

The Web

Newsletter of the Iowa Association of Naturalists

Fall 2025



Iowa's Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund: A Call to Educate & Engage

Adam Shirley, Iowa's County Conservation System (ICCS)



More than fifteen years ago, Iowa took a bold step to secure a future for its parks, trails, wildlife areas, and water quality. In 2010, nearly two-thirds of Iowa voters approved a constitutional amendment to create the Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. The amendment established a permanent, constitutionally protected fund to invest in Iowa's natural resources, but there was a catch: the Trust would only be funded when the state raised its sales tax by three-eighths of a cent.

More than a decade later, that funding trigger has yet to be activated. Despite overwhelming voter support, the Trust remains empty, and many of Iowa's outdoor spaces continue to face challenges from aging infrastructure, invasive budgets, and growing demand for outdoor recreation.

Adam Shirley, ICCS C.E.O.

Why the Trust Matters

If funded, the Trust would provide over \$230 million every year in funding for water quality improvements, soil conservation, wildlife habitat, trail development, and public park facilities. These investments would strengthen Iowa's reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation, boost local economies, and ensure future generations have access to clean water and vibrant landscapes.

Unlike general state appropriations, the Trust would be permanently protected. Funds would be distributed through a constitutionally defined formula to local governments, state agencies, and conservation organizations. This stability would allow Iowa to plan for large-scale projects and long-term stewardship rather than relying on year-to-year budgets. Importantly, the Trust is not just about outdoor recreation. It would also benefit Iowa's farmers and rural communities by helping to make conservation practices more practical and affordable. By investing in soil health, wetlands, and water quality projects, the Trust would provide farmers with additional tools and resources to protect their land while maintaining productive operations. These efforts would support agriculture while reducing runoff, improving water quality, and building resiliency for future generations.

Recent Challenges

In 2025, Iowa Senate Joint Resolution 6 (SJR-6) proposed repealing the Trust altogether. While the resolution did not advance, it highlighted a critical reality: public support and awareness cannot be taken for granted. Without consistent education and advocacy, the Trust's future remains uncertain—even as Iowa's conservation and agricultural needs continue to grow.

How Naturalists and Educators Can Lead

Iowa's naturalists, educators, and conservation professionals are the trusted storytellers of our natural heritage. Every interpretive program, field trip, or guided hike offers an opportunity to highlight the importance of dedicated conservation funding.

By weaving the Trust Fund's history and goals into your work, you can help Iowans see that their voices matter. More than 60% of voters approved the Trust in 2010—proof that Iowans value their natural resources. Reinvigorating that public support is essential for turning an empty promise into a funded reality. By celebrating Iowa's landscapes, sparking curiosity, and educating about the Trust, you can help re-ignite support that brings the Trust to life!

Consider weaving this story into public programs, educational materials, and community conversations at parks and nature centers. When people see the clear connection between healthy ecosystems, vibrant outdoor recreation, thriving farms, and a strong economy, they gain a deeper appreciation for this thoughtful, forward-looking vision. That understanding is what inspires advocacy and builds lasting support for funding the Trust.

A Bright Future

The Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund is more than a policy; it's a promise to future generations. It represents Iowa's shared desire for clean water, resilient farms, vibrant wildlife, and outdoor spaces where families can thrive.

Naturalists and educators have a special role to play in making that promise a reality. By celebrating Iowa's landscapes, sparking curiosity, and encouraging advocacy, you can help ensure that our state remains a place where nature and communities flourish together.



Grant Update!



CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Victoria DeVos, Plymouth County Naturalist &
REAP-CEP Committee Member



Victoria

The Conservation Education Program (CEP) is a key provision of the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Act of 1989. Annually, \$350,000 is allocated for formal and non-formal education projects and programs through competitively awarded grants and cooperative agreements. Applicants can apply for funding that supports hands on interactive types of educational experiences like workshops, trainings, field trips, classroom activities, or passive education experiences (ie. interpretive or wayside signs, brochures or video programming, education center exhibits).

After a loooooooooooooooooooooong wait, REAP CEP is now accepting grant requests for larger projects. Large grant awards are not to exceed \$80,000 per request. Large grant awards require a minimum of 33 percent matching funds either as an in-kind or cash match.

Here is the link <https://iowadnr.slideroom.com/#/login/program/85956>

Applications are due November 17th.

The next cycle will be accepting smaller requests, and those grants should be due in February. I'm not sure of the dates quite yet, but I will let you know as soon as I do.

For more information on REAP Conservation Education Program Grants please go to:

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/programs-services/resource-enhancement-protection-reap/reap-funding-opportunities>

There is a helpful PDF on that page with more info about REAP CEP criteria. We will only be taking applications for the larger grants during this interim grant cycle.

Let me know if you have any questions. Hope to see your grant come across my screen soon!

Grapevine News

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

Sarah

Emily

Jill

Christina

Heather

Michael

Angus

Jess

Paige

Emma

- Sioux County Conservation has had a shift in our environmental education department. **Sarah Davelaar** has moved to a different position in our conservation board and is now Conservation Department Assistant. **Emily Ostrander** is our new Naturalist.

- **Christina Roelofs** (Shelby Co/IDNR): Kid's say the darndest things...5 and 6 year old group. When we hike we always take a break at the bathroom and playground for a while. We were ready to go and there was a little girl taking forever in the bathroom. One of my volunteers went in to check on her and then came out and reported she needed help wiping. I went in there told her I could not do that and she needed to do it herself. She responded with, "But I can't see back there!" I told her nobody could. She asked what to do and I told her. She goes "How do I know when I I'm done?" I said "you look at the toilet paper and when it's clean you're good." I could hear her messing around for a while and then announced she was done and flushed. As she was flushing she asked me if I wiped myself. I fought hard to not laugh and told her, that "yes, I do wipe myself". For any Adam Sandler fans out there, all I could think of was a quote from "Big Daddy"!

