# Nahant News

Summer 2023

Volume 17, Issue 3





4220 Wapello Ave. • Davenport, IA 52802 www.nahantmarsh.org • 563.336.3370

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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).





# WELCOMING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

by Curtis Lundy, Board Chair

The board is eager to welcome the new blood of Rita Rawson and Chris Barnard to its rank. Both individuals bring high energy, a collaborative can-do spirit, and a passion for nature. Meet our newest members below!

#### RITA RAWSON

Rita brings plenty to the table to make Nahant Marsh a stronger, more involved organization in the greater QCA. Rita has worked in the private sector owning her own investment/finance company, helping many individuals and small businesses. She served significant roles in the public sector, spending four years as an Alderwoman on the Davenport City Council. She now serves on the Scott County Board of Supervisors.

She has served various roles as a teacher, both as a teaching professor with the University of Phoenix and as an Advanced Water Aerobics instructor at the YMCA. She has been a leader and participant in numerous environmental and health projects, including Scott County Master Gardener, Medicinal Herbs, Native Roots, and East Bluffs N.A. community garden.

In all endeavors, Rita has sought to dig into the details and with others, reach reasonable, collaborative decisions. Her passion is not only to dig, but to act.

Chris is co-founder and managing partner of Marigold Resources, a

#### CHRIS BARNARD

mid-market merger and acquisitions firm formed in 2011. The firm has been highly successful at putting business buyers and sellers together to keep businesses and families moving. Chris is not only a successful entrepreneur, for over 20 years he has been a board member of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. For his leadership and mentoring of this group, Chris received the Excellence in Mentoring Award in 2021 from Governor Reynolds. He has long been involved in other neighborhood organizations, and is always collaborating to make our community better. In the last two years, he was a leader in the ownership team that acquired Navarro Canoe Company of Rock Island. He has been a long-time friend of Nahant Marsh and has completed the Master Conservation program.

# NATURAL RESOURCE NEWS

by Kinsey Nielsen, Natural Resource Manager

In 2018, we acquired a 40-acre parcel across the railroad tracks from the main marsh along Wapello Avenue. Over the past five years, we have been restoring the wetland and prairie habitat at this area informally called the "Clarke Property." We are excited to share that this parcel finally has an official name:

# **Rockingham Bottoms at Nahant Marsh!**

Work continues on creating trails and installing fencing at Rockingham Bottoms. We plan to have the new parking lot and trails open to the public by the end of the summer. Stay tuned for the opening date!

The natural resources crew and volunteers have also been busy with other projects over the past few months! We spent several weeks removing flood debris from trails and the prairies, and then focused on invasive species removal and planting new shrubs, trees, and prairie plants. Volunteers worked hard to remove musk thistle, sweetclover, common mullein, and unwanted saplings from many areas of the preserve. We planted 188 trees and shrubs and over 300 forbs and grasses to enhance the habitat in various areas. Upcoming projects will include invasive species removal and debris cleanup near South Concord St.

# **Image Descriptions:**

- 1 Volunteers and staff removing flood debris from the prairie and trails
- Zach installing geomesh trail that will be filled with gravel to prevent erosion
- **3** Removing common mullein from the oak savanna
- 4 Forbs and grasses planted near the new parking area at Rockingham Bottoms









# POLLINATOR PROGRAMS

by Maddie Young, AmeriCorps Naturalist



Over the course of the last few months, I had the opportunity to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide pollinator-focused education to elementary students who participate in the Spring Forward after school program in Rock Island, IL. Over the course of six weeks, students started common milkweed seeds indoors and watched the seeds germinate into seedlings that would end up being planted in their schoolyards.

The overall goal of this project was to provide access to education about native pollinators to students who might not normally get the opportunity to learn about these topics.

Each class was developed to build upon the information taught in the preceding class, starting with the lifecycle of a seed, to the importance of prairie plants, to the existence of the endangered Rusty patched bumble bee in our area.

Over the course of the program, I watched students develop real connections to native plants and pollinators and be a part of the process of tending to living things. The students were so excited to see their seeds grow with the knowledge that they would leave a lasting impact at their school. These native plants will help to diversify the plant populations present at these two schools and promote native biodiversity, allowing for greater soil health.

As of this article, there are no plans to expand this program beyond the initial pilot program, but we would eventually like to have this curriculum be an established part of each elementary school in the Quad Cities area.

I would like to extend my thanks to Amy Loving, Robbie McIntyre, and Lauren Larson for making this program series happen. I appreciated the opportunity and look forward to seeing where it goes from here!



# **COMMON LOON SIGHTING**

by Jimmy Wiebler, *Naturalist/Research Coordinator* 

In early May, we had a rare sighting at Nahant Marsh: a Common Loon! Though we are in this beautiful bird's migration range (see map below), it's not every day that one stops by.

Common Loons are diving waterfowl that plunge quickly under the water to catch small fish. In order to perform these underwater acrobatics, Common Loons prefer deep and expansive bodies of water. Under normal circumstances, loons would fly right past the shallow water of Nahant Marsh. During the spring flood, however, the marsh rose about 8.5 feet, making the flooded wetland a perfect place to stop during migration.

Common Loons are built for deep water. Although most birds have hollow bones, loons have solid bones, and that extra weight helps them to dive to depths as low as 250 feet below the water's surface. Their feet are also positioned far back on their body, which makes it very difficult for them to walk on land but assists them in their underwater plunges. These anatomical features also make it hard for the loon to take flight. They must "run" on the water for several hundred feet before they can get enough lift to fly. Once in the air, though, loons are strong, fast fliers and may reach speeds up to 75 miles per hour.

