

Wildlife Diversity News

A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program

News from the Frogpond

Karen Kinkead, Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator

I hope you have heard by now that a bill was introduced into the House of Representatives in July, 2016 which would provide dedicated funding for all wildlife species with the goal of preventing the need for listing species under the Endangered Species Act. Basically it would provide additional funding to implement Iowa's Wildlife Action Plan. This bill is known as "Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2016" and can be found at: [this weblink](#)

It may or may not pass, and bills are often amended prior to passing, so we don't know what the final language (if passed) may look like. Currently it directs these funds to be partitioned to the states in the same manner as the State Wildlife Grant funds where we write grant proposals to describe how the money would be spent (only certain tasks are allowed) and the State must provide at least 25% of the total project costs.

The bill follows the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel which was a



group of Presidents and CEOs of various organizations and businesses chaired by John Morris (CEO of Bass Pro Shops) and former Wyoming Governor David Freudenthal. The final report from this group can be found at: [this weblink](#).

Similar to past efforts to fund non-game wildlife efforts, this group examined many different ways to raise funds, from excise taxes on outdoor equipment (think binoculars and tents) to corporate donations but decided that directing current taxes on energy and mineral extraction on Federal lands and waters was the best option. These are funds that already exist but are currently not being directed to specific functions and instead are placed in the general fund.

In anticipation of this bill moving forward in the House and being introduced into the Senate, we are in the process of updating the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition. Iowa's Coalition is still listed as 8th largest in the nation with 236 member organizations.

If you would like to update your organization's contact information for Iowa's TWW or join your organization to TWW, please send the name, email address and phone number to Stephanie Shepherd and Joe Wilkinson at iowatww@gmail.com or visit the Iowa Wildlife Federation website (www.iawildlife.org) and join there under Teaming With Wildlife.

Sept.–Dec., 2016

Special points of interest:

- Bird Conservation Areas working for wildlife
- Wildlife Action Plan for the future
- Falcons reclaim their name "Rock hawks"
- Mysterious Mudpuppies
- Barn Owls' best friend

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Diversity Dispatch

Breaking News in the World of Wildlife

Alleged Whooping Crane Shooter to be Charged under ESA

A man charged with shooting 2 Whooping Cranes in Texas in January was filed under the Endangered Species Act meaning larger penalties if convicted of the crime. “If we hope to deter future shootings, perpetrators must be prosecuted vigorously. In all cases of Whooping Crane shootings, we demand justice for the birds that were killed, restitution for the enormous effort needed to bring them back, and personal penalties that match the seriousness of the crime,” said Rich Beilfuss, President & CEO of the International Crane Foundation.



USFWS File photo of Whooping

<https://www.savingcranes.org/alleged-shooter-of-endangered-whooping-cranes-to-be-prosecuted-under-endangered-species-act/>



Wandering Glider Dragonfly thought to be Distance Migrator

The Wandering Glider (which does occur in Iowa) is thought to fly thousands of miles across oceans moving from continent to continent. This conclusion is based upon genetic analyses of individuals from the United States, Canada, Japan, India, and South America. Migrations of this species have been documented crossing the Indian Ocean between Asia and Africa. For comparison, Monarch Butterflies are thought to migrate about 2,500 miles each way to their overwintering grounds, whereas the Wandering Glider must be migrating about 4,400 miles one way.

Wandering Glider, Ryan Rasmussen, MSIM Program, Iowa DNR

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160302150020.htm>

for additional information.

Hibernating Toads and Climate Change

Fowler’s Toads (which also occur in Iowa), tracked around Lake Erie for over 25 years, emerge from hibernation under certain rainfall and temperature regimes. They emerge when the sand underneath them becomes cooler than the sand over them where they are buried for the winter. These temperature change appears to be happening earlier each year. The species may also be susceptible to changes in their environment from an invasive plant.



Fowler’s Toad, MSIM Program, Iowa DNR

[Click here](http://wildlife.org/hibernating-toads-reveal-climate-change-clues/) for more information: <http://wildlife.org/hibernating-toads-reveal-climate-change-clues/>

Loess Hills Conservation Area—Another Birding Destination

Bruce Ehresman—Avian Ecologist

On June 3, 2016 a 94,048 acre area encompassing Loess Hills State Forest, Preparation Canyon State Park, and Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area in Monona and Harrison counties was dedicated as Iowa’s 22nd official Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The event was held in conjunction with the 40th annual Loess Hills Prairie Seminar, where a record-setting 93 people attended the dedication ceremony.

