

The Web

Newsletter of the Iowa Association of Naturalists Summer 2025



*Angie Auel (with daughter Stella)
Bremer County*

My Archery Experience Angie Auel, Bremer County Conservation

This year I have been reflecting on my archery experience through our National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) season. My archery experience started back 23 years ago in Guthrie Center, IA at Springbrook Conservation Education Center. I met this wonderful lady, Anne Riordan, who taught me how to teach kids archery. I would have never guessed where that experience leads me this many years later.

In bout 2006, another rock star naturalist, Victoria DeVos, was talking about this NASP program in the schools. It really piqued my interest and so I took the training to become a Basic Archery Instructor (BAI). Then that turned into becoming a Basic Archery Instructor Trainer (BAIT). Now, I can teach teachers and coaches to instruct NASP in the physical education programs.



2008 Diagonal Archery PE Class

January 2008, I have a six-month-old baby and pregnant with another, when I decide I need something more to do. My husband, Jason, and I start one of the first NASP archery teams in the state of Iowa in the smallest school district at Diagonal Community School. We had 15 archers shoot at the first ever state event. We added elementary the next year with 31 archers and take our first trip to nationals in Louisville, KY on Mother's Day weekend. Our team grew again to 44 archers the following year and we take another trip to nationals. Then, we leave our team in the hands of great coaches as our family moves to northeast Iowa.

The school year begins in 2012, and we have another baby. My husband thinks it's a great idea to start yet another archery team. In my mind- no more babies, no more archery teams! We now have a baby, preschooler, and kindergartener. By January 2013, we have the first Wapsie Valley Archery Team

with 62 archers. In the 13 years of archery at Wapsie Valley, adding up all the archers each year, we have had 1,234 archers on our team, been to nationals eight different times with individuals or the team, and have had life time friendships made. We are gearing up to take another trip to nationals this year with our high school team.

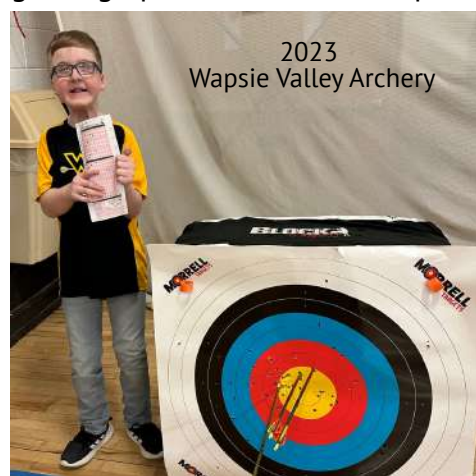


2009
Diagonal Archery



2013
Wapsie Valley Archery

I love archery because anyone can do it. I have seen kids with all different disabilities shoot a bow. We have had to talk an archer off the ledge because the whistle was too loud, body hug an archer to keep them from hurting others, and celebrated when they finally hit the target at 15 meters. Archery has taught kids how to concentrate in school and have patience with others or their progress.



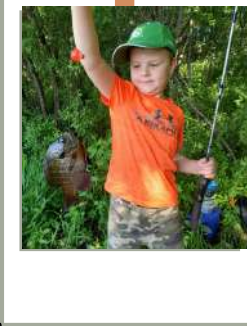
2023
Wapsie Valley Archery

Jason and I have helped many teams in NE Iowa start. I am a resource you can use to get archery started in your county, email me. I am also a school board member, so I can help tell the administrative side of archery.

Then you also have Victoria and Anne who are great voices for archery in the state. If you are the head coach, it does take a lot of time, but I had little kids through the years, so it is manageable. Being a county naturalist is a great way to get involved with NASP. Even if you just become BAIT certified you can help get archery into your PE classes. I encourage you to try it out! You will not regret watching your archers grow into amazing outdoor adults!



Got Photos?



We want 'em!

IAN ExCom and the Website Management are looking to freshen up our webpage with new photos! Have some great shots of environmental education in action?

Send them to Chelsea at crowcliffe@mitchellcoia.us or put them on the IAN Member Google Drive - there is a folder there titled "2025 Website Photos" where you can directly upload your favorite pics.

