



In The Field

Teacher's Conservation Education Newsletter

Fall Semester ~ 2016

Ekstrand Kindergarten Teachers Are Changing It Up

by Jessica Steines, Interpretive Naturalist

Central Community School District's Ekstrand Elementary in Dewitt has utilized Clinton County Conservation's (CCC) naturalists for many years. Every winter they invite us into their school to share with the kindergarten a presentation we call *Into Winter*. This program discusses the ways Iowa animals cope with winter. In the spring, the kindergarten visits us at the Soaring Eagle Nature Center for a field day. In the past, they would have four 30-minute presentations in the morning and then go to lunch at the nearby Eagle Point Park and spend the rest of the day playing at the park. That is until this last spring when they turned their half day with CCC to a full day!

This last spring, the first half was the same, but in the afternoon the CCC naturalists went with the classes to Eagle Point Park for four rotations and it worked great! In fact, the teachers said, "We really enjoyed last spring's setup for the field trip because it was very informational and structured, not only for the students, but for the teachers and adult volunteers as well. The activities your staff [CCC naturalists] planned were of high interest and engaging. Every minute was so well planned out which kept the students busy and involved."

Here is what else the kindergarten teachers had to say about their student's field day. "Our students loved the entire day with activities that captured each child's interest. From a worm craft under the shelter to touching live creatures. It's not often children get to take a wagon ride to look out at the Mississippi River, walk up a "castle" or crawl through a



From left: Heather Sturtz, Joanie Taylor, Tracey McCulloh, Lisa Fox, and Anessa Petersen.

tree trunk during their school day! The students [also] like learning about the different animals in the nature barn, love playing nature and pioneer games along with songs. Students are very interested in learning about their outdoor world where they can make classroom connections from their tree and weather units. We believe it is important for students to take their learning outside the realm of the schoolyard and classroom."

For all that the Ekstrand teachers Joanie Taylor, Anessa Petersen, Heather Sturtz, Tracey McCulloh and Lisa Fox do for incorporating conservation education into their classroom, CCCF is presenting them with the Teachers of the Semester Award. With their \$50 award, they are planning to either plant a tree or paying it forward to another conservation education project.

An Invitation to ALL Teachers

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

Three years ago, the creation of our nature gallery at the Eco Center was just beginning and the need for fundraising was high. The Clinton County Conservation Foundation (CCCF) organized an amazing fundraising banquet that has now turned into an annual event.

Who: CCCF, a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to support the programs and facilities of the Clinton County Conservation Board.

What: Our annual fundraising banquet including an unforgettable prime rib dinner with live and silent auctions.

Where: Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center

When: November 5th, 2016

Why: To raise money in support of a much needed addition to the Eden Valley Nature Center. We are hoping to add modern restroom facilities and a small classroom.

How: The night is filled with excitement as people gather to support this great organization.

On behalf of the CCCF, we would like to extend an invitation to this event. Our wish is for our teachers to attend this banquet. What better group of people to share their experiences at our facilities than the teachers of Clinton County. Tickets will go on sale in late September. For more information about this event, or to purchase a ticket, please call Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202.

Snakes, Rattles and Holes!

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

There are some new things to see and do at the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek this fall. We have been working hard to finish up our displays in the Nature Gallery. We also have brought in a terrific new temporary display that will be here through the first of the year. If you visited last fall you will remember the five major displays that were completed and in use.

- ◆ **8,000 Gallon River Aquarium** with a variety of fish specimens from the Mississippi River.
- ◆ **State Record Fish Collection** that features over 30 replicas of state record-sized fish. These are the fish that can be caught on a fishing pole from the huge and unusual paddlefish to the mighty muskellunge!
- ◆ **Turtle Island** is the Gallery's centerpiece featuring a beaver lodge, Iowa's largest deer and a bobcat family. The main attraction is the turtle pond with native turtle species and an acrylic, crawl through tunnel so kids can get a "turtle's-eye" view!
- ◆ **Mussel Beach Touch Tank** is our S-shaped aquarium full of freshwater mussels and sunfish. Students can pick up the mussels and get a good look at a variety of species.
- ◆ **Giant Cottonwood Tree** is based on a real 8-foot diameter tree located near Grand Mound. The best part is students can climb inside the hollow trunk and look out over the Gallery through a knothole 11 feet above the ground! The tree also features learning stations along the way where students investigate animals that live in hollow trees such as the wood duck, little brown bat and screech owl.