The uniqueness of this Bird Conservation Area is related to the fact that it is centered in the rolling hill topography of the Loess Hills physiographic region of western Iowa, which was created by windblown loess from the Missouri River bottomland and piled 200-300 feet deep. Representing the very best examples of this loess topography is the Loess Hills National Natural Landmark, which is comprised of the Turin and Little Sioux/Smith Lake sites.

Once near totally covered by prairie vegetation, land cover now is a mix of prairie, bur oak savanna, and woodland habitats – interspersed with some wetlands. About 19,000 acres of permanently protected land lies within this new BCA, an area where American Indians hunted Black Bear, Bison, Elk, Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse for centuries (if not thousands of years) before Euro-American settlers arrived.

Bird diversity in the “hills” is exceptional, with 249 species of birds identified within this BCA - and at least 111 of those species nesting. Of particular importance is the fact that 80 of Iowa’s 112 Birds of Greatest Conservation Need can be found inhabit-

ing this unique prairie-savanna-woodland landscape.

This unique landform was particularly selected as a Bird Conservation Area because of its importance to grassland birds, the fastest declining bird group in this country. Plus, it was selected because the area contains oak savanna, a Midwest ecosystem as endangered as tallgrass prairie. Grassland covers nearly one-fourth of the landscape within this BCA, and oak savanna comprises about one-third. Declining nesting grassland birds, such as Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, Dickcissel, Western Meadowlark, Field Sparrow, and even the state threatened Henslow’s Sparrow, all will benefit from the establishment of this new BCA. Savanna birds, especially Red-headed Woodpecker, Baltimore and Orchard orioles, and Eastern Bluebirds will increase in numbers, as will Iowa’s Endangered Barn Owls. This BCA also is designated an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA). The National Audubon Society’s Important Bird Area Program is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity, and the Loess Hills certainly qualifies as vital habitat to many declining bird species.

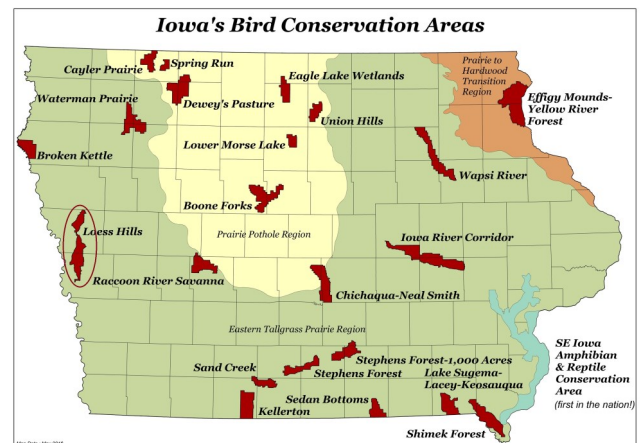
Loess Hills BCA only exists because of the partnerships developed among conservation agencies, private conservation organizations, and active public citizens. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and The Nature Conservancy played key roles in nominating this area to become a BCA, and other major partners include Natural Resources Conservation Service, Monona and Harrison County Conservation Boards, Iowa Audubon,



Official Sign for the latest BCA.

Loess Hills Audubon Society, Loess Hills Alliance, Pheasants Forever, Loess Hills Preservation Society, and Iowa DNR.

Future plans for this BCA include assisting landowners to better manage for birds and creating a map that shows where particular bird species might be seen. A brochure was created for this BCA, which includes a bird list and is available from this office. To learn more about Iowa DNR’s Bird Conservation Area program, . <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Wildlife-Stewardship/Non-Game-Wildlife/Conservation/Bird-Conservation-Areas>



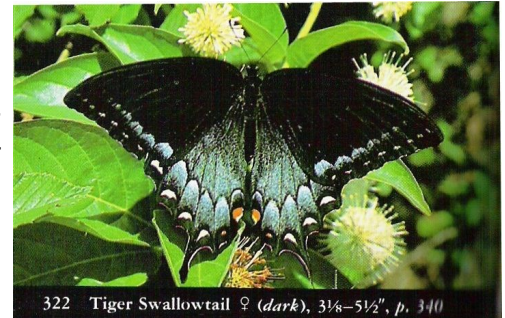
Iowa Wildlife Action Plan is Updated!

