



# Up and Down the River

JACKSON COUNTY CONSERVATION      FALL 2025

## Protecting Our Water: A First Step in a Larger Battle

*By Nathan Jones, Director*

The health of Prairie Creek is vital to our community, and the challenges we face are visible right in our own backyard. For the last few years, the pond at Prairie Creek Recreation Area has experienced periods of being very green. This is a direct result of high nutrient loads from sources like the nearby city yard waste area. As organic material, like leaves and grass clippings decompose, they release nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which are carried by rainwater runoff into the pond.

This serves as a powerful reminder that our actions on the land, whether managing yard waste or applying fertilizer, have a direct and significant effect on our water quality. The same nutrients that make our lawns green are what cause the unsightly algae in the pond. It's also important to understand that once these nutrients enter a water body, they are incredibly difficult and expensive to remove.

That's why our recent water quality project at Prairie Creek is focused on prevention and mitigation. By implementing bank stabilization and other water quality provisions, we are addressing problems at their source. This approach avoids the costly and complex process of trying to remove pollutants later, ensuring a healthier creek and a safer, more beautiful environment for all to enjoy.



While our enhancement project utilizes the latest science in sediment reduction, it is crucial to recognize that it is a first step, not a final solution. The scale of the challenge is immense. Iowa State University's Daily Erosion Project (DEP) estimates that the Prairie Creek watershed, with its 19,791 acres, has carried approximately 58,581 tons of soil loss so far in 2025, at a rate of 2.96 tons per drainage acre. Our work will not stop large nutrient loads from entering the Maquoketa River, but it is a vital part of a broader, long-term strategy. The project will serve as a demonstration of best practices and an educational tool, showing what is possible and building momentum for future conservation efforts throughout the entire watershed.

Beyond the visible concerns of sediment and nutrient pollution, our waterways face a complex array of other contaminants. Iowa's water quality is also impacted by emerging contaminants like pesticides, pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and industrial chemicals. These substances can enter our water through agricultural runoff, wastewater treatment facilities, and everyday household practices. The full, long-term effects of these contaminants on human health and the environment are often not fully known, as they are not always regulated or even routinely monitored. This highlights the importance of not only investing in projects like the Prairie Creek Enhancement Project, but also of taking a broader, preventative approach to protect our water at every level—from the products we use to the policies we support. This project is a crucial investment in our water quality, a commitment to our natural resources, and a call to action for every resident to do their part.

# Severe Weather

By Macey Yaeger, Naturalist

The bright, jarring flash of lightning, followed by the house rattling boom of thunder. Phones start lighting up with alerts of severe thunderstorms, flood warnings, and tornado watches. The rain pounds against the roof, and the wind rips branches from the trees.

Severe weather is something every Midwesterner is familiar with. But what does it take for weather to be considered severe instead of your typical Midwest thunderstorm. Severe weather is classified by a weather event that has a risk of significant damage, disruptions to daily life, or even loss of life. These severe weather phenomena include things like tornados, thunderstorms, flooding, hurricanes, blizzards, ice storms, drought, and even lightning. The global location and season play a major role in what severe weather will appear. Some key characteristics of severe weather include high winds - gusts over 60mph; heavy precipitation; flash flooding; large hail- greater than ¾ inch; and lightning.

When it comes to weather, there are many things to take into consideration as to why this weather is happening. Things like thermals, downbursts, bow echo, and wind shear may not mean much to someone who is not a meteorologist, but when these characteristics start mixing, it is a recipe for severe weather. These examples all fit into one of three causes of severe weather. The first cause is warm, moist air. This provides energy and moisture for severe weather and creates atmospheric instability. An unstable atmosphere, the second cause of severe weather, is when a layer of the atmosphere readily builds up vertical air movement. Like when warm air becomes more buoyant than the air surrounding it and quickly rises because it is less dense. The last factor to create severe weather is a lifting mechanism, something that gets the air moving. This can be the sun heating the ground which causes thermals to rise, air being forced upward between two air masses, or different winds colliding near the surface sending air upwards. All these causes work together and amplify each other creating a positive feedback loop that keeps increasing until a storm appears.