- **Paige Owings** (Clinton Co.): We were able to rescue a great horned owl from a cattle pasture. We nicknamed it "Angus" and when I went home I told me 2 1/2 year old daughter about him. She loves to hear about Mommy's work! Then the next day when she was asking me about him, she accidentally called him "anus". **Michael Granger** (Clinton Co.): Here is photo of the owl rescue. Look close - We could not find the owl until the cows in the back ground started "Roaring" like dinosaurs (apparently cows don't like owls). They then cornered it along a fence line until we rescued it. The owl was terrified and easy to capture. Thank you cows for making our job a little easier!

- **Jill Schmidt** (Clinton Co.) When out on the Mississippi River, I asked the kids if they knew where the MR started...a boy raised his hand and answered, "right behind Wendy's"! To him, that's where he sees the river start. It was a great reminder why we provide opportunities for people to explore outside their small individual bubble of a world.

- **Heather Hucka** (Cerro Gordo Co.) I got to explore one of my favorite habitats (caves) with a group of high schoolers, one being my daughter... AND help a new naturalist grow in their profession at the same time. Our job is truly one to be thankful for!!!! Especially when we can collaborate to make AMAZING opportunities happen. **Emma Jacobs** (Clinton Co.) - Heather don't forget you saved me from my panic attack in the devils butt crack!

Jess Lancial (West Des Moines Parks and Rec.) My Rockhounds camp - kids obsessed with rocks and can spend an entire two days literally thrilled to look at and learn about rocks!

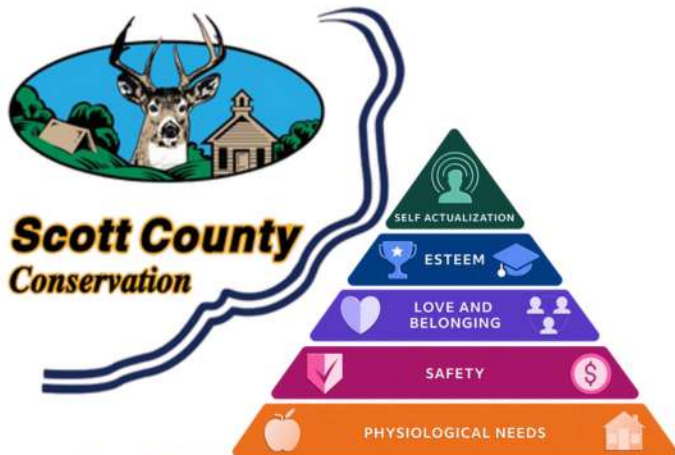
Save the Dates!

IAN Workshop News:

FALL Workshop:

Nov 5-7, Scott County

"Tilden on Maslow: Back to the Basics"



Interpreting Our Heritage

fourth edition, expanded & updated
FREEMAN TILDEN

SPRING Workshop:

Mar 4-6, 2026

Polk 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



Iowa Prairie Network: Check for upcoming events here:

<https://www.iowaprairienetwork.org/events>



Iowa Chapter of The Wildlife Society (IATWS):

September 18, 2025

Chariton, IA



ICEC: February 21, 2026

Cedar Rapids, IA

"Linking Learning Landscapes: Where Classrooms and Conservation Meet"



Iowa Nature Summit, Nov 19-20

Des Moines, IA

<https://www.iowanature.org/about-2025-summit>



MEEC: November 13-15, 2025

Illinois

"Nature Connects Us All"

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



NAAEE: Nov 3-6

Online conference

"Forward Together"

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



NAI: November 11-14, 2025

"Virginia Beach is for Interpreters"

Virginia Beach, Virginia



IAN is here for YOU!

Scholarship Opportunities

Do you have an upcoming workshop or professional development event that's beyond your budget? Want to attend one of the great opportunities listed above? IAN offers a scholarship program designed to help offset workshop costs and enhance professional development for current members! Scholarships are awarded up to \$150 and can be used for registration fees, which may include meals. Please note that funds cannot be allocated for college credit, membership fees, or travel expenses. You can receive one scholarship each calendar year, and they are granted on a first-come, first-served basis. To get started on the scholarship process, visit <https://www.iowanaturalists.org/memberservices/funding>

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION:

1. Applicants must be an IAN member. Be sure to get your yearly membership paid if you haven't yet!
2. Student applicants must provide a signature endorsement from a Guidance Counselor/Natural Resource Professional/Advisor/Professor.
3. Applicants must state career goals.
4. Selection of the recipients is based on the applicant's ability to explain the relevancy of the workshop to their career/professional goals.



Faith Hunt

Scholarship Committee Chair
Naturalist, Benton County

fhunt@bentoncountyparks.com

319-472-4942

The application deadline is 30 days prior to the start of the scheduled workshop/training.



Fall IAN Workshop 2025 "Tilden on Maslow: Back to the Basics"

November 5th-7th



**Wapsi River Environmental
Education Center**
31555 52nd Ave,
Dixon, IA 52745

*Wednesday, November 5th - Offsite and
Extended Learning Sessions*

Option 1: Forest Bathing

Cost: \$25 **Time:** 1:00 - 4:00PM **Category:** I

Presenter: Karen Johlas-Szalkowski, *Certified Forest
Therapy Guide, Forest Spirit LLC*

Meet at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center.

This immersive session invites educators to slow down, breathe deeply, reset, and reconnect with nature and self. Through mindful invitations, participants will explore the calming, restorative benefits of being present in the forest—supporting reduced stress, enhanced mental clarity, and a deeper connection to the natural world. Rediscover calm and return to your work refreshed, inspired, and renewed. Limit 15 people.

