

IOWA NATURAL HERITAGE

Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

Scout's Honor
INHF is working to protect Little Sioux Scout Ranch in the Loess Hills. **8**

Returning Home
A new park in Johnson County fosters learning and reconnection. **14**

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8 Little Sioux Scout Ranch

INHF is partnering with the Mid-America Council of the Boy Scouts of America to protect a scout camp in the heart of the Loess Hills and open it to the public.

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INHF Land Acknowledgement:
As a land trust it is important for us to continuously acknowledge and understand the full scope of history that has brought us to reside on, protect and steward this land. The land between two rivers is home to many indigenous people, historically and today. We acknowledge the value of indigenous communities and work to honor them on the land.



ON THE COVER
Early fall colors reflect off water at Grant Park in Auburn, Iowa. Different pigments cause different fall colors. Carotenoids create yellow, orange and brown colors. Anthocyanins produce red and purple colors.
Photo by Bob Buman



Protecting and restoring Iowa's land, water and wildlife.

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Partners in conservation, big and small

I am truly inspired by the amazing work being done by thoughtful people across the state to improve the health of the land they own and steward. This may be as simple as native wildflowers for pollinator habitat instead of a mowed lawn, creating large natural buffers for the streams and rivers that pass through their land, or re-creating a diverse prairie oasis for wildlife to call home.



JOE McGOVERN
President

At INHF, we are grateful to have the opportunity to partner with individuals and organizations statewide not only to protect and steward our precious land and water for future generations, but to provide outdoor recreation access for everyone, regardless of where they live.

INHF was created over 43 years ago for just that reason; to be a partner. So, when rare opportunities come along to protect

a large area of the Loess Hills, where we are working closely with the seller on common goals, we are excited to partner to make it happen. When landowners trust us to be part of the future protection and stewardship of their land, we are humbled by their generosity. When we can work closely with an organization that provides new career opportunities in conservation while stewarding the land, we know it has a profound impact on our future. And when we are invited to play an even small role in giving land back to first nations, we are honored to help make it happen. Because at the end of the day, being a trusted Iowa partner for conservation is what really matters.

In this issue, we'll explore some of those projects and partnerships, made possible by the cooperation of people sharing a vision for a better Iowa. And by you. Thank you for your trust and support to make this meaningful work possible!

Lark Fields in Scott County is a 237-acre parcel of land including farmground and newly restored prairie, wetlands and thousands of native shrubs and trees. Learn more about the partnership between INHF and landowner Ann Werner on page 22.
Photo by Mike Fetterer

My children cache cicada shells like currency, a summer hobby that fills glass jars and flower pots and cookie tins with six-legged relics. They are rich in abandoned insect parts. I am mildly disgusted. I've seen nothing to love in the red-eyed, big-bodied bugs.

I remember the Midwest summer they emerged en masse, a periodic brood filling the air with their hungry buzz. Here, we are not overrun but on some summer nights, the cicada song dominates. My kids are out to convince me of their magic.

"Look, mom!" They lead me to the spot where a nymph has crawled out of the earth and clung. We find them on tree trunks and garbage cans and fence posts. Defying gravity, they emerge and molt, drying their wings and hardening themselves for their brief lives.

Cicadas wait for years, some almost two decades, underground before joining us. We almost never see their emergence because it often happens under the cover of night, their translucent exoskeletons left behind like traces of tiny, enraptured souls. The nearly weightless armor is a whisper to notice the details. To appreciate nature, in my own backyard.

I watch my son and daughter discover, then pluck the casings. I push them on the swings at the park, thinking about the 18 summers (if I'm lucky) I'll get to closely watch my children grow.

We go to collect our bike and bear witness to a transformation: A cicada is emerging in broad daylight. Its body hasn't yet darkened and a wing is folded over. We're transfixed, holding our breath as it tumbles from the tree and then climbs back up the bark. I fall a little bit in love. We leave the shell behind to become some other child's treasure.

— BRIANNE SANCHEZ
Special to INHF



Some cicada species emerge every year, while periodic cicadas wait as many as 17 years before making an appearance. Photo by Larry Reis

FIELD NOTES

RED ROCK PRAIRIE TRAIL

Construction on the first phase of the Red Rock Prairie Trail, an 11-mile stretch of former rail corridor between Monroe and Prairie City, is complete. Part of a long-range goal for the Central Iowa Trail system, this connector is a piece of the puzzle in linking Saylorville Lake with Lake Red Rock and Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. The second phase, a five-mile stretch between Prairie City to Mitchellville, will begin as soon as funding is secured.

IOWA RIVER'S EDGE TRAIL

Paving on the Iowa River's Edge Trail between Eldora and Steamboat Rock in Hardin County is complete, connecting communities and natural spaces via an old railroad corridor along the Iowa River. This section bridges gaps with other regional trails to form a scenic loop and is part of the larger vision that will extend 34 miles to Marshalltown connecting seven cities and two counties.



DR. JIM PEASE WINS HAGIE AWARD

Dr. Jim Pease is many things to many people. To his former students at Iowa State University, he is a mentor. To listeners on Talk of Iowa and attendees at various conferences and events, he is a knowledgeable speaker. To fellow conservationists, he is 'the wildlife interpreter.' Regardless of the venue or audience, he is an inspirational educator.

Pease, of Story County, has been selected by INHF to receive the 2022 Lawrence and Eula Hagie Heritage Award, which recognizes Iowans who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to improving the quality of Iowa's natural environment and encouraging others to do the same. Pease truly shines in the latter.

Throughout his career, Pease organized retreats and events, developed conservation educational materials and founded the Iowa NatureMapping and Master Conservationist programs. Even in retirement, Pease has continued to educate and inspire by serving as the Chair of the Story County Conservation Board, guiding Iowans on international wildlife tours and serving as a consultant and presenter. Dr. Pease will be presented with a \$1,000 prize and acorn sculpture hand-carved by Dennis and Linda Schlicht in a ceremony this fall.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEED HARVESTS

SEPTEMBER 21
Pohl Prairie Seed Harvest
Ames

SEPTEMBER 24
Snyder Prairie Seed Harvest
Elkhart

SEPTEMBER 28
Loess Hills Prairie Seed Harvest
Pisgah

OCTOBER 1
Heritage Valley Seed Harvest
Waukon

OCTOBER 8
Moonlight Seed Harvest
Maxwell

OCTOBER 13
Loess Hills Prairie Seed Harvest
Moorhead

OTHER EVENTS

OCTOBER 1
Iowa River's Edge Trail Ribbon
Cutting & Bike Ride
Eldora

OCTOBER 5 & 6
Iowa Trails Summit
Webster City

OCTOBER 6
Heritage Hills Dedication
Madison County

For more information, and more upcoming events, visit www.inhf.org/events

Joan Ghrist, center, pictured here with children Tommy and Sara, celebrates after donating a conservation easement on the family farm in March of this year. Joan has since passed, but her gift and the joy and peace it brought their family will last in perpetuity.

