

EARTHTONES

A BLENDING OF NATURE'S NEWS



Spring 2024



Summer 2024 Day Camp Registration

Registration for our summer day camps opened on April 1st. We were completely blown away by the community, and the support and enthusiasm they showed us. For the first time ever, our summer day camps filled up within the first two days of registration being open. We would not be able to host these camps without the interest of the community. As a result, we are able to host 8 different camps, and reach close to 160 kids in preschool through eighth grade. This helps us to achieve our goal of introducing kids to the outdoors, while planting the seed for them to grow into stewards of the environment.

This Issue:

Summer 2024 Day Camps

Page 1

Spring Calendar

Page 2

Rattlesnake or Foxsnake?

Page 3

Spring I Spy Activity

Page 4

Iowa Project AWARE

Page 5

Morels in May

Page 6



Spring Calendar

May 24th

At Dusk

Shelter #3

Movie Night at the Park

Join us for our first movie night of the year, to kick off summer and the 2024 camping season. The movie will be played at Shelter #3 (the old soccer fields) beginning at dusk. We will kick things off with the 1993 classic *The Sandlot*. In this film, one boy becomes part of the gang, nine boys become a team, and their leader becomes a legend by confronting the terrifying mystery beyond the right field wall. Make sure to bring a chair or blanket along with your favorite movie snacks!

May 29th

9:00-9:30 AM

CEC

Toddler Time

Join us for our first Toddler Time of the year. This program is for the littles. Toddlers will have the opportunity to learn all about reptiles. They will be introduced to the turtles and snake living at the nature center. Kids will have the opportunity to touch and feel the live reptiles, as well as some turtle shells and snake skin. Questions? Give us a call at 319.657.2400.

June 21st

At Dusk

Shelter #3

Movie Night at the Park

Join us for our second movie night of the summer. This month, we will be playing the 1987 classic *Overboard*. This film follows a demeaning, wealthy socialite who suffers from amnesia after falling from her yacht. She is taken in by a widowed father of four, who claims she's his wife. This is one you won't want to miss. Please give us a call at 319.657.2400 if you have any questions or concerns.

Washington County Conservation Board

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Members: Craig Capps

Bill Nickell

Barb Donkersloot

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Staff: Zach Rozmus | Executive Director

Megan Jorgensen | Naturalist

Randi Brase | Activities Director

Fritz Engel | Maintenance Supervisor

Cody Smith | Ranger/Technician

Brett Johnson | Ranger/Technician

Jacob Adrian | Maintenance Tech.



Rattlesnake or Foxsnake? How Do You Know?

By: Megan Jorgensen,
Naturalist

Spring has sprung! Therefore, many of our cold-blooded critters are coming out of their winter hibernation; this includes snakes. Often times, many common snakes are misidentified by people as venomous rattlesnakes, when confronted with live animals or a photo. Unfortunately, this can instill unnecessary fear in people. Though there are some species that appear similar to rattlesnakes, there are easy ways to tell them apart!

It should be noted that though rattlesnakes have fangs and venom, and pose a danger if threatened, they are a calm and docile species, most commonly found in northeast Iowa. Some of the lookalike species in residence in Iowa, are the Fox Snake, Bullsnae, Common Watersnake, Prairie Kingsnake, and the Milksnake. Of all of them, the Fox Snake is the most commonly misidentified snake in Iowa.

