



Field Trips and Classroom Visits for Area Schools

by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

Our field trip offerings are free of charge to schools within the districts of Clinton County which include Calamus-Wheatland, Camanche, Central, Clinton, Delwood, East Central, Midland and Northeast. Since a portion of Maquoketa and Preston overlap the county borders we also treat them as Clinton County schools. Likewise, a large proportion of students at Unity Christian School and we include them as well. School districts overlapping our county lines are not charged fees for field trips and class visits. Out-of-county schools do incur modest fees. We also offer bus scholarships through our foundation to those same districts. The rate is \$2 per mile round trip with a minimum of \$20 per bus and maximum of \$100. This is a reimbursement meant to defray some of the costs of busing students to our areas.

We have a conservation education program that has won multiple state-wide awards for excellence including Iowa's Most Outstanding, four times in the last decade.

Our primary field trip sites are:

Eden Valley Refuge, 7 miles northwest of Lost Nation, featuring Eden Valley Nature Center, Bear Creek, limestone bluffs, hiking trails, observation tower, Werden's Cave and swinging bridge.

Rock Creek Marina & Campground, Camanche, featuring Blue Heron Eco Cruise 30-passenger pontoon boat, Mississippi River tours, backwater canoeing/kayaking, and coming this spring, the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center with an 8,000 gallon river aquarium, crawl through turtle tank, state record fish collection, state record deer mount, large classroom, indoor archery range and a small theater. We have many great choices for you. Our staff has over 50 years combined experience (Jessica Steines, Chuck Jacobsen, and Mark Roberts).

Soaring Eagle Nature Center, Clinton, featuring a 1938 Iowa barn converted to a nature center better known as The Nature Barn, trails, prairie, historic one-room schoolhouse, adjacent to Eagle Point Park with limestone observation tower and scenic Mississippi River overlooks.

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, 5 miles south of Wheatland, featuring the Eagle View Eco Center, Wapsi River, trails, aquatics lab, frog pond, teams course, 52-bed dormitory combined Clinton & Scott County Education staffs, prairie, observatory, and soon, a canoeing pond.

Other Good Outdoor Education Sites

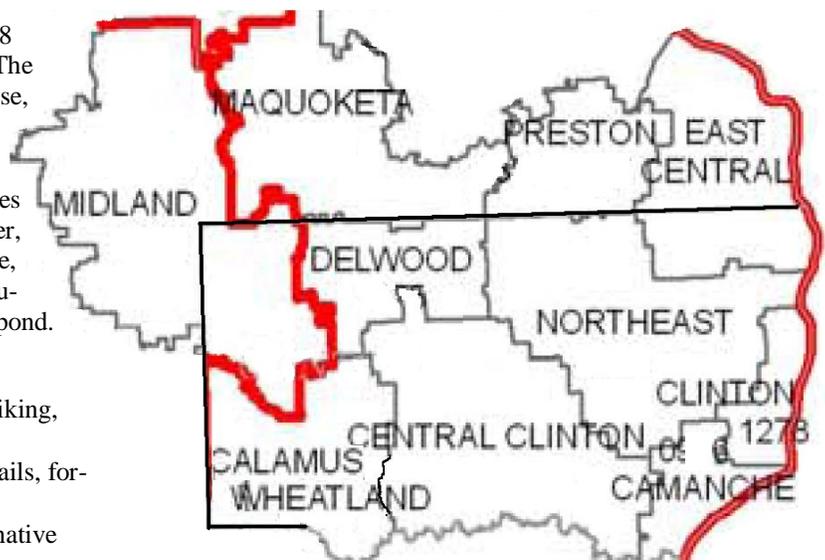
- **Lake Malone near DeWitt.** Fishing, pond study, hiking, disc golf, canoeing.
- **Camp Miss-Elk-Ton, near Andover.** Elk River, trails, forest and lodge.
- **Manikowski Prairie, Goose Lake.** Iowa's largest native limestone prairie remnant.