QUARTERLY PROTECTION REPORT

A quick look at new INHF protection projects and land transferred between **March 1 and May 31, 2022.**

Newly protected areas

Clarke & Madison Counties
453 acres of mixed habitat including pasture, wetlands and timber near Truro. Preserves open space and grasslands while ensuring protection from subdivision and development. Provides excellent habitat for insects, birds and mammals. (Conservation easement donated by Joan Ghrist) *Family photo on right

Palo Alto County
170 acres of reconstructed and remnant prairie near Emmetsburg. Protection of grass and open space will positively impact Cylinder Creek and the Des Moines River watershed. (Conservation easement donated by Clinton and Suzanne Young)

Chickasaw County
205 acres of riparian and upland habitat along the Wapsipinicon River near New Hampton. This property provides water quality benefits and protects habitat for wildlife such as sandhill cranes, river otters and potentially eastern massasauga rattlesnakes. (Portion of land value donated by Loretta Koenigsfeld. Proposed public ownership)

Story County
68 acres along the South Skunk River near Cambridge. Protection and restoration will aid flood retention and reduce erosion while providing habitat for various birds, reptiles and amphibians. (Portion of land value donated by Maxwell Farms, Inc. Proposed public ownership)

Story County
56 acres along the South Skunk River near Cambridge. Contains oxbows and the former river channel. Protection and restoration will aid water quality and provide wildlife habitat. (Proposed public ownership)

Ida County
The first INHF project in this county! 103 acres of grassland and woodland adjacent to Crawford Creek Recreation Area near Battle Creek. Builds on existing public land and will positively impact the water quality of a nearby public lake. (Portion of land value donated by Sue Smith. Proposed public ownership)

Johnson County
90 acres of woodland and restored prairie near Coralville Lake. Provides water quality benefits, recreational opportunities and valuable wildlife habitat. Boasts 364 documented plant species including two species of orchids considered threatened in Iowa. (Portion of land value donated by Brian and Erin Melloy. Proposed public ownership including 7 acres that will be rematriated to the Iowa Tribe)
***Read more about this protection story on page 14**

Fayette County
155 acres of fen wetland, sedge meadow, woodland and agricultural land near Waucoma. One of the largest remaining fen wetlands in northeast Iowa, this property protects uncommon species like tall cotton grass, crested fern, fringed gentian and dwarf red raspberry. (Will be owned and managed by INHF)

Fayette County
16 acres of prairie and wetland habitat adjacent to Fritz Prairie near Hawkeye. Builds on existing public land and important wildlife habitat, including sandhill cranes. (Proposed public ownership)

Pottawattamie County
28 acres near Council Bluffs including a 13-acre remnant prairie. The property will become a valuable seed source for Loess Hills prairie restorations. (Donated by Joann Gohlinghorst. Will be owned and managed by INHF)



Pottawattamie County
43 acres of mature timber north of Council Bluffs in the heart of the Loess Hills. Preserves old-growth bur oaks and other valuable habitat for the 120 bird species documented on the property. (Donated by Bert Fritsch and Dominique Crapon De Caprona subject to a reserved life estate. Will be owned and managed by INHF)

Land transfers to public partners

Sedan Bottoms WMA Addition
200 acres of grassland and quality oak-hickory woodland within the Sedan Bottoms Bird Conservation Area near Centerville. Builds on one of the larger wildlife complexes in the state, providing additional wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. (Owned and managed by Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Addition
10 acres adjacent to existing public land with the potential for future education and interpretation activities. (Owned and managed by Polk County Conservation)

Heritage Hills WMA
126 acres of woodland and savanna on rolling hills in Madison County. This is the final piece to transfer in a 1,021 complex providing critical habitat and recreation opportunities near the Des Moines metro. (Owned and managed by Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Dutch and Tom's Access
67 acres of restorable habitat adjacent to Ventura Marsh WMA in Hancock County. Following restoration, the property will provide water quality benefits to Ventura Marsh and needed habitat for migrating waterfowl. (Owned and managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Johnson County
83 acres of woodland and restored prairie near Coralville Lake. Provides water quality benefits, recreational opportunities, and valuable wildlife habitat. Boasts a documented 364 plant species including two species of orchids considered threatened in Iowa. (Owned and managed by Johnson County Conservation)

West Fork WMA Addition
58 acres of restored wetland near Emmetsburg in Palo Alto County. Builds on existing public land offering important prairie pothole habitat. (Owned and managed by Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Salsness Conservation Area
240 acres of woodland adjacent to Oak Ridge Conservation Area near Oto in Woodbury County. Provides connection between existing public land, creating over 2,200 contiguous acres of habitat and recreational land. (Owned and managed by Woodbury County Conservation)

Big Marsh WMA Addition
Nearly 50 acres of riparian woodland and wetland along the West Fork of the Cedar River in Butler County. Protects additional habitat for state endangered wood turtles, found only in this region of the Cedar River. (Owned and managed by Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Deadwood WMA
333 acres of quality habitat along the Iowa River between Columbus Junction and Wapello. Includes woodlands, grasslands, wetlands and oxbows, all critical habitat located within the historical floodplain. (Owned and managed by Iowa Department of Natural Resources)



Scout's honor

INHF is helping to protect Little Sioux Scout Ranch in the Loess Hills by preserving its history and opening it to the public

Little Sioux Scout Ranch
Monona County

Little Sioux Scout Ranch contains nearly 1,800 acres of old-growth oak woodland and remnant prairie in the heart of the Loess Hills. *Photo by Joe Jayjack/INHF*

BY JOE JAYJACK
Communications Director | jjayjack@inhf.org

Scouts have spent thousands of nights under the stars at Little Sioux Scout Ranch (LSSR) in western Iowa's Monona County.

