



JOURNAL

Warren County Conservation Board

Summer 2019

Forest Therapy

Forest therapy, forest bathing, and Shinrin-Yoku are terms that are starting to pop up in health practices and nature-inclined circles all over the country and world. These all reference using time spent in nature or in the forest to enhance health, wellness, and happiness. Forest Therapy is also about building and cultivating a relationship with nature.

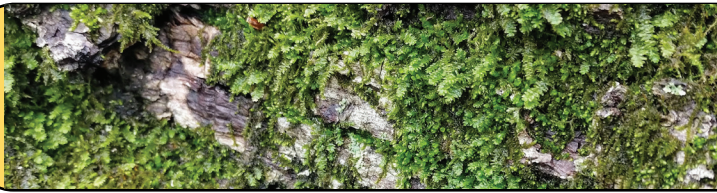
Shinrin-Yoku came about in Japan in the 1980s to combat the stress induced diseases and illnesses that they were noticing in their over-worked citizens. In our primal senses, the stress hormone could be released in order to assist with the fight-or-flight response. If being attacked by a large predator, the stress hormone would be very high for that brief moment. However, after the incident was passed, the stress hormone would be basically zero. In today's society, our stress hormones tend to sit at a low to medium level of constant stress. This constant state of stress to meet deadlines, get the kids to their activities, keep up with the latest trends, and see negativity on every screen all day long can cause a serious detriment to people's health and a drain on their energy and moods.

Forest Therapy is all about slowing down, being in the moment, and raising the awareness of all of your senses in order to fully be present with nature. This has been shown to help reduce stress levels, blood pressure, and anxiety. It can also boost immune system functioning, improve mood, increase the ability to focus, and energy levels. A popular saying is that the forest is the therapist, the guide just opens the door.

So what is a forest therapy guided walk? It may be easier to explain some of what would not be expected on a walk. It is not a hike, although participants spend time in nature or the forest. It is not about getting to a certain destination or accomplishing a record time on a certain trail. It is not a naturalist walk. This is not a time when guides focus on identifying plants, animals, or natural objects. Noticing one's surroundings is encouraged but you may be encouraged to sit with the mystery for a bit when it comes to what something is. This is because, on a forest therapy walk, the idea is to get out of your head and into the moment. When we start thinking about destinations, records, and what things are we get back up into our heads. These walks are also about loosening some of the restrictions and limitations we put on ourselves as adults.



Recently, Warren County Conservation Board naturalists Karen and Kelsey took a trip to northern Minnesota to attend training with the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy to become guides. The training was an intensive, 8-day workshop and is the foundation for another 6 months of practicum training to be completed. Once the practicum is complete, they will be two of only seven certified guides in Iowa, which allows a unique opportunity for the Warren County area to have access to this incredible health and wellbeing practice from an early stage. If you have more questions, we encourage you to consider attending one of the three scheduled walks we have in 2019. Feel free to stop in and ask us some questions about it too!



News

Iowa's Flying Mammals

Bats are a unique animal in Iowa and are the only mammal capable of true flight. Although we don't often think of them, unless actually encountering one, bats are very important to our ecosystem. Iowa is home to nine species of bats: little brown bats, big brown bats, hoary bat, silverhaired bat, red bat, Indiana bat, evening bat, northern long-eared bat, and the tricolored bat. All species of Iowa bats are insectivores, and are a huge part of natural pest control. A single little brown bat can eat up to 1000 mosquitos in an hour, and big brown bats like to eat larger insects like moths and beetles that cause crop damage. In the United States alone, it is estimated that bats provide more than \$3.7 billion worth of reduced crop damage and pesticide use due to their voracious appetites.



Bats are a highly misunderstood animal, and are often associated with rabies. All mammals can contract and carry rabies, and people should always be cautious when handling any wild or unknown animal and take bites seriously. Bats actually contract rabies far less than other animals. Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of all bats may contract the disease. In the United States, a person is more likely to catch leprosy or the plague than to contract rabies from a bat. A bat can be a surprise to find in your home, and usually people flip the lights on and start running around to figure out what to do with it. Often people are also very loud when they find a bat in their home. The bat will start climbing or flying around and that startles people even more. If we look at it from the bat's perspective, though, a large top-predator turned on a bright light and started