Option 2: Nahant Marsh Tour & Birding Experience

Cost: Free **Time:** 1:00-4:00PM **Category:** I

Presenters: Nahant Marsh staff

**Meet at Nahant Marsh Education Center, 4220 Wapello Ave.,
Davenport, IA. Meet at Bldg. A**

***To avoid getting stuck by the train and road closures on S.
Concord, enter Wapello Ave. from Rockingham Rd/Hwy 22.**

Discover the rich history and restoration efforts of our Nahant Marsh! This session will begin with a presentation highlighting the preserve's unique history from sportsmen's club to EPA Superfund site to the protected preserve it is today. We will also highlight the ongoing restoration projects that help keep the marsh thriving. Then, we'll explore the trails, visit different habitats, and watch for migrating waterfowl along the Mississippi Flyway—home to over 200 bird species. The tour will conclude with a tour of our Education Center and Operations Building.

- Binoculars provided (or bring your own)
- Dress for the weather & wear sturdy shoes
- Rain or shine (indoor activities if needed)

Limit 24 people.





Fall IAN Workshop 2025

"Tilden on Maslow: Back to the Basics"

November 5th-7th

Wednesday, November 5th - Offsite and Extended Learning Sessions

Option 3: Natural Pottery

Cost: Free **Time:** 1:00-4:00PM **Category:** I & II
Presenter: Mike Granger, *Scott County Conservation*

Meet at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, Eagle View Eco Center. Join Naturalist Mike Granger for a lesson on Natural Pottery. Learn how to locate and harvest natural clay, the history of pottery, and primitive pottery techniques. Then using your new knowledge create a pinch pot, and an animal or gnome to take home. Finally, learn how to fire your creation on your own. All materials will be provided. Class is limited to 15 participants.



Option 4: Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village Walking Tour

Cost: Free **Time:** 1:00-4:00PM **Category:** I
Presenter: Susan Laures, *Pioneer Village*

Meet at Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village - 18817 290th Street, Long Grove, IA (North edge of Scott County Park). Pioneer Village Coordinator Susan Laures will give a tour of the historic Pioneer Village with time to explore on your own. Walnut Grove was a Scott County cross-roads settlement and stage coach stop of the 1860s. The Village includes 22 historic buildings, some relocated from rural Scott County. Pioneer Village has accessible and modern restroom facilities. Class is limited to 12 participants.



After: Dinner on own Here are a few recommendations from Scott County Conservation staff: DeWitt:

MezCal (delicious Mexican food and margaritas), Golden Wok (Chinese food), Hall of Fame Pizza and Wings, the Old Library (burgers, limited menu), Twisted Paddle Brewery (craft beer and giant pretzels), Van's (bar food); Coffee stops: the Summit Café, Blondie's Coffee Out Back, Brent's Firehouse Coffee (near the hotel!)

Eldridge:

Maloney's Pub (American food), Miquel's Street Tacos, Cabos Cantina and Grill (Mexican), Hungry Hobo (sub sandwiches), Domino's pizza, New Hong Kong Chinese; Coffee stops: Sips Coffee (drive through only), Cody Road Coffee

Donahue:

Brad's Pizza, Ray's Pub

Dixon:

the Legion (pub food)

We are also near the World's Largest Truck Stop! The Iowa 80 Truck Stop (near Dixon): Taco Bell, Wendy's, Dairy Queen, Caribou Coffee and other fast food options

And Slaby's pub

Thursday, November 6th - Sessions at the Environmental Education Center

6:00- 8:00 AM Breakfast - Continental breakfast at hotel

8:30 - 9:30 AM - Registration

9:30 AM - Welcome, Announcements & Introductions

9:45- 10:45 AM - General Session

Leave No Trace- Then and Now

Presenter: Dave Murcia, *Scott County Conservation* **Category:** I & II
Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

Join Director Dave Murcia for an update on Leave No Trace, principles, ethics, and research behind the international organization. Leave No Trace is grounded in science and research and has been since its origins in the field of recreation ecology. This has evolved over the years as recreation-related impacts and associated monitoring has incorporated human dimensions of natural resources, striving to understand how and why humans cause impacts and, ultimately, how to influence behaviors to decrease recreational-related impacts.



10:45 - 11:15 AM - Break

11:15 - 12:15 PM - Concurrent Sessions

A Year with the Sauk and Meskwaki

Presenter: Julie Nelson, *Hauberg Museum* **Category:** I
Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

The Sauk and Meskwaki were the last indigenous tribes to occupy the 400 miles of Mississippi River valley from the Wisconsin River to the Missouri River. From 1735 until 1831, they made their home in the region surrounding present day Quad Cities. Join Hauberg Museum Director Julie Nelson to learn how the Sauk and Meskwaki people ordered their lives by the cycle of the seasons and utilized the area's abundant natural resources for nearly a century.



Welcome to IAN

Presenters: Bri Blom, *IAN Welcoming Committee* **Category:** II
Building: Eagle View Eco Center

New to the crew? This session will go through all the nitty gritty details about the organization and what it has to offer YOU! New to the job? Want to get more involved? Want more money for your organization? Do you want tips and tricks to survive the first five years of your new gig? This session is all about how IAN can support YOU!



12:15 - 1:45 PM - Lunch & Business Meeting

Cabos Cantina & Grill

- 2 each/person: Beef or cheese enchiladas (corn tortillas, GF)
- Rice, Beans, Chips/salsa
- Cost: \$15



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

Thursday, November 6th - Sessions at the Environmental Education Center

12:15 - 1:45 PM - Lunch & Business Meeting



MESS KIT RENTALS

FORGET YOUR REUSABLE DINNERWARE?



THE IAN FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE WILL HAVE LIMITED RENTALS AVAILABLE FOR \$10 FOR THE WORKSHOP

SEE EMMA TO PICK UP YOUR RENTAL.