- **Duke Prairie near Grand Mound.** Tallgrass prairie preserve.
- **Sherman Park, near Calamus.** Wapsi River, trails, forest, rock outcrops.
- **Mockridge Wildlife Preserve, near Calamus.** Pine forest and trails.

The most important part of making a great and educational field trip or classroom visit is to have the experiences fit with your classroom topics. You can take a field trip that will introduce and reinforce things that may have been taught. Or you can schedule a visit that works perfectly with your current units. Both approaches are fine. The best way is for the teacher to tell us what they are studying and together come up with experiences in the field and in the classroom that take learning out of school books or off the computer screen and into the real world. We have a teacher's guide that we are updating and will re-print this winter, but the 2003 version is still valid. It lists and describes all our activities as they fit with national science standards and age levels. Our teacher's newsletter, "In The Field" comes out twice a year and has some great ideas. We can also incorporate music, art, social studies, history, technology and PE into our field trips and often do.

We look forward to serving our adopted school districts in the future. We would love to come to teachers' in-service or other meetings to explore possibilities with teachers in any of our local school districts.

If you have a group you would like to schedule please contact me at: mroberts@clintoncounty-ia.gov or call 563-847-7202.



School districts overlapping Clinton County lines

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center

Open for Field Trips Starting in Spring 2012 ~ by Mark Roberts, Education Coordinator

It has been a long process but I can safely say that we will be able to start using the new Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center this spring! Now I don't want to be misleading, the Center will not be completely done, primarily the display gallery, but some important features will be ready to use for spring field trip season.

We have been hosting field trips since 1994 and during that time we have "made do" without a roof over our heads. We have had to cut field trips short because of a cloud burst or cancelled entire trips because of the threat of wet or cold weather. Students have had to wait on the bus and even huddled in the showerhouse! Our small camp store has played host to over 60 kids eating lunch, standing or sitting on the floor. All-in-all, I am impressed by the fact that groups were willing to continue to come to Rock Creek for the unique experiences they can receive even with the inconvenience of not having an indoor refuge. Simple things like organizing into groups and doing introductions were done in the parking lot while lunches were put in the garage or store deck because there just was not anywhere else. Students ate lunches spread out through campsites or the landscape wall around the showerhouse. The days of groups not having their own space are gone! The new facility will provide space both inside and out away from the other activities of the park.

Large Classroom & Community Room. This room will seat 125+ at tables if needed. If weather is either very hot, cold or wet, we will have the ability to move indoors for lunch and activities with this large room. While we don't believe field trips should be spent indoors, it will be very nice to have the option to simply get under a roof. The room will be furnished with audio/visual equipment that will be conducive to multiple presentations. It will also have a kitchenette and serving window attached for groups that want to cater and serve meals.

Theater & Small Classroom. This room will seat 25 students so we can have breakout sessions with smaller groups. It will be fully furnished as well with audio/visual equipment allowing separate presentations simultaneously. Eventually, the room will have an easy-to-use touch screen system where a teacher or parent could show video or powerpoint-type programs

on the large projection screen.

Camp Store/Café. The room can be pressed into service when necessary for activities as well. We may have to share with campers and fisherman, but in a pinch, we could have smaller presentations in there as well.

Attached Deck. The building has a large deck attached that will seat many people as well. It will be used by the education staff as yet another area for breakout sessions or during presentations that have both indoor and outdoor components.

The Land Down Under. Beneath the center is a spacious area that will be furnished with picnic tables and will be used as a picnic shelter. This will be our primary lunch spot that will have electricity, lights, a hand-wash station and will be a safe dedicated spot for students to have their meal. The spot offers shade and shelter and will be where field trips are organized and serve as "home base" for field trips.

MRETC Basement. Also under the center is a large above-ground basement. It's primary function is a storm shelter for park visitors. While it is unusual to have tornado or severe thunderstorm warnings it has come up on a few occasions. We will use this room for a few other uses, the coolest is an indoor archery and air rifle range! We think shooting sports are a valuable skill for young people to learn. The room will provide a safe and sheltered space for our certified instructors to teach safety and skills.

