the planning process concluded, the group decided to stay together to collaborate on implementation.

With a mission of "Working together to promote a healthy, productive, and beautiful Little Sioux River Watershed", this formerly loose network came together as the Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership (LSWCP) in 2014. The partnership exists to address the challenges impacting the Little Sioux watershed while maintaining balance between working landscapes, cultural resources, and nature with respect for private property rights and all who live, work, and play here.

For the past five years, the LSWCP has been cooperatively targeting conservation efforts for the greatest financial and ecological impact, facilitating the Little Sioux Grazing Network, and educating landowners on land management techniques throughout the watershed. Most recently, the partnership has become the lead in helping form Watershed Management Authorities in the Little Sioux Watershed.

A Watershed Management Authority (WMA) is a mechanism for cities, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other stakeholders to cooperatively engage in watershed planning and management. A WMA, according to Iowa legislation passed in 2010, may assess and reduce flood risk, assess and improve water quality, monitor federal flood risk planning and activities, educate watershed residents regarding flood risks and water quality, and allocate money made available to the Authority for purposes of water quality and flood mitigation.



Little Sioux Watershed- cnt.

A few of the many benefits of planning and working on a watershed scale including fostering collaboration between non-traditional partners, leveraging funding resources and technical expertise, coordinating upstream investments for downstream benefits, and coordinating locally led projects and investments.

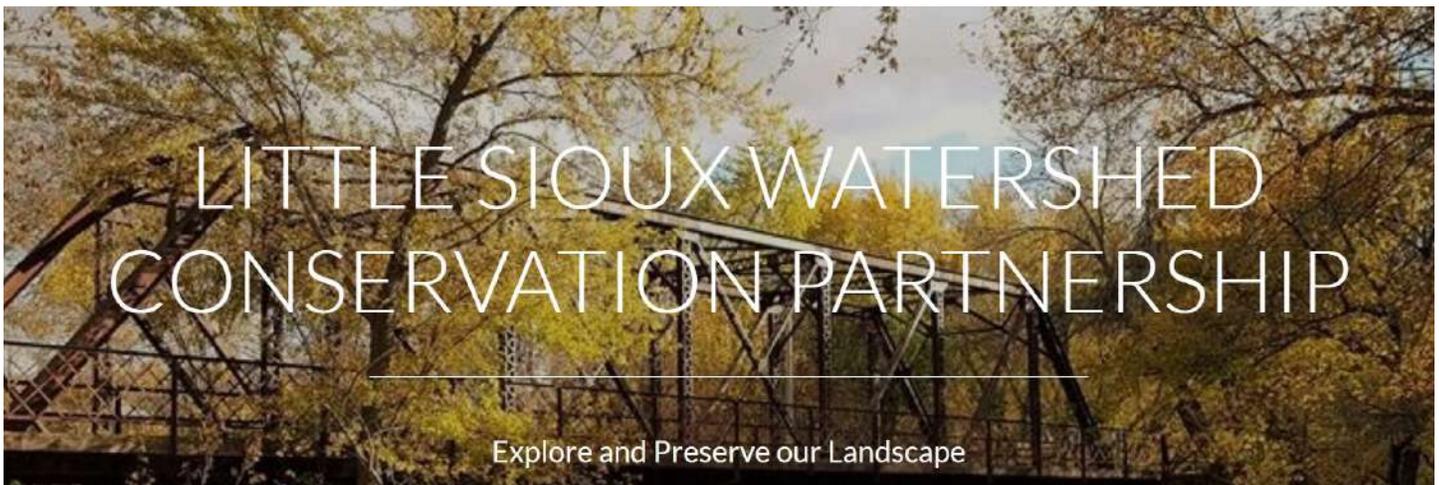
The Little Sioux Headwaters Coalition WMA in Dickinson County was officially formed in 2019, independent of the current LSWCP activities; however, members of the LSWCP are on the technical advisory team that helps with watershed-wide planning and advises practice implementation. The Coalition is currently seeking funding to complete a watershed plan assessing priorities, needs, and desires of local citizens.

We are currently working on the formation of the Upper Little Sioux WMA in Clay, Dickinson, Buena Vista, Emmet, Palo Alto, Osceola, and O'Brien counties. Once a participating entity has agreed to take over stewarding the process forward, we will move farther down river and begin bringing partners together to form the Middle Little Sioux WMA which includes O'Brien, Cherokee, Ida, Plymouth, and Woodbury counties. Since water does not follow man-made boundaries, portions of individual counties may be in multiple watersheds.



Conservation agencies and organizations like the LSWCP are perfectly poised as technical resources for WMAs. We have the experience and expertise to help guide decreased flood impacts and improved water quality without building levees or adding storm sewers. Our current work managing and restoring wildlife habitat and green spaces should be the foundation of water quality and quantity work in the state.

For more information, please check out the LSWCP website at www.lswcp.org, the DNR WMA page at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Watershed-Management-Authorities>, or contact Amy Crouch at acrouch@tnc.org.





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Naturalists

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