What types of photos do we need?

People having fun outdoors at your programs, parks, & trails!

Gorgeous native landscapes!

Selfies of you guiding folks on your favorite trail!

Cool critters!

Silly (or not) pics of us Stars doing what we do best - sharing our love of the natural world!

Can't wait to see all your great photos



Kendall

Shout out to **Kendall Prehn** from Henry County for sharing photos!

Grant Update!

Victoria DeVos, Plymouth County &
Michelle Wilson, Iowa DNR REAP Coordinator



**CONSERVATION
EDUCATION
PROGRAM**

I was contacted by Michelle Wilson about a month ago with REAP CEP update.

Here is a synopsis of her communication:

She is in the final leg of the rulemaking process. At the June Natural Resource Commission Meeting she will ask them to approve the final and adopted rule for REAP CEP. She held public meetings in April/ May and received no comments, so there will be no change from the Notice of Intended Action.

After the NRC approves this, the Legislative Rule Committee will put this on the Iowa Administrative Bulletin and on the Committee's calendar for final approval. It looks like the final date of adoption and new administrative rule will be published and accessible in mid-August.

Enough with the legislative blah blah blah, now to the good stuff!

Once the new rules are published, we will be taking applications for 90 days. Michelle is thinking the grant due date will be in early November. For this grant cycle, we will likely only accept grants requesting more than \$10,000. After this grant cycle, things will look more like the "new normal". Once all of the ink is dry, I will make sure IAN members know what the grant process will look like.



Victoria



Michelle

Save the Dates!

IAN Workshop News:

Summer Workshop:

Clay & Dickinson Counties

August 6-8



Fall Workshop:

Nov 5-7

Scott County



Upcoming E.E./Interpretation Workshops:

Iowa DNR: Check their website for upcoming trainings and continuing education opportunities through their Fish IOWA, B.O.W., NASP, and other programs



ICEC: Check website for upcoming event



MEEC: November 13-15

"Nature Connects Us All"

Illinois <https://eeai.net/annual-conference/>



NAAEE: "Forward Together" Online conference

Nov 3-6

<https://conference.naaee.org/>



NAI: November 11-14, 2025

"Virginia Beach is for Interpreters"

Virginia Beach, Virginia



Grapevine News

- From Cassandra "Critter Cass" Barbosa (Montgomery County) "My daughter was born in February! Her name is Autumn Rain and we call her 'possum (please note it's short for OPOSSUM 😊)"
- Sarah Davelaar has taken a part-time position with Sioux County and is now the Conservation Department Attendant. She will help our entire department in needs such as media, trail design, grant writing, mapping, website, and still support the environmental education department.
- Emily Ostrander is taking Sarah's position as full-time Naturalist for Sioux County Conservation.
- Cari Nicely, American Gothic House Center Administrator, received the NAI Heartland Region 2025 Excellence in Interpretive Support. Congratulations Cari!
- Plymouth County Conservation is excited to share that they hired a part time naturalist!!! Her name is Morgan Sauer. She is from Lismore, MN. You can expect to meet her at a future workshop.
- Katie Krueger has joined the Polk CC education team as the new assistant naturalist. Katie recently graduated from Drake University majoring in Sustainability and Resilience and Rhetoric, Media and Social Change. She Spent last summer as a Seasonal Naturalist for three Rivers Park District in Victoria MN and the prior summer with Polk CC as an AmeriCorps Naturalist.

Thanks for letting us all share and support you in the field and at home. Keep up the amazing work, Constellation!



Cassandra



Emily



Sarah



Morgan



Cari



Katie



Summer IAN Workshop 2025



**Clay Co. Conservation, Dickinson Co. Conservation
and Lakeside Laboratory**
Wednesday - Friday, August 6-8, 2025

Lakeside Laboratory 1838 IA-86, Milford, IA 51351
Scharnberg Campground, 3430 145th Ave Everly IA

Wednesday, August 6th - Lakeside Lab Learning Sessions

Option 1: Lakeside Lab Tour and CLAMP

Cost: FREE

Time: 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Category: I or II

Location: Waitt Hall

Presenters: Ashley Scheve, Education Coordinator at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory and Megan Vigdal, Environmental Lab Analyst at State Hygienic Laboratory

Cooperative Lakes Area Monitoring Project (CLAMP) Join us to learn more about Lakeside Lab's volunteer-ran CLAMP program! CLAMP started in 1999 and is the longest running lake monitoring program in Iowa. Participants will learn about CLAMP and then experience being a CLAMP-ologist themselves. We will go out on boats to take data measurements and collect samples from West Okoboji Lake, and do a little sightseeing on the lake while we're at it!



