

Nahant News

Winter 2023

Volume 17, Issue 1



Photo by J. Malake



NAHANT MARSH
EDUCATION CENTER

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OF NAHANT
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About Nahant Marsh



Nahant Marsh preserve is one of the largest urban wetlands on the Upper Mississippi River. It is comprised of marshy areas; mesic, wet, and sand prairie; and bottomland forest.

The 382-acre preserve is owned by the City of Davenport and the Nahant Marsh Board, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Conservation and restoration efforts on the preserve are directed by the Nahant Board. The educational programming is overseen by Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC).



A YEAR OF GREAT GROWTH MADE POSSIBLE BY GREAT GENEROSITY

by Brian Ritter, *Executive Director*



Through a great deal of planning and generosity, 2022 was a year of incredible growth for Nahant Marsh. We added more land, began work on more trails, had near-record attendance, continued the restoration of more prairies and wetlands, and added another permanent staff member to help keep pace.

In September, Nahant Marsh took over management of around 20 acres from the Levee Commission. These parcels are located between Nahant's Carp Lake and the Mississippi River and are part of a vast network of marshland and bottomland forest that makes up the lower part of the Nahant Marsh complex. The area is also excellent Red-shouldered Hawk and eagle habitat. Over the next few years, we will remove illegally-dumped trash from the site and develop a public access and ecological restoration plan.

In December, our partners at the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation helped us purchase an additional 60 acres. This parcel, which is currently farmed, is a critical missing piece of the main marsh that will not only allow us to create a larger, natural buffer around the marsh but will also help to protect the water quality of the wetlands. Over the next few years, this parcel will be converted back to wetlands and prairie. A trail network and viewing platform will eventually be constructed on this parcel and will be part of a much larger network of future trails that will take visitors around the perimeter of the marsh. With these land additions, **Nahant Marsh is now 382 acres** of protected land.

During the year, Nahant Marsh also constructed a new parking lot/trail head that will serve as an access point to our parcel located between the railroad, the river, Wapello Avenue, and I-280. Trails, a viewing platform, and picnic shelter are being developed on this property and will be open to the public by this coming summer.

After 2 years of pandemic-related restrictions, Nahant Marsh's education program reached the record levels of 2019. During the past year, our staff reached over 22,600 people, including over 10,000 kids. Additionally, over 900 volunteers helped Nahant staff plant over 1,000 trees, harvest and replant nearly 100 different native wildflower species, and remove several acres of invasive species and loads of trash.

Nahant Marsh, along with our partners at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, put the finishing touches on our updated Master Plan. The final draft will be made available to the public later this spring and will serve as a roadmap for planning our next several years.

Even though we continue to grow, we still have a lot of work left to do. Please consider volunteering, donating, or joining us for one of our programs in 2023.



BALD EAGLE DAYS & BEYOND

by Amy Loving, *Director of Education*

The new year for the education crew means Bald Eagle Days! This year, numbers were up on both the kids' day and public days from previous years. Kids' day is open to area schools and gives students a unique opportunity to explore the expo with teachers and parents. Of course, they also get to learn about birds of prey and conservation through interactive booths, a live raptor presentation, and Bald Eagle viewing. This year, our booth was all about bird adaptations. Stations like 'mystery skulls box' and 'which beak works best?' required students to experiment with a variety of beak types, look at patterns, examine skull structures, and make determinations based on those observations. One teacher commented, "These kids could be here all day! It's like a big fidget!"

While we always enjoy Bald Eagle Days, we're looking forward to the rest of this year's exciting lineup of programs. This year, we will be hosting our second annual Valentine's Day Lantern Hike. Couples can enjoy a leisurely walk along luminary-lit trails. After, warm up with a charcuterie snack box, sweet treats, and tasty beverages. This event filled up quickly last year, so be sure to register on our website soon!

Looking ahead to spring, our education team has been working toward some creative offerings like outdoor adventure trips, fungi classes, creative writing classes, wild woodworking, evening bird hikes, and more. Check our calendar of events or Facebook page for more information on upcoming events— we hope you can join us in making 2023 a record-breaking year!