Green Space. On the north side and adjacent to the center there will be a dedicated area for a multitude of activities. Features will include an amphitheater with benches surrounding a large campfire ring and amphitheater. This will be a great setting for outdoor presentations. The natural playscape will provide interesting and

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Rock Creek Field Trip Favorites.

All equipment and instruction provided.

- **Air Rifle.** 3 air rifles and targets for indoor or outdoor shooting.
- **Archery.** 9 Genesis compound bows, arrows and targets, indoor or outdoors. We also now have Atlatls!
- **Canoeing & Kayaking** 26 canoes and 10 kayaks and all safety gear.
- **Disc Golf.** 18-hole course at nearby Folletts Park, equipment provided.
- **Fishing.** Backwater fishing with cane poles and worms!
- **Forestry & Tree ID.** Students learn to use a dichotomous key to ID trees.
- **GPS/Geocaching.** 20 handheld units & geocache course through the park.
- **Low Impact Camping.** Light packing, fire starting, tent set-up, etc.
- **Map & Compass.** Learn to find your way "old-school" style.
- **Motorboat Safety.** Uses flat-bottom boats and small motors.
- **River Critter Study.** Kids catch aquatic life with nets and use microscopes to investigate the bottom of the river's food chain.
- **Team Building.** Uses challenges to teach teamwork, self-confidence and problem solving.
- **Water Testing.** Uses simple chemical tests to determine pH, chloride, water clarity, dissolved oxygen, nitrogen and phosphate levels in the Mississippi River and small nearby streams.



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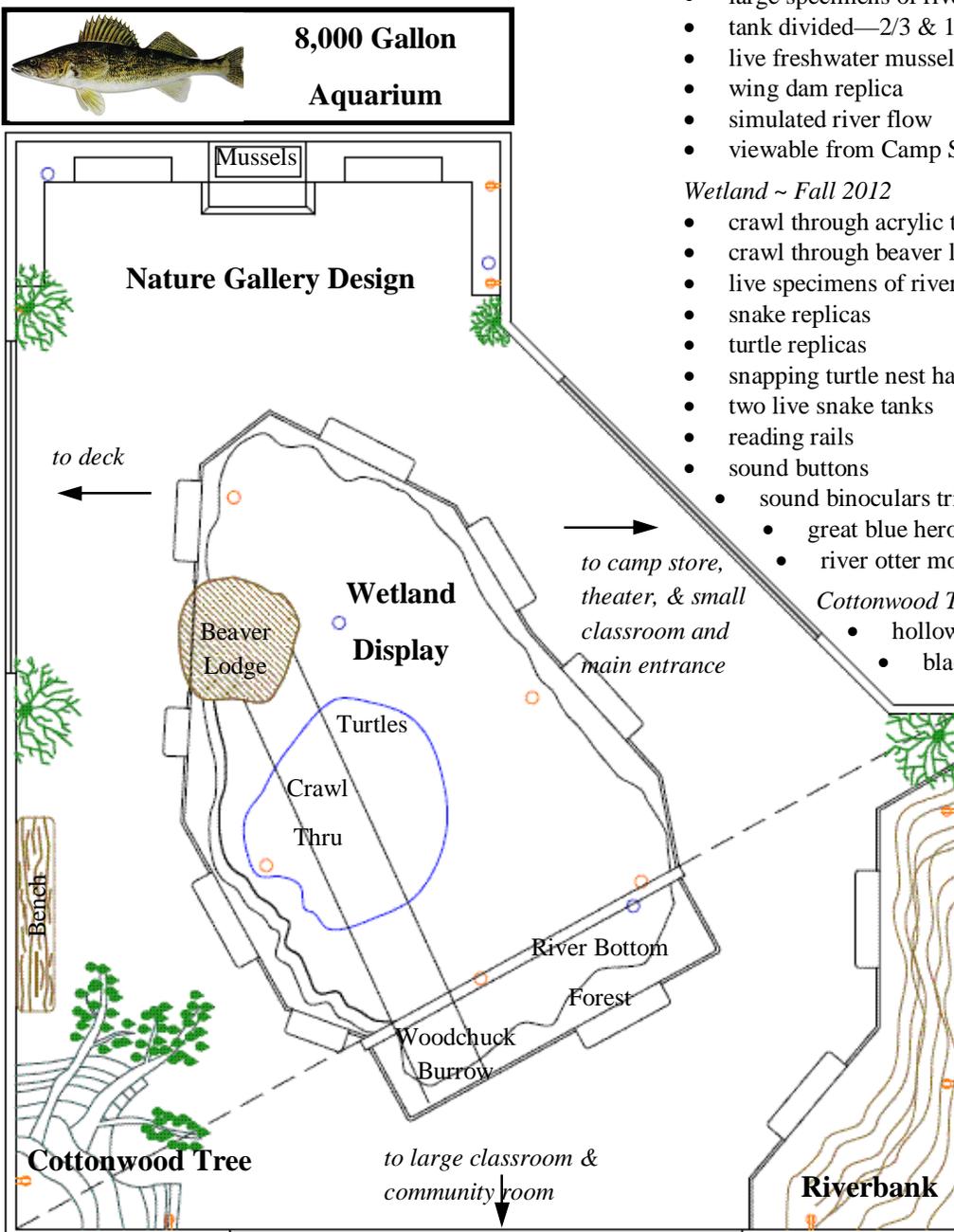
Imagination-driving natural objects for kids to investigate. Instead of traditional swing sets and jungle gyms, the area will have big rocks, logs, sand and rock piles and other natural things to play on. There will also be some open lawn for games and activities.

