WARREN COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD



THREE RIVERS JOURNAL

FALL 2026

NATURE SPOTLIGHT: BARRED OWL

Barred owls are commonly found across eastern North America and much of southern Canada, though in recent years their range has expanded further into the western United States. They are a common owl here in Iowa.

Habitat & Behavior:

Barred owls prefer to live in well-established forests with a variety of conifer and deciduous trees. Old-growth forests are more likely to have tree cavities suitable for nesting during the breeding season. They roost in branches during the day. These owls are sit-and-wait predators, meaning they wait until a prey item comes along, then they use a short burst of energy to capture their prey.



Dinner Time:

They are opportunistic predators and feed on a variety of animals like rodents, frogs, crayfish, snakes, and other small animals.



What does the owl say?

This owl has a very distinctive call that sounds like, “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?” They may also let out one big, long “WHOOOO!” And if they’re really worked up about something, they can even make sounds that resemble monkeys!



Adaptations:

- Silent flight: Owls have what look like eyelashes at the ends of their feathers that help make their flight silent.
- Flexible neck: They can rotate their heads up to 270 degrees.
- Asymmetrical hearing: Owls’ ears are slightly off-kilter to help triangulate their prey in the dark.

Fun Facts:

- The Great Horned Owl is the Barred Owl’s most serious predator.
- Fossils of Barred Owls have been found dating back 11,000 years.
- Barred owls have expanded their range into the Pacific Northwest and have begun taking over and hybridizing with their endangered cousins, Spotted Owls.



THANK YOU!

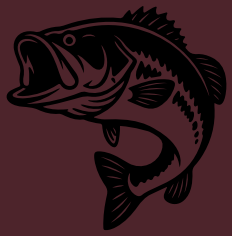
Thank you!

Without the help of our amazing sponsors, donors, and volunteers we wouldn't be able to provide the programs and events that we do! If you or your business are interested in becoming a sponsor, donor, or volunteer please email **hannahh@warrencountyia.org**

Volunteers

Pictured from left to right:
Jeff Bolton
Mike May
Steve Dermand
Jay Timmons
Warren Gardner
Larry Lepper

Not Pictured:
Amaya Sandquist
Berkley Sandquist
Jason Jauron





Kids Fish Day 2026

Volunteer Opportunities for 2026

FALL

Halloween Hike: Halloween Hike is a family hike, where characters are placed along the trail. Participants will have the opportunity to interact and learn about each living thing. They will also have a snack and do a craft. As a volunteer you would have the chance to play one of these fun characters, lead a hike, help in the craft room or help with snacks. Help us make this a fun-filled experience for our local families!

Farm to table (Decorations): Are you skilled at arranging decor? We are seeking assistance in decorating for our upcoming farm-to-table event. Join us in creating a beautiful atmosphere that showcases the elegance of farm-fresh ingredients.



EVENTS

October

Playscape Open House
October 3 | Annett Nature Center

Join Warren County Conservation for a morning of pancakes and an exciting look at the future of outdoor play in Warren County!
Enjoy a pancake breakfast to go, or stay and eat it while learning about our plans for a new nature playscape at the Annett Nature Center Park. Designed to blend inclusive play with natural exploration, the playscape will give children and families new ways to climb, explore, imagine, and connect with nature.

During the open house, you'll have the opportunity to:
9-11 AM ~ Enjoy a pancake breakfast
10 AM ~ See plans and learn about the vision for the nature playscape
Hear a brief presentation about the project and fundraising campaign
Ask questions and share feedback
11 AM ~ Tour the future playscape site
Learn how you can help bring the project to life

Saturday, October 3 | 9:00-11:00 AM
Annett Nature Center

Bring the family, grab some pancakes, and help us kick off an exciting new chapter for outdoor play in Warren County. We can't wait to share the vision with you! Get a sneak peek by visiting: WarrenCountyPlayscape.org
Registration helps us ensure the proper amount of materials and seating!

~Rooted in Nature, Built for Everyone~

Fall Birding Hike
October 10 | Annett Nature Center

Join one of WCCB's naturalists on an early morning hike at Annett Nature Center. Enjoy the sounds and glimpses of the different bird species that live in the park. This program is great for both beginners and experienced birders.
Don't have binoculars? No problem! Binoculars and identification books will be provided.

Registration is open!







Homeschool Wednesday: Arachnology
October 14 | Annett Nature Center

For this month's Homeschool Wednesday, we will be crawling into the fascinating world of arachnids! Discover who they are, how they are different from insects, the amazing adaptations that help them survive, and the important roles they play in our ecosystems. From spiders to ticks and mites, we'll explore some of the unique creatures that make up this eight-legged group!

Halloween Hike: Catch 'em on the Trail
October 26 | Annett Nature Center

Head on out to the Annett Nature Center for our annual Halloween Hike. This non-scary hike is educational and fun for the whole family. You will be guided along the trail to meet different characters. After the hike you can make a craft and enjoy some treats. The cost is $5 per person and those under 3 are free.
**Registration is required. Registration is open and on our website, under the events tab.
**Hikes leave the nature center at 6:30, 6:40, 6:50, 7:00, 7:10, 7:20, and 7:30.
**Please arrive at the Annett Nature Center 5-10 minutes early to get checked in. The hikes leave the nature center at the scheduled times. In order to maintain the schedule throughout the entire night, we will not hold hikes. If you arrive late for your scheduled time, we will do our best to get you into the next open time, however that may be at the end of the night. We do have a maximum number of hikers per group time to avoid overcrowding, and to make sure everyone can hear at each stop on the trail.*

Registration is open!





