



The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2026

New Mural Stands Tall

Local artists Lauren Roush and Pauli Zmolek have completed their second mural inside the Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center. The duo's first work of art was a large prairie mural in the Henderson Nature Nook which fills an entire wall. This summer, they've created a sprawling oak tree featuring eleven native birds to our area.

The bird mural is part of an educational project funded by a \$10,000 donation in honor of the Hidgon Sisters through the Newton Community Educational Foundation (NCEF). Centered on the tree is a TV screen that will show live footage of birds at feeders within the park.

Birds featured in the mural are all common species to our area: Northern Cardinal, Downy Woodpecker, White Breasted Nuthatch, Chickadee, Baltimore Oriole, Blue Jay, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Red Wing Blackbird, Mourning Dove, American Goldfinch and Eastern Bluebird. The tree is a white oak, Iowa's State Tree, surrounded by native wildflowers and grasses.

The bird feeding station, which is being built by Jasper County Conservation (JCC) staff, and camera installation is projected to be completed this fall. Eventually, landscaping will be completed around the feeding station and JCC staff hope to add more bird interpretational exhibits within the nature center. JCC works closely with local licensed bird bander, Bob Van Ervelde, and looks forward to this site being utilized for bird banding research as well.

Earlier this year, a classroom set of 25 binoculars was purchased using NCEF grant dollars and used on spring field trips with 5th grade students to help ID and track bird migration.

We're looking for Songbird Seed Sponsors! If you'd be willing to help us keep our feeders fully stocked with a monetary donation for seed, please contact Katie Cantu at kcantu@jasperia.org.



Above: Lauren Roush and Pauli Zmolek stand with their latest mural at the nature center, an oak tree and eleven songbirds.



Left: The bird tree mural with TV installed. Currently, various live feed bird cams from around the Midwest are being shown, but eventually this will be replaced with our very own "Newton Cardinal Cam."

Did you know? We had a pair of Killdeer birds make their nest right in front of the nature center this summer! They successfully hatched three chicks, despite the ongoing construction next door and many nature center visitors passing by. The babies looked like little balls of fluff with toothpick legs!

Killdeer do not build traditional nests, but instead scratch out simple, shallow depressions in the dirt or gravel, known as a scrape. Their speckled eggs are very well camouflaged!



Volunteering at the Nature Center

Jasper County Conservation has found some amazing volunteers to help out at the new Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, located just southeast of Newton. Sarah Patterson, RSVP Program Director, contacted her list of volunteers for us and many of our other conservation supporters have stepped up for some jobs as well!

Volunteers have had many jobs, including 3-hour greeter shifts at the nature center. These shifts are from 10am-1pm and 1pm-4pm Mondays-Fridays, and on Saturdays from 9am-12pm. If you like to meet new people and help promote conservation in our area, a building greeter is the job for you!

We have also had special guest story time readers on Mondays at 10:30am. These programs have been very popular, bringing in anywhere from 15-40 people! Story times involve reading a nature themed children's book and leading a simple activity/craft. The naturalists are always willing to help with ideas and supply materials!

Lastly, we need volunteers to assist with "pop up" events, which could be anything from making Junior Naturalist buttons, help preparing for programs, planting, watering and weeding around the facility, or any other activity that takes place at the center.

If you would like to be included in a volunteer email group to be notified about opportunities at the nature center, please email Keri Van Zante at kvanzante@jasperia.org. Volunteers will receive a brief training session with Keri and sent our calendar of events each month. And, feel free to stop by the center any time to learn more about our amazing facility and everything that takes place here!