Blue Heron Eco Cruises. Since 2002 we have been cruising the Mississippi River with students on board our Blue Heron pontoon. The boat carries up to 29 people through the backwater sloughs and out onto the main channel for a spectacular learning experience. Wildlife is a common sight. Our naturalists talk about both the wild side and human use side of the river.

The new *Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center* will augment all of our activities we have traditionally performed at Rock Creek. The new building will make Rock Creek Marina & Campground one of the top Conservation Education destinations to be found anywhere in the midwest. Field trips dates will go fast and are first come, first served. Reserve your date now!

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center ~ Nature Gallery Exhibits Floor Plan

Construction of the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center at Rock Creek is under a full head of steam. With recent grants from the Clinton County Development Association (\$150,000) and the Howe Foundation (\$250,000), the interior displays have the funding to begin to take shape. Working with Midwest Exhibits of Mt. Joy, we have some fun and spectacular ideas for the Center



Gallery Features

- murals throughout room
- 'grass' carpet and 'stone' trails
- log bench

Aquarium ~ Spring 2012

- large specimens of river fish
- tank divided—2/3 & 1/3 to keep small fish from large
- live freshwater mussels touch tank
- wing dam replica
- simulated river flow
- viewable from Camp Store and Nature Gallery

Wetland ~ Fall 2012

- crawl through acrylic tunnel
- crawl through beaver lodge
- live specimens of river turtles
- snake replicas
- turtle replicas
- snapping turtle nest hatching replica
- two live snake tanks
- reading rails
- sound buttons
- sound binoculars trigger sounds when focused on mounts
 - great blue heron mount
 - river otter mount

Cottonwood Tree ~ Fall 2012

- hollow so people can enter
- black rat snake nest replica
- American bald eagle's nest
- bat roost replica