Katy Reeder—Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator
The Iowa wildlife action plan is a comprehensive conservation strategy that focuses on developing habitat to meet the needs of all fish and wildlife. It describes the status of wildlife and habitat in Iowa, outlines challenges faced by wildlife, and recommends actions needed to safeguard Iowa's wildlife and natural places. The plan presents six visions for the future of Iowa's wildlife, with goals and multiple management strategies for each.

Congress requires that States review and revise their Wildlife Actions Plans at least every 10 years. The first

10-year deadline was October 1, 2015. Iowa's review and revision process, like the development of the original version of the plan, was a collaborative effort across many organizations and individuals. In 2016, Iowa's revised Plan was approved. The revised Plan identifies 405 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). These rare and declining species were identified by expert committees which conducted a conservation status assessment for Iowa wildlife species. The revised Plan is available for download on Iowa DNR's website.

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Wildlife-Stewardship/Iowa-Wildlife-Action-Plan>



322 Tiger Swallowtail ♀ (dark), 3¼–5½", p. 340

If you have questions about the Plan, please contact me, Katy Reeder, at Katy.Reeder@dnr.iowa.gov or at (515) 494-6136.

Ospreys in Iowa 2016

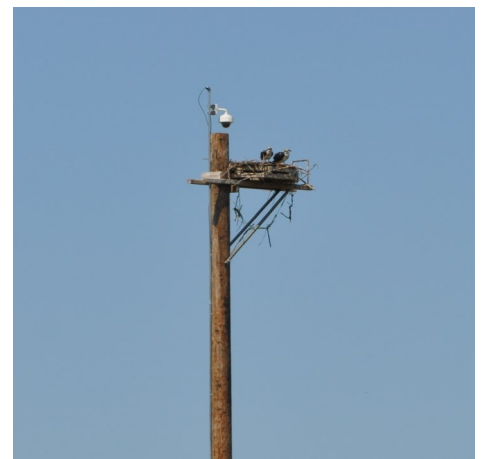
2016 has provided incremental growth with our nesting Ospreys in Iowa. So far we have learned of four new nesting pairs. One in Dickinson County, one in Jasper County and two in Polk County. It is exciting to document seven nesting pairs this year in Polk County. Some of these birds originated at Red Rock Reservoir in Marion Co. and Lake Aquabi in Warren County. Folks at those areas are patiently awaiting nesting Ospreys.

Another exciting nesting has increased Dickinson County's Ospreys. A nesting pair has been successful at the Okoboji High School in Milford. Charles Vigdal with Dickinson CCB

and Tim Waltz with Iowa DNR have enjoyed seeing their Ospreys increase to three nesting pairs this year.

One of the nest sites separate from our release sites has been Colfax in Jasper County. A new nesting pair added to this site this year. Mid-American Energy removed sticks from a power line pole and erected a pole with a platform by their entrance to Quarry Springs Park. The new pair was successful in fledging two young.

In summary 24 nesting pairs had 22 successful nest attempts with 41 young produced. Since 1997 307 Ospreys have been released at twelve sites. Since 2003, 241 wild Ospreys have been produced at 135 successful nests.



A nest cam provided by Wells Fargo shared amazing egg laying, incubation, hatching and brood rearing at website <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Osprey-Cam>. Watch for the Ospreys return to their camera next spring. A BIG THANKS to Wells Fargo for their camera.



A Big Thank-You From the Wildlife Diversity Program to those of you who donated to the Chickadee Check-off on your 2015 tax form!

Peregrine Falcons in Iowa



Photo by Lowell Washburn at Eagle Point Park in Dubuque

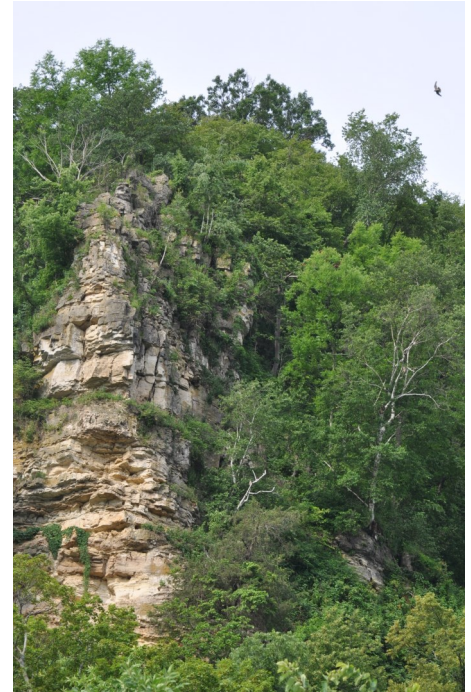
Iowa's Peregrine Falcon nesting success continues. This year 18 nesting pairs were successful at 14 sites that we know about with 36 young falcons or eyases produced.