Option 2: Plant Preservation Workshop

Cost: \$10

Time: 1:00-4:00 PM

Category: I or II

Location: Waitt Hall

Finding Satisfaction with simple tools: the plant press, paper and glue.

In our age of molecular sequencing, the late Renaissance techniques of pressing, drying, and mounting plant specimens still have relevance. During a hands-on workshop, discover how such relatively low-tech methods assist becoming better acquainted with the botanical world as well as advancing scientific understanding.



After . . . meet back at Waitt Hall Building to depart for Scharnberg Campground Shelter
3430 145th Ave

Everly Iowa

6:30 PM - Supper at the Shelter

Questions? Email Raina Genaw at rainagenaw@gmail.com

Thursday, August 7th -

7:20 - 8:20 AM Breakfast at Scharnberg Shelter

Boji Spudz Donuts, yogurt, granola and fruit

8:30 AM Leave Scharnberg Shelter Campground - Divide in two groups and Carpool

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM Glacier Landmark Tour -

Presenters: Danika Cox and Britney Snell, Dickinson Co. Conservation

Category: I or II

Take a tour of the glacier land features that make the Iowa Great Lakes region like nowhere else! We will divide into two groups and carpool to different locations throughout Dickinson County. While on this tour you will get the chance to hike around a kettle hole, walk on an esker, explore a knob-and-kettle terrain, touch glacier erratic's, and trek around a groundwater-fed fen! Wear shoes that can get wet/muddy. Be prepared for a moderate amount of hiking and limited bathroom access. Lunch will be at the Maser Monarch Lodge (2785 Nature Center Road Okobojo IA) for McCreary's Taco Bar.



3:00 – 4:30 PM Free Time

Option 1 - Arnolds Park - Try the Nutty Bar at the Nutty Bar Stand! **Option**

2 - Abby Gardner Museum - Docent will give a short tour 4-4:30 pm **Option**

3 - Maritime Museum - Tour on your own

503 Terrace Park Blvd., Milford IA 51351

5:30 PM Supper, Trivia & Social Night @ West O - Pizza

Lodging

Scharnberg Park Cabins and Campsites are already reserved for IAN workshop attendees free of charge. You can bring a camper, tent, or stay in a bed at one of the Scharnberg Park cabins. You might be sharing a bed with someone in a cabin. Attendees must choose a Scharnberg Park housing option on reservation if they are planning to stay at Scharnberg Park.

Boy cabin: Maple accommodates up to 4 people with a full-size bed and full size hide-a-bed

Girl Cabin: Oak Cabin This cabin has 3 queen size beds, full size bed and two fold out couches making it possible to sleep 10-12 people.

Girl Cabin: This cabin has a queen size bed, full size bed, full-size futon and full-size hide-a-bed making it possible to sleep 8 people.

Tent Camping or camper- Please bring your tent or camper. If they want a camping spot each spot can have 4 tents or one camper 2 tents Campsite 33- tent or camper, Campsite 35- tent or camper, Campsite 37- tent or camper Campsite 39- tent or camper, Campsite 40- tent or camper, Campsite 41- tent or camper

Needs To Bring If staying at Cabins:

QUIET HOURS are from 10:30 P.M. to 6:30 A.M. No exceptions.
Violators will be asked to leave – Please be respectful!

- Complete bedding w/pillows, sheets, blankets, or sleeping bags
- All bath linens and toiletries
- Lawn chairs if desired
- Firewood may be purchased from park



Naturalists...