Severe weather can be very scary, but if you prepare and educate yourself, you can keep you and your family safe. One thing that is good to know when dealing with severe weather is the difference between a watch, and a warning. A weather WATCH is when there is a possibility of a severe weather event, but if, when, and where are uncertain. A weather WARNING is when severe weather is actively happening, imminent, or highly likely. If you are in the path of a weather warning, you should take protective actions. These actions include going to the lowest level, typically a basement, and avoiding windows. It is also important to talk to your family about a storm plan. And since we're all Midwesterners and storm watching is a favorite pastime, know when to go inside for real.

# Summer Trip Highlights

By Julia Rodewald, Naturalist

Stars rising in the sky, the crackle of a campfire, and the smell of a marshmallow burning on a stick. Nothing gets you closer to nature then camping in the woods.

Jackson County Conservation partners with Dubuque and Clinton County Conservation to provide overnight trips in the summer for youth and adults. These trips are designed to get people of all ages and experiences out into the wild and making some good memories!



The first trip of the summer, the youth backpacking trip, took place at Sand Ridge State Forest this year. It is the largest state forest in Illinois, comprised of hardwoods and pines, along with sand prairies. The kids backpacked for 3 days across the sandy trail, totaling about 11 miles hiked, and carrying their food, clothes, tents, and everything on their back. One of the leads for the trip, Macey, recounted some personal highlights of the trip. One perk was the beautiful landscape, including the blooming prickly pear cactus, one of the Midwest's few native cactus species. Another highlight of the trip was the "Tick Count". Macey said her final count between everyone was 1045 ticks! The best part of the trip, she said, was the kids. "We had a diverse age range this year, 13, 14, 15, and 16 year olds... they were all entertaining and got along and made it fun."

The second trip of the summer was a youth paddle along the Maquoketa River. We were traveling down the river in canoes and kayaks, carrying everything in large dry bags. One of the leaders for this trip, Jess, said one of her trip highlights was "getting to watch the kids be kids." They get a chance to play and swim in the river, free from screens. Watching them explore the parks, playing baseball with stick bats and life jacket bases, and find secret rock shelters was really inspiring. Jess loved how creative the kids were and how much fun they were having playing in nature.

The last trip of the summer was an adult paddle down the Mississippi River. Traveling from Wyalusing State Park to Cassville, we covered about 24 river miles in two 29' canoes from Clinton County Conservation. We camped on sandy beaches and islands in the river, experienced going through the lock and dam, and stopped at towns along the way. The leaders for this trip thought one of the highlights was all the wildlife we got to see. Seeing 29 bird species and 12 mussel species provided a great way to pass the time.



Overall, these trips are a great way to relax and connect back into nature. They aren't just fun for the participants, either. The staff always enjoys joining in the exploration, discussions, and tick counts, and we look forward to these trips every year!



# Fall Calendar of Events



**Registration is REQUIRED at least 48 hours in advance for ALL programs.**

Register by calling (563) 652-3783 or email [conservation@jacksoncounty.iowa.gov](mailto:conservation@jacksoncounty.iowa.gov)

*Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Donations are accepted.*

For up to date information on our programs, check online at [www.JacksonCCB.com](http://www.JacksonCCB.com) or visit the Hurstville Interpretive Center's Facebook page.

## Rock Painting

**Monday, September 1 between 10:00-3:00**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

This Labor Day enjoy a visit to the Center with a make and take craft. Paint rocks to decorate your garden. Painting supplies will be provided. We will have rocks or bring your own.

## Safe Mushroom and Tree Nut Foraging Class

**Thursday, September 4 from 5:30-7:30 PM**

*At the Jackson County Extension Office*

Hear from Gina Buelow, ISU Extension Natural Resources specialist, about safe mushroom foraging and Jess Wagner with Jackson County Conservation about Tree Nut Foraging! Cost \$15. Includes a book and other materials. RSVP to Jackson Co. Extension at (563) 652-4923 or email [jmaier@iastate.edu](mailto:jmaier@iastate.edu).