A highlight of nesting success exists at Agee's Bluff approximately four miles north of Lansing in Allamakee County. Bob Anderson of Raptor Resource Project passed away in 2015 when last year's young were testing their flight skills. Bob loved the fact that everything is natural at this site. The nest site or eyrie is located within a prominent bluff located within public property of the Yellow River State Forest. There is a DOT pulloff for viewing the site. Also Bob was

thrilled neither adult is banded, so the pair is result of decades of work to return falcons to our natural historic sites. And this site is inaccessible to band the young. That was Bob's definition of a successful reintroduction of a species to North America. Meanwhile each year nearly 200 pairs are nesting throughout the Midwest.

Another exciting natural cliff nesting success is Eagle Point Park in Dubuque. Two young were reported to successfully fledge this year. This site was the result from work in 1999 – 2000 by falconers Tom Deckert and Lowell Washburn. They released 43 falcons at quarry cliff at Eagle Point Park.

A second peregrine pair has attempted to nest at Dubuque's Courthouse. This stretch of the great Mississippi Flyway could have the best of natural cliff nesting and urban falcons within very close proximity of each pair. Hopeful developments for this pair in future years will be the result of the Dubuque County Conservation Board working with Courthouse staff.



Agee's Bluff falcon eyrie or nest site is domed amphitheater left of center

We are actively seeking outdoor loving individuals to become members of our Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program. If you have some time each spring to connect with falcons or Ospreys please contact Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov.

Wildlife Diversity Program Grants coordinated by Stephanie Shepherd

The Wildlife Diversity Program has two grants available for wildlife researchers, wildlife educators and organizations that manage land for conservation. Deadline is November 1st.

1) Small Research and Education Grants: The maximum ask is \$2500 and is for small wildlife diversity focused research and education projects. Organizations that do environmental education or which have a small research question to answer should apply.

2) Habitat Management Grants: The maximum ask for this project is \$7500 and is for on the ground habitat management projects that will benefit wildlife diversity. Applicants should be organizations which manage land with wildlife conservation objectives.

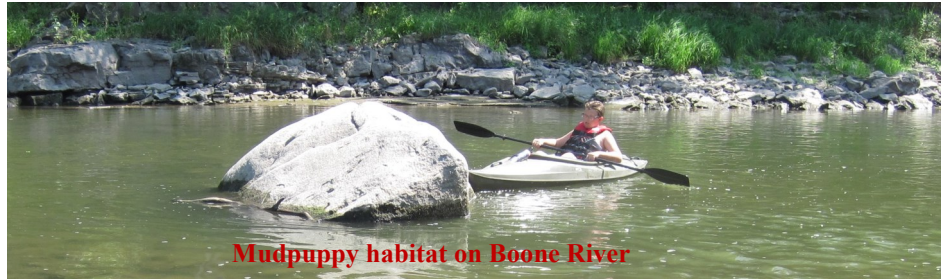
Download the RFPs for these grants from our website: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Wildlife-Stewardship/Non-Game-Wildlife/Inside-Wildlife-Diversity/Grants-Available-Funding> “

Species Spotlight: Mudpuppy-*Necturus maculosus*

by Paul Frese WDP tech.

“Is it a Mudpuppy?” This is a common question when someone finds a strange tadpole-like creature with legs in a pond or wetland. When they describe a creature with external gills, small legs, a large paddle-like tail and large mouth it usually means they have found a Tiger Salamander larva, especially when the habitat was standing water like a pond or pothole wetland. However, we occasionally get a report from a river or stream after a fisherman hooks a similar slimy, gilled creature with legs. When this happens, I get a little more excited as it may be a rare Mudpuppy!

