

In The Field

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Teacher's Conservation Education Newsletter

Brought to you by Clinton County Conservation



A Different Kind of Field Trip

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

A couple of weeks ago, several of our education staff participated in a Living Lands and Water Educator Workshop where we were introduced to an amazing resource put together by the US Army Corps of Engineers entitled *Our Mississippi, Educational Activities about the Upper Mississippi River*. After spending some time and trying out some of the activities in the curriculum, I thought it would be a fun program to offer our teachers.

The curriculum guide is directed towards 5th & 6th grade educators but could be adjusted accordingly. The lesson lengths are designed for a normal class length, 45 minutes to an hour, and because of that, we are asking for more of your time. Therefore, we would like to introduce the "In School Field Trip"! This new type of field trip would be offered November-March. Our four educators would come to your school and cover four different lessons of your choice and rotate throughout the day so each class participates in each lesson. We could set up several days throughout these months to come to you to cover additional lessons if you so choose.

We are very excited about this curriculum and encourage you to explore the possibilities it has to offer. The following is the Table of Contents of the guide. If you would like more information on the "In-School field trips", please contact me, jschmidt@clintoncounty-ia.gov.



Area educators posing at the crows nest on Living Lands and Waters' (Chad Pregracke) barge to learn about *Our Mississippi* curriculum.

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Teacher of the Semester

by Chuck Jacobsen, Interpretive Naturalist



Deb Willwerth is a kindergarten teacher at Eagle Heights Elementary School who, along with her team, is being awarded the Teacher of the Semester Award for Environmental Science. One morning after presenting to the Eagle Heights 1st grade, she approached me with a request to set up some visits with the kindergarten classrooms. We complied with her request with a series of visits which included First Scientists (classification/sorting), Majestic Monarchs (butterfly types and metamorphosis),



The Sun (its composition and effects), The Water Cycle (characteristics of water in various forms) and The Frog Chorus (a look at the human ear, how sounds travel

and the varied calls of frogs). Last spring the Eagle Heights kindergarten visited us at Soaring Eagle Nature Center and its education building often referred to as the Nature Barn. This facility is just a few minutes from any Clinton school. We asked her to express her experience with all of this so that we could share it with you.

Deb writes, “I am writing this on behalf of my team, to share how amazing our experiences have been with Chuck, Jessica and the Nature Barn! Over the past two years, Chuck and Jessica have

provided enriching, hands on science lessons directly related to our Science Core Curriculum. They were willing to come into our school to do this and for that, we are very grateful. We have also had the privilege of travelling to the Nature Barn to learn about frogs and take a nature walk on the property!”

She continues to say, “The students have thoroughly enjoyed all of the wonderful learning opportunities presented by Chuck and Jessica! They especially love John Denver’s song “The Flower That Shatters the Stone” that Chuck teaches them and sings with them about our earth. We teachers often hear our students singing this song quietly to each other, after Chuck has been here presenting a lesson. Through this amazing outreach program, our students have grown and developed a love of nature, frogs, living and non-living things, water cycles and many other science topics. Chuck and Jessica are fabulous resources for this community and truly foster a love of our earth and the environment! I would strongly suggest that you invite them to be a part of your school year...you will be thankful you did!”



We thank Deb for her kind words and most especially for her



Deb Willwerth is pictured third from the right with her fellow team of kindergarten teachers.

Eagle Heights Kindergarten Team’s efforts in bringing their students these presentations and that very special trip to the outdoor classroom at Soaring Eagle Nature Center. We hope to serve them for many years to come. Congratulations to the Eagle Heights Kindergarten!

Midwest Environmental Education Conference (MEEC)

Season's of Plenty

September 25-28, 2013 in Coralville, IA



Join teachers, formal and non-formal, from around the Midwest, in attending this year’s MEEC. Scholarships and Iowa Teacher License Renewal credits are available, visit the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition website for more information on the conference and what it has to offer our teachers! **REGISTER TODAY!**

Teaching Important Lessons

by Jill Schmidt, Interpretive Naturalist

We are always trying to share ideas with our teachers in the hopes that we can be a resource to you, providing lessons to be learned and ways to bring nature into your classroom. One “hot topic” in the fall is *Monarchs* and what child doesn’t like to see a butterfly? We often find ourselves out searching for our mighty monarch in hopes to provide that hands-on experience up-close and personal with a butterfly. This year, we may find ourselves exploring other ways to teach that important lesson about monarchs because their population is down dramatically.