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

Visit us at www.iowanaturalists.org

Friday, August 8th - Need to be out of the cabin before Breakfast and the Sessions start



7:00 - 8:00 AM Breakfast Breakfast Boji Burrito

Healthy Option - Gluten Free tortilla with egg, shredded cheese and potato

Not Your Typical - egg, potatoes, queso, bacon and sausage

Farmers - egg, potatoes, shredded cheese and sausage gravy

**Need to be out of the cabin before Breakfast and the Sessions start*

8:30-9:30 AM General Session

Tools to keep you sane-Northwest Iowa Counseling

Category: V

Room: Scharnberg Park Shelter

Is field trip season too much to handle? Join this session for some rhings to keep in your memory took box to not go insane! Learn helpful information about burn out, and tips and tricks about still being YOU!



9:45 – 10:45 AM General Session

The Archaeology Roadshow with the Archaeologist Mark Anderson

Category: I

Room: Scharnberg Park Shelter

As a Naturalist, we always get that question “What is it?” From arrow heads and other broken chipped stone tools, the flakes from making them, pottery sherds, ground stone tools, and other evidence of humans past that modern folks find every day. Well, bring a small selection of artifacts (3-5) to quiz the archaeologist! This discussion will provide the information needed for a first shot at helping people understand what they have found.



10:45 AM Depart—comsider sticking around Okoboji for the Blue Water Festival!

****Come for work during the week and stay for fun on the weekend!**

Stay for the Blue Water Festival at Arnolds Park Preservation Plaza- August 9th, 9 AM- 2 PM

The Okoboji Blue Water Festival was founded in 2016 as a venue to promote clean water and natural resources advocacy in the Iowa Great Lakes. The festival has grown exponentially each year and is now regarded as the premier water quality event in Iowa.

Okoboji Blue Water Festival Concert Wallflowers will be the headline for the FREE concert at Arnolds Park Preservation Plaza on August 9th at 8pm.

Remember your reusable...

- dinnerware
- water bottle
- mug



Questions? Email Raina Genaw at rainagenaw@gmail.com

Meet Summer Workshop Host -



Brianne Blom



Dannika Cox



Britney Snell



Ashley Scheve

Thank you for hosting!



***Come for work during the week and stay for fun on the weekend!*

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Fresh Faces & Cherished Comrades - Naturalist Spotlight



Lisa Ralls - Winnebago County

Hi! My name is Lisa Ralls and I'm the Naturalist for Winnebago County. July 1st will mark 40 years since I began my job here, so I'm definitely one of the "old guard". I graduated from Iowa State University in 1985, with a Bachelor's Degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology, and a Minor in English. Ten years later, I went back to college and received my Master's Degree in Science Education from the University of Iowa. (Don't worry--once a Cyclone, always a Cyclone!) My first job right out of college was actually working jointly for both the Winnebago and Hancock County Conservation Boards. But, after 8 years, Winnebago County hired me on full-time. And, as they say, the rest is history...



Needless to say, I really enjoy my job, mostly because no two days are exactly alike. Whether it's setting up bat monitors in the field, educating senior citizens, helping kids find pond critters, or putting together our quarterly newsletter, there's always something fun to do each and every day!

Recently, I also helped establish Winnebago County's first nature center, which we were able to open up last summer! It's been challenging trying to turn a previously-empty building into a thriving education center. But, it's so nice to now have a facility that we can use to expand our educational offerings, and reach community members (even tourists) that we have not been able to reach before.

So, I invite all of you to come visit Winnebago County when you can. And, if you do, be sure to stop into the Hanson Nature Center and say hi! Since I still enjoy my job, and I'm not quite old enough for Medicare, I plan to be around for a few more years.

≡Welcome≡

Hello all! My name is Vanessa Hinners, and I am the new naturalist for Carroll County Conservation.

I just graduated from Iowa State University in December 2024 with a bachelor's degree in Animal Ecology with the option of interpretation. (Go Cyclones!) From a young age I have had a love for the outdoors as my family spent much of our free time enjoying the state parks near my hometown and I am so thankful that I can take that passion and turn it into a career.