LSSR, spread across the western slope of the Loess Hills, has given scouts a place to hike, canoe, fish — and learn to tie knots — for more than 50 years. At almost 1,800 acres, it is also one of the largest privately owned natural areas in the state, and one of the few that offers this sense of remote wilderness.

Since the early 1970s, LSSR has been the home of Camp Amikaro, where Cub Scouts often get their first taste of camping. It has hosted day camps, overnight wilderness experiences and family camping weekends.

“On an average year, we would get more than 10,000 [individual] nights of camping

at Little Sioux,” said Chris Mehaffey, CEO of the Mid-America Council of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). “Generations of cub scouts have done their camping at Little Sioux. All three of my children have camped there. It’s a very special place for me.”

LSSR has served as a place for scouts to connect with nature and engage in projects that develop a love of service and, according to BSA, “teach children that doing their best can be a fun and rewarding experience — no matter the difficulty of the challenge.”

Sometimes those challenges can seem monumental.

Troubled skies

On June 11, 2008, 96 boys and 24 youth leaders were at LSSR. They all came from the Mid-America Council, which includes western

Iowa and parts of Nebraska and South Dakota. The boys had been specially picked for the camp to study leadership skills and wilderness survival.

Shortly after dinner that evening, a pounding storm developed into a tornado. Winds reaching 165 mph tore through the camp, snapping trees and flattening buildings, including the lodge where most of the scouts had taken shelter. Four boys — Aaron Eilerts, 14, of Eagle Grove, along with Josh Fennen, 13, Sam Thomsen, 13, and Ben Petrzilka, 14, all of Omaha — were killed when the chimney of the lodge collapsed.

Four dozen others were injured, and the scouts immediately used their first aid training to help each other while waiting for emergency responders to arrive. It was the beginning of a long recovery for the camp and all the people that were there.

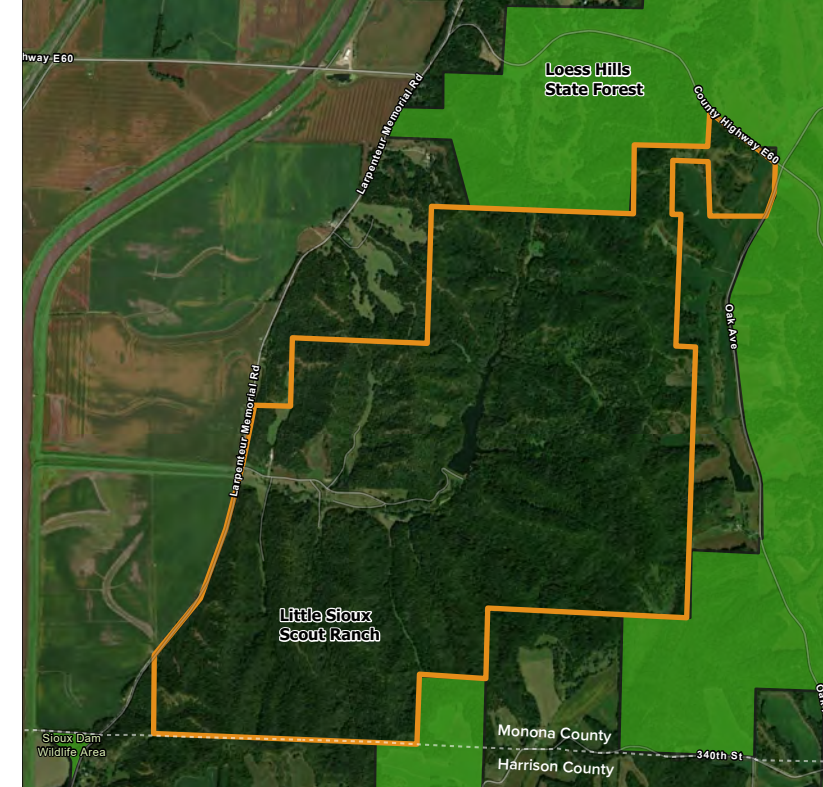
The camp was re-opened the following May, and a memorial to the four boys was erected. Later that year, the New York Says Thank You Foundation and Mid-America Council coordinated hundreds of volunteers to help build an open air chapel on the foundation of the site where the four scouts died, using reclaimed timber from the camp and surrounding areas.

Things settled into a new normal at LSSR, with scouts returning to camp, connecting with nature and learning new skills. But attendance at the camp was steadily declining, a trend that has been happening with camps across the country.

The Gillwell Foundation, which owns all the properties used by the Mid-America Council, began a years-long study of all of its camps, looking at usage and determining the best future for each property. In 2021, they came to the difficult decision that they would sell Little Sioux Scout Ranch. Ideally, they would find a buyer who could do three things:

- 1) Open the property to the public
- 2) Maintain the memorial to the four boys that died in the 2008 tornado
- 3) Honor and share the history of LSSR as a scout camp

They immediately reached out to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.



A new partnership

“From the very first phone call when I called [INHF President] Joe McGovern and told him what we’d like to do, he was very interested,” Mehaffey said. “I had two or three other individuals that were interested in pieces right away. But we wanted to keep it whole and make sure it would be available to the public.”

In the fall of 2021, INHF purchased an option to buy property with the help of multiple donor funds designated for Loess Hills land protection. The option must be exercised by Dec. 31, 2022, in order to secure the property as a whole. The project will cost more than \$7 million in total, and INHF has set a goal to raise at least \$2 million privately by the end of the year.

“We believe the history of the property, especially the memorial to the lives of the boys that were lost in 2008, is very important

A memorial to the four scouts killed in a 2008 tornado at Little Sioux Scout Ranch sits next to an open air chapel that was built with the help of hundreds of volunteers in 2009. The memorial and chapel will remain on the site even after the property is sold. *Photo by Erica Place/INHF*



The vast size of Little Sioux Scout Ranch

creates numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation. Once open to the public, it will create access to more than 6,000 acres of land when combined with the adjacent Loess Hills State Forest.

Photos by Erica Place and Joe Jayjack/INHF

to preserve as part of this land,” McGovern said. “INHF has worked in the Loess Hills for decades. We know this land is special, and we’re grateful for the opportunity to preserve the Little Sioux Scout Ranch.”