Follow us on Facebook [@nahantmarshiowa](https://www.facebook.com/nahantmarshiowa)

2022 NATURAL RESOURCE RECAP

by Kinsey Nielsen, *Natural Resource Manager*

This fall, we worked on several large projects at Nahant. First, the removal of trees and shrubs in three acres of prairie was a huge undertaking. Volunteers Hank and Becky Hartman, Joe Ambrose, and Tim Murphy (bottom image) dedicated several days a week the entire fall to removing willows in order to restore the habitat back to prairie. After the trees were removed, the area was seeded with more than 50 species of native forbs and grasses. Many of these species were hand collected by staff and volunteers at Nahant. Numerous hours were spent harvesting prairie seed and making sure it was spread in the correct areas for enhancement. Overall, 13 acres of prairie were seeded with 91 additional species to increase the plant diversity.

Volunteers were key in helping to plant several hundred new trees and shrubs in the mitigation bank areas this fall. In total, 1,550 trees were planted at the Marsh in 2022, which could not have happened without the help of volunteers! Another fall project involved using prescribed fire in 10.5 acres of prairies at Nahant. The fire removes dead plant material, controls small shrubs, and allows for ideal conditions to spread prairie seed. Areas burned are rotated every few years, depending on the management needs, and are key to prairie habitat restoration and management.

We are looking forward to seeing what restoration projects are accomplished in 2023!



WINTER WATERBEARS– OH MY!

by Jimmy Wiebler, *Naturalist & Research Coordinator*

Covered in thick ice and crusty snow, Nahant Marsh may seem lifeless in the winter. But don't be fooled: there's life under the surface. During the coldest months, aquatic frogs and turtles hibernate completely motionless on the wetland floor. Damselfly and dragonfly nymphs lie dormant in the marsh muck. Other insects like backswimmers and water striders might spend days or months in a pocket of air, trapped in the ice. Even the microscopic species tolerate the cold. One particularly cold-hardy, microscopic critter that can be found at Nahant Marsh is the tardigrade.

Tardigrades—also known as water bears or moss piglets—live almost everywhere around the globe, yet they are smaller than the tip of a sharp pencil. They are aquatic, so they are found in oceans, lakes, ponds, marshes, and various other wetlands. They can also be found on land living in the tiny amount of water associated with lichens, mosses, or even decaying matter on the forest floor. Under the microscope, they look like an eight-legged mix between a bear, pig, and naked mole rat; however, they are so different from any other animal that they are classified by scientists into their own group: a phylum called Tardigrada. About 1300 species of tardigrades have been described, but there are likely thousands more. Although they may look cute and cuddly, these are some of the toughest creatures on the planet. For example, when conditions are dry, they dehydrate into a wrinkled, desiccated state, and in this form they can survive some extreme conditions. Research has shown that some can survive frozen at temperatures as low as -328°F . For perspective, that's about 2.5 times colder than the lowest temperature ever recorded on earth, which was -128.6°F in Antarctica in 1983! Tardigrades have even been reported to survive 30 years without food or water, and they can withstand blasts of radiation and the vacuum of space.

So next time you're out in the bleak winter weather, remember that life out there is surviving and thriving, even if you can't see it!



WETLAND WINTER SPORTS

by Allison Nodurft, *Naturalist*

Nahant Marsh is a great location for outdoor winter activities, including hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Snowshoeing is a long-standing activity, dating back roughly 4,000 years ago. Over the years, snow shoes have evolved to the several styles and materials used today. Historically, snowshoes were used to make travel in the deep snow easier in order to complete tasks, such as feeding livestock. Over the years, snowshoeing has grown to be a popular sport; some places even hold snowshoe races!

The flat, grassy trails at Nahant offer a great location for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. A one- or two-mile loop can easily be achieved; most of our trails are conducive to these winter sports.

Our trails are open sunrise to sunset and offer a perfect place to enjoy the winter months. While we do not currently offer snowshoe or cross-country ski rentals, our hope is to provide this opportunity in the future.

Stop by the Marsh if you want to learn more about snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and other outdoor winter activities, or if you want to give it a go on the trails yourself!