In mid March, the announcement came that the monarch overwintering population in the Oyamel fir forests of Mexico had dropped dramatically representing a decline of almost 59% from the area occupied the previous winter. According to www.MonarchWatch.org this population is the smallest recorded since the monarch colonies came to the attention of scientists in 1975. From personal experience, I have seen little signs of monarch caterpillars or adult butterflies on my search for them this summer.

Classroom Ideas:

There are many things classroom teachers can do with their students that connect monarch curriculum. Discussing the importance of plants and the way plants grow is often a lesson included in the classroom. By using milkweed as your plant to grow, you can connect the importance of this plant to the monarch butterfly population as well as add the beauty of a butterfly garden as your final project.

Butterfly Garden

In early spring, you can begin your garden by planting in your classroom if you have a windowsill or other source of light.

1. You first must decide what type of milkweed you’d like to plant as well as some other flowers that would attract adult butterflies to your garden. You can order seeds by mail, online or visit your local hardware store.

2. Once you’ve determined the type of milkweed you want to use, provide each child with a reusable milk carton from your cafeteria and a scoop of potting soil.

3. Give each child a couple of seeds to plant in their carton.

4. Once the seeds have been covered, water each seed. Keep the soil moist and in a week or two your seeds will sprout, or germinate.

5. Once the ground begins to warm up (and frost warnings are past), choose a sunny location around your school and transplant your seedlings to your growing site.



6. As your plants grow, keep a butterfly garden scrapbook with photos of your flowers, journal entries of what types of butterflies you see, and most importantly record any monarch caterpillars you may find on your milkweed!

Raise & Release Your Own Monarch

Educating your class on the magic of metamorphosis is a common topic teachers include in their classroom. Why not raise a monarch, observing along the way the stages of metamorphosis, then tagging it and releasing it.

1. First things first, you need to find either an egg or a monarch caterpillar. Spend time along gravel roads or open fields searching under the leaves of milkweed plants. If you have any close to your school you could get your students involved.

2. Once you find an egg or a caterpillar you will need to set it up in a container of some kind. Use plastic with a mesh-like lid



and add milkweed leaves for the food source. If you are unable to find one in the wild, you can order caterpillars online.

3. Place the container outside in a shady area or inside close to a window.

4. Watch the caterpillar eat and grow, include a journal of how much the caterpillar eats as well as recording measurements of the caterpillar. You could use this data in a graph to show the changes in the caterpillar throughout time.

5. The caterpillar will shed its skin multiple times and continue to grow before developing the chrysalis.

6. For the next two weeks, watch and observe your chrysalis. It will change from a green color to more transparent covering. When the time is right, the chrysalis will split open and a beautiful monarch butterfly will emerge!

7. After a couple of hours, you can tag your butterfly, record its information and release it outside; what an exciting time!

Tagging a butterfly

We try our hardest to catch monarch butterflies for tagging with our school groups. This program is set up to research migration patterns and to shed some light on the life of monarchs. To find more information about tagging please visit the website MonarchWatch.org.



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, North-east, Clinton, Delwood, Camanche, Midland, Maquoketa, Preston and East Central 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 _____ Teacher(s) _____

Classes _____ 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 available November 13th - December 2nd

Contact us to come into your school to learn about the night sky during the day! It is appropriate for all ages as we can cater to your classes' needs. Some schools bring us in to present to the whole school (only 25 students at a time) or just a specific grade, it is up to you. For preschool and kindergarten we present for 30 minutes while 1st grade and up we need at least 45 minutes of presentation time. Starlab focuses on Earth's rotation, our placement on Earth, seasons, Native American and Greek constellations and the mythology that goes with constellations. It can also be reserved for other special school events like parent's night and after school events. All we need is a quiet room, with a 30-foot square space with a 10-foot high ceiling.



Set up Your Field Trip Today!

To set up your next field trip to Rock Creek (including the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center and Blue Heron Eco-Cruises), Eden Valley Refuge, Soaring Eagles Nature Center or the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, please contact conservation education coordinator Mark Roberts or interpretive naturalists Chuck Jacobsen, Jessica Steines or Jill Schmidt at 563-847-7202.

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.clintoncounty-ia.gov, www.mycountyparks.com and on facebook.