In Iowa, Mudpuppies are rare according to documented records. In fact, they are considered a threatened species in the state. However, Mudpuppy records are scattered throughout several major river basins including the Des Moines, Boone, Skunk, Raccoon, Wapsipicon, Shell Rock, Cedar, Upper Iowa and Mississippi so they are fairly widespread in the state. Mudpuppies are notoriously difficult to sample with standard aquatic techniques like traps, nets, or electrofishing methods. Snorkel or scuba surveys are possible when water clarity is high and water levels are low, but this occurs rarely in most Iowa stream systems. Presently, the Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau is undertaking a study on Mudpuppies in the Mississippi River which holds great promise.



They captured several dozen specimens during the first year of the study.

Mudpuppies are a totally aquatic salamander exhibiting paedomorphic characteristics, meaning they retain larval characteristics, like external gills and a paddle-like tail, into maturity. In Iowa, Mudpuppies live their entire lives in streams and rivers, finding shelter under structures like large rocks, logs, or other debris. In neighboring states like Minnesota and Wisconsin, Mudpuppies are found in natural lakes as well as streams. Mudpuppies forage on a variety of foods: snails, worms, aquatic insect larvae, crayfish, tadpoles and small fishes are reported. Most fishermen catch Mudpuppies using minnows or other live bait. We hope most report and release them soon after! Cutting the line is the easiest way to release them.

Making your living in a river can be tough. Large fishes, wading birds, and semi aquatic mammals want to eat you while constantly changing water levels and poor water quality can make life difficult. Somehow Mudpuppies are hanging on in some Iowa

streams. Mudpuppies breed in the fall, but females don't lay eggs until spring. They usually find a log, rock or hole and attach 60-100 eggs to the top of the structure guarding the nest from predators like fishes, crayfish or aquatic insects. After a month or so, larvae hatch and immediately find shelter in rocks, leafy detritus, or other debris. If they survive the many perils of river life, after five years they will mature and the cycle continues.

Mudpuppies are fascinating aquatic creatures most Iowans don't get a chance to see. If you catch or hear about a salamander found in an Iowa river, please report it to the Wildlife Diversity Program. The first step in learning about our wildlife is knowing where they live!



Of Barn Owls, Great Horned Owls, Raccoons—and Bob Muller

Bruce Ehresman—Avian Ecologist

My wife, Marlene, and I recently experienced a unique and educational road trip to check out a report of a Barn Owl family in a northern Iowa woodlot. It was an adventure that I felt should be shared.

The back story is that there is a gentleman (truly a gentle man), named Bob Muller, who lives on an acreage in northern Franklin County near the town of Sheffield. The acreage is comprised of 8 acres of old trees (mostly silver maple and box elder), a house, and a couple of old farm buildings; and it is completely surrounded by cornfields. Several years ago Bob reported to Mark Leoschke (DNR Botanist) that he had Barn Owls (State Endangered in Iowa), nesting on his property several times, since 2006. A few years ago, when I talked to Bob on the phone, I became immediately intrigued with the uniqueness of this Barn Owl nesting site (plus it is several counties north of where this species is usually found). I then spent a few hours one evening walking around Bob's woodlot, studying what factors are in place to attract the Barn Owls to keep returning to that site. While there is a significant amount of Bur Oak savanna habitat (ideal Barn Owl habitat) two miles to the south of Bob's acreage, the primary nearby foraging habitat (that might contain voles - Barn Owls' favorite prey) seems to be grass waterways. When I visited Bob the first time, I was amazed at his intelligence and knowledge (he knows the scientific name and medicinal properties of nearly every plant on his place), he knows much about every wild animal species (especially the birds) that exist there, and he has a near photographic memory of whatever he sees, based on his extremely detailed descriptions. When Bob was younger, he helped his dad on the farm. Now

he refers to himself as a horticulturist. He tends the woodland and adds native plants to it. His reverence toward the land and Nature is contagious.

The night when Marlene and I arrived at Bob's acreage and stepped out of the car (about 8:15 pm), we immediately heard the squawk of a Black-crowned Night-heron and a rasping screech (food-begging call) from a Barn Owl. This heron is a rare nester in Iowa these days, and Bob matter-of-factly mentioned, "yes they nest here." Bob next led Marlene and I into his woodlot so we could better hear the Barn Owls calling. He took us to the area where he was pretty certain the Barn Owls had nested (in one of the hollow Silver Maple trees), and we could hear four (we eventually identified five - just as Bob said there were) Barn Owl youngsters food-begging. I also made out the tinkling call (usually associated with pair-bonding) of what I believe was the adult male (perhaps the female already was sitting on a second clutch of eggs in a nearby tree cavity). While we were standing there listening, I heard the purring sounds of baby Raccoons and then witnessed a mama Raccoon and her cubs coming out of a tree cavity. This was very close to where Bob thought that the Barn Owls had nested. Because Raccoons are known to eat Barn Owls, this co-existence seems an extreme anomaly!