## Adult Intro to Tent Camping

**Friday, Sept 5 at 5 PM—Saturday Sept 6 at 9 AM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Never been camping before, but want to give it a try? We will go over basics of camping, practice setting up a tent, practice making a fire, and more! Then spend the night outside by the center. Ages 18+.

## Night Hike

**Friday, September 5 from 5:00-7:00 PM**

*At the Jackson County Recreation Trail, Preston*

Event held in conjunction with Preston Growth and Development. Free hot dog meal provided by the Preston Lions Club. Followed by a Nocturnal Animal program presented by Naturalist Macey Yaeger. After the program, enjoy a stroll along the trail, ask questions and enjoy nature. The hike will be approximately one mile on flat terrain.



## Fungi Foray

**Saturday, September 13 from 9:00-11:00 AM**

*At Maquoketa Caves State Park— Meet at Stone Shelter*  
Experts with the Prairie States Mushroom Club will lead a hike off trail through the forest to look for mushrooms. We will then come back to identify the mushrooms we find. All knowledge levels welcome!

## Monarch Tagging

**Sundays, September 7, 14, 21, 28 at 2:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Learn about the monarch butterfly's life cycle and migration to central Mexico. Then head out to the prairie to catch monarchs and participate in a citizen science project to place stickers on their wings.



## Hamilton Prairie Walk

**Saturday, September 20 at 2:00 PM**

*Ray Hamilton's Prairie, Codfish Hollow Road*

Enjoy a guided prairie hike through Hamilton's Prairie. It has been managed as a biological preserve for the past 35 years. Participants should be comfortable walking on rough terrain.



## Nature Through a Lens

**Saturday, September 27 from 9:00-10:00 AM**

*At Papke Wildlife Area near Miles, Iowa*

Join Naturalist Macey on a relaxing walk through the park. Explore Iowa's native habitats through a camera lens. Bring your phone or professional camera to take a little piece of nature home with you. As you walk, ask questions, share stories, tips or tricks, or just enjoy your time in nature taking photos. Open to all photography levels.

## Homeschool Series: KinderNature & Nature Tales

**Sept-Apr 3rd Thursday from 10:00-11:00 AM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

New this year: we will be hosting two separate homeschool programs each month. KinderNature is for elementary aged kids. Nature Tales is geared for preschool & kindergarten age children. Youth will have fun learning about nature!



## Water Quality Survey

**Friday, October 3 from 5:00-7:00 PM**

*At Prairie Creek Recreation Area, meet at Pavilion*

Join Naturalist Julia to learn about water quality and how we measure it. We will conduct water quality tests that will be uploaded to a national database and view quality of the ecosystem. Participants will get a chance to get in the water and collect data.



### **Night Hike & Harvest Moon Hoorah!**

**Saturday, October 4 from 6:00-11:00 PM**

*At Oakland Mill/Prairie Creek Recreation Area*

Part of the Maquoketa Spooktacular series of events the month of October! Enjoy a bonfire, s'mores, hot cider & cocoa at Oakland Mill. As the Harvest Moon rises, Conservation Staff will lead a Night Hike at Prairie Creek, starting at 6:45 PM.

### **Cyanotype (Sunprinting) Workshop**

**Sunday, October 5 from 2:00-4:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Cyanotype printing, or "sun printing," is a camera-less alternative to traditional photography that requires sunlight, the shadow of an object, and paper treated with an iron solution. The results are beautiful white and blue images. Join us for a tutorial, led by Brit Gray, on this centuries old technique! Materials (some from nature!) will be provided for participants to create their own prints. Cost is \$5.