What makes this land so special? First is its size. The average privately owned parcel of land in the Loess Hills is around 100 acres. At almost 1,800 acres, LSSR offers unsurpassed opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, wilderness camping, fishing and hunting. The property has 25 miles of established trails and a 20-acre lake with some of the best fishing in western Iowa, according to Mehaffey.

Once secured, INHF will work with partners to open the property to the public and expand use around the Loess Hills State Forest, which is owned and managed by the Iowa DNR.

Next is the land itself. LSSR, which is about halfway between Council Bluffs and Sioux City, is mostly old-growth oak woodland and remnant prairie on the western bluffs of the

Loess Hills, a globally unique area consisting of ridges formed by wind-blown soil.

“This landscape at this scale only exists in two places in the world, here and along the Yellow River in China,” said INHF Loess Hills Land Stewardship Director Kody Wohlers, who noted that even within the Hills, this expanse of historical woodland is rare. “To be able to protect a piece of this size, and what that means for wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation, is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

LSSR is in a state-designated Bird Conservation Area, making it a haven for birdwatching, one of North America’s fastest growing outdoor activities. It is also in a National Park Service-designated Special Landscape Area and lies along the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.

Gaining momentum

The project has already garnered support from community partners. The Iowa West Foundation has awarded a \$500,000 grant

to INHF to go toward the purchase of the property, recognizing its potential to benefit western Iowa residents and the importance of maintaining the memorial.

Brenda Mainwaring, president and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation, had a colleague whose son was killed in the 2008 tornado at LSSR. “I remember very vividly the impact that had on him and his family. Opening this property to the public broadens the ability for people to go and pay their respects and honor the boys who were killed there,” she said.

The Gilchrist Foundation, based in Sioux City, awarded a \$150,000 grant to the project, with the pledge of another \$150,000 if INHF exercises the option to purchase the property by the end of the year. That leaves at least \$1.2 million for INHF to raise by the end of the year to reach its fundraising goal.

“The early support for this project has been amazing,” said Abby Hade Terpstra, INHF Director of Philanthropy. “We’re so grateful for these lead gifts from the Iowa West Foundation

and the Gilchrist Foundation. And now we’re excited to engage with people that hold special memories of this place and people that are excited to explore it for the first time.”

The project is likely to take 3-5 years for INHF to complete, and in that time they will lease the camp back to the Mid-America Council for use and management. Even after the property is completely opened to the public, Mehaffey envisions scouts continuing to use it for years to come.

“I can see Eagle Scout projects being done for generations at Little Sioux. Arbor Day can be celebrated by planting native trees. Scouting will continue to have a presence there,” Mehaffey said. “When parents want to take their kids back to where they did scouting, they’ll be able to do that. It will be the same place, the same topography. There are a ton of people here that know of Little Sioux because of the tornado, but there’s not a whole lot of them that have been there. Now they’ll be able to go and get to know this place.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

INHF has a goal to raise at least \$2 million by the end of 2022 so it can exercise the option to purchase the Little Sioux Scout Ranch and make sure that it is protected forever.

Learn more about the project and how to donate by visiting www.inhf.org/LSSR

If you have questions or want to learn more about how you can support the project, contact INHF Director of Philanthropy Abby Hade Terpstra at aterpstra@inhf.org or **515-288-1846, ext. 15.**

FROM BATTLES TO BICYCLES

Veterans find healing along the Great American Rail-Trail



BY CJ YOUNGER
Special to INHF

In the summer of 2021, five veterans set out from Washington, D.C. with nothing but bikes and bags. Their destination? The other end of the country. The veterans were on a trip put together by Warrior Expeditions, a nonprofit outdoor therapy program that helps veterans transition from service to civilian life. They hike, bike or paddle thousands of miles, processing trauma and making new connections along the way.

“By the time you see folks at the end, it’s like someone’s turned a light switch on,” said Sean Gobin, director of Warrior Expeditions. “Life has returned to their eyes.”

The five cyclists were the inaugural Warrior Expeditions team to travel along the Great American Rail-Trail®, a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy vision to connect 12 states with 3,700 miles

of existing and future regional trails when completed.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is a partner in establishing many of the existing and future trails along the 465-mile route through Iowa from Davenport to Council Bluffs. INHF continues to help fill in the gaps, including recently purchasing land needed to complete the connection

The cross-country journey spans 3,700 miles from Washington D.C. to Washington state, including passing over the High Trestle Trail bridge, shown above. Photos courtesy of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Warrior Expeditions



Outfitted with the needed equipment, clothing and supplies, the veterans can focus on contemplation, camaraderie and community. The route passes through Iowa’s Cedar Valley Nature Trail, pictured at right. Photos courtesy of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

between the High Trestle Trail and the Raccoon River Valley Trail.

As more pieces of the Great American Rail-Trail are connected and routes are moved off of busy roads, the riders can more fully immerse themselves in the quiet serenity of America’s natural landscape.

But the Great American Rail-Trail doesn’t just connect these veterans with nature – it connects them with people, too. The trail takes them through communities that open their campsites, restaurants and homes.

“You experience the worst of humanity in combat,” Gobin said. “Meeting all these wonderful, supportive people along the trail helps reestablish that basic faith in humanity.”

Jay Waters was one of the veterans invited to go on the Great American Rail-Trail ride in 2021. Waters served as an army human resources specialist, and was deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Liberia during his 30 years of service. Once he retired, he found himself adrift without the structure and support of military life.

The trail took him through 12 states, but Iowa made the strongest impression. The D.C. native found the landscape beautiful, but it was the kindness of the people that stuck with him.

At the end of the High Trestle Trail, a woman who connected with Waters through a Facebook group waited with home-cooked fajitas, vegetables, beer and watermelon. Three farmers invited him to ride a combine and see how it worked near Grundy Center. Someone else bought him breakfast and let him and his fellow bicyclists stay at a campsite for free.

“I really found the people – all across the United States, but especially in Iowa – very friendly and very helpful,” Waters said.

This summer, another team of veterans completed the second annual Warrior Bike expedition, passing through Iowa in June.

When completed, the Great American Rail-Trail will have nearly 50 million people living within 50 miles of it. And while the trail can be enjoyed by anyone anytime, veterans biking the trail each summer will be connected with a sixth of America’s population that, through acts of ordinary kindness, can help them heal and grow into this next chapter of their lives.