1:45 - 2:45 PM - Concurrent Sessions

School of the Wild

Presenter: Jay Gorsh, *University of Iowa School of the Wild* **Category:** II, III, IV
Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

From Davenport to Council Bluffs, Decorah to Central Decatur...What we've learned from 5 years of the Statewide School of the Wild effort. In an interactive forum, we'll discuss pros, cons, and future directions. If you've participated already, please come share your experiences. If you've yet to participate, come ready to learn, pose questions, and/or get involved.

Water and Citizen Science

Presenter: Liv Humphrey, *Partners of Scott County Watersheds* **Category:** II
Building: Eagle View Eco Center

Join Liv Humphrey with Partners of Scott County Watersheds (PSCW) as she goes over the mission of PSCW, history, projects, and the importance of their long-standing citizen science work, best known as the Snapshot Water Quality Monitoring Volunteer Event. Snapshot occurs 2-3 times a year for the past 20+ years, collecting usable water quality data all around Scott County and implementing it to enhance, protect, and restore our watersheds.



Partners of Scott County Watersheds



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

Thursday, November 6th - Sessions at the Environmental Education Center

2:45 - 3:45 PM - Concurrent Sessions

Friends' Groups—the Nitty Gritty

Presenters: Lucia Dryanski and Carol Rogers, *Friends of the Wapsi Center* **Category:** IV
Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

How do you start a Friends' Group? What do they do? How do you sustain the group over time? Join Friends of the Wapsi founding member Carol Rogers, and current co-president Lucia Dryanski as they share stories and lessons from the organization's 32 years. Learn the origins and evolving history of the group, discuss best practices, and learn from our experience, both challenges and successes.



Connecting to Classroom Standards: Highlighting new and creative ways to connect environmental phenomena to classroom learning standards.

Presenter: Gus Elliot, *IADNR Conservation Education Specialist* **Category:** II, III
Building: Eagle View Eco Center

We will highlight and demonstrate some great ideas from all over the state where naturalists and teachers work together to give students great natural experiences. Oftentimes teachers need some help seeing the connection to their core standards. We will share some ideas to help facilitate that understanding and match the needs of schools. As a part of this session we plan to model a few examples of integrating local natural experiences into science classrooms. Come ready to learn, discuss, and get your hands dirty.



3:45 - 4 PM - Group Picture & Break

4:15 - 5:15 PM - Concurrent Sessions

Wonders of Bats

Presenters: Becky Baugh and Paige Owings, *Scott County Conservation* **Category:** I, II
Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

Bats are an incredibly important part of our ecosystem and they provide so much (possibly unknown to you) value. Join Becky and Paige as we share some of the wonders of bats! In this session we will walk you through the development of our bat program and how we got it going and then we will go through the program as we would with a group of students. You get to be bat scientists! Don't worry, you don't need PPE or anything—we've got you covered with model bats.



Ins and Outs of NAI: Why be a Member?

Presenters: Billie Wille, *NAI Heartland Region Treasurer* & Bri Blom, *NAI Heartland Region Deputy Director* **Category:** II, IV
Building: Eagle View Eco Center

Becoming a member of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) means joining a nationwide community of professionals dedicated to connecting people with the natural and cultural resources that define our shared heritage. NAI membership is more than just belonging to an organization—it's an investment in your personal and professional growth. It provides opportunities to expand your knowledge, strengthen your skills, and connect with others who are passionate about inspiring understanding and appreciation of our world. We'll explore why NAI membership is a vital step for both you and your organization, and how it can help you tell everyone's story with authenticity and impact.



Questions???? Raina Genaw- rainagenaw@gmail.com

Thursday, November 6th - Sessions at the Environmental Education Center

5:15 - 6:15 PM - General Session

Training to Train the Trust

Presenter: Adam Shirley, ICCS & Dan Cohen, retired Buchanan CCB director

Category: I, II

Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

Learn about the Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and materials aimed at empowering and encouraging educators to inform all Iowans about it.



6:15 PM - Dinner

Matthiesen's

- Baked chicken or BBQ Beef
- Vegetarian lasagna (GF)
- Sides: Cheesy potatoes and Tossed salad/dressing
- Dessert: Pumpkin bars
- Cost: \$16



Fundraising Trivia Night!

- Thursday after the conference (7pm-9pm)
- \$5/person (cash) to play
- Teams randomly assigned-go make a friend!
- Fun themes including nature AND more - see how smart naturalists are



Participants can register online at:
<https://portal.mycountyparks.com/Org-Event/Default.aspx>

Friday, November 7th - Sessions at the Environmental Education Center

6:00- 8:00 AM Breakfast - Continental breakfast at hotel

8:15 AM - Announcements

8:30 - 9:30 AM - General Session

Principles First Farming: Soil, Plant, Animal, Human, and Planet Health

Presenters: Monte Bottens **Category:** I

Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

Monte Bottens will show how he makes his farming decisions utilizing the 5 Soil Health Principles. He will walk you through his family farm's journey, leadership his teams are providing other farmers, and the future of what is possible for his and his fellow farmers.

9:30 - 10 AM - Break

10 - 11 AM - Concurrent Sessions

Foraging 101: Building a Foraging Program One Bite at a Time

Presenter: Becky Baugh, *Scott County Conservation* **Category:** I, II

Building: Wapsi River Learning Center

Interested in teaching about Foraging, but have no idea where to start? That was me about 8 years ago. Learn how to make a foraging program from scratch and incorporate it into all seasons. Along the way, I have added different flavors into the foraging program including invasive plants, mushrooms, non-edibles, and even ART! Try a sample of what I offer during my foraging programs and try your hand at a little nature art!



