

EARTHTONES

A BLENDING OF NATURE'S NEWS



Autumn 2024



Halloween Hike 2024

Join us for our annual Halloween Hike on Saturday, October 12th, 2024. Take a trek through the wilderness to explore the mysteries of migration. Have you ever wondered how some animals seemingly disappear every fall only to inexplicably return each spring? Enter the trail to discover the truth behind this mighty marvel. Along the way, there will be games and goodies. The hike will begin and end at the nature center, where families are invited to enjoy refreshments and a Halloween movie outside. The hike will begin at 6:00 PM, with 7:30 being the last chance to enter the trail. Give us a call at 319-657-2400, if you have any questions.

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Autumn Calendar

October 2nd **9:00 AM** **CEC**

Toddler Time

This month, the toddlers will be learning all about the busy lives of beavers. We will read the book, *The Busy Beaver*, and explore sensory bins to learn what beavers make their dens out of. Finally, they will also get to leave with some fun coloring pages.

October 30th **9:00 AM** **CEC**

Toddler Time

This month, the toddlers will be learning all about Iowa's resident turkey, the Eastern Wild Turkey. We will read a book, and then the kiddos will dive into a sensory bin. They will get to feel feathers, turkey feet, and a beard. At the end, we will make hand turkeys!

November 21st **5:00-7:00 PM** **CEC**

Holiday at the Park

Join us for our annual ornament decorating event! We will have several ornament options, including with wood cookies. Registration is required. To register, please give us at call at 319-657-2400.

December 4th **9:00 AM** **CEC**

Toddler Time

This month, we will be learning all about deer and their antlers. The kiddos will go on a hunt to see if they can find any antlers deer may have left behind. There will also be deer fur to touch and some coloring pages to take home.

Washington County Conservation Board

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Spiders: Creepy & Crawly But Crucial

**By: Megan Jorgensen,
Naturalist**

Spiders are possibly the creepiest and most crawliest of all Iowa's critters. I definitely do not enjoy any encounter with them. Especially, when they are in my house. However, they are most often misunderstood and an undervalued part of nature in Iowa. Here are a few things you may not know about Iowa's spiders.

Spiders have an incredibly important job to do in the wilderness and help our ecosystem stay balanced. In fact, they are most definitely not out to get you. Spiders eat around 2,000 insects a year. Take a minute to think about what your yard may look like without them. My advice? Leave them be to do their job. In return, they will not bother you.

A fact that may come as a surprise to some, is that not all of our spiders are actually spiders. One of the most well-known spiders in Iowa, the Daddy Long Leg, is not a spider. It is actually an arachnid. Though they have eight legs like spiders, they cannot make webs and have no fangs to bite with. Other arachnids include ticks, mites and even scorpions.

Not all spiders use a web to catch prey. For example, the Wolf Spider actively stalks its prey at night. Due to its large size, speed and hairiness, a web is unnecessary. This may cause fear in some people, but if you see one, it will run away from you. Rarely, do humans get bit by one. If they do, their venom is not lethal to people.

Venomous spiders are a rare occurrence in Iowa. Though the range of the Brown Recluse does include southern Iowa, they are rarely seen. They can be identified by the violin-shaped mark on their back, and by their eye arrangement. They have six eyes set in three pairs.

Spiders are not safe from predators in the wild. They are tasty snacks for many wildlife, such as birds, lizards, snakes, wasps and even other spiders. The next time you encounter a spider, think twice about stomping on it. Instead, choose to respect it, and the purpose it serves. Is it in your house? Safely escort it back outside. Do not forget how crucial they are to the balance of our ecosystem.



Fall Leaves Coloring Page





The Mighty Monarch Migration

**By: Megan Jorgensen
Naturalist**

The annual migration of the monarch butterfly is one of the most unique phenomena to occur in nature. In fact, monarch butterflies are the only butterfly to make a two-way migration like birds do. Every fall, the monarch butterfly begin their almost 3,000 mile journey south to reach their winter home.

Other butterflies can overwinter as larvae, pupae, or even as adults. Monarch butterflies cannot survive the cold winters of northern climates. Monarchs rely on environmental cues to know when it is time to travel south. They use a combination of air currents and thermals to travel long distances.

Where do they go? Monarch butterflies from Iowa travel to Mexico, where they roost in oyamel fir trees from October to March. At 2 miles above sea level, the fir trees provide nearly perfect conditions for monarchs. The average daily temperature is between 32 to 59 degrees Fahrenheit. The high humidity also keeps them from drying out, which helps them to conserve energy.

Monarch butterflies rely on directional aids to

get them to Mexico. Scientists believe they use a combination of the magnetic pull of the Earth, and the position of the sun. Monarchs can only travel during the day, and need to find a roosting spot at night. They like fir, pine, and cedar trees, because of their thick canopies that provide warmth.

Monarch butterflies will cluster together in colonies during their flight, and once they reach their overwintering sites. Tens of thousands of monarch butterflies can roost on a single tree. The oyamel fir tree can generally support the weight of the clustering monarchs, but sometimes branches will break.

When temperatures warm up again, the journey north begins. There are four generations of monarchs born during the summer. The first generation are the offspring of the monarchs who overwintered in Mexico. It will take up to four generations to reach the U.S. and Canada.

The monarch butterfly is now on the endangered species list. There has been decline in their populations due to habitat loss and climate change (continued on page 6).

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Winter Center Hours

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In the U.S., monarchs are threatened by expansive land-use change, grassland plow-up, and climate change. Their overwintering sites are threatened by deforestation and climate change. Monarch butterflies need our help now more than anything. What can we do? As lowans, we can help by planting native habitat. In particular, monarchs rely on common milkweed to lay their eggs and feed off of. Small patches go a long way! You do not have to have hundreds of acres.

We can also practice proper forestry management by ensuring the health of our fir, pine and cedar trees. JourneyNorth.org is a website you can visit to track monarchs during their migration, as well as submit your own observations. Check it out!

The Mighty Monarch Migration