Those interested in supporting the veterans on their next ride through Iowa can reach out to Sean Gobin at sgobin@warriorhike.org. To learn more about the Great American Rail-Trail, visit www.railstotrails.org.



“Trails are a necessity. It’s not a ‘nice to have.’ It’s something you need to have in your community to give people outdoor access that is safe, free and well-connected.”

– Kevin Belanger
Great American Rail-Trail Project Manager

RETURNING HOME

One family's gift is creating a new public area in Johnson County and reconnecting a tribe with its ancestral land

BY BRIA HOLTHE
Conservation Programs Intern

Nestled within the rolling hills of Johnson County lies Two Horse Farm: the culmination of decades of love and hard work spanning generations.

In 1978, Pat and Enid Cancilla purchased 90 acres of land on a ridge overlooking the Iowa River Valley. Old farmer's wisdom indicated it would take two horses to work a property that large. The size, coupled with an old shed found on the property with two horses carved on it, led to the name Two Horse Farm. On the property lay oak-hickory savanna and prairie ecosystems in need of restoration, a job that the Cancillas were happy to take on.

The Cancillas are conservation-minded and were awarded INHF's Lawrence and Eula Hagie Heritage Award in 2019 because of their restoration work on Two Horse Farm. Their passion for protecting Iowa's land was passed down to their daughter and son-in-law: Erin and Brian Melloy.

The Melloyes moved onto the property in 2013 with the goal of continuing the work the Cancillas had started: removing invasive species and restoring ecosystems. Working on the land was a labor of love for the couple; they wanted the land to look and be healthy. The Melloyes removed stubborn invasives like honeysuckle and oriental bittersweet to create one of the healthiest oak-hickory forests in the region and conducted regular burns and brush removal on the prairie.

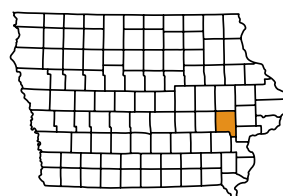
After 10 years spent pouring every bit of love and time they had into caring for the property, it became even more important to ensure it was protected forever. Once the Melloyes came to that realization, it was just a matter of who to call.

"It became a question of how do we make this happen long term and who do we need to approach," remembered Erin. "As well as what's their philosophy and does it mesh with ours. What's their capability to actually maintain a large property? No matter what question we asked ourselves, Johnson County



Two Horse Farm
Johnson County

Erin and Brian Melloy, pictured at left, carried on a tradition of protection and restoration at Two Horse Farm that was started by Erin's parents, Enid and Pat Cancilla, above. *Photos by Erin Melloy*



LAND: 90 acres of carefully restored prairie and woodland with a rich cultural history that will host future environmental education opportunities for the public

PARTNERS: INHF, Johnson County Conservation, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska

SPECIAL FEATURES: At least 364 documented plant species, including several that are rare or threatened. Seven-acre circle rematriated to the Iowa Tribe — their only land holding in the state

and Johnson County Conservation always came back as the answer.”

The Melloy's relationship with Johnson County Conservation (JCC) was many years in the making at this point. Both they and the Cancillas frequently volunteered with the organization, and JCC had been working on several projects near their property. These connections grew a relationship that fostered the trust the Melloy's needed to pass on ownership of the property. JCC has taken on the mantle of continuing the work the Cancillas started decades ago: managing and maintaining the land, while also aspiring to new heights.

The Melloy's donated a portion of the land's value in a sale to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. INHF was then able to transfer the property to local partners so the land could become available to the public.

Soaring to New Heights

The relationship with Johnson County Conservation is not the first Two Horse Farm has fostered. Erin's sister Jodeane Cancilla is a founding member of RARE, Raptor Advocacy Rehabilitation and Education, a non-profit raptor rehabilitation and education

organization. RARE has been using Two Horse Farm as a rehabilitation site for years.

After Jodeane helped create RARE, Erin and Brian were quick to suggest turning a barn on their property into a flight space for the birds. For Jodeane the opportunity was perfect. She would be able to provide birds under her care with space to thrive in a place she knew and loved. Erin and Brian helped RARE build a flight enclosure in their barn along with a caged-in outdoor space. The barn enclosure houses birds they are currently rehabilitating while the outdoor space houses their education animals.

In the future RARE hopes to host more educational events out at the property in partnership with JCC. “I'm very excited for the future and I think it's going to be a fabulous relationship,” said Jodeane. “The transition is bittersweet because we used to hold family get togethers out there, but we're gaining a bigger family there. I think it's going to be a wonderful opportunity for everybody.”

JCC is very aware of how special this plot of land is. They plan to take full advantage of all the unique connections this land holds through continuing partnerships and offering new education opportunities for the public.

Education, operations and maintenance staff will all be working out of the site in the future. But there's something even more special in store for a seven-acre circle in the heart of the property.

Returning Home

The Iowa Tribe is the tribe which Iowa is named after. There are two branches of the tribe, one reservation in Kansas and Nebraska and the other in Oklahoma. The lands of the Iowa Tribe were ceded to the U.S. in several treaties, losing the last of the Iowa land in 1838.

During meetings with JCC, a unique opportunity was brought to the Melloy's attention. Larry Gullett, Director of Johnson County Conservation, had previously been approached by Lance Foster, Vice Chairman and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska. During a meeting between the tribe and JCC to authorize the naming of the nearby Cangleska Wakan project, Foster mentioned that he wanted Gullett to stay on the lookout for opportunities to work with private landowners to rematriate a piece of land to the Iowa people.

“It's symbolically very important that we have another part of the land that used to be ours,” said Foster.

Gullett knew from his conversations with the Melloy's over the years that they could be just the folks the Iowa Tribe was looking for. Inspired by the Cangleska Wakan project, the Melloy's were on board. “If we can all make this happen let's do it,” said Erin.

Gullett was thrilled. He knew that not only was this a great opportunity for the Iowa Tribe to return to their ancestral home, but it was also an opportunity for Johnson County Conservation to learn from the tribe.

“The indigenous cultures have such a strong and respectful relationship with the land, and that's something that our culture is really lacking,” said Gullett. “By promoting this project with a culture of people that honor the land and take care of it so well there can be a lot of cultural sharing and diversity that can help us all understand this place where we live so much better”.