EVENTS

November

Pro Series: Wildlife Success Stories
November 14 | Annett Nature Center

Iowa's wildlife has faced tremendous changes over the years. Habitat loss, chemical use, invasive species, intensive agriculture, and other challenges have placed pressure on many species and the ecosystems they depend on.

Despite these challenges, Iowa is also home to remarkable stories of survival, recovery, and resilience. Some species that were once endangered or declining have managed to persist, recover, and even thrive. Their stories remind us that conservation can make a difference and that given the right conditions, wildlife can adapt, recover, and return. Wildlife Success Stories celebrates the species that have beaten the odds. Through these stories, we'll explore Iowa's wildlife, the challenges they have faced, the people and conservation efforts that have helped them, and what their successes can teach us about protecting Iowa's natural heritage for generations to come.



Homeschool Wednesday: Knots
November 18 | Lundy Acres

There are a few different knots that many people use daily; these are typically bow knots and slip knots. But there are so many other knots to learn! Square knots, clove hitch knots, figure-eight knots, and more. Learn about the different uses for each knot and put your knot-tying skills to the test with some hands-on practice. Once we have plenty of practice, you will put your new skills to the test and make a knot craft to take home.

Registration opens October 18th, 2026.

Night Hike
November 19 | Annett Nature Center

Explore the trails at the Annett Nature Center with a naturalist after dark! Experience nature in a whole new way as your senses come alive in the nighttime landscape. What sounds will you hear? How does the air feel as temperatures shift? The night has a way of cloaking the land, revealing a different world and bringing nocturnal wildlife to life.

Registration opens October 19, 2026.

December

Homeschool Wednesday: Snow
December 9 | Annett Nature Center

In Iowa we love to think about snow during the winter months, but what exactly do you know about the white stuff, besides school gets cancelled when it falls a lot? In this program we will learn about the basic shapes of snowflakes, how snowflakes are created, study fallen snow, and make a snow craft.

Registration opens November 9, 2026.

Nature Market
December 12 | Annett Nature Center

Warren County Conservation Board is hosting our second local nature- and craft-related vendor fair. We want to support local merchants in our beautiful park setting. Vendors will offer a wide range of items to help you get ready for the upcoming holiday season. Each vendor was selected based on how well their products fit into the following categories: nature-themed, handcrafted, upcycled or repurposed, Iowa-based, photography, artwork, items locally grown or created, and items inspired by nature. Unique items are preferred, and similar vendors will not be doubled. *Vendor fees will support a nature playscape at the Annett Nature Center. Free to Enter!

Candy Cane Hike
December 12 | Middleswart Lodge

'Tis the season to bust out your favorite ugly sweater and candy cane stripes! Come hike the trails at the Middleswart Lodge to find the candy canes hidden along the trail. Do you have the eyes to find them all? If so, enter your guess in the candy cane box for your chance to win a candy cane-themed goodie bag. The winner will be drawn at noon, and you do not have to be present to win. Staff will have candy canes, hot chocolate, coffee, or hot cider for you to enjoy after your hike, while supplies last. Feel free to come and go as you please.

Don't forget to check out our awesome vendors at the Fall Nature Market inside the Middleswart Lodge and warm up by the fire when you go inside to drop off your guesses! Registration is not required but encouraged.

Registration opens October 12, 2026.





PLAYSCAPE

Rooted in Nature
Built for Everyone

Warren County Conservation is building a one-of-a-kind Nature Playscape at Annett Nature Center Park - a destination where children and families can connect with nature through play, discovery, and adventure.

Designed to be inclusive and accessible, the Nature Playscape will provide opportunities for children of all abilities to learn, explore, and experience the outdoors together. It will serve local families while attracting visitors from across Iowa, creating a place where future generations can play, learn, and connect with nature.

Join us OCTOBER 3 to learn MORE!



Why nature play matters

Children thrive when they have opportunities to explore the natural world. Nature-based play helps children:

- Build confidence, resilience, and independence
- Strengthen physical, social, and emotional development
- Spark creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving skills
- Develop a lifelong connection to nature and conservation
- Reduce stress and attention fatigue in an increasingly digital world

What makes a Nature Playscape different?

- Inspired by Iowa's natural landscapes, the playscape will feature:
- Prairie, forest, pond, and rock habitat play areas
- Sensory-rich experiences that engage all five senses
- Natural elements that encourage creativity and exploration
- Traditional play features integrated for accessibility and varied play styles
- Opportunities for both structured learning and spontaneous discovery

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WINGS OF THE WILD

MIGRATION

Fall migration is well underway; this flurry of movement and expenditure of energy is an amazing feat that our wildlife does year after year. Let's meet a few of our Iowa natives to learn about the journey they make.

MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Over a span of 6 to 8 weeks, fall-migrating monarchs make a journey of over 1,500 miles south to Mexico. Unlike the monarchs that migrate north in the spring, these butterflies are part of a special generation known as the "migratory generation." They live much longer than summer monarchs and use the sun and other environmental cues to navigate their incredible journey.

TURKEY VULTURE

These birds begin their journey south in October, with some migrating as late as November. Vultures follow food availability, especially when their food sources freeze and become harder to access. Many migrate to the southeastern United States, while some may travel as far south as Central and South America.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS

Like other migrators, hummingbirds move south in search of resources. They make a 500-mile-long open-water journey from the southeastern part of the United States to Central America in under a day! Hummingbirds make their migration alone by instinct rather than flying in flocks.

BATS

Four species of bats commonly migrate: the eastern red bat, silver-haired bat, hoary bat, and evening bat. As temperatures drop and food sources become scarce, these bats begin their journey south. They travel to the southern United States, with some migrating as far as Panama. Most begin their migration in October and return north in April.



FALL 2026

Warren County Conservation Board

The Warren County Conservation Board manages over 2,700 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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wccb@warrenccb.org

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