THANK YOU to these wonderful people who have volunteered at the nature center this past summer:

Kathy Batterson	Kimbra Korte
Linda Erickson	Veronica Mangrich
Deb and Jerry Ferrone	Marcia McFall
Megan Garrett	Natalie Moorman
Mary Margaret Gran	Sue Smith
Dara Hanson	Karen Staker
Terri Hayden	Loretta Tool
Heidi Holley	Deb Wearmouth
Sue Huetter	Kathy Winn
Jane Johnson	Delaney Woollums
Jodi King	Karen Van Wyk
Willy Klein	Bill Yeager

Rich Pendroy Memorial Event

Sunday, October 11, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Join us for a fun day of fishing and a chance to win some amazing prizes including rods, reels, tackle, and two guided fishing trips.



Prizes will be awarded for the biggest bass, bluegill, and catfish for each age group. Prizes will also be awarded for catching a tagged fish.

Age Categories for Big Fish Contest:

5-8 Years Old
9-12 Years Old
13-16 Years Old
17+ Years Old

Tagged Fish Prizes:

- Basic Registration \$10 (Kids only ages 15 and under): Win gift cards and small prizes for catching a tagged fish
- Bonus Registration \$25: Receive an event t-shirt with pre-registration and win upgraded prizes like rods, reels, and tackle
- Big Catch Registration \$50: Same benefits as Bonus registration, plus entered into a drawing for a guided catfishing trip

Each registrant will receive a meal ticket which includes a sandwich, drink, and chips. Spectators can purchase meals for \$10.

Proceeds from the event will go to the Outdoor Mentor Legacy Pond Project. The goal of this project is to create an accessible fishing area for youth and their outdoor mentors. To accomplish this we plan to:

- Install an accessible fishing dock outfitted with a pellet feeder
- Create a shoreline trail system for easy pond access
- Supplemental stocking of hybrid bluegill, channel catfish, and largemouth bass
- Install fish habitat structure

Right: Conceptual drawing of the Outdoor Mentor Legacy Pond fishing dock, located at Kramer Park.



Off the Beaten Path Trail Race

Saturday, September 19, 9:00 AM

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

Registration for the 22nd annual trail race will begin at 8:00AM at Ahrens Access of the preserve. The 3K and 6K trail will both kick off at 9:00AM.

Further information, including registration forms and directions to Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve, is at www.jaspercountyconservation.com and on Jasper County Conservation's Facebook page. All registered runners and walkers will receive a long-sleeve t-shirt. Proceeds from the trail race will benefit Jasper Conservation Connection.



Nature Center Themes

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Each month activities in the nature center focus on a special theme. Kids can take part in things such as scavenger hunts, puzzles, crafts, and more! There are natural objects to look at through the microscope and the educational animals are on display. When kids complete all the special activities, they can earn their "Junior Naturalist" pin for that month! Special blue drawstring bags are available for purchase (\$5/each) so kids can collect pins and show them off on their own nature center bag!



Nature Center Themes:
September: "Squirrels and Acorns"
October: "Bats"
November: "Turkeys"
December: "Animal Tracks"

UTV Tours

September 16 and 30

Uhlenhopp Arboretum

2706 E. 146th St. N., Grinnell, Iowa 50112

Jasper County Conservation continues to offer tours with our UTV that comfortably gives 4 people at a time rides to view the beauty of our natural areas. Brad Van Zante leads these tours.

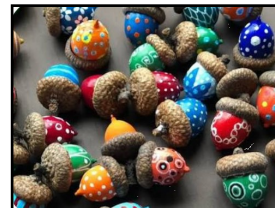
UTV tours will be offered on select days and times this fall. More dates will be added in October. Please call the JCCB office at (641) 792-9780 to check on availability and to make a reservation.

Acorn Art

Monday, September 21, 2:00-3:00 PM

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Decorate some colorful acorns with local artist Cat Rickers. This program is for kids ages 8-12 years old. There is no fee, but registration is required at www.mycountyparks.com/county/jasper/events.



Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors (OWLS)

Second Wednesday of each month

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Come for coffee and a short presentation. All programs are from 10:00-11:00 AM unless noted otherwise.