Foster echoed that idea: “The partnership means not only connection to the place, but

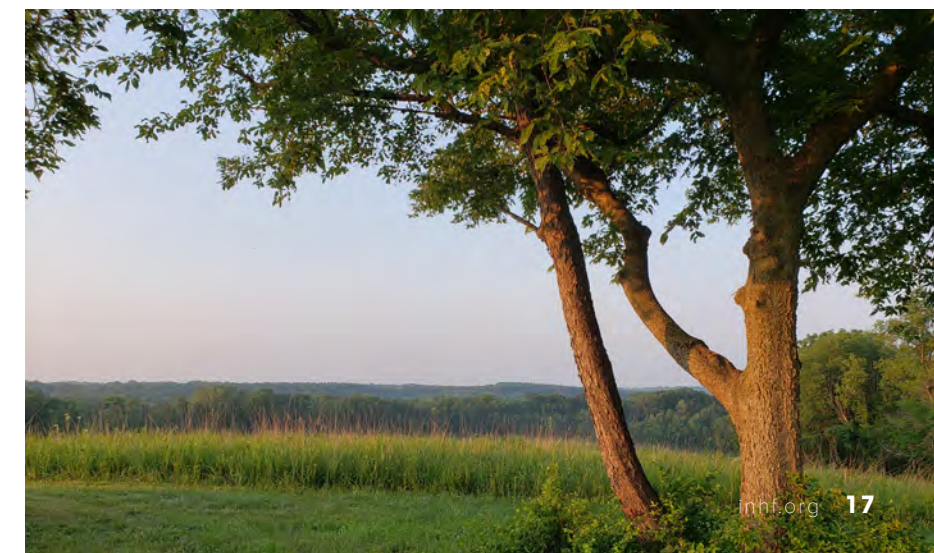
“We do hope this is a gradual reconnecting for us and for the people of Iowa. It's a continual going home for all of us in different ways so we remember that place and so people remember us.”

– LANCE FOSTER, VICE CHAIRMAN AND TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER, IOWA TRIBE OF KANSAS AND NEBRASKA

to the kind people who made this happen. Everything is connected and perhaps this will open a good new way for us all.”

Now, the seven acres at Two Horse Farm is a chance for the Iowa Tribe to reclaim the connection to their ancestors. “We will use the land for prayer and to remember our ancestors, and through them, our ancient connection to this place,” said Foster. “We will see the Iowa River far below, which was named for us, and which gave the state its name in turn. We may even come at times to sing our prayers for the land and all who come there.”

Stepping onto Two Horse Farm is akin to stepping onto a sanctuary. Visitors are immediately struck by the restful beauty found on the land, full of places that beckon you to sit down and soak it in. The Melloy's decision to share this experience with the public is nothing less than a selfless gift, and the diverse opportunities for conservation and education would have never been a possibility if it wasn't for a family of Iowans willing to spend years of their life giving back to the land. 🌿



Nonprofits profiting through

PARTNERSHIP

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa strengthens stewardship throughout the region and helps to build the next generation of conservationists

BY ERICA PLACE
Communications Specialist | eplace@inhf.org

There are many different types of organizations across the state doing conservation and outdoor recreation work.

There are government entities like parks and recreation departments, the county conservation system, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; entities with strong community presence in the form of chapters like Pheasants Forever or Iowa Audubon; private companies that can provide seed for your prairie restoration or fish for your pond; and nonprofit groups that rely heavily on community support to execute their mission.

It's in the last category that INHF falls as a land trust and 501(c)(3), and we have the great fortune of working alongside the entire spectrum of Iowa's conservation organizations. Some of our best work is done in partnerships, and there's lots to gain from teaming up.

One longstanding INHF partner is Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), an AmeriCorps program modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. CCMI is a job skills training program and engages youth and young adults in meaningful service, leadership development and environmental stewardship. Also a nonprofit, CCMI is funded primarily through contracting their crews to complete projects across the Midwest. The Iowa Field Crew program engages around 45 crew

members every year.

"Some are coming to the program because they want experience and certifications," explains DeWitt Boyd, Iowa Program Manager. "Others just want to figure out what they want to do with their life. But service to the environment is important to all of them."

Crew members receive a living allowance and education award that can be used for student loan payments, and serve three-month, half-year or year-long terms. They often camp at worksites as they travel from host to host, completing projects like footbridge construction, invasive species removal or other habitat management. At the end of their term, they've networked with natural resource professionals, learned skills like teamwork and conflict resolution and come away with tons of experience and training. And through working with a variety of hosts, they have a much better idea of what job opportunities are available in this field.

As you visit your local parks, there's a good chance you'll encounter at least one CCMI project. They even have crews dedicated specifically to tasks like trail construction or monarch monitoring in Iowa and hope to someday also

An independent nonprofit since 2003, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa engages young adults in leadership development and environmental stewardship. *Photos by INHF and CCMI*





Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa engages young adults in leadership development and environmental stewardship. “From a stewardship perspective, we couldn’t do what we do without them. They’re that important.”

– RYAN SCHMIDT, INHF CENTRAL IOWA LAND STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR

create a crew dedicated to water trails.

INHF is one of the many organizations who hosts CCMI crews each year, supplementing the work of our permanent and seasonal staff.

“From a stewardship standpoint, we couldn’t do what we do without them,” reflects Ryan Schmidt, Central Iowa Land Stewardship Director. “They’re that important.”

Especially when you’re a small nonprofit, there’s tremendous value in having a reliable partner to get good conservation work done. Crews are specifically booked to coincide with prescribed fire season, when many hands and eyes are needed to get the job done safely. And while getting good work done is always the focus, we can’t lose sight of the responsibility to shape the next generation of natural resource advocates and professionals. That’s what makes it mutually beneficial for CCMI.

Also focused on developing people, INHF is intentional about taking time to educate and inspire CCMI members just as we do our own seasonal staff. Schmidt expands on our philosophy when hiring a crew: “Give your best effort every day – physically and mentally. Come ready to work because we’re going to ask a lot of you. But what’s the point of being out here if we’re not enjoying it and learning from each other? These are young people trying to get into the field and make a difference.” It’s bigger than the project. “We treat members with respect and as equals, and that gives us results. That extra time comes back to benefit INHF and land conservation as a whole.”