Sandhill Preservation Center

Presenter: Glenn Drowns, *Sandhill Preservation Center* **Category:** I

Building: Eagle View Eco Center

Sandhill Preservation Center is a private gene bank and promotor of sustainable agriculture. We strive to create environments for pollinators, native plants and animals and incorporate sustainable methods into our farm practices all focusing on the preservation of over 2900 varieties of vegetable crops and 230 breeds of heritage poultry. Sustainable methods will be discussed as well as ways to grow crops without the use of any pesticides.



11- 12 PM - Concurrent Sessions

Growth and Grief - A glimpse into the past, present, and future connections between plants and the care of our lost loved ones

Presenter: Andra Olney-Larson, *Casper Creek Natural Cemetery* **Category:** I **Building:** Wapsi River Learning Center

Join Andra Olney-Larson for an interactive, historical, and healing journey through the uses and significance of specific plant species and their connections to honoring the dead across time, across the globe, and in one's own backyard. This one-hour presentation will include the use of herbs in ancient Greece and Egypt, Victorian flower language, global floral elements, and bringing focus to the restored prairies of Iowa and the Driftless region to learn more of the elements of native plants and their prevalence in tradition. Participants are encouraged to create and acknowledge their own special connections to people and plants in harmony.



Friday, November 7th - Sessions at the Environmental Education Center

Lawn & Order: Cultivating a Sustainable Lawn Revolution

Presenter: Christian LaCarte **Category:** I

Building: Eagle View Eco Center

Founded in 2019- Sustainable Stewards was created solely based on one statistic. The EPA estimated that 5% of all air pollution in the United States was due to lawn equipment. This is a huge chunk of the pie that wasn't being addressed by anyone. This is where the idea was born- create an electric lawn care company that can charge while on the go during route, using alternative energy methods such as solar. This closes the energy loop and we can sustain a full day's work just by using the sun! The rest is history. Since birth, we have expanded to all of Scott County, parts of Cedar and Clinton County, and most of Johnson County. We will cover soil health, weed control, new growth, alternative energy methods, and why our approach to these topics matter greatly.



12:00 PM - Lunch/Depart- Don't forget to return your name tag!

Boxed sandwich lunches from local specialty shops! Meals come with chips and a cookie.

Carnivore: ham-turkey-provolone, herbivore: veggies, and gluten-free

\$15

Thank you to Dave Murcia and Scott County Conservation for hosting!



Lodging

AmericInn by Wyndham, DeWitt, Iowa

2520 12th St Ct
DeWitt, IA 52742
(563) 659-5500

To book a room call and mention that you want a room that is blocked for "IAN"
40 rooms are available for the Fall IAN Workshop on Wednesday, Nov. 5th, and Thursday, Nov. 6th, 2025.

Free on-site camping available at the Wapsi Center. Call (563)328-3286 in advance.

Free firewood
Restrooms
Cooking kitchen

Alternate Lodging (No block of rooms has been reserved for these locations)

Comfort Inn & Suites by Choice Hotels
8300 Northwest Blvd, Davenport, IA 52806
(563) 324-8300

ExCom Elections!

Two positions are open on the Fall 2025 Executive Committee ballot:

Vice-President and Secretary

Voting will take place at the Fall 2025 IAN Workshop in Scott County. Absentee ballots can be cast via Google poll link found here: <https://forms.gle/f4JG8N7EppRae9Nm8>

Vice-President

Cassandra Barbosa

A little bit about me... My name is Cassandra Barbosa and I am the naturalist for Montgomery County Conservation. Our main office is located in Red Oak (Southwest Iowa), and we manage 10 wildlife areas. I also provide the programming for Lake Icaria with Adams County Conservation. I grew up in Indianola, Iowa and have always aimed to work in a field where I can educate others about my passions. I have worked at the Science Center of Iowa, Lake Ahquabi State Park, and I got this gig right out of college (graduated from Northwest Missouri State University with a degree in Wildlife Ecology & Conservation, and General Biology with an emphasis in zoology) and I have loved every bit of it. I have been here for 5 years and strive to make us the best we can be. A few random fun facts about me- I am a rookie taxidermist, I have a sweet Vizsla named Loretta Lynn, and my husband and I welcomed our sweet daughter Autumn Rain Barbosa in February. My goals for executive committee... I am eager to take big leaps and step into new roles. **I would love to be considered for the Vice-President or Secretary position.** I believe I have the ability to excel at either position and I am full of ideas to help the betterment of the group. Southwest Iowa doesn't always have a ton of representation, and I would love to represent our corner. I hope you consider me for either position. Thank you for time and consideration!

DUTIES OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

- Represent the President at all meetings in absence of the President.
- Act as liaison for committee reports and presenting a summary at the spring and fall meetings by contacting committee heads two weeks prior to a meeting.
- Committee Reports are due to the Vice President, and the VP will produce an annual committee report to be given to the secretary for the annual report. The VP will also produce a report for the summer newsletter of the activities of each committee.
- The Vice president is responsible for compiling and editing the newsletter.
- Participate and vote in all meetings as called by the President.
- Conduct other duties as assigned by the President.



Chloe Proffitt

Hello everyone, I am Chloe Proffitt, and I am the naturalist/conservation technician for Van Buren County. I have started the naturalist program here in Van Buren County from scratch within the last 3 years. I am interpreting topics such as wild edibles, plant hikes, stargazing, Dutch oven cooking, and other fun outdoor activities I am passionate about.

I am excited to serve you as your IAN ExCom Vice-President and hope to learn more about IAN! I have previously served as your IAN ExCom Secretary! Thank you for letting me serve you with this great organization!

Chloe



ExCom Elections!

