



Conservation News



A Publication of the Muscatine County Conservation Board

Volume 40 No. 1 Spring/Summer 2026

Deep Lakes Campground - 22 Full-Hook-Up Sites - Opening April 15, 2026

There was a chill in the air on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. when a crowd of 30 people gathered at the new Deep Lakes Campground for a ribbon cutting ceremony.

This \$1.5-Million improvement project is sure to be a busy place come April 15 when the 2026 camping season officially kicks off. The area is reservable in advance online for \$40/site/night at MyCountyParks.com/County/Muscatine.

The Deep Lakes Campground features 22 full-hook-up campsites with water, septic, and 20-30-50-amp electric service at each site. There is a 13' wide concrete pad (around 80 feet long) for the campers to sit on and a 13' wide gravel pad adjacent for the campfire ring and picnic table.

Campsites 1-11 are back-in only. Sites 12-22 are pull-through sites. We have two pairs of buddy sites; 13 & 14, and 15 & 16. They are arranged so that the campers pull in from opposite directions so that they face each other as "buddies!" A modern shower house with four family style restrooms is available

for campers to use. Each has a toilet, shower, and sink.

Bicycle Trail - a mile and a quarter trail that bisects Deep Lakes Park and goes right past the campground. Campers are encouraged to bring a bicycle to utilize the trail, that easily connects to the 4 reservable cabins (where friends might choose to stay), the swimming beach and accessible fishing dock, both at Lake Chester. The trail also connects to the Greater Muscatine Trail system offering a nice long biking adventure (11 plus miles, one-way).

Deep Lakes Park is a 435-acre County Park with over 120-acres of clear lakes. The area is open to fishing, paddling, boating (trolling motors only), camping, cabin rentals, and swimming ONLY in the designated beach area.

Future plans include building an on-site maintenance building and a disc golf course with plans for both underway.

The Deep Lakes Campground is located on the NW corner of the park at 2488 41st Street.



The Ribbon Cutting was held on Monday, February 2, 2026! Holding the ribbon was County Supervisor, Scott Sauer (left) and Julie Jindrich (right) who serves on both the Conservation Board and Foundation. Mike Schulte, Chair of the Muscatine County Conservation Board had the honor of cutting the red ribbon!

Eastern Bluebird

Did You Know Facts

- Bluebirds have excellent vision, being able to spot insects up to 60 ft. away.
- There are three species of bluebirds in the U.S.; Eastern, Mountain, and Western.
- The females build the nest and do all of the incubation of the eggs.
- The oldest bluebird on record was about 10.5 years old.
- February is the best time to clean out your bluebird boxes for the next nesting season.
- Studies have shown that some broods will stick around to help feed the young of the next brood.
- The Eastern Bluebird is the state bird for Missouri and New York.
- You can attract bluebirds to your backyard by adding mealworms to your feeding stations.
- Snakes, falcons, hawks, owls, and non-native species like House Sparrows and Starlings are all predators for adults and young.
- Bluebird trails were established during the 60's and 70's and greatly increased the number of bluebirds across ranges.



Animal Sponsorships

There has been a lot of participation in our Animal Adoption program lately!

All of the ambassador animals at the Environmental Learning Center are available to adopt for \$100 each, for a whole year. With your donation you will be providing food, care, and enrichment.

Laura M. is sponsoring “Mr. B”, the Blanding’s Turtle and “Louie”, the Speckled Kingsnake. She worked with both animals during an Externship with us and became very fond of both of them.

Rita M. is sponsoring “Kajika”, our Fox Snake. Rita is a frequent visitor at the Environmental Learning Center, and likes to check in on Kajika regularly.

Alisa B. is sponsoring both, “Skipper”, the Red-Tailed Hawk and “Nadie”, the Barred Owl. Alisa just happened to stop in one day to visit from out of town and decided to support this great program for the animals.

If you are wondering what to get for that person who has everything, an animal lover, or just plain hard to buy for, this would make a great gift!

A business or group could get together and adopt too!

Contact our office or stop in during regular business hours for more information. We can give you an up close visit with most of the animals and tell you about them.

Environmental Learning Center

Visit the ELC at Discovery Park

FREE and open to the public!

3300 Cedar Street, Muscatine, Iowa 52761

Hours: Mon. - Fri. from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sat. & Sun. from 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Closed most holidays.

Highlights include:

- Two 1,200-gallon aquariums with native fish
- Live animal displays
- Over 100 animal mounts
- Natural history exhibits
- Hands-on kids area
- Live raptors & MORE!