### **Birding Hike: Green Island**

**Saturday, October 11 from 5:30-7:00 PM**

*Green Island Refuge, meet at large parking area*

We are hosting various citizen science projects this year. Join our bird citizen science effort with a short bird survey. Come learn basic bird ID and how you can help us learn more about birds by simply going out and finding them! This easy hike is great for any experience levels and will offer tips and tricks on bird ID. Bring your own binoculars, or borrow one of ours. Green Island is a great place for birding!!

### **Halloween Nature Craft**

**Sunday, October 19 from 1:00-3:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Bats, ghosts, and pumpkins, oh my! All ages welcome for this make and take Halloween craft. Come get creative and make your very own Halloween decorations using things found in nature! All craft supplies will be provided. Participants can bring their own nature elements to spookify!



### **Ribbon Cutting & Disc Golf Event**

**Saturday, TBD late October**

*At Prairie Creek Recreation Area*

Celebrate the completion of the Prairie Creek Enhancement Project with a ribbon cutting event. Disc golf and other activities will be part of the celebration!

### **Skull Hunt**

**Sunday, October 26 between 1:00-4:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Learn tips and tricks to ID animal skulls you might find outside. Then head outdoors on the prairie to find the hidden skulls! Kids and adults welcome. Kids that wear their Halloween costumes will get a treat!



### **Live Bird of Prey Presentation**

**Saturday, November 1 at 1:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Join us for a special program from the RARE group (Raptor Advocacy Rehabilitation and Education). This group is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation of Iowa's raptors. Participants will learn about diurnal and nocturnal birds, their similarities and differences, diets, habits, and more! Participants will also get the chance to see two of the RARE avian ambassadors!

### **Pine Needle Basket Class**

**Sunday, November 9 from 1:00-4:00 PM**

*Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Explore the lovely art form of pine needle baskets. Participants will make their own basket by coiling pine needles. Cost is \$10. Materials and instruction will be provided.

### **Archery**

**Saturday, November 15 from 1:00-3:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Get a chance to learn how to shoot a bow and arrow! This will be a come and go as you please program, but instruction will be provided the entire time. All equipment will be provided, but participants are encouraged to bring a leftover pumpkin to shoot at!



### **Mending Workshop**

**Saturday, November 22 from 1:00-3:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Join us for an afternoon of creativity and repair! Often times we lose our well loved clothes to the trash because they get snagged, ripped, or torn, but mending them can keep them out of the landfills, save us money, and add a bit of flair to our wardrobes! We will have needles and thread available, but participants can bring in their own supplies if desired. All you need to bring is clothes to fix! There will be a short presentation at the beginning with examples of ways to repair clothes.

Registration is **REQUIRED** at least 48 hours in advance for our programs.  
Register by calling (563) 652-3783 or email [conservation@jacksoncounty.iowa.gov](mailto:conservation@jacksoncounty.iowa.gov)

### **Recycled Gift Wrapping**

**Wednesday, December 17 from 4:00-7:00 PM**

*At the Hurstville Interpretive Center*

Have gifts left to be wrapped but ran out of wrapping paper? No worries! Stop by anytime between 4-7 and decorate your own wrapping paper from recycled materials. Either bring your presents and wrap and decorate them here, or take some home with you! We will have stamps and markers out, so feel free to bring your own leftover paper as well to decorate! Registration is not required.

### **Winter Solstice Luminary Walk**

**Sunday, December 21 from 5:00-7:00 PM**

*At Prairie Creek Recreation Area*

Celebrate the longest night of the year! Enjoy a campfire, hot cocoa, and walk the lighted trails as we celebrate the winter solstice and coming of winter.

### **OWLS Events (*Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls*)**

Coordinated in partnership with Dubuque & Jones County Conservation. **Programs are for adults.**

#### **Kayaking the Maquoketa River Thursday, Oct 9**

Paddle 8 miles from Iron Bridge to Spragueville.

#### **Sandhill Crane Migration Monday, November 10**

Day trip to Baraboo, Wisconsin to visit the Aldo Leopold Center, Leopold Shack, and witness the fall migration of thousands of sandhill cranes.