Two positions are open on the Fall 2025 Executive Committee ballot:

Vice-President & Secretary

Voting will take place at the Fall 2025 IAN Workshop in Scott County. Absentee ballots can be cast via Google poll link found here: <https://forms.gle/YZx1vXNnN3uoEMe39>

DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY

- Take minutes during all IAN ExCom and Business meetings and make available to the ExCom and membership. All minutes of the general business meeting will be posted on listserv within one month of the meeting.
- Send out the draft minutes on the listserv and make any corrections two weeks prior to a business meeting.
- Post approved annual report to the website.
- Provide hard copies of the minutes at the business meetings.
- Keep record of honorary members and suggested honorary members.
- Prepare an annual report for each year.
- Annually, archive business meeting minutes, newsletters, annual reports and other pertinent documents at Iowa State University Campus Library. This transfer can take place at the summer meeting.
- Send the membership a two week reminder about IAN grants, then send applications to the ExCom for review.
- Participate and vote in all meetings as called by the President.
- Conduct other duties as assigned by the President.

Secretary



Hannah Hernandez

Hello Stars! My name is Hannah Hernandez, and I am running for the secretary position. I've worked at Warren County Conservation for almost 3 years. I am still relatively new, so I think running for this position will be a great opportunity to learn more about the organization and grow professionally in this field.

I would be thrilled to be a part of ExCom! I'm excited about the chance to help our organization grow, and I look forward to working with others to support our mission and make a positive impact. IAN has helped me grow professionally and personally, so I would like to give back to the organization that has already given so much to me by fulfilling this role.

Hannah's fun facts:

- My fiancé and I adopted a dog last December, whom we named Appa.
- I provide a home to an absurd amount of houseplants.
- I love learning new things and picking up new hobbies!



Shania Hansen

Hi, my name is Shania Hansen. I am currently the Naturalist at Des Moines County Conservation, where I enjoy teaching students about archery and wild turkeys—two topics I could talk about all day. Before this role, I served as the Assistant Naturalist at Henry County Conservation for three years, where I also became involved with the Iowa Association of Naturalists attending conferences.

I look forward to diving deeper into the IAN community.

IAN Grants at Work!

New Evaporator at Walden Pond Keeps Maple Syruping Tradition Burning

Walden Pond, dedicated as the Roy and Genevieve Schultz Memorial Outdoor Discovery Area, is Winneshiek County Conservation's newest and third largest outdoor recreational area. It was donated in 2021 by the Schultz family with the intent to conserve the area and provide a space for environmental education. The 133-acre park is home hiking trails, woodlands, restored prairie, restrooms, an enclosed picnic shelter, and a large sugar maple bush. Walden draws dozens of people every spring for maple syruping programs.

Hannah Meyer,
Winneshiek County

The Schultz family began their maple syruping tradition at Walden over fifty years ago, and it continues to this day with Winneshiek County Conservation staff and volunteers. The process begins with putting about 200 taps into 140 trees. After collecting the sap using traditional metal spiles and buckets, the sap is boiled in an evaporator to remove most of the water. The evaporator runs on firewood, maintaining high temperatures to keep the sap boiling. After evaporating a batch of sap for several hours, staff and volunteers finish the syrup on the stovetop, a precise process that requires skill and experience to master.



Winneshiek County Conservation staff and volunteers demonstrate how the new evaporator works to a group of homeschool families.

This is how the Schultz family and Winneshiek County Conservation have been making syrup for many years. However, the old evaporator, being over 25 years old, was severely rusted and unsuitable for educational programs in the Shultz's original sugar shack. Due to the area's cultural and historical significance, as well as its importance as a unique educational resource, it became imperative to purchase a more efficient evaporator and place it in a safer sugar shack. A portion of the new evaporator purchase was paid for by an IAN grant. Thanks to everyone on the IAN grant committee, Winneshiek County Conservation was able to purchase and install a state-of-the-art evaporator by the start of the 2025 syrup season.

In spring 2025, a group of 30 students were the first to experience a school program with the new evaporator. Nearly 20 more participated in the county's first-ever public program on maple syruping a couple weeks later. The participants in these free programs collected sap, watched the evaporator in action, taste-tested the final product, and took home their own jars of pure maple syrup. In March 2025, about 1800 gallons of sap were collected and boiled into 50 gallons of syrup. The new evaporator is more accessible, easier to use, and much more efficient—what once took 24 hours to evaporate now takes only eight hours and burns less firewood! This helped save our dedicated volunteers and staff countless hours working in the woods and sugar shack.

The shiny new evaporator running for the first time after installment at Walden Pond.



Hanna Meyer, Winneshiek County Conservation Education and Outreach Coordinator, leads a maple syruping lesson.

With the new evaporator, Winneshiek County Conservation will bring more people to Walden Pond each spring, sharing the history of the park and educating others about maple syruping. This more-efficient equipment helps to continue a valuable tradition, one that Winneshiek County Conservation uses to further their mission of outdoor education for all.

IAN Grant Applications Due March 1st!
\$5,000
Has been budgeted on a limited-time basis
Apply online at iowanaturalists.org
Click the programs tab to open Grants & Scholarships. The application button is on the bottom of the page.

Leaf Peeps Nature Craft!

Julie Fosado, Kossuth County Conservation

Leaf People Fall Craft

With so many of us doing fall leaf rubbings with kids, sometimes it can be nice to switch it up. One of my favorites is making leaf people.

Usually, I do lots of leaf rubbings with preschoolers and kindergarteners. I use the leaf people activity for the older crowd of first grade and up, and it's a good change of pace. It allows kids to use their creativity while still accomplishing the same goals of taking a leaf hike and identifying leaves and their parts.

If you have a free hour, make your own leaf people to see what works best for you. Typically, I use: paper, glue, crayons/colored pencils but you can make it as extravagant as you want (think googly eyes, puffy paint, etc).

Enjoy making your shiny happy leaf people!