Through high school and college, I was able to get many different opportunities in interpretation. In high school I got the opportunity to intern with a local wildlife rehabber, Saving our Avian Resources (SOAR). With them I not only got the chance to learn the rehabilitation side of things, but they also exposed me to education programs with some of their ambassador birds. During my time at ISU, I was given the chance to experience interpretation in many ways from classes to my last summer being the Ledges State Parks seasonal Interpreter for their 100th year. All these experiences and opportunities made my love and enjoyment for interpretation and outdoor education grow!

I am super excited to Join Carroll County's team as their naturalist!



Vanessa Hinners-Carroll County



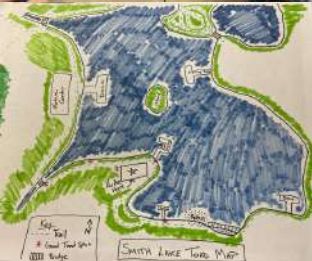
Julie

Toad-ally cute Nature Craft!

Toad Abode Craft: Julie Fosado, Kossuth County Conservation

One easy crowd-pleasing program I tend to do in early summer is making Toad Abodes! I always like to shine a light on critters that are often overlooked or underappreciated and toads seem to fit that bill. Toads are creatures of habit and if all their needs are met, they will stay in an area for weeks or months.

Generally, I do a short program describing toad habits, lifestyle, Iowa species, benefits, etc. I show a live toad and talk about their characteristics. Usually, I try to feed it a worm too because kids get excited about that. I emphasize that they eat a lot of bugs too and a toad in your garden can be a good thing. Making an abode encourages them to hang out in the area longer.



Then, we use paint markers (less messy than paint) for folks to decorate the outside of their terracotta pots. I also hand out shallow bowls or trays for folks to set near their abodes at home to serve as a water soaking area. These can be terracotta trays or shallow bowls or pie tins from your local thrift shop. Finally, while the pots dry, participants are encouraged to go on a self-guided toad hunt using a crude map to see if they can track down a live toad (if toads are found they are encouraged to be left at the park though).

When folks get home, they will need to find a good spot in the yard for their abode. I encourage them to find an area of damp dirt that is shady most of the day. Once they find a good spot they can add moist leaf litter to the inside of the abode. This will give the toad something to hide under when temps become too hot. Also, place the shallow saucer near the abode and press it into the dirt so it has a nice ramp to dive in from. Folks will need to keep the water clean all summer long. Finally, I usually mention to avoid using pesticides in yards. Toads are very sensitive.



Goal: To present folks with an engaging and environmentally friendly activity that provides a backyard habitat for toads.

Objectives: To understand how toads are beneficial to your backyard, and how the abode provides suitable habitat for a toad.

Materials: 6-inch Terra cotta pots, paint markers, shallow saucer or trays for toad soaking area (pie pans from thrift shops work great), pictures of Iowa toad species, map for toad hunt, live toad.

Name That Nature Center!



This one is a real head scratcher! There is still no correct guess for this nature center, originally posted in the Fall 2024 newsletter. Matt Crayne (Chickasaw County) threw in a guess, but was not correct.

Who will be the first to get bragging rights?

Send your guesses to Chelsea
(Mitchell County Naturalist)
Email: crowcliffe@mitchellcoia.us



Matt



NAI Heartland Region Awards

Cari Nicely, American Gothic House Administrator & IAN Member!



Cari

Excellence in Interpretive Support Cari Nicely, Administrator, American Gothic House

Nicely's work to revitalize and reimagine the American Gothic House's exhibits has significantly increased its reach and audience impact, inspiring deeper connections between visitors and the site.

The Heartland Region Awards recognizes outstanding achievements of NAI members and others working to advance the profession of interpretation. Recipients of these awards represent leaders in our profession, and we are honored to recognize these outstanding programs and professionals from the Heartland Region. The heartland Region awards program aligns with the National awards program and many recipients of Heartland Region awards go on to receive national recognition for their exceptional work in interpretation. The 2025 award recipients were acknowledged at the awards ceremony on April 25 in Montana.



Chelsea's Wild Bites: Milkweed - Not just for the Monarchs!