NATURE WRITING IN THE WINTER: DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM OBSERVATION

by Maddie Young, *AmeriCorps Naturalist*



During my sophomore year at Augustana College, I had the opportunity to take a class about the relationships that humans develop with the environments that they are a part of. For this class, I was forced to create a habit of field journaling outside in the dead of winter for at least 20-30 minutes a day. Despite the fact that I was experiencing bone-chilling conditions every day for a month, I ended up enjoying the experience and writing some well-thought-out poems and other prose that I would not have written if I was instead inside.

In general, nature writing provides an opportunity for individuals to develop a more robust relationship with their environments, strengthen observational skills, and develop key creative thought processes that are often absent from the physical sciences. But in the wintertime, nature writing provides more than this. It is a reason for us to get outside when we are most likely to be uninterested in outdoor recreation and allows for us to experience the full breadth of what our ecosystem can provide for us. In addition, by observing the changing of the seasons and how we and our bodies respond to that change, we are given the opportunity to explore human life in all of its facets, externally and internally.

When first beginning a nature or field journal, it can feel a bit daunting. The desire to get it right, to create something beautiful, or Leopoldian even, can overwhelm that initial pique in interest. But ultimately, a journal is for you alone—it is not meant to be perfect or publishable.

What follows here is a few tips to get you started, as well as an example of a poem that I wrote that arose from a journaling session at the Marsh:

Writing Tips:

- ✿ Try to develop a routine with your journaling. Have a set time everyday which is dedicated to it. But remember to give yourself grace. It's not the end of the world if you forget!
- ✿ Start with basic information and expand. What is observable on the surface (e.g., weather conditions, organisms observed)? What might be hidden below (e.g., your interpretations, how you feel about what you are observing)?
- ✿ Write it all in the field if possible, but it's always OK to go inside if conditions are less than kind.
- ✿ Try different formats. Do you prefer drawing or painting over writing? I sometimes bring a travel watercolor set to give color to my rudimentary sketches and bring my journal to life.
- ✿ Write wherever possible! Nature is all around, not just in preserves and parks. How can you bring nature journaling inside?
- ✿ And if all else fails, what do you notice? What questions do you have about what you observe? What do your observations remind you of?

NATURE WRITING IN THE WINTER, CONT.

“After The Waking” by Madeline Young

when theodore roethke wrote that
he wakes to sleep / and takes his waking slow

does he mean this in a ritualistic way
drinking coffee / and watching the redness of the
cardinals

against the whiteness of the snow
or is this a metaphor for life / is the waking
ourselves

the trees / the birds / the cold wind on our backs
the backwards desire to move on

but at the same time / stay
among the tall grass / monarchs and muskrat huts

ice crashing amongst the body of the water
shallowed by our hands

is the waking the acknowledgement of change
as we see it
moving forwards and backwards at the same time

floating listlessly / in offshoots of rivers
that have no destination or origin

the trees have adapted to the railroads
but I cannot say the same for myself

this world is too loud for me
to wake slowly or wake to sleep

I am matched by deadness
a necessary path to aliveness

starlings puffed up in the cold
a murmur circling on the breeze.

Written in response to [“The Waking” by Theodore Roethke \(Doubleday, 1961\)](#)

If you are interested in exploring nature writing , please be on the lookout for more information about a generative writing workshop series coming to Nahant in the spring. If you have any questions in the meantime, don't be afraid to reach out!





WHAT'S ON THE MARSH?

by Emily Schallert, *AmerriCorps Naturalist*

In these chilly months, we humans like to hunker down in our heated houses, but the critters at Nahant Marsh don't have that option! Some animals—like certain birds—will migrate south where it's warmer, while others will find a good spot to hibernate through the whole winter. But some animals at the marsh have to keep going on with their daily lives and survive the cold without snow boots and fireplaces.

Many of our visitors here have noticed mounds of sticks pop up all over the marsh in the late fall and wonder who or what is building them. These are huts, which are home to one of our favorite rodents: the muskrat! These mammals are medium-sized, brown, furry creatures with long opossum-like tails. The huts are their main home during the winter, insulated with plant matter and mud. They stay at about 32°F inside no matter the temperature outside. Muskrats don't stock up on food for the winter like beavers do, so they have to be out and about to eat. Their diet consists mostly of aquatic vegetation, but they will eat small aquatic creatures if available. They swim underneath the ice from hut to hut to find food and can stay under the water for 10 minutes at a time. In the springtime, muskrats no longer need their huts, and they are often converted into nesting spots for Canada Geese.