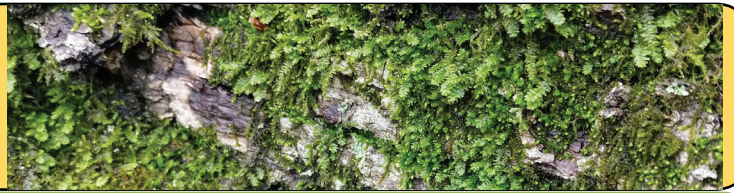
moving around a lot and making a lot of noise. The bat is trying to get away from people for fear of being eaten just as much as people are wanting to get away from the bat. The best thing to do is remain calm, keep lights low if possible and try to get the bat out of the house without causing damage to the bat or yourself. An empty coffee can or bowl can be placed over the bat gently and a stiff piece of paper or cardboard can be slid carefully (the bat's little feet are going to be hanging onto the wall) between the container and the wall. Then the bat can be transported outside to eat up those insects. The important thing is to make sure any holes or bat entrances are closed up or they may keep returning.

Aside from negative myths; bats face a number of threats. Habitat loss is caused by both urban development and intensive farming. White-nose syndrome is caused by a fungus that affects hibernating bats, causing them to become active and using up their fat stores that they need to survive the winter. It is very contagious between bats and can be devastating to bats that hibernate in colonies.

There are a few ways that people can help these furry fliers. Avoid disturbing hibernating bats. This will help them to survive the winters. Maintain or increase healthy forests and bat friendly habitats. Follow specific disinfection protocols before and after entering any caves or known bat habitats and help decrease the chances of spreading diseases like White-nose syndrome to bat colonies. Placing bat houses in your yard is a good way to roll out the welcome mat and invite the bug devouring mammals to stay. There are many places to purchase bat houses, and online resources and templates to make your own. Finally, spread awareness about the benefits of bats and how to safely and carefully remove them from dwellings can be two of the best things individuals can do for our bat populations.



News



Meet-a-Member Veronica O'Hern



This edition's Meet-A-Member features one of our newest Board Members for the Friends of Warren County Conservation. We are excited to introduce you to Veronica O'Hern.

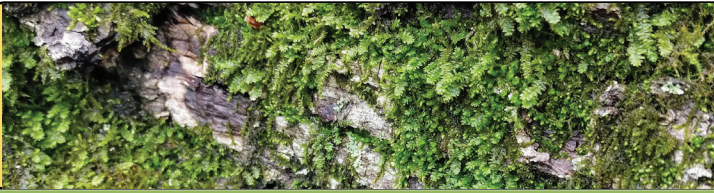
Since moving to Warren County five years ago, my spouse, Alex, and I quickly discovered that the parks are the county's best kept secret. We spend most weekends hiking and exploring the natural beauty of the area. Finding chicken of the woods at Woodland Mounds, enjoying the bluebells at Hickory Hills and counting the dragonflies around Grant Nature Land pond are just a few of the sites we enjoy each year. The parks have made Warren County home for us and I wanted to take a more involved role in the supporting the good work that the staff at the Annett Nature Center and the Warren County Conservation Board do by serving on the Friends of Warren County Conservation.

I joined the Friends Board in February and have since been delighted by the commitment to education and love for nature that the staff and my fellow board members share. I look forward to participating in the Prairie Picnic and taking our little boy out to the story walks this summer. I'm excited to learn more from the staff and board as we work to support the parks in our county.



I've worked for the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, for nine years managing statewide programs that support arts and culture in Iowa. My hope is to be able to contribute to the Friends Board by utilizing those resources and networks to support our county programs.

When not enjoying the parks, I keep busy on a small acreage with two humans, a black cat, chickens, and our newest neighbor—bees. We tend a garden, watch the stars and name other visiting critters. I dabble in taxidermy and moonlight as an artist—most recently teaching myself how to make Victorian Hair Art.



Events

July

Storywalk® @ Woodland Mounds

Monday, July 1st | All Month | Woodland Mounds

StoryWalk® is a fun idea to get communities outside and reading. Each month, we will put new nature-themed children's stories along trails in different parks. Stories will all be nature-themed and fun to read! Bring your whole family out to hike and read a page of the story every few feet as you go along. Please sign our guest book at the end of each StoryWalk® so we know how many people made it out.

Kids Day at WCCB Fair Booth

Thursday, July 25th | 10a.m.–3:30p.m. |

Warren County Fairgrounds

Come visit the Warren County Conservation Board booth at the Warren County Fairgrounds for Kids Day! Staff will be at the booth our booth with some fun kids activities to do and might even have some special guests!