Rita and Kajika



Become a Friend



Thank you to all our “Friends” whose donations to the Muscatine County Conservation Foundation support the development and enhancement of environmental education and conservation projects in Muscatine County.

The names of all donors go into our donor book and those who donate \$250 or more receive a plaque on our donor wall located in the Environmental Learning Center. Please include the form below with your donation and become a “Friend” today.

<i>Mike & Phyllis Avesing</i>	<i>Patricia Drake</i>
<i>David & Barbara Chown</i>	<i>William Angell</i>
<i>David & Alice Jones</i>	<i>Nancy Pagel</i>
<i>Larry & Judy Carter</i>	<i>Sarah Lande</i>
<i>Jeff & Katie Hammond</i>	<i>Brenda Meineke</i>

Muscatine County Conservation Foundation

The Muscatine County Conservation Foundation was formed in 1988 with the purpose of supporting the development and enhancement of environmental education and conservation projects in Muscatine County.

The Muscatine County Conservation Foundation is a nonprofit, contributions are tax-deductible.

Friends are recognized in our quarterly newsletter.



There is also a beautiful butterfly display in the Learning Center that is updated annually to thank our Friends and show our gratitude.

Please consider a gift today! Thank you for supporting conservation projects in Muscatine County!

Newsletter Contact Information

To help save on Newsletter expenses, we would like to update our mail and e-mail information. If you have moved or changed your email address, please contact us or email us with new information. Thank you!



Muscatine County Conservation Board
P.O. Box 109
Muscatine, IA 52761
563-264-5922
Conservation@muscatinecountyiowa.gov



A Gift For the Conservation Foundation

I would like to become a Friend,
please accept my donation.

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$10—\$49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner | \$50—\$99 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$100—\$249 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian | \$250—\$499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward | \$500—\$999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$1000 + |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to donate my time. | |

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Thank you for your support!

Please make checks payable to:
Muscatine County Conservation Foundation
PO Box 109
Muscatine, IA 52761

Programs and Special Events



Earth Day Clean - Up Saturday, April 18th at 9:00 a.m.

Let's meet at the Beach Parking lot off of Pettibone Avenue and spend the morning cleaning up Deep Lakes Park. Snacks and water will be provided. Please bring gloves and a grabber if you have one.

Arbor Day Tree Giveaway (Tentative) April 25— 8:00-9:30 a.m.- Discovery Park Shelter #1

Back again this year, let's celebrate Arbor Day (a day late) with a tree giveaway!

We will have 275 saplings to give away, FREE! Limit 2 per household. First come, first served, no reservations. Species included will be Hackberry, Red Oak, Eastern White Pine, Wild Plum, Redbud, and Aronia berry.

All trees should be planted on the same day you pick them up. Planting information will be available. If there is a date change, information will be posted on the Muscatine County Conservation Facebook page.



Mother's Day Weekend Foray - Saturday, May 9th - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Meet at Saulsbury Lodge parking lot.



We're hunting for morels! Come join us for a fun hike and mushroom foray through Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area. We may highlight other wild edibles in season. Trails can be "squishy," so please wear hiking shoes that can take on dirt. This program is entirely outdoors, so please dress for the weather.

Pearl City Buckskinner Rendezvous - Discovery Park - Free, Family Event.

Friday & Saturday, May 15 & 16 - 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, May 17 - 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

Come experience the 1800's fur trade era and the history of the mountain man. There will be demonstrations, knife and tomahawk competitions. Special appearance by Buffalo Bill.



Twilight Paddles at Deep Lakes Park

Saturday, May 30 - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 25 - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 26 - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 27 - 7:30 p.m.

Friday, August 28 - 7:30 p.m.

Let's watch the sun set and the moon rise from a kayak on Lake Chester. Canoes, kayaks, and lifejackets are available to borrow, or bring your own. Please bring a light that can be attached to your boat. Meet at the Lake Chester boat ramp. **Pre-registration is required** by calling 563-264-5922 or emailing Michelle at michelle.berns@muscatinecountyia.gov

Andy Hartsock Memorial Fishing Derby and Clinic Saturday, June 6th – 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



Come learn the basics of fishing with several education stations and then put your newfound fishing knowledge to use and participate in the Kids Fishing Derby. Prizes awarded for several categories. This event is for ages 3-18! Lunch will be served in the playground shelter at noon for those who participate. If you would like to participate in the fishing derby, bring all of your fishing gear plus bait, there will only be a few poles that can be borrowed. **Pre-registration is requested.**

Check-in starts at 8:30 the day of the event at the front pond. Pre-registration forms will be available at MuscatineCountyConservation.com and at the Environmental Learning Center.