Found nearly statewide, the Fox Snake often mimics a rattlesnake rattle by vibrating their tails. They do this when agitated or warm. Using it as a defense mechanism, Fox Snakes are effective in scaring off potential predators and humans. Fox Snakes and Prairie Kingsnakes are

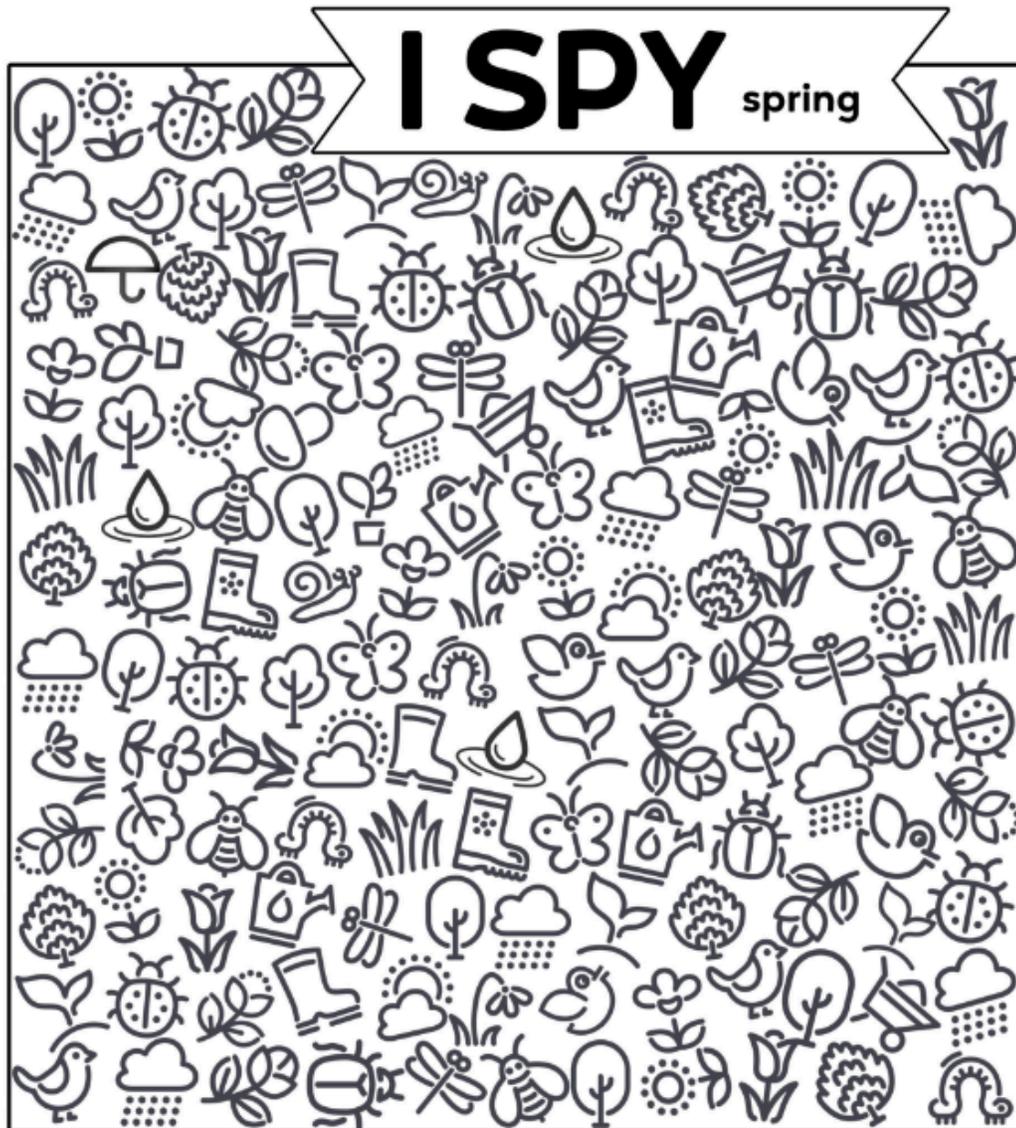
both brown spotted snakes with fairly narrow heads and necks. In contrast, Timber Rattlesnakes have a constricted neck and wide head, with dark bands on their bodies.

Bullsnaes have a narrow head without a neck constriction. Plus, they have a dark band through their eye, and dark spots on their bodies. More similar looking to rattlesnakes, Common Watersnakes have bands with highly variable coloration, neck constriction, and diamond shaped heads. Unlike rattlesnakes, they are only found in or around water.