Chelsea Ewen Rowcliffe, Mitchell CCB



Oh Milkweed, you beautiful thing! I've always liked them; as a kid knowing their importance for Monarchs, playing with the fluff, and turning the empty pods into "angel wings". And now as a kid at heart - still loving on them for their crucial role in supporting Monarchs and many other pollinators, but also appreciating their gorgeous blossoms, diverse species, the absolutely intoxicating smell of Common Milkweed AND their many tasty parts (from the edible by us humans) species. For us here in Iowa, that really only means Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), and Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*), and, unless you have a really big patch of Showy (lucky you!), we're sticking with Common Milkweed.



But what about the Monarchs? We'd be taking their food! I assure you, there can be plenty of Milkweed for all of us - just follow a couple guidelines:

- If you see eggs or a caterpillars on a plant you're thinking of harvesting from - leave it - they were there first.
- Milkweed will, and actively does, regrow after being cut. So harvesting plant parts for your food might actually be helping the Monarchs by providing fresh, tender growth and later in the season. Just look at the roadsides after the mower or grater passes by!
- Only harvest from good-sized patches. If it's only a couple of plants, leave them for the butterflies.
- Don't be greedy! Harvest only what you can and will be able to use
- Practice gratitude and reciprocity - go back when the seeds are mature, harvest, and help them spread!



But what about the toxic compounds? Isn't that what keeps the caterpillars safe? Well, yes.

Milkweed does contain cardiac glycosides and other compounds, and those compounds do need to be denatured (by cooking or other treatments) for safe consumption. A few raw flowers sprinkled as a garnish is ok, though. And the flowers as flavoring are ok without cooking. But any "vegetable" part, including flower buds, need to be cooked. Do keep in mind, though, that even when cooked, everyone has different sensitivities to new foods (not just milkweed and not just wild), so sample small amounts at first before consuming larger portions.

But I heard Milkweed was bitter and had to be boiled in several changes of water before eating? Yeah, that's wrong. A case of mistaken identity that has been perpetuated. DOGBANE is extremely bitter and could be confused for Milkweed in the shoot stage. If you boil milkweed a couple times before eating it, it turns into a tasteless slimy green mush - a light steam, blanch, or sauté is really all that is needed to bring out some lovely flavors.

So, what parts can we eat?

- Shoots (in the Spring. This is when they would most easily be confused with Dogbane). Think similar to asparagus
- Leaves - I haven't really eaten them, but you can treat the young tender leaves like other greens.
- Flower Buds - they're like "wild broccoli!" (same structure!) - you can eat the leaves from the tender "bud tops" as whole vegetable, or the buds individually make tasty little capers
- Flowers - sooo gorgeous in scent, color, and flavor. They add an intense rose-pink color and fruity/floral flavor to vinegars, syrups, drinks, fun desserts (ice cream is fun!), or anywhere sweeter, floral flavors would work well.
- Pods - harvest when they are fairly small - usually around 2 inches - and the seeds and silks inside are still creamy white and juicy. They are yummy whole and fried up, or I like to treat them kind of like a stuffed mushroom.
- Silks - if the pod is too big and tough for eating, check the silks inside! If the seeds are still white and juicy, you can eat them and discard the pod. The flavor reminds me of a sweet corn in a way, with the texture of melted cheese.

***Reminder: Milkweed "vegetable" parts - shoots, leaves, buds, tender tops, pods,**

and silks - must be cooked to be safe.



Milkweed Broccoli

Enjoy any way you would broccoli or asparagus!

- small, tight green buds
- salt & fresh black pepper
- butter
- garlic

Inspect buds for caterpillars or eggs.

Blanch 30 seconds and then into an ice bath. Drain onto a towel. I like to sauté simply with some butter, salt & pepper, and garlic.

Pink Blossom Lemonade

I love the flowers in all sorts of recipes, but this is a quick, simple way to get a taste of Milkweed Summer!

- Milkweed Blossom Clusters
- Water
- Fresh Lemons
- Lemonade Mix or Homemade Lemonade

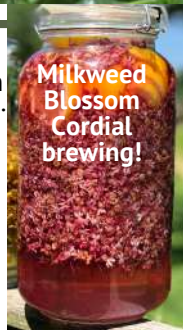
Gather 1/2 gal. of milkweed blossom clusters

Scan for any caterpillars or eggs. Place blossoms in a 1 gal. glass jar and cover with water. Let steep in the sun for several hours. Strain through a fine mesh strainer or cheese cloth. Use the milkweed blossom water/tea to make lemonade! Serve over ice and garnish with fresh lemon and a few milkweed flowers.