Standup Paddleboarding

Sunday, July 28th | 1–2:30 p.m. | Hooper Area Pond

Get out on the water and give stand up paddleboarding a try. A WCCB naturalist will go over the basic equipment, paddle strokes, and get you paddling around at various areas. No experience necessary! An adult must accompany children and children must be at least 10 years old. Space is limited to 11 participants and registration is required.

Hooper Area Pond is located South of Lake Ahquabi State Park. Meet near the boat ramp, which is the second entrance.

August

Storywalk® @ Otter Creek

Thursday, August 1st | All Month | Otter Creek

StoryWalk® is a fun idea to get communities outside and reading. Each month, we will put new nature-themed children's stories along trails in different parks. Stories will all be nature-themed and fun to read! Bring your whole family out to hike and read a page of the story every few feet as you go along. Please sign our guest book at the end of each StoryWalk® so we know how many people made it out.

Hunter Education

Thursday, August 1st | 6:00–9:00 p.m. | Izaak Walton League

Friday, August 3rd | 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. | Izaak Walton League

Hunter education is designed to introduce students to life-long skills important to the many different types of outdoor recreation. The course will teach students basic survival skills, wildlife identifications, the basics of wildlife management, hunting laws and firearm/archery safety. Hunter education also stresses the importance of individual responsibility and outdoor ethics. Registraion at iowadnr.gov/hunting/hunter-education.



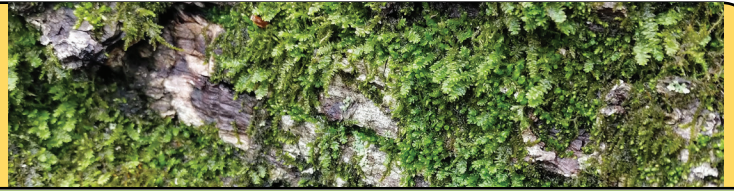
Standup Paddleboarding

Sunday, August 4th | 3:00–4:00 p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Get out on the water and give stand up paddleboarding a try. A WCCB naturalist will go over the basic equipment, paddle strokes, and get you paddling around at various areas. No experience necessary! An adult must accompany children and children must be at least 10 years old. Space is limited to 11 participants and registration is required.

For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrenccb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.

Events



August Cont'd

Family Health & Nature Day

Tuesday, August 6st | 9:30–11:30 a.m. | Annett Nature Center

Sue Wilson with Young Living Essential Oils and Warren County Conservation are teaming up for an amazing event for everyone at the Annett Nature Center. Participants can take part in PiYo exercise in the outdoors with Shelley Heckertt, make an essential oil roller bottle, explore the trails on a scavenger hunt, make a nature craft, do a fun run, make & enjoy a healthy snack, and visit the nature center exhibits. Feel free to bring a sack lunch to enjoy on the deck or at the Lester Davison Memorial Pavilion.

PiYo will be held from 10:30AM–11:00AM. Please bring your own towel or yoga mat for PiYo exercises. The rest of the activities will be come and go as you please. The cost is \$5 per child and includes all activities, snack, and one essential oil roller bottle of your choice.

Full Moon Hike

Thursday, August 15th | 8:30–9:30 p.m. | McCord Park

Exploring the outdoors at night is an exciting experience. Night hiking during a full moon is even more exceptional. Join a WCCB naturalist for a night hike and learn about the outdoors in a different light. We will discuss how animals adjust and thrive in low-light conditions and compare that to human night vision. Families and children are welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Please register at www.warrencb.org/events by August 13th.

Adult Disconnect Night

Tuesday, August 20th | TBD p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Relax, slow down, and unplug for this disconnected evening with other adults. This program is meant to be a reset button after the busy summer before the school year gets started again. Take this opportunity to allow yourself to be unplugged for a few hours and enjoy being in the moment. Bring a friend!

Forest Therapy

Sunday, August 25th | 8:45a.m.–12:00p.m. | Hickory Hills

Immerse yourself in nature and experience the benefits of being fully present in the medicine of the forest. This gentle three hour forest therapy walk offers a rich experience in nature that can improve mood and provide relaxation. Certified guides from Forest Therapy Pathways, will guide you to become sensitized to the healing environment of the forest. You'll have the opportunity for self-reflection, social interaction, and a little child like fun! We invite you to slow down and unplug with mindfulness based nature connection invitations on this one of kind nature excursion. Join us for this unique wellness activity to rejuvenate and experience nature in a new way! Program fee is \$15 per person, registration deadline is Thursday August 22nd.