Come by the marsh this winter to see the muskrat huts for yourself!



VOLUNTEER NEWS

by Kelsi Massengale, *Volunteer Coordinator*



Seasonal Volunteer Highlight

This newsletter, we'd like to highlight long-time Friends of Nahant Marsh member, Terry Collins! Over the last year, Terry has volunteered almost 100 hours; she often helps to docent the education center, provide baked goods for programs, and staff special events like the Monarch Release Party, Spring Celebration, and more.

We are grateful for Terry's dedication and service to the Marsh, as well as her kind spirit and helpful attitude.

Thank you, Terry!

Spring Cleanup— Save the date for Sat., April 29th & stay tuned for more info!

UPCOMING EVENTS

WILD WOODWORKING

Build a nature-themed project with Nahant Naturalist, Allison! All materials and tools will be provided. No woodworking experience necessary.

January 21: Leopold Benches

February 18: Goldfinch Feeders

March 18: Birdhouse Feeders

Cost varies

BREAKFAST NATURE CLUB

BNC meets year round on the first Friday of the month. Enjoy a continental breakfast while listening to nature-themed presentations from 8:00-9:00 am.

February 3: Sandhill Crane Research

March 3: Warblers of the Quad Cities

\$5 Members / \$10 Guests

NATURE HIKE

Hikes are offered year round on the first Saturday of the month and give visitors an opportunity to learn more about the diverse flora and fauna of this unique natural area.

February 4 & March 4 | 9:00-10:00 am

\$5 Members / \$10 Guests

VALENTINE'S DAY LANTERN HIKE

Bring your valentine to the Nature Center to enjoy the wintry landscapes of Nahant Marsh! On this self-guided, lantern-lit walk, follow the luminaries along the trails and then warm up by the bonfire. Savory hors d'oeuvres, sweet treats, and hot cocoa will be available in the education center. A headlamp or flashlight is recommended. Price is per couple.

February 10 | 5:00-7:00 pm

\$20 Members / \$28 Guests

4TH ANNUAL OBERHOLTZER AWARDS

Nahant Marsh's Oberholtzer Awards recognize local people who dedicate their lives to protecting our natural world. They are a way to recognize hard work and leadership in conservation, to bring awareness to the causes they believe in, and to inspire others to take action.

February 25 | 9:00 am-12:00 pm

\$40 Members / \$50 Guests

ST. PATRICK'S DAY STORYTIME

Join a naturalist to read the story, *How to Catch A Leprechaun*, and build your own leprechaun trap just in time for St. Patrick's Day! Children should be accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

March 11 | 8:00-9:00 am

\$5 Members / \$7 Guests

SPRING SUNSET HIKE

As the largest urban wetland on the upper Mississippi River, Nahant Marsh serves as a resting spot on the great spring migrations. This creates the perfect opportunity for nature enthusiasts to see a wide range of migrating waterfowl. Feel free to bring a camera and remember to come dressed for the weather.

March 21 | 6:00-7:00 pm

\$5 Suggested Donation

BIRD HIKE

Join Nahant Naturalist, Jimmy Wiebler, and other local bird enthusiasts for a guided bird walk through Nahant Marsh! These walks are for everyone: experts, novices, and people who have never gone birding.

March 23 | 5:30-7:00 pm

\$5 Suggested Donation

MASTER CONSERVATIONIST

The Master Conservationist Program is a collaborative program offered by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, County Conservation Boards, and local conservation leaders and professionals. The blended online and in-person curriculum is developed to equip Iowans interested in natural resource conservation with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about natural resources and to become local leaders and educators. Master Conservationists are individuals that share an interest in the sustainability of Iowa's natural resources and in becoming better stewards of those resources.