Amy Yoakum, Iowa Assistant Program Manager, hears from crew members about why they enjoy INHF projects, and she feels the same way. “INHF just ‘gets it.’ They know it takes a village to train the next generation of land stewards. They very much look at our members as a work in progress, and take the time to nurture them, explain the projects, and the history. They value our values, and they thank them for their work. The members feel it.”

“I really appreciated how Ryan and Derek went out of the way to explain their conservation methodology to me and to answer all of the questions I had,” remembers Rose Caplan, CCMI Field Crew Leader, of her experience working on an INHF project. “I felt very supported in my desire to learn!”

With values so closely aligned, it’s no surprise that individuals will often end a summer with INHF and move on to a term with CCMI, or vice versa. A couple current fulltime INHF staff got their feet wet in the conservation field as a CCMI crew member.

“It played a huge part in shaping my career and giving me the skills I needed to succeed in this profession,” remembers Jered Bourquin, INHF Blufflands Associate. “I had some of the best role-models to look up to and guide me during my time with the Corps and that is what I hope to be to the Conservation Corps crews that we [INHF] work with. Knowing that these young adults are the next generation of conservation practitioners makes it all the more important for us to take the time and teach them what we have learned so that they can avoid our mistakes and better serve our collective conservation mission.”

People benefitting through mentorship and collaboration, the land benefitting from many hands with shared goals. It’s a win-win. A true partnership, not just the transaction of hiring a crew.

With no shortage of project requests, CCMI is sure to stay busy. But projects with INHF will remain a fixture on their calendar. Because when two nonprofits come together, there’s profit. 🌱

In 2022, INHF requested CCMI’s help with prescribed fire, invasive species removal and prairie seed harvest.

Photos by INHF and CCMI



UNDER Wild Skies

BY EMILY MARTIN
Conservation Programs Coordinator | emartin@inhf.org

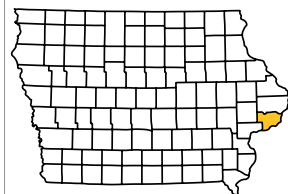
"We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it—for a little while." ~ Willa Cather, O Pioneers!

There are those who remain steadfast in recapturing the wilderness that once dominated the Great Plains, the limitless skies and prairie which inspired the likes of Willa Cather and Aldo Leopold to exclaim to the world its beauty. Ann Werner is one of those stewards who sees the splendor of the land and has a vision for what future generations of humans and wildlife deserve.

"People in my generation do not have a relationship with prairie because we didn't have prairies like Neal Smith [National Wildlife Refuge] in which to wander. So, we don't know the wild beauty, the wonder, the joy of walking with big bluestem waving over our heads and wildflowers blooming underfoot. We have lost the ancient history of this land. The tallgrass prairie evolved over ten thousand years and was nearly lost in less than one generation, lost before it was written record. The loss of the largest native ecosystem in the U.S. to what we have now, is something I don't even know how to take in. But I believe that Iowans can still do something big here," said Werner.

Earlier this year, Werner made a leap forward in her vision by donating Lark Fields

Lark Fields Scott County



LAND: 237 acres of diverse habitat and sustainably-farmed agricultural land near Davenport

SPECIAL FEATURES: Models the intersection between wildlife habitat and sustainable agriculture



Using a phased approach, Werner has worked to restore Lark Fields using prescribed burning and planting thousands of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers.



to INHF so it will be protected forever. Located in Scott County in eastern Iowa, Lark Fields is a diverse 237-acre farm intentionally designed with native prairie, trees and shrubs and a newly excavated wetland. But Lark Fields didn't start this way. Werner first had to go on her own journey before she would be ready to take on the restoration of her heritage farm.

The Ties that Bind

Werner grew up with her two siblings where they played in their backyard and ravine in Davenport, Iowa. This was her first classroom where she observed nature. Werner's parents, Jane and Clem, strongly valued conservation, becoming early supporters of INHF and Nahant Marsh Education Center.

"One of the gifts [my parents] gave us was showing humility to other people and to other species. That we were small in comparison and only here for a short time," said Werner.

That humility would stick with Werner throughout her life, guiding her out West to deepen her study of the environment. Werner eventually put down roots in Oregon where she still lives today after a career in environmental planning and advocacy.



“Growing up, we drove by our farms on Sunday afternoons. In college, I’d come home often and we would see the farms but after my parents retired to Florida, I didn’t come to Iowa for 10 years,” said Werner.

Werner stayed in touch with Iowa through environmental newsletters where she learned about the criticisms Iowa faced for its loss of soil and habitat.

“After Mom died, my siblings and I decided to split the farms. While it made sense to trade my Iowa farm for a farm in Oregon where I lived, the opportunity to restore wildlife habitat in Iowa was too important to pass up,” said Werner.

A Plan Comes Together

Werner wasted no time getting to work on what would become Lark Fields. The property was originally purchased by her great grandparents in the 1920s and had been farmed since.

“Like most of the rich black soil in Scott County, the land was planted with two species for crops,” Werner said. “Because I was in my 60s, I wanted to fast-forward biological diversity so I could see results in my lifetime.”

One of Werner’s first steps was to learn what was possible by visiting land owned and stewarded by Curtis Lundy, chairman of the Nahant Marsh Education Center board of directors. It was Lundy who introduced her to the planning resources available through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). Shortly after visiting Lundy’s land, Werner worked with the NRCS to create a plan.

“With the ecological advice from experts, I hired contractors to plant thousands of native species of trees, shrubs, wetland plugs and to seed native grasses and forbs. I had some drainage tile removed from the farmed fields and a pond excavated,” said Werner.

Travelling back and forth between Oregon and Iowa throughout the restoration of Lark Fields, Werner enjoyed reconnecting with her Iowa roots. By day she worked at Lark Fields, and by night she traveled to her hometown of Davenport to rest. Werner reveled in looking to the wild skies as vast crackling thunderstorms rolled across the land.

“In Oregon, I missed the big wild beauty of Iowa’s sky: its storms, dramatic clouds, and extreme weather,” Werner reflectd. It was in this time between spectacular sunrises, peaceful sunsets and tireless work that Werner chose the name Lark Fields. As Werner puts it, humans are here for a short time, but nature remains to greet future generations. That’s why the horned lark, a grassland specialist who lives year-round in Iowa, became the farm’s namesake.