The River bank, the final piece to the Nature Gallery puzzle, just opened in June. It features a stream bank that you can enter and explore. On the outside are nest holes of the bank swallow. Inside, the tangle of tree roots and mud give a safe place to lurk for muskrats, mink, snakes and monster flathead catfish. Kids can try their hand at



"noodling" or hand-fishing for the beast! The River bank also depicts a sand prairie complete with a live ornate box turtle.

Snakes, Rattles and Holes is our massive 65-foot snake skeleton. On temporary loan from Dallas County Conservation, the display is only here May through mid-winter.

The rattlesnake skeleton replica is 9-feet tall so students can wander through the belly of the serpent. Along the journey they will learn about many aspects of snake biology such as senses, shedding, anatomy, scales, camouflage, reproduction and venom!



It goes along perfectly with the several species of live snakes we have in our collection including fox, northern water, garter, rough green, speckled king, western hognose, blue racer, bull and black rat snakes! Snakes are fascinating and misunderstood animals that people either love or fear. With snakes there is no middle ground!

One of our favorite games is called *Snake Supper*. Students create a snake by sitting in two rows, side-by-side, cross legged and move a mouse (a fellow student) head-first, the length of the snake, being digested along the way! It is fun while using teamwork to pass the "mouse" along. During *Snake Race*, students lay face-down on the floor, hands to their sides and legs together. On your mark, get set, go! The kids struggle to slither like a snake, not using their appendages, to get across the room!

The Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center will keep evolving. Over the winter we will start making replacement displays for when the snake skeleton moves on to another nature center. Our interactive displays and live animals make any visit to the center fresh and new. Perhaps our best asset is our naturalist staff. They make learning fun for students and assist so children get a hands-on experience that is both safe and non-threatening for our animal friends and the students.

The best time to introduce creatures like snakes, bats and bugs is when people are young. As you know, fears are usually learned from a scary incident with one of these critters or because we hear so many stories that are scary, we just decide to be afraid. Kids pick up on our fears and mimic the behavior and attitude. They also can pick up a more open-minded point of view from watching their classmates successfully pet or even hold a snake.

The Eco Tourism Center has many great learning opportunities for classes on a field trip. River rides on the Blue Heron pontoon, archery, tomahawks, atlatls, team-building games, pond study, nature hikes, bird watching, survival, canoeing/kayaking, and much more, can make up a great day in the field. Email us and get the ball rolling for your Fall 2016 field trip, RIGHT NOW!



We have been providing resident students across the county with quality environmental education for decades. There have been many challenges through the years and one that concerns us currently is the Iowa Core. We know you want to meet the standards that produce a well-rounded curriculum and we're certain we can help you with this. The table below is a quick peak at what we have to offer you and how it fits the science standards by grade and topic. We would be happy to communicate the details if you so desire through a telephone call or by e-mail. Personally, I like the e-mail as I can review your request and keep it for a record. We hope you'll put us to the test if you haven't already.

