

Iowa Ornithologist's Union
Final Grant Report
2018

1) Title of Project:

Outdoor Learning Environment Project at the Dragoon Trace Nature Center

2) Project Description

The Ringgold County Conservation Board's goal is to create an intentional outdoor learning environment with native species to attract pollinators and numerous bird species for public education. This will provide individuals the experience to immerse themselves into nature in a safe, comfortable environment while enhancing public knowledge of native plant species, pollinators and avian resources. Through displays and programs such as live bird programs with Rufous (permanently injured screech owl) and Slate (permanently injured American Kestrel), owl night hikes, identification classes, bird counts and mounted displays, the public will be exposed to the extraordinary avian world. The outdoor learning environment will highlight the diverse bird species in Ringgold County by providing visitors with prime viewing of these creatures in their natural habitat.

Ringgold County Conservation will help people of all ages understand the environment and become advocates of the natural world. Ringgold County Conservation is able to provide school and public programs with the educational materials and funding from this grant. An outdoor learning environment is not only a great resource for local communities, but a great destination and source of tourism for Ringgold County. The Iowa Ornithologists' grant has helped Ringgold County Conservation develop a unique outdoor learning environment around the Dragoon Trace Nature Center that will benefit all ages.

3) Project Goals:

- To Redefine Outdoor Classrooms or Learning Environments
- To Create an Intentional Space for Exploration, Inquiry and Learning
- To Empower Environmental Literacy and Education
- To Educate Iowans on wildlife and Natural Resources
- To Emphasize Education on Native Pollinators and Birds

4) Project Impact

Through the Iowa Ornithologist's Union, Ringgold County Conservation has been able to provide more diverse habitat that will benefit multiple species and improve viewing of these marvelous birds and pollinators to the public. This project will have long-lasting benefits for numerous species.

Funding from the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was used to create bird watching areas in the outdoor learning environment by planting native trees, along with tallgrass prairie for habitat. Native trees and prairie plugs were purchased for intentional habitat plantings to improve habitat quality for a diverse range of birds. These educational items will improve the quality of programming in Ringgold County and provide the public with a place to view and learn about the diverse species of birds in Iowa.





The Friends of Warren
County
Conservation

Making a connection between people and nature.

Annett Nature Center
15565 118th Avenue, Indianola, IA 50125-8852
(515) 961-6169 (515) 961-7100 (fax)
<http://www.warrencb.org/fwcc/fwcc.html>

Invoice

Bill to:
Ringgold County Conservation Board
2205 210th Street
Mount Ayr, IA 50854

40 plants @ \$4 each

Total Amount Due: \$160

Thank you for your purchase.

Make checks payable to:
FWCC
15565 118th Ave
Indianola, IA 50125

Dragoon Trace Nature Center

One Year Anniversary



Ringgold County Conservation Board

Annual Newsletter 2018

2205 210th St Mount Ayr, Iowa 50854 - 641-464-2787



Ringgold County Conservation Board and Staff

Chair – Jim Norris
Vice-Chair – Doug Frost
Secretary – Randy Bishop

Member – Susie Catanzareti
Member – Dale Walkup

Executive Director: Kate Zimmerman
Seasonal Staff: Cecil Dolecheck, Bill Stump,
Jake McCreary and Kaitlyn Dolecheck

Watch our Facebook and mycountyparks.com pages for updated events and postings!!

Monarch Tagging – September 1st at 10:00-11:30 AM

Nature Tots – September 8th at 10:00 -11:30AM

Yoga Hike – September 15th at 9:00 – 10:30 AM

SOAR Program – September 30th at 1:00 PM

Haunted Halloween Hike – October 20th at 5:30 – 10:00 PM

Holiday Lights in the Park – November 30th, December 1st, 7th, 8th, 15th from 5:30 – 9:00 PM



Ringgold County Conservation Takes Over The "OLD LAKE"



Ringgold County Conservation is excited to announce that they will be acquiring a new property currently known as the "Old Lake" from the City of Mount Ayr. The multiple public hearings about the property exchange were overwhelmingly supportive. We are excited to tackle this project and to be able to develop the area for the communities of Ringgold County!

So, what happens next??

You will begin to see a few immediate changes in maintenance at the "old lake" as staff starts working to enhance the recreational and natural aspects of the area. Long term plans for the area include cabins, shower house, lodge and more! These larger components will be accomplished with grants and donations.



Here is a little history about the "old lake".

In 1913 the public petitioned the city council for a new water system. The special election passed a bond issue and the 40 acres for the "old lake" was purchased and construction began in 1914. However, by 1938 Mount Ayr was struggling to keep up with the heavy demand for water, calling the "old lake" a mud puddle, not more than 5 feet deep at any given point. By 1939 another election was held and the public passed a mandate to construct a new lake named Loch Ayr.

DRAGON TRACE NATURE CENTER REGULAR OPERATING HOURS

Summer (April - October)
Monday - Tuesday • Closed
Wednesday - Friday • 9:00AM - 4:00PM
Saturday - Sunday • 9:00AM - 2:00PM

Winter (November - March)
Sunday - Tuesday • Closed
Wednesday - Friday • 9:00AM - 4:00PM
Saturday • 9:00AM - 2:00PM

THE NATURE CENTER WILL BE CLOSED ON COUNTY HOLIDAYS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Phone: 641-464-2983 Email: Ringgoldccb@ringgoldcounty.us

Creature Feature - North American Bullfrog
Meet Our Friend Fen!