#### **Willow Baskets Friday, December 12**

Create a basket using willows. At the Hurstville Interpretive Center from 9:00-Noon.

*Registration is REQUIRED for OWLS events.*

# **Kid's Corner**

## ***Mesmerizing Mushroom Maze***

Mushrooms are neither plants nor animals. They belong to their own kingdom called Fungi.

Mushrooms, often called toadstools, are the fruiting bodies of certain fungi.

**Can you find your way through these tricky toadstools? Begin at the "Start" and see if you can make it to the "End"!**





# Friends of Jackson County Conservation

*The Friends of Jackson County Conservation brings people together through educational and recreational opportunities in partnership with the Jackson County Conservation Board and inspires people to understand and care for our environment*

## Join us for the Next Friends Meeting Tuesday, October 14

6:00 PM at the Hurstville Interpretive Center  
Potluck at 5:30 PM, tableware & beverages provided—bring a dish to share!



Agenda and minutes from last meeting will be sent via email a few days before the meeting.

Didn't get the email? Make sure we have up to date contact info for you!

Friends of JCC is instrumental in providing funding for improving county parks and providing materials and equipment for programming. Jackson County Conservation could not do what they do without the Friends' support.

Friends of JCC is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible and go towards projects and programs in conjunction with Jackson County Conservation.

Friends of JCC welcomes members and donors to get involved with ongoing activities. Join us for our next meeting to learn more!

## Friends host a food booth at Muster on the Maquoketa

The Jackson County Historical Society is hosting Muster on the Maquoketa again this year at the Jackson County fairgrounds on September 13 & 14. Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the American Civil War at the annual Muster on the Maquoketa! Join us for a weekend of living history, where you can witness thrilling battle reenactments, explore authentic military encampments, and learn about the daily lives of soldiers and civilians during this pivotal period in American history.



Friends of JCC is hosting a burger stand as a fundraiser. The booth will also help get our name out in the community more. If you'd like to help with the food booth, contact the Conservation office. Volunteers will be grilling burgers, selling burgers and chips, and keeping the water bottle refill station full. You'll be given a pass to get into the event at no cost so feel free to enjoy the activities before or after your shift. Shifts available include Saturday, Sept 13 from Noon - 2:00 PM AND 2:00 - 4:15 PM.

## Thank you!

Friends of Jackson County Conservation would like to say a BIG THANK YOU to all the donors and volunteers that have helped with the Sustainability efforts at the Maquoketa Farmers Market and providing food for Codfish Hollow concerts!!!!



Being part of the Maquoketa Farmers Market has been a great collaboration. We have been able to share the message about reducing our waste. Food served at the market is on compostable tableware. It is then brought to the Hurstville Center to be composted. Market attendees are also encouraged to bring their own reusable tableware!



Friends has been providing food for the band members at Codfish Hollow Barnstormers for several years. This has been a nice fundraiser for our group. A bonus for those who help—get free admission to a concert! If you are interested in being part of this fundraiser, please reach out to the Conservation office.





# A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

*Jackson County Conservation would like to **thank and acknowledge** the following individuals, organizations and businesses for their continued support and donations.*

**Volunteers**—Pam Bahr, Karen Manning, Ann Burns, Kenny Derganz, Nancy Flagel, Kevin Burns, Jim Dean, Sarah Hobbs, Mary Hayward, Deb Frieden, Jeff Tampir, Jennie Willcox, Shelby Davison, Jo Ellen Langerman, Carolyn Keck, Marie Rossman, Jeannette Hartung-Schroeder, Judy Bickford, Marilyn Willey, Jim England, Mike Griffin, Angie Lichter, Larry McDevitt, Jo Ellen Langerman, Ben Wagner

**Donations**—Larry Zeitel, Karen Manning, Patricia Grapevine, Marilyn Dean, Chris & Mara Nissen, Daryl & Kerry Schepers, James & Barbara Holstrom, Steve & Christine Tubbs, William Wentworth Memorial, Ryan Skoff, Jack Parmer, Carol Breuch, Jeanne Hoesley, Alvin Barker, Andrew Petal Pals

## Donations made in memory of:

*Chuck Jorgensen*



## Fungarium on Display at Hurstville Center Now Until the End of October

*We have a traveling exhibit visiting the Hurstville Center... a **Fungarium***

The fungarium showcases many of the magnificent mushrooms that we have here in Iowa. Fungi live most of their lives underground or in trees and can be hard to study. Get a closer look at them and learn a little more about our states timid toadstools.