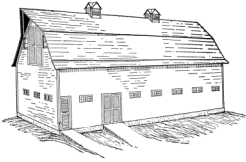
Programs and Special Events

Live Animals at the Saulsbury Campground - Saturday - June 13th - 6:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist and learn about amphibians and reptiles who live in Iowa.

Meet near the campground hosts' site #20, across from the shower house.

The Old Barn - Discovery Park - Saturday, June 20th - 11:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.



100th Anniversary Celebration and Open House at the Old Barn in Discovery Park.

Live animals, Mountain Man display, food available.

Watch Facebook for the time and updated list of events.

Live Animals - Deep Lakes Campground - Saturday - July 11th - 6:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist and learn about amphibians and reptiles who live in Iowa.

Meet near the campground host site #22.



Water, Water, Water - Deep Lakes Campground - Saturday, August 8th - 4:30 p.m.

Join a naturalist to discover what makes water at Deep Lakes so crystal clear. We'll explore the incredible water cycle and the human impacts on water quality in Iowa. We'll also have some fun cooling off with water games. Meet near the campground host site #22.



Hunter Education - Environmental Learning Center - August 29 - 9:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Anyone born after January 1, 1972 who wants to purchase a hunting license in Iowa must have successfully completed a Hunter Education course. Minimum age is 12. Class is free, but limited to 35 students. You must register online at www.gooutdoorsiowa.com then pick up a workbook at the Environmental Learning Center. The review questions at the end of the workbook should be completed prior to the class. Students need to bring the completed workbook, a water bottle, and a sack lunch.



Monarch Tagging - Environmental Learning Center Saturday, September 12th - 1:30 p.m.

Learn all about Monarch Butterflies and their incredible migration all the way to Mexico and then help with the research by tagging butterflies.

Wear long pants and bring a net if you have one.



Summer Nature Camps for Kids

General Summer Nature Camp Info



- * The registration form is available at the Environmental Learning Center or on our website MuscatineCountyConservation.com
- * Registration will begin March 15, 2026
- * Signed registration form and payment are required to be registered for camp.
- * Camps may include outdoor exploration, hikes, games, stories, crafts, and lots of fun!
- * All camps meet at the Environmental Learning Center. We will provide transportation to and from any other areas we visit.
- * Snacks are provided for any camps over one hour in length.
- * Campers should bring a water bottle and wear clothes that can get wet and dirty. Please wear sturdy shoes, no flip-flops.
- * Refunds are only made if we have to cancel the camp.



Polliwog Playtime

9:00 a.m. - 18 mo. - 2.5 years
 10:00 a.m. - 2.5 years - 4 years
 Environmental Learning Center
 Maximum 12/per session
 \$5.00/session

Hello Sun!	June 15
Wind Wonders	June 29
Rain & Puddles	July 13
Clouds & Sky	July 27
Celebrating Weather	August 10



Knee-High Naturalists

9:00 a.m. or 10:00 a.m.
 Ages: 4-5 years old
 Environmental Learning Center
 Maximum 12/session
 \$5.00/session

Hellos Sun!	June 8
Wind Wonders	June 22
Rain & Puddles	July 6
Clouds & Sky	July 20
Celebrating Weather	August 3

Toddlers, bring your favorite adult to Nature Camp! Activities are designed to help our youngest explorers enjoy nature through hands-on activities, stories, crafts, games, and activities.

Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Pre-registration is required.



Get ready for a great adventure! We will have fun exploring nature together at Discovery Park. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Pre-registration is required.

Summer Nature Camps

Chipmunk Camp

Kids who just completed K or 1st grade

9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

\$15.00/session

Maximum 16/session

Discover Water	June 16
Discover Astronomy	June 30
Discover Birds	July 28
Discover Insects	August 4



Kestrel Camp

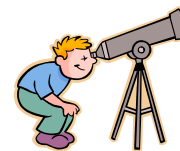
Kids who just completed 2nd or 3rd grade

9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

\$15.00/session

Maximum 16/session

Discover Water	June 17
Discover Astronomy	July 1
Discover Birds	July 29



All Chipmunk Camps will stay at Discovery Park and the Environmental Learning Center.

Meet at the Environmental Learning Center and travel to Muscatine County natural areas.