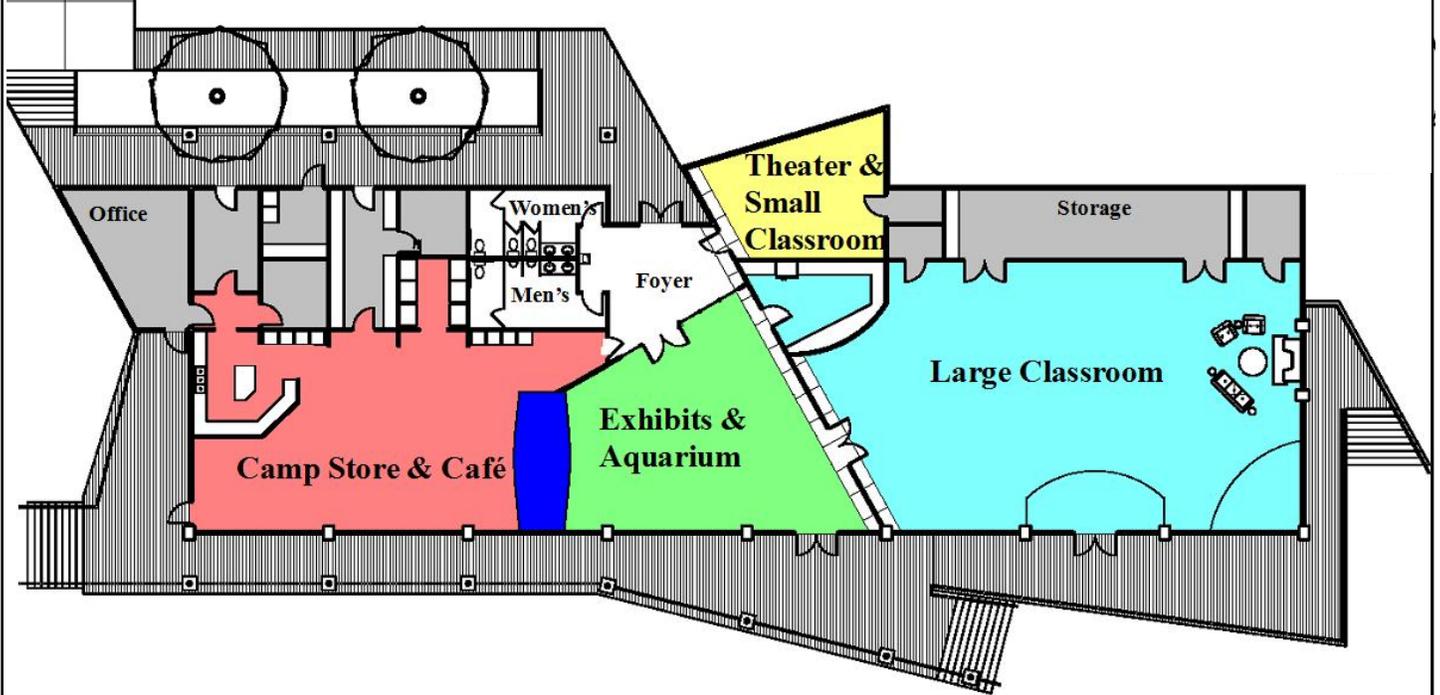
River Bottom Forest ~ Fall 2012

- crawl through woodchuck burrow
- red-tailed hawk mount
- songbird mounts
- barred owl mount
- river bank
- bank swallow nests
- state record white-tailed deer
- snake & lizard replicas
- two live snake tanks

Camp Store ~ Spring 2012

- replicas of 32 species of Iowa's state record fish

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center ~ Floor Plan



Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center ~ Green Space and Natural Playscape



A Letter From the Teachers of the Semester ~ Central Clinton Community School's First Grade Team

Dear *In the Field* Readers,

Throughout the past 22 years, the first grade teachers in the Central Clinton Community School District have utilized the Clinton County Conservation (CCC) naturalists in our classrooms at Grand Mound Elementary, Welton Elementary and Ekstrand. Our teaching careers range from 15-36 years of experience. Our annual spring field trip has been to the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. Now all first grade classrooms are at Ekstrand Elementary and all five first grades take the spring trip together.

The CCC plans engaging activities dealing with many aspects of nature. The conservationists share their expertise in all facets of their job. We have enjoyed all of the presentations each year, especially the hands-on ones.

One of the center's staff takes the students on a walking hike through the woods on the nature trail. The students learn about plants and animals. There is much history of how pioneers used these plants and animals for their daily survival. The students walk to the Wapsipinicon River, learning about the importance of the river.