*The exhibit is courtesy of the Prairie States Mushroom Club.*



## Conservation Board Members

Jim England	Maquoketa	563/652-3213
Mike Griffin	Springbrook	563/357-1736
Mary Hayward	Maquoketa	563/357-0814
Angie Lichter	Maquoketa	563/599-6573
Larry McDevitt	Maquoketa	319/541-6357

The Jackson County Conservation Board meets the third Tuesday of every month at 5:00 pm. Public welcome.

## Conservation Staff



Nathan Jones, Executive Director  
Sheila Root, Office Manager  
Jessica Wagner, Environmental Education Coordinator  
Macey Yaeger, Naturalist  
Julia Rodewald, Naturalist  
Jeannie Collins-Heer, Park Ranger/Roadside Manager  
Tony Vorwald, Natural Resources Ecologist  
Jerry Widel, Operation Technician  
Katelyn Yauslin, Park Ranger  
Isaac Anderson, Park Ranger

## Address & Contact Information

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Website:

[JacksonCCB.com](http://JacksonCCB.com)

<https://www.mycountyparks.com/county/jackson.aspx>  
[www.facebook.com/HurstvilleInterpretiveCenter](https://www.facebook.com/HurstvilleInterpretiveCenter)

## Office Hours / Hurstville Center

18670 63rd Street Maquoketa, IA 52060

Weekdays: Monday–Friday 9:00 am–4:00 pm

Weekends: Saturday & Sunday

April–October 12:00–5:00 pm;

November 12:00–4:00 pm

## Holidays:

OPEN Labor Day September 1

CLOSED Veteran's Day November 11

CLOSED Nov 27-30 for Thanksgiving

CLOSED Dec 24-25 for Christmas

CLOSED Dec 31-Jan 1 for New Years

CLOSED Weekends December-March

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Hurstville Interpretive Center  
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Maquoketa, IA 52060

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## JACKSON COUNTY CONSERVATION UP AND DOWN THE RIVER—Fall 2025 Newsletter

### **Big Work Being Done at Buzzard**

*By Tony Vorwald, Natural Resources Ecologist*

One of my favorite aspects of my job is finding ways to help improve the habitat quality and ecological health of Jackson County Conservations properties. Jackson County owns and manages some amazing areas that are truly ecological gems. Though our areas are amazing, we need science-driven management to keep and improve the health of our areas. A lot of the management work that I am talking about consists of invasive species removal, overabundant shade tolerant native tree removal from prairies/oak woodlands, and prescribed fire.

This past spring JCCB was awarded grant funds from the National Wild Turkey Federation's Super Fund grant program to conduct habitat management activities that will benefit wild turkeys. Which just so happens to be restoring and managing oak woodlands. This summer and fall habitat work funded by the National Wild Turkey Federation's grant program will be happening at Buzzard Ridge Wildlife Area. Most of this work will be conducted in the woodland on the riverside of the trail that leads to the river overlook. Overabundant mid story shade tolerant trees, like sugar maple, hackberry, and ironwood, will be removed. Following the tree removal, JCCB will be conducting a prescribed fire on this area in the fall. The area in question will look a lot different at first but in subsequent years we can expect to see more grasses, sedges, and wildflowers present themselves in this area making for better wild turkey and upland wildlife habitat.

***Thank you, National Wild Tukey Federation, for the generosity that helps support wildlife habitat management at Buzzard Ridge Wildlife Area.***