April 19 – August 16

\$175 Member / \$225 Guest

2022 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Avise Family | Haas Family | Moore Family |
| Bailey Nicole and Family | Haddock Family | Muir Family |
| Barbara Palen | Halverson Family | Nancy Coulter |
| Bernadene Bowles | Haney Family | Nancy Orchard |
| Betty Wood | Hartman Family | Nathan Kraus |
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 Bob Bryant in memory of Georg W. "Jun" Fortune
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 Michael & Michelle Hahn in memory of Teresa A. Marxen
 Jerry & Julie Skalak in memory of Caleb Neff
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 Gail Rinkenberger in honor of Nahant Staff
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 Anonymous William Burress
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Georgia Jecklin Brandon Patterson
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Cassie Druhl
Nicolina Turtle Co.
The Rakus and
Wille Families

Captain Blanding's Turtle

Mark and Lisa Cleve
Nicolina Turtle Co.
Alicia Stowe

Micheline Three-toed Box Turtle

Nicolina Turtle Co.

Pudge Musk Turtle

Nicolina Turtle Co.

Oneida Ornate Box Turtle

Sheri Colman in memory
of Brody Shelby
Nicolina Turtle Co.

Rocky Bullsnake

Liz Schramm in memory
of Shirley Horstmann

Ethel Red-eared Slider

Nicolina Turtle Co.
Mark and Cindy Slater

Pancake Spiny Softshell Turtle

Nicolina Turtle Co.
Joe and Sally Stewart

Squirtle Ornate Box Turtle

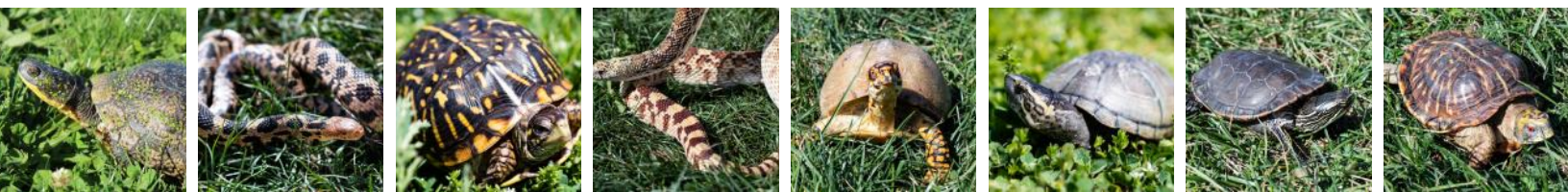
Nicolina Turtle Co.
Rescued
Cathy White

Bob Three-toed Box Turtle

Ambrose Kerr
Judith Lee
Nicolina Turtle Co.
Nicole Laurito

Sunny Fox Snake

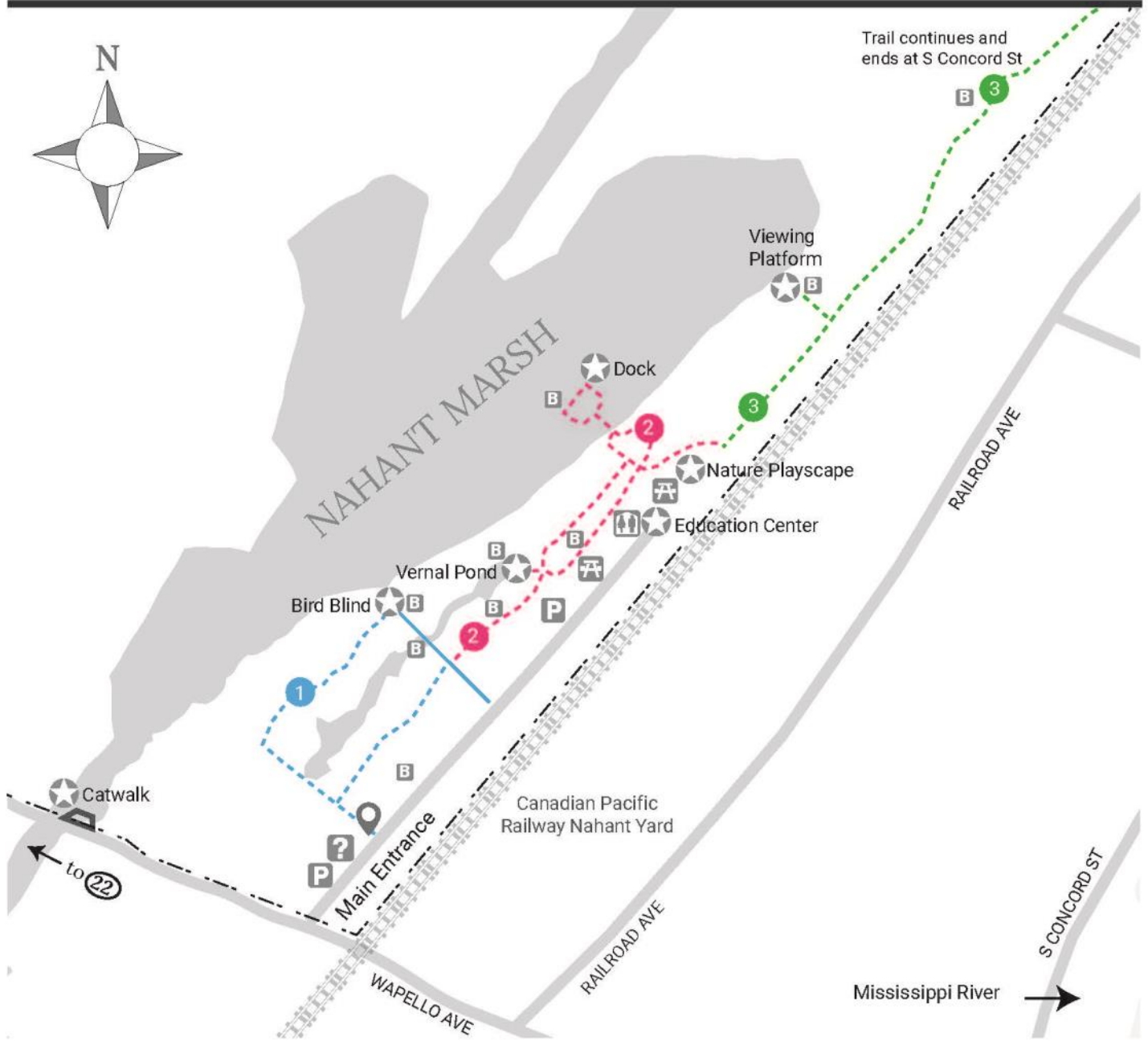
Kendall and Susan
Schwartz Family
