

Iowa Project AWARE 2024

Educational Program Schedule

Programs are open to the public – just bring a lawn chair!

Sunday, July 7 (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)

- **2:30 pm - Afternoon Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *Canoe Skills and Safety Clinic* - John Wenck (Iowa DNR and ACA Certified Instructor), Rick Dietz, Jim Dodd, and Shelly Weeks (Iowa Project AWARE Volunteers)
- **3:00 pm – Concurrent Afternoon Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *Corridors of Conservation: How INHF works to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife* - Erica Place (INHF)
 - *Knots for Paddlers* - Jeff White (Skunk River Paddler and AWARE Volunteer)
- **4:00 pm – Concurrent Afternoon Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *Canoe Skills and Safety Clinic* - John Wenck (Iowa DNR and ACA Certified Instructor), Rick Dietz, Jim Dodd, and Shelly Weeks (Iowa Project AWARE Volunteers)
 - *Mississippi River unique fish and turtles/commercial fishing* - Denny Weiss (Retired Iowa DNR Fisheries)
 - *Bugs, Fish, and Water Quality* - Louise Biderman and Mike Birmingham (State Hygienic Laboratory at University of Iowa)
- **7:15 pm – Welcome and Introductions**

Monday, July 8 (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton) (15.6 Miles)

- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Afternoon Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *Turtles of Iowa* - Megan Jorgensen (Washington County Conservation)
 - *A Travelogue of Water in the Skunk River* - Dan Haug (Prairie Rivers of Iowa)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *Unraveling the Mysteries of the Ho-Chunk Nation's Dugout Canoes in Lake Mendota* - Bill Quackenbush (Ho-Chunk Nation)
 - *A Whiff of Skunk River Geology* - Ryan Clark (Iowa Geological Survey) and Joe Artz (University of Iowa)

Tuesday, July 9 (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton) (19.1 Miles)

- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Afternoon Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *The Lake Darling State Park and Friends Connection* - Don Kline (Friends of Lake Darling)
 - *Flora, Fauna, and Fun with Archaeologists* - Elizabeth Reetz and Cherie Haury-Artz (University of Iowa)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Programs** (Lake Darling State Park, Brighton)
 - *Mammals of the Skunk River* - Austin Roe and Lauren Snyder (Jefferson County Conservation Board)
 - *Evaluating Risks for Recreators in Iowa's Lakes and Streams* - Claire Hruby (Drake University)

Wednesday, July 10 (Oakland Mills Area Water Works Park, Mount Pleasant) (16.6 Miles)

- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Afternoon Programs** (Water Works Area Oakland Mills Park, Mount Pleasant and Lewelling Quaker Museum, Salem)
 - *The Big Bird Sit* - Kelly McKay (BioEco Research Monitoring Center)
 - *Lewelling Quaker Museum* - Kay Wesley (location - Lewelling Quaker Museum)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Programs** (Water Works Area Oakland Mills Park, Mount Pleasant)

- o *Birds of the Floodplain Forest* - Kelly McKay (BioEco Research Monitoring Center)
- o *Clean Water Advocacy - Save Bloody Run Case Study and Other Uncomfortable Truths* - Steve Veysey (Protecting Outstanding Iowa Waters)
- **9:00 pm – Late Evening Program** (Water Works Area Oakland Mills Park, Mount Pleasant)
 - o *Night Sounds Prowl* - Kelly McKay (BioEco Research Monitoring Center)

Thursday, July 11 (Old Threshers Campground, Mount Pleasant) (14.4 Miles)

- **4:30 pm – Concurrent Afternoon Programs** (Old Threshers Campground, Mount Pleasant)
 - o *Snakes aren't Scary* - Kendall Prehn (Henry County Conservation)
 - o *Meet a Live Animal* - Jacklyn Goodman (Des Moines County Conservation)
- **7:30 pm – Concurrent Evening Programs** (Old Threshers Campground, Mount Pleasant)
 - o *Iowa Mussel Blitz over the years* - Scott Gritters (Iowa DNR)
 - o *Honey Bee and Pollination* - Tony Kempker (Friends of Conservation in Henry County LTD)

Sunday, July 7

Program Title: *Canoe Skills and Safety Clinic*

Program Description: Learn the basics of paddling and learn new skills. This clinic is for folks that have never put a paddle in the water and for folks that would like to improve their paddling skills. Two sessions will be held at 2:30 and 4:00 pm. Each session can have up to 20 people.