Looking closely at a rattlesnake, you will notice they have a slit or cat-eye pupil, whereas our harmless lookalike snakes have round pupils. Harmless snakes are also lacking a rattle! Rattlesnake rattles are incredibly conspicuous and seldom missing. The next time you come across a snake in the wild, do not panic! Stay calm, and remember it is most likely uncommon. If you are feeling brave, stop into the nature center to visit our resident Fox Snake Mama. We will most definitely let you hold her.



Spring I Spy Activity



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| 2 | | 4 | | 4 | | 5 | | 4 | | 5 | | 7 | | 4 | | 6 | | 5 | |
| 1 | | 6 | | 7 | | 1 | | 3 | | 6 | | 7 | | 4 | | 7 | | 5 | |
| 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 6 | | 2 | | 7 | | 5 | | 9 | | 6 | | 3 | |



JULY 7-12, 2024
SKUNK RIVER

What is Iowa Project AWARE? AWARE stands for “A Watershed Awareness River Expedition.” Iowa Project AWARE is an educational canoeing event, where participants paddle down a different river in Iowa every summer, while cleaning the waterway by removing trash. This year, Washington County has the unique opportunity to be apart of Iowa Project AWARE.

This year’s event is scheduled to take place July 7th-July 12th along the Skunk River. The route will begin along the Keokuk and Washington County borders, and end just before the Mississippi River in Des Moines County. After each day of cleaning the river, volunteers will gather back in camp, where they will enjoy educational programs and interactive activities. Focus is on watershed awareness and outdoor skills.

The public is welcome and encouraged to attend in-camp programs. Registration is not required. Registration is required however, if you wish to participate in the on-river cleanup. In the 20 years since this event started, over 6,000 volunteers have removed 489 tons of trash from 1,429 miles of river. 81% of all trash

Iowa Project AWARE Coming to Washington County

By: Megan Jorgensen, Naturalist

Source: Iowa Project AWARE

was recycled.

Whether you can join for an evening program, one day on the river, or the entire weeklong expedition, Iowa Project AWARE volunteers can expect to leave with an improved understanding of the Skunk River, the beautiful communities that call it home, and a rejuvenated sense of appreciation for local watersheds.

On Monday, July 8th, at 4:30 pm, I will be presenting a program on Turtles of Iowa. Specifically, I will provide general information about turtles. I will be bringing along some special guests; three of our resident turtles at the nature center, a painted turtle, a snapping turtle, and a red-eared slider. All three can be found statewide in Iowa.

If you would like more information, or are interested in participating in the event, reach out to Event Director Sophie Van Zee, at sophie@iowaprojectaware.org. You may also visit their website at www.iowaprojectaware.org.

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WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
2943 HWY 92
AINSWORTH, IA 52201

Electronic Service Requested

Summer Center Hours

Tuesday-Thursday:
8:00 AM-4:00 PM

Friday-Saturday:
9:00 AM-5:00 PM

Sunday-Monday:
Closed

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. Postage
Paid
Kalona IA 52247
Permit #7

Spring is the perfect time to get outside! One of the greatest pastimes in Iowa in spring, is morel mushroom hunting. They are also quite the delicacy. With warmer temperatures and spring showers, morel mushrooms seem to pop up literally overnight. Whether new to mushroom hunting, or a seasoned veteran, there are several tips to take into consideration before heading out to the woods.

Look for signs of morels near dead or dying trees, especially elm, aspen, ash, and oak trees. Morels have a distinct look. They have a cone-shaped cap and crevices like a sponge. If you split it open, it should be hollow inside. The best time to hunt for mushrooms, is when the daily temperature is consistently in the 60s, with lows in the 40s. Be mindful of other hunting seasons, know the terrain, and be prepared for any and all weather conditions. Good luck hunting!

Morels in May