Cathy White



Animal Adoption Program

Nahant Marsh cares for more than a dozen turtle, snake, and frog Animal Ambassadors. As an ambassador, these animals represent their species allowing our education staff to educate the public about them. "Adopting" these animals help to support their ongoing care needs. Learn more about adopting an animal at nahantmarsh.org/adopt-an-animal/

Want to help another way? Check out our [Amazon Animal Care list!](#)



MAP KEY

- Trail
- Paved Trail
- ☆ Point of Interest
- B Bench
- P Parking
- ? Info Kiosk
- ♿ Restrooms
- ⛶ Picnic Area
- P Parking
- Preserve Boundary
- Railroad

TRAIL NAME	LENGTH	TRAIL ACTIVITY	TRAIL FEATURES
1 Woodland Loop	0.4 mile	Hiking	Bottomland Forest, Tallgrass Prairie
2 Marsh Trail	0.4 mile	Hiking	Tallgrass Prairie, Marsh
3 East Trail	0.9 mile	Hiking	Sand Prairie, Bottomland Forest



EDUCATION CENTER HOURS

Monday–Friday: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Saturday: 9 am to noon

(extended to 3 p.m. April–October)

There is no fee to visit the Education Center, but donations are always appreciated.

PRESERVE HOURS

Open Daily from Sunrise to Sunset

If the main gate is locked, trails are accessible from the front parking lot.

Look for the opening in the fence near the kiosk.



GETTING TO NAHANT MARSH

**Nahant Marsh
4220 Wapello Ave.
Davenport, IA 52802**

From Davenport, Iowa—Take Highway 22 south (Rockingham Road), turning left on Wapello Avenue (the last turn before the I-280 overpass).

From Rock Island, Illinois—Take I-280 into Iowa to the Highway 22/Rockingham Road exit. Turn right onto Highway 22, and then right onto Wapello Avenue.

**Follow Wapello Avenue toward the river.
Nahant Marsh will be on the left just before the railroad crossing.**