Presenter(s): John Wenck, Rick Dietz, Shelly Weeks and Jim Dodd

Bio: This clinic will be instructed by John Wenck, Iowa DNR Water Trails Coordinator. John provides technical assistance for planning and development of water trails and is responsible for the administration of DNR Water Trail Grants. John is a certified American Canoe Association Instructor and will be assisted by Shelly, Jim and Rick, lifelong paddlers and longtime Project AWARE volunteers.

Program Title: *Corridors of Conservation: How INHF works to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife*

Program Description: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is the state's leading nonprofit in protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife. Learn more about INHF's work across the state with specific attention on protection projects along this year's Project AWARE route.

Presenter(s): Erica Place

Bio: Erica Place tells stories about INHF's good work through their quarterly magazine, engaging social media posts and speaking opportunities. Her degree in animal ecology from Iowa State University gives a unique lens for her career in outreach and communications. She spends most of her free time with binoculars in hand (self-proclaimed bird nerd), loves to hike and garden, and strives to inspire others to connect with nature in their own way.

Program Title: *Knots for Paddlers*

Program Description: Learn the most useful paddling knots and receive a free 8-foot bow line. Practice!

Presenter(s): Jeff White

Bio: Jeff is a Skunk River Paddler, geologist, Eagle Scout, retired DNR. He has taught knot tying at the State Fair, paddler's meetings, college classes, previous AWAREs, Boy Scout camps, and around campfires.

Program Title: *Mississippi River unique fish and turtles/commercial fishing*

Program Description: I will have several different live species of turtles and a cooler of unique species of fish that live in the Mississippi River that I will talk about. Some of the fish species that I will show many people have never encountered while fishing on the river. I will also talk about the commercial fishing industry that is still being practiced on the Mississippi River as well.

Presenter(s): Denny Weiss

Bio: Denny Weiss grew up in Burlington, Iowa and worked for 35 years for the Iowa DNR as a fisheries technician on the Mississippi River stationed in Bellevue, IA. Denny retired 10 years ago and now fur traps in the fall/winter and commercial fishes for catfish in the spring-fall months. I used to give 80-100 presentations each year during my DNR working career to schools, girl/boy scouts, fishing clubs, civic groups and the Iowa State Fair in the DNR courtyard about a wide range of fish, turtles and various animals. Even in my retirement years I love to educate people about the outdoors that I get to enjoy almost every day!

Program Title: *Bugs, Fish, and Water Quality*

Program Description: Come take a close-up look at the bugs and fish that inhabit Iowa's rivers and streams! Get familiar with some of the benthic macroinvertebrates you might see as you paddle and learn what they indicate about water quality!

Presenter(s): Louise Biderman and Mike Birmingham

Bio: Louise is from Fairbanks, Alaska and now lives in Cedar Rapids and works at the State Hygienic Lab at the University of Iowa. Mike has been a limnologist with the State Hygienic Laboratory for over 30 years.

Monday, July 8

Program Title: *Turtles of Iowa*

Program Description: Audience members will learn some basic facts about turtles. Specifically, we will talk about three of Iowa's common turtle species: the Painted Turtle, the Snapping Turtle, and the Red-eared Slider. Families will have the opportunity to touch various turtle shells, as well as interact with live turtles.

Presenter(s): Megan Jorgensen, Naturalist with Washington County Conservation

Bio: My name is Megan Jorgensen, Naturalist with Washington County Conservation. I have been in this position for over 4.5 years. I provide environmental education programming to students and the public in Washington County. Additionally, I am a hunter education instructor, and coach both archery and trapshooting. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, my dog, reading, hunting and fishing.

Program Title: *A Travelogue of Water in the Skunk River*

Program Description: This program will tell the story of the water flowing in the Skunk River: the various places it came from (watersheds), how it travelled (hydrology), what it's carrying with it (water quality), and how people are trying to improve it (conservation).

Presenter(s): Dan Haug

Bio: Dan Haug has been playing in tributaries of the Skunk River since childhood, and working to improve water quality in tributaries of the Skunk River since 2017. As water quality specialist for Prairie Rivers of Iowa (an Ames-based non-profit) he has been involved in watershed conservation projects, environmental education, GIS mapping, and water monitoring and data analysis.

Program Title: *Unraveling the Mysteries of the Ho-Chunk Nation's Dugout Canoes in Lake Mendota*

Program Description: This presentation provides an overview of the past, present, and future of the Ho-Chunk Nation and their connection to two of the oldest known watercrafts in the Great Lakes region. Since 2021, archaeologists have recovered two dugout canoes (1,200 and 3,000 years old!)

from the bottom of Lake Mendota in Madison, Wisconsin. Since then, Bill Quackenbush and the Ho-Chunk Nation have created their own replica canoe to take on journeys down rivers that are ancestrally significant, including waterways in Iowa. Learn about the extraction of dugouts from Lake Mendota and the importance of the regional canoe journeys.