Grade	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
All Kinds of Animals	K-ESS3-1				4-LS1-2	
Animal Defense	K-LS1-1	1-LS1-1		3-LS2-1 3-LS3-1&2 3-LS4-2	4-LS1-1&2	
Dirt Made My Lunch			2-PS1-1	3-ESS3-1		5-PS3-1
Eagle Point Park			2-ESS2-2	3-LS4-4		
Blue Heron Eco-Cruise	K-PS3-1		2-LS4-1 2-ESS2-2	3-LS4-4	4-PS4-1 4-ESS2-1 4-ESS3-2	
Enviroscape	K-ESS3-3		2-ESS2-1	3-ESS3-1		
Fossils				3-LS4-1	4-ESS1-1	
Frog Chorus		1-PS4-1&4			4-PS3-2 4-LS1-2	
Geology Rocks			2-PS1-1 2-ESS1-1		4-ESS1-1 4-ESS2-1	
Growth & Metamorphosis		1-LS3-1		3-LS1-1	4-LS1-1	
Nature Hike			2-LS4-1	3-LS4-1(EV)	4-ESS1-1(EV) 4-ESS2-1(EV)	
Into Winter	K-ESS2-2			3-ESS2-1		
Light & Sight in Nature		1-PS4-2,3&4			4-PS3-2 4-PS4-1&2 4-LS1-2	
Our Iowa			2-ESS1-1 2-ESS2-2 2-ESS2-3	3-LS4-1&4 3-ESS3-1	4-ESS1-1 4-ESS2-1&2 4-ESS3-1	
Plants	K-PS3-2 K-ESS2-1 K-ESS3-1	1-LS1-1	2-LS2-1&2		4-LS1-1	5-PS3-1 5-LS1-1
Reason for the Season	K-PS3-1&2	1-ESS1-1&2		3-ESS2-1&2	4-PS3-2	5-PS3-1
Sound & Hearing in Nature		1-PS4-1&4			4-PS4-1	
STARLAB Star Experience		1-ESS1-1				5-PS2-1 5-ESS1-2
Stellarium Solar System Tour		1-ESS1-1&2		3-ESS2-1&2	4-ESS2-2	5-PS2-1 5-PS3-1 5-ESS1-1&2
Stream Table			2-ESS1-1 2-ESS2-1	3-ESS3-1	4-ESS2-1	
Survival	K-LS1-1 K-ESS2-2	1-LS1-2			4-ESS3-2	
Vertebrate/Invertebrate		1-LS3-1		3-LS1-1		
Water Cycle	K-PS3-2 K-ESS3-2		2-PS1-1 2-ESS2-3		4-PS3-2	5-LS2-1
Water Study		1-LS1-2 1-LS3-1	2-LS4-1	3-LS1-1 3-LS4-3	4-LS1-1	5-LS2-1

Field Trip Bus Scholarship Program

The Clinton County Conservation Foundation is committed to assisting schools in taking field trips to nature centers and parks of the Clinton County Conservation Board, resulting in a scholarship to help defray busing costs for Clinton County Schools. We hope that schools will help us stretch the money as far as possible by packing the buses full and taking as few buses as possible. School districts with significant coverage in Clinton County are eligible, including Calamus-Wheatland, Central, Northeast, Clinton, Delwood, Camanche, Midland, Maquoketa, and Easton Valley School Districts plus St. Joseph's, Prince of Peace and Unity Christian Parochial Schools. Keep in mind, funds are limited and will be given out based on the order on which each request is received.

Requests will receive scholarships until the fund is exhausted.

The Scholarship amount is \$2 per mile per bus, round trip with a minimum award of \$20 and a maximum award of \$100 per bus per field trip.



Field Trip Bus Scholarship Reimbursement Request Form

Date of field trip _____ School _____ Number of classes _____

Teacher (s) _____ Field trip destination _____

Number of buses _____ Number of students _____

Contact information (name, phone, email) _____

What percentage of busing costs for this trip is the scholarship covering? _____

Would this field trip have happened without the this scholarship assistance? _____

Make reimbursement check out to: _____ Attention: _____

Internal use only:

Round trip miles, school to park _____ Scholarship award \$ _____ Date received _____

Mail form to: Clinton County Conservation Foundation, PO Box 68, Grand Mound, Iowa 52751



Starlab is Here!

Take your students on a trip to the stars! We have checked out the 30' X 30' inflatable dome from Mississippi Bend AEA to bring to your school and is available for use between **November 10th—November 28th**. If you are studying constellations or Greek mythology this year, it is a must have. It pairs well with *Stellarium*, which we use to study the solar system. Invite a naturalist to share their knowledge on the different topics of outer space through this interactive star gazing activity! Students get a chance to crawl inside a portable planetarium where they get an up-close and personal view of the millions of stars that surround Earth.

Call us today to book the STARLAB for your school!



Fall Field Trip Season is Upon Us!

Book your date now! To set up your next field trip please contact Conservation Education Coordinator Mark Roberts or Interpretive Naturalists Chuck Jacobsen, Jessica Steines or Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202. We would be happy to help guide you through your schedule and prepare you for your fun day outdoors!

You can also email us to schedule a field trip:

- ~ Mark Roberts - mroberts@clintoncounty-ia.gov
- ~ Chuck Jacobsen - cjacobsen@clintoncounty-ia.gov
- ~ Jessica Steines - jsteines@clintoncounty-ia.gov
- ~ Jill Schmidt - jschmidt@clintoncounty-ia.gov

You can find out more about us on www.mycountyparks.com and on Facebook