Fresh Faces & Cherished Comrades - Naturalist Spotlight



Heidi Reams - Floyd County

Hi! My name is Heidi Reams, Floyd County Conservation Naturalist. Looking back on how I got here, it seems like I was destined to be a Naturalist. My father was an avid outdoors man and took me along as he hunted and trained his dogs. After I received my Fishery and Wildlife Biology degree from Iowa State University, I was unsure how I was going to use it. After various jobs and starting a family, I stumbled into a part time position with Floyd County Conservation that would truly change my life.

Now twenty-one years later, I can say how much I appreciate sharing the outdoors with others whether young or old. My husband and I are empty nesters (which really seems appropriate for a Naturalist). To fill the gap, we now have a Shih Tsu/Poodle (Max) and German Shorthair (Remi). Our furry children have given Bob a pheasant hunting buddy and I have a walking & cuddling buddy. Having Max and Remi around has given me another reason to explore the areas in Floyd County and see them in a different way. It has renewed my appreciation for the little things that we sometimes miss. As the Naturalist in a smaller county, I appreciate

the freedom that comes with the position such as being able to create "crazy" new public programs and doing live videos from our county areas. In addition, it also enables me to be able to help with prairie burns, painting cabins and other "all hands on deck" staff projects. As my children have entered the job force with their careers they comment to me that I enjoy going to work unlike others and I do! I appreciate being able to share our natural resources with the citizens of our county and its visitors as well as am passionate to protect it. I hope that I am creating a legacy that will last and perhaps others may follow my lead - fingers crossed.



≡Welcome≡

Addie Pacha is super excited to be part of the Henry County Conservation Department's team.

She spent four years as a high school English teacher before making her way to Henry County as the Assistant Naturalist/Conservation Technician.

She grew up in Washington, Iowa, and still lives there with her cat, her ball python, and some chickens.

She's especially interested in plants and mushrooms, so if you find an interesting one, hit her up!



Addie Pacha - Henry County

Chelsea's Wild Bites: Supping like a Squirrel - Acorns!

Chelsea Ewen Rowcliffe, Mitchell CCB



For me, on the north border of the state, it is a HUGE MAST year! I'm not sure if there are any "Farmer's Almanac" type predictions for what kind of winter we might have in store, but the Bur Oaks in my yard have really outdone themselves - my house sounds like a shooting range! I've been having fun sharing them with my turkeys (Mashed Potato "Tater" & Gravy) as well as collecting some for myself for later processing - you know in my "free time" (do we get that as Naturalists? Lol!). If you are also finding yourself with an Abundance of Acorns, here is a quick tutorial on how to process them into delicious food and take part in a fall feast that has nourished and sustained Indigenous peoples in our region for thousands of years.

Collecting Acorns

You can gather acorns anytime from September until early spring. The best time to start collecting acorns is not, however, when they first start to fall. Oaks have several distinct phases where they drop acorns—usually an early drop or two, and then the good drop. When you first notice that oak trees are dropping their acorns, resist the urge to collect! If you do, you'll be incredibly disappointed to find that pretty much every single one is bad. We all know how amazing Nature can be, and somehow oak trees know what nuts aren't developing well or are infected with insects, and so they rid themselves of the unviable nuts as soon as they can.

It's the second drop you want to watch for, usually happening sometime in late September - October. These nuts are the good ones! Good acorns look good, and feel heavy in your hand. They're usually a bit shiny and have clean, tan discs on the top. Bad acorns will be discolored, undersized, have caps that are still firmly attached, look weathered and dull, or have holes in the side. A simple float test will also help this process. Put acorns in a bucket of water: good acorns sink, bad acorns float - discard the floaters! This is also a good time to wash the good acorns - get rid of any dirt on the shell and lay them out to dry for a few hours on a bedsheet. Outside in the sun works well - just make sure it's away from squirrels! No matter how well you sort, Acorn Weevil grubs are just part of acorn processing. If you're feeling adventurous, look into collecting and eating Acorn weevil larvae yourself (they taste sweet and nutty - like acorns!), or feed them to pet poultry or insect loving herps!



A Nut Wizard tool is helpful if you have a fairly open area to collect, as is laying a tarp under the tree for a day or two then pouring that harvest into a bucket for sorting. Otherwise, your hands and a 5-gallon bucket are all you need! When collecting, keep red and white group acorns separated in different buckets. White oak group will mold quickly, so it's best to process them as soon as possible. Red oak group has a longer "fresh storage" life, and can even benefit from freezing first before shelling.

If you can't crack and process them immediately, you will need to dry them for longer term storage. Red oak acorns can be dried in the shell in an open air screen or tray, then held in clean 5-gallon buckets until you're ready to continue. It may take a few weeks to get them bone-dry, so don't rush it. I would advise against storing white oak acorns in the shell, however. They should be cracked, shelled, and then dried before you store them.

Shelling Acorns

Shelling the acorns is the most tedious part of dealing with them, but there are several options. It can be as simple as cracking them open with a hammer, rock, or mallet (put the flat end on a firm surface and rap the pointy end), layering them between two towels and whacking them, or buying a specialized nut cracker, like the Davebilt nutcracker (also works on most other native, foraged nuts - just not Black walnuts or Butternuts).

Once cracked, you'll need to separate out the good nutmeats.

Separating the nutmeats from the shells is a good activity to do with a friend and conversation, some good music, or a group of competitive children. You'll need some kind of tool (knife, nut pick, etc.) to help dig out the nutmeats. Toss out any that are discolored.

Red oaks will often retain their "testas" (the dark brown, papery coating over the nut). Although I haven't tried it, friends have reported that the easiest way to deal with this is to freeze your fresh acorns for a week or two before cracking. This will slip the skin off the nut. The skin is bitter, but it's not that big a deal if you are making flour.