Fen is our bullfrog with a bit of an attitude at the Dragoon Trace Nature Center. Many kids (and adults) can be seen and heard fleeing from her aquarium on a regular basis. Fen loves to leap towards her many admirers. This often surprises our visitors causing mixed reactions! There is no doubt that Fen has become one of our most beloved education ambassadors. Please enjoy learning a little more about Fen and our other Iowa bullfrogs.

The North American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) is Iowa's largest frog species reaching 8 inches in body length and over a foot long with legs outstretched. The bullfrog's skin color can be anywhere from light green to dark olive to nearly brown or black.

Bullfrogs require permanent bodies of water in which to breed and live. Lakes, ponds, oxbows, Mississippi River backwaters, and sometimes slow parts of large rivers are favorite haunts.

Bullfrogs are voracious and eat anything they can fit into their mouths. Aside from smaller prey, they have been known to eat other frogs and toads, tadpoles, fish, small snakes, and turtles, even small birds and rodents.

Female bullfrogs lay 10,000 to 20,000 eggs in large masses. The tadpoles take two years to transform. They are the largest tadpoles found in Iowa. They are green with dark spotting on the body and tail.

Bullfrogs are active day and night, although movement along water courses usually occurs at night and overland movements often take place on rainy nights. Otherwise, adults usually do not move far, staying in or close to their home pond. Some young bullfrogs may move considerable distances to find new homes.

When approached, bullfrogs may slip into the water and swim away silently, but more often they make a fantastic leap.



**Thank you to our Wonderful Volunteers and Donors!!
 We couldn't do it without you!!**

Debbie and Terry Munyon, Matt Munyon, Sophia West, Dawn & Eric Dolecheck, Becca Dolecheck, Mike & Nancy Ford, Steve & Sue Trullinger, Keith & Jamie Miller, Andy & Jennifer Kellner, Doug & Gina Still, Newton Family, Ron & Martha Landphair, Donna Melvin, Gerald & Geraldine McLain, Harvey & Marilyn Ploeger, Dalton Kinder, Caroline McAlexander

Ringgold Conservation Foundation Members

Shane Bishop, Eric Friedrich, Marcy Gregg
 Jessi Grose, Jim Norris



Dragoon Trace Nature Center Wish List

The following items are needed at the Nature Center.

- * Bird Seed and Suet
- * Children's Books about Nature (Iowa Species)
- * Bird Houses/Feeders
- * Scissors for kids
- * Historical Items (Farming/Native American, Etc.)

They usually emit a loud high-pitched "meap!" and make several jumps over the surface of the water before diving and remaining submerged for several minutes.

Adults and tadpoles alike overwinter at the bottom of their home lake or pond. The adults are inactive at this time, but the tadpoles may swim and even feed under the ice.



A valid fishing license is required to possess this species for bait or food.

For more information visit: www.herpnet.net

Outdoor Learning Environment

Our Goal!

To provide a unique opportunity to Iowans that builds community value by creating accessible and vibrant outdoor learning spaces that enhance people's relationship with the outdoors and inspires people with Iowa's native landscape.

The landscaping around the nature center is complete!!! The outdoor learning environment features butterfly gardens, rain gardens, walking trails, bird watching station, benches, pond, presentation amphitheater, group presentation areas, sculptures and educational trail signage.

This project has been completed in stages and will continue to see changes and upkeep each year. We would like to thank Mr. Giles's class for making the sculptures, the HELP Youth Pod Grant, the South Central Community Foundation Grant, the SWI REC Operation Round-up Grant, the Iowa Ornithologist Union Grant, the Wildlife Diversity Grant and the USFWS for helping to fund this project!



Coming Soon to the Dragoon Trace Nature Center!!



Iowa Hunters: Leading the Way traveling exhibit will be on display at the nature center this fall!

October and November 2018

Lead poisoning is a serious threat to wildlife. When birds and mammals eat the remains of an animal shot with lead ammunition, lead can enter their bloodstream, causing potential long-term suffering and eventually, death.

There is no safe level of lead, which is a toxic heavy metal. Lead has already been widely removed from paint, gasoline, toys and water pipes. Removing lead from the environment helps protect wildlife.

Lead slugs (type of ammunition most used for deer hunting in Iowa) shatter on impact. The bodies of animals shot with lead ammunition often contain toxic, microscopic lead fragments far from the initial point of entry. Solid copper slugs leave a clean path with few or no fragments.

COMING SPRING 2019 – SNAKE EXHIBIT

Slither into the Dragoon Trace Nature Center to view an amazing traveling exhibit about snakes. Whether snakes make you nervous or if you are totally fascinated by them, this exhibit is for you. Don't miss the opportunity to view this museum quality exhibit in your own neighborhood for free!



Created by Purdue University, purchased and brought to Iowa by Dallas County Conservation.