Youth Pheasant Mentor Hunt

Saturday, September 7th | TBA p.m. | Izaak Walton League

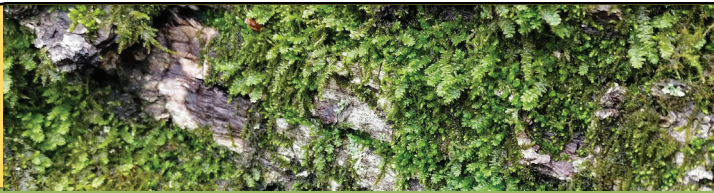
Mentor hunts are a unique experience providing opportunities to those who might otherwise have limited access to hunting. These hunts provide a positive, educational experience for youth while emphasizing firearm safety, conservation, and outdoor ethics. Youth will be paired with a mentor throughout the day who will share some of their personal experiences, knowledge, and passion for the sport with their youth partner. See our website for more information and to register. Registration is limited.

Monarch Tagging

Sunday, September 8th | 1–2:30 p.m. | Annett Nature Center

Come discover more about monarch butterflies, their unusual lifestyle and life cycle, and their miraculous migration to Mexico. A Warren County Conservation Naturalist will teach you how to catch and handle a monarch, determine gender, and properly tag them in the wild as part of a national research project. All monarchs will be released after they are tagged. Bring a butterfly net if you have one. Share a park net if you don't. Fun for the whole family! Please register by September 6th.

For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrencb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.



News

September

Monarch Tagging

Saturday, September 14th | 1–2:30 p.m. | Buxton Park

Come discover more about monarch butterflies, their unusual lifestyle and life cycle, and their miraculous migration to Mexico. A Warren County Conservation Naturalist will teach you how to catch and handle a monarch, determine gender, and properly tag them in the wild as part of a national research project. All monarchs will be released after they are tagged. Bring a butterfly net if you have one. Share a park net if you don't. Fun for the whole family! Please register by September 12th.

Prairie Picnic

Saturday, September 14th | 5 p.m. | ANC

Join the Friends of Warren County Conservation for our annual prairie picnic fundraiser. This relaxing evening includes a social hour with appetizers, drinks, and a meal with sides and desserts. After the meal there will be a silent and live auction filled with lots of nature related items, handmade goodies, and nature experiences to choose from. Registration is required by September 3. The cost is \$30 per person and seating is limited. Bring your friends and family out for a casual evening on the prairie.

For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrencb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.

Thank You!

Osprey 5K Sponsors

Friends of Warren County Conservation
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Barb Ripperger
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Carla Kuehl-Purdum

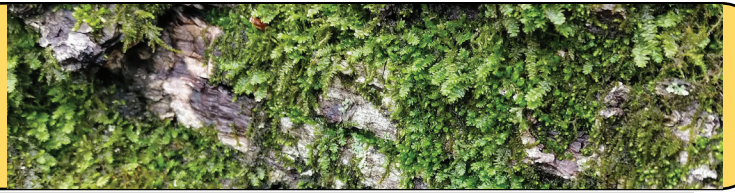
Prairie Picnic Auction Items

John & Kathy Krogmeier
Nancy Engle

Wild Women of the Woods

Mary & Steve Weaver
Steve Dermand
Peggy Hutchison
Shawn Szalkowski
Monty Freeman
Deann Lockling Carlson
Sue Wilson, Young Living Essential Oils
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Conservation

News



Friends of Warren County Conservation



Prairie Picnic

September 14, 2019

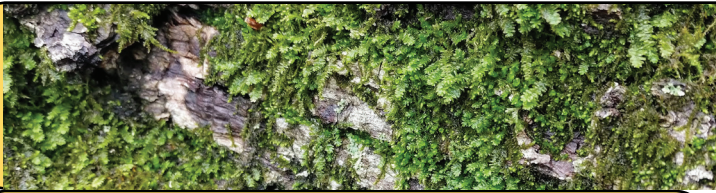
5PM-6PM Appetizers & Drinks

6PM Dinner

Live & Silent Auction following dinner

\$30 per person

**Reservations required. Please contact
Karen at 515-961-6169**



Summer 2019

Warren County Conservation Board



The Warren County Conservation Board manages over 2,200 acres of land for the benefit of its citizens. Visitors can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities on areas being conserved for this generation and generations to come.

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Warren County Conservation Board
15565 118th Avenue
Indianola, IA 50125-8852
(515) 961-6169
www.warrencb.org
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