That pile of nutmeats can now be dried until they're rock-hard and stored for later processing. Dry in a low oven with the door cracked, dehydrator, or air dry on screens with a fan away from rodents.



Chelsea's Wild Bites: Supping like a Squirrel - Acorns! continued...

Leaching Acorns

Leaching is the process of using water to remove the bitter, water-soluble tannins from the nuts and make them edible. ALL ACORNS NEED TO BE LEACHED regardless of how they taste "fresh".

HOT LEACH: Best if you're wanting to use the acorns whole like other nuts (walnut or pecan, for example) – loses some nutritional components, but is generally a "fast" method.

COLD LEACHING: Best for making acorn flour and starch. Retains nutrition, but is a slower method.

For Hot Leaching: Hot leaching acorns is simple—put the acorns in a pan of water, heat it to boiling, drain off the dark-brown water, and repeat until a sampled nut no longer tastes bitter. Have two pots of water heating to make this process go faster. Add twice as much water as amount of acorn nutmeats. Bring to a boil. The water will turn dark as the tannins leach out. Let boil for a minute then drain off. Pour acorns into second pot (with pre-heated water) and bring to boil again. Fill first pot with water to begin pre-heating for next change of water. Continue the boil/drain process until the water is clear-ish and acorn meats have no hint of bitterness. The number of water changes varies depending on the oak species. For whole nutmeats, you can use them right away while they are still soft as a whole nut, grind the soft, leached acorns into acorn meal, or dry the hot-leached acorn meal or whole nuts. For grinding the soft, whole acorns, I like to use an old-fashioned hand-crank meat grinder. To dry the meal or whole nutmeats, spread them out on a cookie sheet lined with parchment or a silicone mat and bake/roast them at 160 to 170 degrees Fahrenheit. Put a wooden spoon in the door so it can't shut all the way. After 45 minutes, check the acorns or meal. Move them around a bit, then place back in the oven. Repeat the process until the acorn nuts or meal are nice and dry. It usually takes 3 hours or so. Alternatively, you can use a dehydrator.

THE FIRST ROUND OF LEACHING. NOTE HOW DARK THE WATER IS.



A FEW CYCLES LATER... WE HAVE NEARLY CLEAR WATER!



GRINDING HOT-LEACHED WHOLE ACORNS INTO MEAL



For Cold Leaching:

This is a good way to leach acorns without using fuel for boiling water, and you do not denature a particular starch in the acorns that acts a little like the gluten in flour, i.e., it helps the flour stick to itself.

Grind the fresh, shelled acorns, then mix a ratio of 1 cup of acorn meal to 3 cups water. Pour this all into a glass jar or large container with a lid and put it in the fridge. Every day, shake the jar or stir the container, wait 12 hours, then pour off the tannin-laden water. Be sure to NOT POUR OFF the light layer of starch that will be just below the water. Pour in fresh water and repeat the process. How long? Anywhere from a week to two weeks, depending on how bitter your acorns are.

Once the acorn meal is completely leached, you're going to strain it, but don't pour the last change of water down the drain! This time, save it and use it to make a drink or to cook with - it makes great sweet-nutty broth for soup or to cook grains or pasta in, or cooked down into a nutty version of a latte, sweetened with maple syrup and maybe a pinch of salt and cinnamon or cardamom/chai spices.

To strain the acorn meal, use a fine sieve or strainer lined with cheesecloth, a jelly bag, or nutmilk bag. Save the liquid that comes off of this, too, and use it like the "pour off" water. You can also "pour off" the starch layer and dry and use it separately at this time if you'd like. Otherwise, keep it with the rest of the acorn meal and use it as a "whole" flour. The "acorn grits" or acorn meal that remains can be frozen fresh, dried in a dehydrator, or laid out on silicone-lined baking sheet and dried in a low oven.

Store leached soft whole acorns or acorn meal, and dried acorns or acorn meal in the fridge or freezer. Why the fridge or freezer even if its dried? The fats in acorns will go rancid pretty quick if left out at room temperature.



DRIED ACORN MEAL

Grinding Acorns

Now that the acorns are leached and dried, it's time to turn them into flour—you're almost there, hungry forager!

The end result from hot or cold leached, ground up acorns will be a coarse meal. This can be used as-is and cooked into acorn "grits", or it can be run through a flour mill, sturdy blender, or coffee grinder to produce finer flour for baking. Sift ground acorn meal through a fine-mesh strainer and continue to grind until you reach your desired consistency.



ACORN, HICKORY, & MAPLE SYRUP PIE



ACORN FLOUR



ACORN COOKIES!

Acorn Shortbread Cookies

½ cup Acorn starch (cold leached)
½ cup Powdered or icing sugar
1 cup sifted cold-leached Acorn flour OR preferred flour
¾ cup butter

Sift acorn starch, flour, and sugar together. Using either your fingers, two forks, or food processor, mix in the butter, until a soft dough is formed. Shape into 1 inch balls and place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Flatten with the palm of your hand, OR roll out into a fairly thick slab of dough and cut into shapes. Bake the cookies at 300 F for 15 – 20 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Let cool before removing from cookie sheet.

Name That Nature Center - We have a WINNER!

And the Winner is...

After a year of guessing, big bragging rights go to **BRITNEY SNELL**, Naturalist with Dickinson County Conservation. She correctly identified this as the Dennis L. Sohl Center for Outdoor Learning at Hillview Park in Plymouth County. Sarah Davelaar and Amber Carpenter also submitted correct guesses, but Britney beat them to it!



Congratulations, Britney!



Name That Nature Thing

Now, who's up for the next challenge?

Send your guesses to Chelsea
(Mitchell County Naturalist)

Email: crowcliffe@mitchellcoia.us



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

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