Otter Camp

Kids who just completed 4th or 5th grade

9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

\$15.00/session

Maximum 16/session

Discover Water	June 18
Discover Astronomy	July 2
Discover Birds	July 30



Outdoor Recreation Camp

Kids who just completed 6th - 8th grade

9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

\$20.00/session

Maximum 16/session

Explore Big Sand Mound	June 19
Explore Odessa	July 10
Explore the Cedar River	July 24

Otter Camps will meet at the Environmental Learning Center and travel to Muscatine County natural areas.

Outdoor Recreation Camps will meet at the Environmental Learning Center and travel to Muscatine County natural areas.

Meet Tobias

Tobias and his mom stopped into the Environmental Learning Center to donate a very old book that he had found while they were out thrifting one day.

It is a vintage stamp collector's book that is filled with a lot of nature stamps inside.

This is a very nice addition to our library of nature books.

Thanks Tobias!



Online Reservations

For Cabins, Shelters, the Saulsbury Lodge and Campgrounds at Saulsbury & Deep Lakes Park



Picnic Shelters: We have six reservable shelters. These are great for summer birthdays, reunions, youth and religious groups. There are 3 shelters at Discovery Park, 2 at Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area, and 1 at Jack Shuger Memorial Park.

Campgrounds: Campers wishing to stay in the main campground at Saulsbury or in the new Deep Lakes Campground will need to make online reservations. Reservations must be made a least 3-days in advance. Once reserved, the Park Rangers will place an orange reserved card in the camp pedestal. If a site is not reserved or marked with an orange card, the site is available on a first come, first served basis on a one or two night basis.

The River Campground and Tent Only areas at Saulsbury will remain first come, first served.

Cabins: There are 4 modern cabins at Deep Lakes Park that are reservable online. Simply log onto the site, choose if you want a one or two-bedroom cabin and find available dates.

Saulsbury Lodge: The Lodge will continue to be available for day use groups, and weekend weddings. Check the website for openings and make your reservations. Please note: weddings must book the Lodge for 3 days and pay the extra \$40 wedding fee.

For more info or to make a reservation:

MyCountyParks.com/County/Muscatine

Conservation@MuscatineCountyIowa.gov

563-264-5922

MuscatineCountyConservation.com

Facebook: [MuscatineCountyConservationBoard](https://www.facebook.com/MuscatineCountyConservationBoard)

Visit the office at Discovery Park

if you are having trouble or need assistance.

Deep Lakes Campground 2488 41st St S, Muscatine IA 52761



- Buddy Sites are color coded with each other.
- Sites 12-21 are pull-through.
- All sites: 20-30-50 amp electric, water, sewer hook-up.





Spring & Summer Holiday Closings **2026**

The Conservation Board offices and Environmental Learning Center will be closed in honor of the following holidays:

Easter - Sunday, April 5, 2026

Memorial Day - Monday, May 25, 2026

County Holiday - Friday, July 3, 2026

Independence Day - Saturday, July 4, 2026

Labor Day - Monday, September 7, 2026



Thank you to all those who generously gave time, talent, funding and/or materials to help make our programs, projects, and areas better than ever.

- Lurysa Yiloliz* - Newsletter preparation
- Yuliia Zozulyak* - Newsletter preparation
- Oleksandr Zozulyak* - Newsletter preparation
- Jerry Heater* - Fletched arrows for archery
- Don Pauken* - Fishing rods & reels
- Ivan Lenz* - Monetary donation
- Mary Pat Brooke* - Monetary donation
- Sheryl Payne* - Monetary donation
- Nancy Brennen* - Monetary donation
- Scott Sauer* - Owl & hawk food
- Michael & Greta Wedell* - Monetary donation
- All Seasons Glass* - RARE Sponsor and Eagles & Ivories Events

Memorials & Tributes

Halloween Drive –Through Sponsors

- Community Bank & Trust*
- Lee Agency*
- Hy-Vee Grocery Store*
- Walmart Supercenter–Muscatine*
- Trucks Unlimited*
- Skip Hitchcock*
- All of the campers who decorated their campers and campsites.*



SAVE THE DATE FOR 2026 - OCTOBER 17th!

A Monetary donation was made

In Memory of Robert F. DeSpeigelaere.

An Oak tree was adopted in Discovery Park

In Memory of Andy Hartsock.

A Maple tree was adopted in Discovery Park

In Memory of Timothy Baars.

A Maple tree was adopted in Discovery Park

In Memory of R. Charles & Donna Schreurs and Floyd & Ruth Umbanhowar.

A Maple tree was adopted in Discovery Park

In Honor of the Schreurs Family.