Presenter(s): Bill Quackenbush

Bio: William “Naąwacekǵize” Quackenbush, Ho-Chunk Deer Clan Member, is the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Cultural Resources Division Manager for the Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin. Bill educates his Tribe, Wisconsin, and regional communities about preservation, environmental, and cultural issues that affect the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Program Title: *A Whiff of Skunk River Geology*

Program Description: There will be rocks! Hear about SE Iowa geology from someone who spent six years mapping the bedrock geology of Lee, Henry, and Des Moines counties. This year's route will likely include exposures of rock formations rich with fossils, coal, and maybe even a few geodes!

Presenter(s): Ryan Clark and Joe Artz

Bio: Joe Artz is a retired geoarchaeologist whose career included archaeological and geoarchaeological fieldwork in a dozen states, Belize, and Portugal. He came to Iowa in 1989, working as an archaeologist until 1999, then switching to a primary focus on geoarchaeology and GIS-based research. Since 2015, he and colleague Art Bettis have written geological overviews for over 20 proposed and designated DNR Water Trails throughout Iowa, including 1:24K geological maps of the valleys through which the trails pass. He is currently working on a memoir of his youth on the high plains of Kansas. Ryan Clark is a bedrock geologist with the Iowa Geological Survey. Over his 12+ years at the IGS, he has authored dozens of geologic maps, researched critical mineral deposits (in Iowa), and is currently working on assessing carbon sequestration potential. He is a 10-year veteran of Project AWARE and is always happy to identify interesting rocks found along the river.

Tuesday, July 9

Program Title: *The Lake Darling State Park and Friends Connection*

Program Description: How a Friends group helps improve recreational facilities & outdoor opportunities at a State park. The Friends group organization & projects 2001 to 2024.

Presenter(s): Don Kline

Bio: Graduated from Iowa State University in 1967 & joined Iowa Conservation Commission as Fisheries Biologist. Continued managing fisheries for 41 years. Joined Friends Board in 2008.

Program Title: *Flora, Fauna, and Fun with Archaeologists*

Program Description: The University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist will host a variety of short activities for all ages. Try out some plant fiber cord-making and traditional toys and games and bring your animal bone finds from the river for identification!

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Reetz and Chérie Haury-Artz

Bio: Elizabeth Reetz is the Director of Strategic Initiatives at the University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist, and she has been doing archaeology fieldwork and research in the Midwest on and off since 2000. Her archaeology career has also taken her to Nevada, Ireland, coastal Washington, and most recently before Iowa - three field seasons in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in far northern Minnesota. In addition to her background in archaeology, Elizabeth completed a M.Ed. in Environmental Education (University of Minnesota Duluth) with the ultimate goal of using archaeology to connect youth with nature. Chérie Haury-Artz has a B.A. in Anthropology from State University of New York at Potsdam and an M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Her research interests include analysis of fauna from archaeological sites, use and identification of lithic resources, rock art, and environmental adaptation of precontact cultures. Most

of her research has been focused on the Great Plains in Oklahoma, Kansas, North and South Dakota, and Iowa. Chérie also has a special interest in public education and outreach and continues independent research in faunal analysis.

Program Title: *Mammals of the Skunk River*

Program Description: We will discuss some of the aquatic/semi-aquatic that can be found along the Skunk River. Lauren and I will also bring some furs and skulls for kids to interact with.

Presenter(s): Austin Roe and Lauren Snyder

Bio: Austin is the Naturalist for Jefferson County Conservation. He graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management and enjoys using what he learned to teach others about nature. Lauren is a returning summer intern for Jefferson County Conservation in her fourth year in the role. She is currently a student at University of Northern Iowa studying Environmental Science.

Program Title: *Evaluating Risks for Recreators in Iowa's Lakes and Streams*

Program Description: This program will go over water quality parameters that are measured to assess risks to swimmers and folks playing on or near the water. We will talk about E. coli and cyanotoxins, but also how we figure out the sources and levels of risk associated with these contaminants.

Presenter(s): Claire Hruby

Bio: Dr. Claire Hruby's passion for water started with annual trips to the Boundary Waters in Minnesota with her family. She joined the faculty of Drake's Environmental Science and Sustainability Department in 2023 after 20 years at the Iowa DNR. Her focus at Drake is on understanding public health risks from exposures to surface and groundwaters used for recreation and drinking-water, and sustainable water resource planning. Her courses include geology, water resources and policy, soil and water monitoring field methods, geology, hydrology, and more. When she is not working, you can find her kayaking down Beaver Creek, walking her two big sled dogs, salsa dancing, and attending all of her daughter's rock concerts!