Oct. 8—The Story of the Battle of Sullivan's Island During the Revolutionary War

In observance of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, Dr. Joe Otto will tell a story about the Battle of Sullivan's Island in the summer of 1776. Attendees will hear about the strategic importance of Sullivan's Island for both the American and British sides, get a walk through the City of Charleston, South Carolina, on the day of the battle, and learn about a historical figure whose actions were of great importance to the people who founded Jasper County.

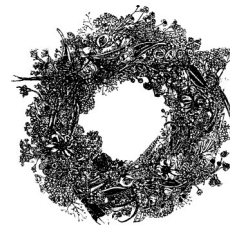
Nov. 11—Baking With Jeff King

Jeff King is known for his creative baking endeavors and his many entries in the Iowa State Fair, including one recipe using "Uncle Jake's Pure Maple Syrup" as a secret ingredient! This year he had 28 baking entries in the state fair. Jeff, a retired chemist, will talk about the chemistry and mathematics behind baking the perfect cakes, pies and breads.

Dec. 9—Evergreen Wreaths

Make your own fresh evergreen wreath or door swag to take home in this hands-on, holiday program!

Pre-registration is required for this program by calling (641) 792-9780.



Nature Center Story Times

Mondays from 10:30-11:00AM

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Special guests will be hosting story times at the nature center. Join us for stories and a craft, and see the new facility!

Sept. 14: "Salamander Room" with Liz Ventling
 Sept. 21: "Fall Animals" with Leslie Maach
 Sept. 28: "Trees" with Mary Margaret Gran
 Oct. 5: "Bats" with Heidi Holley
 Oct. 12: "Owls" with Judy O'Connor
 Oct. 19: "Little Good Wolf" with Leslie Maach
 Oct. 26: "Musical Fun" with Jane Johnson
 Nov. 2: "Mushrooms" with Liz Ventling
 Nov. 9: "Fall Leaves" with Willy Klein
 Nov. 16: "Turkeys" with Karen Hoffmeier
 Nov 30: "Fall Theme" with Rachel Anderson

Keep watching our Facebook page @Jasper County Conservation for more programs being added this winter!



Left: Delaney Woollums shares a story and talks about frogs and toads with summer story time visitors.

Bat Paint Along Class

Saturday, October 17, 9:30-11:30 AM

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Local artist Cat Rickers will lead the group through an acrylic painting session, with everyone creating their own bat scene on canvas for October! This program is for adults, ages 18+.



Space is limited. There is no fee for this program, but registration is required at www.mycountyparks.com/county/jasper/events.

Programs at Ashton Observatory

The Ashton Observatory will be open for public programs through the end of October on Saturday nights at 8:00PM. There will be talks inside the building and telescopes will be outside for open-viewing.



The telescopes are operated by the Des Moines Astronomical Society (DMAS). For more information or to reserve a viewing time for a small group, check out their website at www.dmastronomy.com.

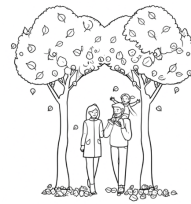
Fall Festival

Saturday, October 24, 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Newton Izaak Walton League

889 Hwy F-36 W, Newton

Jasper County Conservation is partnering with the Emerson Hough Chapter of the Izaak Walton League for a fun, family festival. There will be wagon rides, an archery pumpkin shoot, crafts, games and a pumpkin scavenger hunt on the trail. The Ikes are providing hotdogs, chips and drinks. There is no fee for this event but free will donations will benefit future conservation programs in Jasper County.



Full Moon Owl Prowl and Stargazing

Sunday, October 25, 6:00-8:00 PM

Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Join us for a Harvest Full Moon naturalist-led owl calling hike and stargazing with the Des Moines Astronomical Society (DMAS). Please meet in front of the nature center for a short owl presentation. The group will walk down along the pond and through the timber, stopping to call and listen for barred owls. The trails are mowed grass and wood-chipped surfaces.

Members of DMAS will have telescopes set up on the nature center's observation deck. Participants can stop by for informal talks and viewing of the moon, Saturn, Andromeda and the Pleiades star cluster.