As it grew darker we moved back toward Bob's house and a few isolated very large trees, into which Bob assured us that the Barn Owls would fly. The owl young indeed did move toward these trees, screeching as they went. Many years ago, when Marlene and our boys and I lived on an acreage north of Boone, we had Barn Owls nesting in our barn. When the young fledged, they would routinely start food-begging toward dusk.

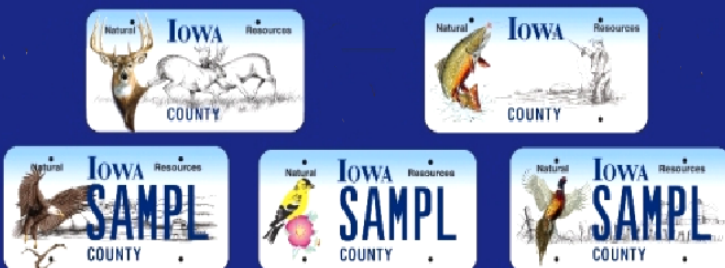
Then, when the male flew out of the barn and headed out to hunt, we would witness the youngsters flying after him, screaming as they flew. Now, 25 years later, we were provided another opportunity to again witness this wonderful event. We watched a Barn Owl fly south over the cornfield with one of the youngsters in close pursuit, screaming as it flew. That sight made my heart happy! While we were standing in the yard listening and watching, completely surrounded by the five food-begging Barn Owl young moving amongst the trees, Bob mentioned that a few nights ago he had witnessed two fledgling Great Horned Owl youngsters, perched on the shed - next to which we were now standing. Shortly thereafter we heard a harsh and somewhat agitated call, coming from the woods, 40 or 50 yards to the north of us. Marlene played her Audubon bird app, and the call indeed was an agitated alarm call from an adult Great Horned Owl. So - again, we documented another well known Barn Owl predator, the Great Horned Owl, raising a family of young in the same woodlot where Barn Owls were apparently fledging successfully. From everything I had learned through our research and the research of others, this is not supposed to happen! Yet it is happening, apparently year-after-year, at this very special place with this very special man, who, with genuine love in his heart, reverently tends this woodlot and all its inhabitants. As a scientist, I can interpret the fact that Barn Owls are nesting successfully amongst their two main predators, Great Horned Owl and Raccoon, as an exception to the rule. As a fellow human being, I interpret what is happening at Bob's woodlot as a bit of Nature's magic, or more preferably a very good example of the effects of love of Wildness and repeated acts of kindness toward the earth and all of our fellow inhabitants.

Last Look



Barn Owl Feeding Young—Photo by Tom Litchfield, Iowa DNR

SUPPORT CONSERVATION IN IOWA.



BUY A NATURAL RESOURCE PLATE.

22% of the original purchase price and 60% of the renewal fee for natural resource license plates go directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program.

Upcoming Events

Pelican Festival

Hawkeye Wildlife Area; September
Sunday Sep. 11 11AM-4PM

For more information call
(319) 338-3543 x6300

Blank Park Zoo Monarch Festival

Blank Park Zoo; September 18

[Click here](#) to visit the Zoo's event page.

Iowa Herpetological Meeting

Mt. Mercy University, Cedar Rapids
September 24 at 12PM

For more information:
Paul.Frese@dnr.iowa.gov

High Trestle Hawk Watch

Madrid-Woodward Bike Trail Head
Saturday, October 8 10AM-4PM;

For more information :
Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov



A second LAST LOOK ** Quick! Name that butterfly? If you said Viceroy or *Limenitis archippus*, way to go! Viceroy and Monarchs, which share a family but different genera, are thought to be Mullerian Mimics - both unappetizing to predators & using their similarity in appearance as a defense. Look for Viceroy wherever you find their hostplant, Willows. They also eat Poplar.

*A Publication of the Iowa DNR
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