Werner’s commitment to restoring Lark Fields has resulted in birds, insects and other animals returning to the site, like this red-winged blackbird perching on a stand of cup plant.

“I like that Ann picked the Lark as a symbol – it likes openness but with transitional edge – that’s how it feels to be at Lark Fields. You’re tucked into safety with resources all around you,” said Abby Hade Terpstra, director of philanthropy for INHF.

Werner is quick to point out that the transformation of Lark Fields was extremely hard work and depended on the involvement of many. Natural resource specialists; private landowners; botanists; ecological consultants; certified prescribed burn experts; and the tenant who still farms a portion of the land. Werner was inspired to see so many Iowans wanting to return farmland to habitat together.

In total, 70 acres of the 237 are now diverse habitat, and the rest are farmed with conservation at its heart. In the last seven years, new life has found this oasis — birds, insects, rodents, mammals, amphibians — singing, swimming, flying, eating, nesting, resting, monarchs overnighting on trees on their migration and so much more.

Looking to the Future

With the land healing, Werner wanted to ensure Lark Fields would forever remain habitat for Iowa’s native species. Werner turned to the same organization her family had worked with years ago: INHF. This past spring, Werner made a charitable donation of all 237 acres to INHF to protect and steward forever.

“Living far away, I knew it was time to donate Lark Fields to an organization who had the capacity to manage it for long term success. That’s a tall order. I felt lucky to have an organization as mature and capable as INHF to take over the stewardship of Lark Fields,” said Werner.

“INHF recognizes the intensity of this personal decision. It has been truly fantastic to be able to develop a relationship with Ann as she considered making a gift of this magnitude,” said Hade Terpstra.

Werner hopes to see Lark Fields have the same impact on young people as her parents’ love for nature had on her. “The experiences we have when we are young stay with us and shape us. We need to protect wild lands now to ensure future generations have places to go. Lark Fields is an island of hope in a sea of corn and soybeans; what is desperately needed is the restoration of much more habitat in Iowa, on farmland and in backyards.”

Under INHF’s protection, Lark Fields will inspire generations to come so every Iowan may know what it’s like to see a native landscape filled with singing birds under wild skies.

FUNDING THE FUTURE

Dr. William Holtze, M.D. and Mary Holtze are Iowans. They have connections to Sioux City, where Bill is from, and the Dubuque area, where Mary is from, as well as being long-time residents in the Des Moines community. But out-of-state grandkids are beckoning, and the Holtzes have decided it is time to move away.

“I am an Iowan, even though I’m soon to not be living here,” said Bill, at a meeting we had this spring. Bill and Mary didn’t want to depart their home state without considering how to leave a legacy here that would promote their ideals of supporting pollinator habitat, protecting natural lands, and caring for Iowa’s waters.

The William and Mary Holtze Endowment Fund was established at Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation because INHF’s long-term thinking and wide-ranging, responsive programs were a way to serve their desired legacy. The Holtze’s gift was placed in INHF’s restricted endowment,

invested as part of the corpus that feeds the annual operating costs of running every part of the organization; from land protection and stewardship to intern and staff salaries; from new initiatives to established programs like volunteer outreach and trails programs.

Bill and Mary’s gift will lift the mission to protect and restore Iowa’s land, water and wildlife year after year. Their unrestricted support will make it possible for all future iterations of the organization to have what it needs to get good work done for conservation in Iowa. Thank you, Bill and Mary, for this incredible and generous gift to Iowa.

— ABBY HADE TERPSTRA, *Director of Philanthropy*

Leave a legacy for future generations: If you are interested in setting up an endowment or have questions about leaving a legacy gift, contact Director of Philanthropy Abby Hade Terpstra at aterpstra@inhf.org or 515-288-1846, ext. 15.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN HONOR OF

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Mark Ackelson
Garth Adams
Colleen Armstrong
Walter Armstrong
LuAnn Armstrong
Donald Beneke
Tom Bruegger
Mary B. Crawford
Phillip Cummins
Michelle Devine
Bruce Ecker
Clifford Fudge on his 85th Birthday
The Garst Family
Diane Graves
Chris Hall
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Photo by Ron Huelse

MONARCH MIGRATION

BY AUTUMN OSIA
Communications Intern

As summer closes, eastern monarch butterflies begin their seasonal travel from summer breeding grounds across the eastern U.S. and southern Canada to their cozy, southern winter home west of Mexico City.

Depending on their starting point, this journey could be as far as 3,000 miles. As if that’s not a big enough obstacle for an insect that weighs less than a paperclip, they also face threats like harmful pesticides and dwindling habitat for breeding and refueling during their long trek. The hazards are adding up, and each year, fewer monarchs successfully make the trip. Populations have declined over 80% during the past two decades.

Tagging, originally used by Dr. Fred Urquhart of the University of Toronto to help locate overwintering monarchs, is helping us better understand fall migration and monarch populations. We can get insight on tagged

butterflies’ origin, the speed and distance of travel, size, overall behaviors, mortality, and more. The more data we can collect, the better we can understand all the intricacies of this species’ life cycle, and how to change our behavior to prevent further decline. The best part is that this valuable data is being collected by individuals like you.

Millions of tags, each with a unique tracking code, are distributed by Monarch Watch each year to volunteers east of the Rocky Mountains. The tags are small, lightweight, weather-resistant stickers that won’t interfere with or harm the monarch. Simply catch a butterfly in your net, jot down some information, place the tag on a wing and set your butterfly free, and you’ve contributed to a large-scale community science project. You can either order a tagging kit yourself through shop.monarchwatch.org or join in on community tagging events. It’s likely a county conservation department near you has something planned this fall! Browse events at mycountyparks.com.

WANT TO DO MORE?

Build your very own Monarch Waystation to provide food and shelter for every step of the monarch’s life cycle. Waystations can be as simple as adding milkweed and nectar sources to existing gardens or pots on a patio. Be sure to choose native Iowa milkweeds like butterfly milkweed or swamp milkweed. Common milkweed is great for monarchs, too, but it can be “weedy” in a small garden. Learn more about building and registering your waystation at monarchwatch.org.

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A bobcat gracefully navigates a fallen snag. Bobcats are skilled hunters who can climb with ease and run up to 30 miles per hour. In Iowa, these solitary and secretive cats are primarily munching on small rodents like rabbits, mice and squirrels. *Photo by Stanley Buman*