A Summer of Fun!

Newton Noon Kiwanis continues to generously sponsor JCCB summer camps and the funding helps Conservation Staff to create camps focusing on outdoor skills, wildlife identification, water-sports, art projects, and much more! All of the camps quickly overflowed with participants when the registration opened online in April. Over 150 campers, ages 5 to 16, have spent their summer with Conservation Staff being “wild” in twelve different camps that spanned 19 days!

Some of the more popular activities included fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, racing down the giant slip-and-slide, creek stomping, pond netting, games, looking through microscopes, working on survival skills, and so much more.

We all had so much fun this summer! A HUGE thank you to the Newton Noon Kiwanis from Jasper County Conservation and summer camp participants for this wonderful learning opportunity!

Please contact naturalists

Katie or Greg if you have any questions about our summer programming.



Thank you  **Kiwanis**
Newton Noon

A Big Thank You To....

Our many sponsors for the Youth Fishing Club, Delaney Woollums for helping with 71 hours of youth summer camps and story times, Brad Van Zante for driving UTV tours, Newton Noon Kiwanis for sponsoring our summer camp programs, Ina Heidemann for supporting our EE program supplies, JoAnne Price for the Deaton wildflower models, Donna Boone for the poison dart frogs and terrarium habitat, Paxton Panada for the Madagascar hissing cockroaches, Tesha Huffaker for the book donations, Pat Fortune for the taxidermy largemouth bass, Mary Margaret Gran for the rocking chair, Deb Wearmouth for the snowshoes, Sarah Patterson for connecting us with RSVP volunteers, Bentley Huebner for building and maintaining wood duck boxes in the parks, Dan Mortensen for building a little free library for the nature center, and to all our wonderful volunteers who are greeters/helpers at the nature center! **Thank you!**

Update From Our Summer Teacher Extern, Micaela Scott

I had another wonderful experience working as a teacher extern at Jasper County Conservation this summer. It was fun to see the new education center open up and watch visitors come and explore. I also witnessed many changes, from different monthly themes, volunteers, and a new mural get painted. I had the opportunity to run two camps for kids in our community, a Little House on the Prairie camp and a weather camp. I also helped with advertising monthly themes and pop-up story times, as well as lead some of those story times.

This summer was very busy with all the new changes and camps, but it was filled with joy to see people of all ages enjoying a bit of conservation!



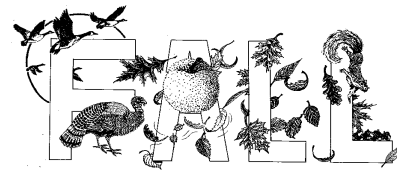
Above: Micaela Scott, Teacher Extern for JCC this summer, reads to a story time group at the nature center.

Right: Dan Mortensen shows off the Little Free Library he built for the nature center. JCC is still working on landscaping around the building, but the library will eventually be located near the front entrance.



Jasper County Conservation Board
5284 Liberty Avenue
Newton, IA 50208

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Jasper County Conservation Board

M - F: 10:00 - 4:00 Sat: 9:00 - 12:00
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Tristan Hunt.....Maintenance Technician
Jacob Arrowood.....Maintenance Technician

Meet Our Educational Animals

You may know “Cupcake” the fox snake and “Franklin” the ornate box turtle, but did you know we have some new animals at the Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center?!

Thanks to a donation from Donna Boone, we now have five little poison dart frogs in a very cool terrarium display. They don’t actually have poison on their skin, but they are small (1-2 inches long) and are very shy. Stop by the nature center and see if you can spot one peeking out!



We also have a painted turtle, a bullhead fish, a toad, and even three Madagascar hissing cockroaches on display. Stop by and visit them soon!

Jasper County Conservation Board’s programs are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age and handicap. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination, they may file a complaint with the Jasper County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, Washington, D.C. 29240