If You Build Them... by Luke Hart, MCCB Naturalist

Voices of spring are returning to Iowa, and territorial lines are being drawn for what is surely the busiest time of an adult bird's year—nesting season. Birds all over Iowa are coming out of winter-mode and gearing up for their annual Nest Fest. This spring we'd like to show our love for a very special little passerine, the Eastern Bluebird. Even more so, we'd like to say "thank you" to local Eagle Scout, Aaron Sparks, and Troop 426 for giving bluebirds a good, nesting chance here at Discovery Park.

Sparks first contacted Muscatine County Conservation Board (MCCB) staff in the summer of 2024, asking if there were any projects that he and his troop could do that would benefit our parks and recreation spaces. After a couple of brainstorming meetings with MCCB naturalists, Aaron decided that he would take on the addition of a new bluebird trail. His project was designed to give bluebirds secure and attractive nesting sites where fewer natural nest cavities were available. The rest would be up to the birds. The only question now is...will the bluebirds use them?

Around the first of March, migrating Eastern bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*), native to North America, begin returning to Iowa from their wintering grounds in the southeastern US and Mexico to claim or reclaim their nest sites. It should be noted that not all Eastern bluebirds migrate: a considerable number of them remain in Iowa through the winter months, feeding on berries when no insects are available. But, whether they're year-round residents or migrants, all bluebirds are cavity nesters. They will seek out tree cavities or human-made nest boxes to use as shelter for their family. Sparks's nest box design came from recommendations by the National Audubon Society—a world-renowned birding organization—and provides ample space for mom/dad and 2-7 babies. However, it's not just about design; location is also key.

Bluebirds prefer nest sites near open fields or woodland clearings, where they can hunt plenty of insects (their main diet source). Males of the species also compete for these prized nests, so boxes must be separated by at least 300 feet (length of a football field). Bluebirds must also compete with other bird species who find these nest boxes ideal. Sparks's plan covers this interspecific competition by installing the boxes in sets of two: one box for a bluebird and one for someone else (e.g. wrens or sparrows). Boxes can easily be relocated if necessary to minimize negative interactions between species.

By May, nesting season is in full swing and will continue through July. Females almost exclusively are the nest builders and egg incubators, while males provide food and protection. Bluebird parents feed their young a protein-rich diet of insects, which are collected from ground level in short-grassed areas. Another perk of the nest boxes is that it allows MCCB staff to monitor the progress and success of the bluebirds.

This is a wonderful opportunity for school-aged kids to explore bird nesting behavior. It may even provide a neat monitoring/research project for interested high schoolers. By three weeks of age, young bluebirds will have fledged the nest, at which point they must begin learning to care for themselves. Adults continue their care until the fledglings are completely independent. By the end of nesting season adults will have begun the molting process—the annual loss and regrowth of feathers. These new feathers will last through the following breeding season. By autumn the nest is empty and the young dispersed, and all bluebirds in Iowa must prepare again for winter’s chill by migrating or finding a local sweet spot with lots of berries.

The good news is that adult Eastern bluebirds are faithful to each other and their nest sites and will return year after year. The young do not imprint strongly on their birthplace, but we can wish them well in finding their own homes when their time comes. Perhaps you can help them out in the same way with a nest box of your own? Either way, please be sure to visit Discovery Park and keep an eye for bluebirds on the trail. Thank you again to Aaron Sparks and Troop 426 for your contribution to wildlife conservation.



For more information on eastern bluebirds, I recommend the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, as both have excellent websites full of educational materials.

MUSCATINE COUNTY
CONSERVATION BOARD
3300 CEDAR STREET
PO BOX 109
MUSCATINE, IA 52761

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
MUSCATINE, IA
Permit No. 71

MUSCATINE COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

BOARD MEMBERS

Mike Schulte	Chairperson
Jeff Snyder	Vice-chairperson
Karen Hartman	Member
Sherry Seright	Member
Julie Jindrich	Member

The Muscatine County Conservation Board meets the third Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. Meetings are held at the Environmental Learning Center, 3300 Cedar Street in Muscatine. The public is welcome to attend.

If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or handicap, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Muscatine County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

STAFF

Katie Hammond	Director
Michelle Berns	Naturalist II
Luke Hart	Naturalist
Kent Kaufman	Operations Supervisor
Ryne Brimeyer	Park Officer
Kristin Neeld	Maint. Tech./Park Officer
Trevor Ebeling	Maint. Tech./Park Officer
Lori Dietrich	Office Manager
Dave Schuler	Learning Center Assistant

Contact us at:

3300 Cedar Street, PO Box 109

Muscatine, IA 52761

P (563) 264-5922

conservation@muscatinecountyia.gov

www.MuscatineCountyConservation.com