Wednesday, July 10

Program Title: *The Big Bird Sit*

Program Description: Join Kelly McKay and other bird enthusiasts while we enjoy listening and learning about birds. Journaling supplies, binoculars and bird guides will be provided. Bring your lawn chair.

Presenter(s): Kelly McKay

Bio: Kelly McKay owns the consulting firm, BioEco Research and Monitoring Center, based in Hampton, Illinois, and he leads birding workshops all across Iowa. He is also a Christmas Bird Count Marathoner where he identifies as many bird species as possible in a day while also contributing to science. Kelly attempts to contribute to a different CBC every day of the count period for 23 days in a row, a grueling 8+ hour/day logistically challenging feat known as the "CBC marathon." On top of that, Kelly compiles the data for not one but ten count circles, a significant challenge in itself.

Program Title: *Lewelling Quaker Museum* - Kay Wesley

Program Description: Educational tour of the Lewelling Quaker Museum. Capped at 25 individuals, will need to be bused to the museum.

Presenter(s): Kay Wesley

Program Title: *Birds of the Floodplain Forest*

Program Description: During the presentation, we will introduce the group to 15-18 species common to the floodplain forest habitat in Iowa. We will discuss their general abundance as well as when and where they tend to occur within the state. I will point out some of the best field marks for identifying the species, as well as their song or call. Needs electricity/ ppt at Nature Center

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Program Title: *Clean Water Advocacy - Save Bloody Run Case Study and Other Uncomfortable Truths*

Program Description: What is clean water advocacy? How the struggle to Save Bloody Run exposes the feckless nature of programs and agencies with public facing water quality goals but critically flawed metrics.

Presenter(s): Steve Veysey

Bio: Steve is a retired chemist from ISU with more than 25 years of experience volunteering with conservation and environmental groups that advocate for clean water. Steve was one of the Sierra Club leaders that successfully advocated for "antidegradation" water quality standards required by the Clean Water Act. This ultimately led to the Outstanding Iowa Waters category. The campaign tag line was "Clean Water Belongs to You."

Program Title: *Night Sounds Prowl*

Program Description: Join Kelly McKay after his evening program about Floodplain Forest Birds for a Night Sounds Prowl from 9 pm until 9:30 pm. We will take a short walk while listening for owls, frogs, and other animals.

Presenter(s): Kelly McKay

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Thursday, July 11

Program Title: *Snakes aren't Scary*

Program Description: Snakes can seem scary, but these animals are an important part of a river community. Come discover where they live and why they act the way they do. Then, get a chance to touch live snakes!

Presenter(s): Kendall Prehn

Bio: Kendall Prehn grew up exploring rivers and woods of Wisconsin. She graduated with a degree in environmental education, which means she loves telling people all about the interesting and overlooked pieces of nature. Since moving back to the Midwest last summer, she has been busy canoeing, hiking, and discovering all the things that make Iowa unique.

Program Title: *Meet a Live Animal*

Program Description: Participants will have the unique opportunity to meet a live box turtle up close and ask any questions they may have. Additionally, if time permits, we offer a fun turtle nesting game. This game is designed as a large-scale board game, where participants act as baby turtles, moving through the game board.

Presenter(s): Marcus and Jacklyn

Bio: Marcus and Jacklyn are both members of Des Moines County Conservation. Marcus serves as the Environmental Education Manager, while Jacklyn fulfills the role of Naturalist. Our team offers a diverse array of programs covering various environmental topics to a wide range of audiences, including local schools, summer camps, the public, and care centers.

Program Title: *Iowa Mussel Blitz over the years*

Program Description: A summary of the Iowa Mussel Blitz results from various river reaches with particular attention to what was found in Lower Skunk Rivers and a major tributary.

Presenter(s): Scott Gritters, Fisheries Biologist

Bio: I am a Fisheries Biologist for the Mississippi River out of Bellevue, Iowa and have worked permanently for the Iowa DNR since 1987. Usually I work on fisheries and aquatic resources on the Mississippi River but every August host an effort called the Iowa Mussel Blitz. This is an effort held near the 3rd week of August on various reaches of inland rivers in eastern Iowa.

Program Title: *Honey Bee and Pollination*

Program Description: A brief open lecture program including a Q and A option. Discuss local pollinators and their importance. Discuss habitat and conservation efforts.

Presenter(s): Tony Kempker

Bio: President of the Friends of conservation. I have been a bee keeper for around 10 years. I currently work with Incarcerated Individuals to learn beginner bee keeping.