Stuffed Milkweed Pods

The pods are so fun because they can be eaten whole or as separate parts. You just have to catch them at the right time!

- Milkweed Pods (around 2" and with juicy white seeds & silk)
- Favorite stuffed mushroom or popper filling (cream cheese, shredded cheese, bacon/sausage, green onion, spicy peppers, garlic, herbs, etc.)



Inspect pods for any eggs or caterpillars. Cut into halves. Scoop out seeds & silks and set aside. Blanch the pods in salted water for about 2 min. Chop and sauté silks & seeds and add into stuffing mix. Schmeat stuffing mix into cooked pods and bake at 375 for about 15 min, or until stuffing is melty.

Reflecting on Mike Havlik's article "Living in a World of Wounds" from Spring 2025

Chelsea Ewen Rowcliffe, Mitchell County

When I read Mike's article on "Living in a World of Wounds", my heart had been feeling pretty heavy - recent political events mixed with late winter blues and just the everyday stresses of LIFE had been getting to me. I sent the newsletter out with a little bit of that heaviness attached - hoping you all were finding comfort in your friends & family, and reminding you all to reach out and check in on each other. Now, I have to say, I truly do have the *most incredible* partner, friends, and family for a support system, but there is just *something* about us Naturalists and environmental educators... I get my fix

Mike Havlik,
Dallas County

carpooling to meetings and workshops (seriously, SO many laughs Heidi, Michael, Angie, Liz!), but then there is the in-between.

One of those Naturalist friends read the article (and my email) and REACHED OUT! Heather Hucka said "let's meet up" and it was such a joy to us both! We are all busy with these passions that we are fortunate to enjoy as our professions, and then throw families, hobbies, communities, social groups, etc. on top of it, but y'all.... We just met for a beer at a local brewery for a little bit after work on a week night. It was doable! It could be coffee, a walk, a paddle, a play date with the kids (or fur kids), checking out some live music, or attending a program at another county together (how fun would that be!)- WHATEVER! But, it starts with reaching out and checking in on each other. Heather did that for me, and we made a promise to do it again, as well as check in on our "neighbor naturalists" - especially now that we have survived field trip season (to begin summer camp chaos HA!). I'm so grateful for this caring, intelligent, and fun Naturalist community of folks that I call friends. You get me. I'm not the "weird" one here. So, even if you aren't officially my neighbor, consider this the beginnings of me checking in on you. How are you? Do you need a Naturalist Chat? Share a funny story or can we solve a problem or plan a new program together?

Or maybe you can come hang out with me? I currently have the biggest tree in Iowa just down the road from my house - and that's pretty Neat.



Heather Hucka,
Cerro Gordo County
& Chelsea



Biggest Tree!



2025 IAN Executive Committee

Workshop Coordinator

Raina Genaw

rainagenaw@gmail.com

President

Michael Maas

Buchanan Co. Naturalist

1883 125th St

Hazleton, IA 50641

(319) 636-2617

MMaas@co.buchanan.ia.us



Raina

Chloe

Julie

Bobbi

Victoria

Michael

Secretary

Chloe Proffitt

Van Buren CCB

816 Franklin St.

Keosauqua, IA 52565

(319) 461-0662

cproffitt@vanburencounty.iowa.gov

Officer-At-Large

Julie Fosado

Kossuth County Naturalist

1010 250th St.

Algona, IA

(515) 295-2138

naturalist2@kossuthccb.com

Vice-President

Bobbi Donovan

Story County Naturalist

56461 180th Street

Ames, IA 50010

(515) 232-2516

BDonovan@storycountyiowa.gov

Treasurer

Victoria DeVos

Plymouth County Naturalist

P.O. Box 1033

Hinton, IA 51024

(712) 947-4270

VDeVos@plymouthcountyiowa.gov

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

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