Using our five senses to explore about nature is another engaging activity for the students. For example, touching and then describing the snake skin, deer antlers and shelf fungus, etc. also encourages them to use scientific terms which enhances their language development.

A highlight of the visit is to experience the Eagle View Eco Center. The center has a lot to offer including animals in their habitats, birds of prey and the reptile room. While in the center the conservationists share with the children many animals found in Iowa and their habitats. The students have an opportunity to see and hear the live fish and birds in their habitats.

Another portion of the Eco Center is the live reptile room. Getting to touch the frogs and turtles or feel the live snake is a highlight. It's remarkable to see first graders happy to touch or hold the snakes.

Learning about birds of prey is always an interesting part of our day at the Wapsi Center. Knowing we see these birds around our area, it makes it very interesting to learn more about them. We learn how the birds use their special body parts for survival, how to identify them by their wing shapes and span, and a few students even get a chance to hold one of the live birds on their hand.

Finally, the students get their bodies moving with nature games. The games are based on how animals react to each other in nature, whether it is for food or survival.

Of course it wouldn't be a whole day in nature if we didn't get to stop and have time for lunch. Roasting hot dogs over an open fire and sitting out in the great outdoors is always fun! Nothing better than enjoying nature while eating lunch outside. Last year we were even serenaded by naturalist Chuck Jacobsen on his guitar as we ate lunch. It doesn't get much better than that!

We end our day traveling north of Wheatland to visit the Bob Boock farm, which is the home of trumpeter swans and many Canada geese. Again the students have the opportunity to experience animals in their habitats. The trumpeter swans are amazing to see and learn about from the conservationists. Throughout our teaching careers, we have had the opportunity to have the CCC visit our schools to share their expertise about releasing monarch butterflies, the world of insects and last year we had a special visit at Ekstrand from CCC and three live trumpeter swans. The students had a close up look at them and got to touch one.

We have worked with many different naturalists and conservationists over the years. We have been blessed to be able to collaborate with them and give the students an opportunity to learn about nature, first hand.

This field trip and the on-site visits with the CCC correlates with our science curriculum and aligns with the Science Standards in the Iowa Core. What a great way to make learning meaningful. The students over many years have a better knowledge of nature in Iowa, because of the Clinton County Conservation Education Program.

Thank you,

*Jolene Anderson, Sherry Lange,
Carla Wall, Barb Rohlf, Bev Osmun*

Ekstrand Elementary, First Grade Team



Some first grade students getting familiar with the tiger salamander and Clinton County Conservation Naturalist, Jessica Steines, at the Wapsi River E.E. Center.

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

EdiWild 2012 ~ Environmental Stewardship Monday, June 25 - Thursday, June 28

This is a four-day educators workshop to incorporate conservation education into the classroom curriculum. It can also qualify for continued education credit and graduate credit through the AEA. The workshop will use an interdisciplinary approach of teaching and will emphasize Iowa's part in environmental stewardship. This year's activities, tours and topics include renewable energy, composting, climate change, invasive species, environmental ethics, *Prairie for Schools*, etc. If you are interested and would like to register, contact the Wapsi River EE Center at 563-328-3286. A brochure will be sent to you which includes a registration form, daily activities and locations, plus other details.

New Full-time Naturalist Position

This new full-time position at CCCB, starting May 2nd. Salary will start around \$37,000 per year and move up fairly quickly through our union wage scale. This position will be officially announced soon. If you know of any qualified candidates, call 563-847-7202 for details.

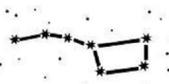
Starlab



Presentations

February 23rd - March 14th

We have checked out the 30' X 30' inflatable dome, from Mississippi Bend AEA, to bring to your school or local nature center. 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. Just call or email, we will take care of the set-up and instruction.



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 or Jessica Steines 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

You can find out more about us on www.clintoncounty-ia.gov, www.mycountyparks.com and on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com).