Loons that migrate from
Canada or the Great Lakes
region to the
Atlantic coast or
Gulf of Mexico are likely the
individuals that are stopping
at Nahant Marsh and using the
preserve as a rest stop during
their journey. We don't see
them every year, but we sure
do get excited when they
stop by for a visit!



Photo by C. Shirk



# **MEET ECTO!**

by Maddie Kull, *Animal Caretaker* 

In late March, we gained a new addition to the animal ambassador program: Ecto the Tiger Salamander!

Tiger salamanders are a native amphibian species and can be found in wooded areas near clean, cool bodies of water. As an amphibian, Ecto is ectothermic, or cold-blooded, which is how he got his name.

Ecto is voracious eater who is ALWAYS hungry. He enjoys mealworms, crickets, earthworms, and the occasional baby cockroach.

You can find Ecto in the amphibian enclosure with Leopold the Leopard Frog, sleeping under the rock hide or climbing around the enclosure. Come visit Ecto and the rest of the animal ambassadors at the Education Center!

# VOLUNTEER NEWS: VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Speaking of animal ambassadors, this newsletter's volunteer spotlight is on Amy Groskopf, who has spent more than 30 hours assisting with animal care this year!

Amy has been a volunteer at Nahant Marsh since 2012 and is an active member of the Friends of Nahant Marsh. In addition to feeding the animal ambassadors, cleaning enclosures, and providing animal enrichment, Amy often docents the Education Center, makes delicious treats for bake sales, and helps with special events.

Thank you, Amy, for all you do for the Marsh and the animal ambassadors!

# VOLUNTEER NEWS: SCOUTS FOR SCUTES

by Kelsi Massengale, Volunteer Coordinator

This summer, a young volunteer provided a valuable addition to the Marsh: turtle basking platforms!

Life Scout Dexter Needham worked with other members of BSA Troop 24 to design, test, build, and install five turtle basking platforms.

From start to finish, Dexter and his crew put in over 100 hours of volunteer time. The platforms were built using PVC pipes and deck boards that were spray painted to blend in to the marsh. To ensure these platforms would float, the troop conducted a buoyancy test in a scout's swimming pool.

Once the platforms were constructed and tested, they made their way to the marsh. In late June, the troop put on waders and hopped into the marsh with Natural Resource Manager, Kinsey, to put the platforms in place. Three platforms were placed near the dock and two just past the bird blind. Staff have already seen turtles checking out their new structures; come down to the Marsh soon and 'scout' them out yourself!



# BUILDING BETTER BIRDERS

Nahant Marsh is soon offering a three-part workshop series called **Building Better Birders** in an effort to build a community of citizen scientists and stewards of the natural world.

The mission of Building Better Birders is to "create birders all across lowa that can contribute to the knowledge about birds across the state...through participation in citizen science programs." This workshop will be conducted by Kelly McKay, with assistance from Mark Roberts, Brian Ritter, and James Wiebler.

These award-winning workshops are open to anyone—from beginners to experts—and offer a great opportunity to improve birding skills, learn about issues facing wild animals around the world, and meet like-minded people interested in conservation.

Each of the three workshops will begin with a 1.5-hour evening presentation at Nahant Marsh on a specific bird group (see below), which will cover migration class, species presence in lowa, identifying field marks, and the song/call of each bird. The following day will include a day-long field trip to an off-site location that has prime habitat for the species covered in the lecture.

The Building Better Birders workshop is funded through an Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) grant. During year one of this project, the workshops reached 1,806 participants in 100 workshops across 26 counties in Iowa.

The workshops are divided into sessions; come for as many or as few sessions as you'd like!

#### AUG. 29 - PRESENTATIONS

4:30-6pm | "Shorebirds of Iowa" 6:30-8pm | "Birding Internationally"

#### AUG. 30 — BIRD HIKES

8-10am | Credit Island Park 10-11:30am | Nahant Marsh Education Center 1:45-5pm | Cone Marsh WMA

#### SEPT. 26 - PRESENTATIONS

4:30-6pm | "Diurnal Raptors of Iowa" 6:30-8pm | "Nocturnal Raptors of Iowa"

#### SEPT. 26 - OWL PROWL HIKE

7:45-9pm | Sunderbruch Park

#### SEPT. 27 - STATIONARY HAWK WATCH

8am-3:30pm | Eagle Point Park

Additional sessions scheduled for May 2024. Visit <u>buildingbetterbirders.com</u> to learn more!

# **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **FUNGI FORAY**

A series of fun and informal forays led by mushroom expert Joshua Shomo focused on finding and identifying common mushrooms of our area with information about habitat, seasonality, and key identifying features of edible, interesting, and dangerous mushrooms and fungi.

July 15: Sunderbruch Park Pavilion September 16: Nahant Marsh Education Center \$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 people with all levels of birding experience.

July 27 | 6:30-8:00 pm August 24 | 6:00 PM-7:30 pm September 21 | 6:00 PM-7:30 PM

\$5 suggested donation

# CYPERACEAE & JUNCACEAE IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

Use floristic keys to correctly identify species, diagram and label morphological characteristics of vegetative and reproductive stages, and use sight identification of genera and species in the Cyperaceae and Juncaceae families.

July 19-21

\$175 General / \$50 Students

#### TODDLER TALES

Toddler Tales is a great way to introduce young children, ages 3-5, to the wonders of the outdoors! This program meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 10:00-11:00 am, beginning in April and running through October.

August 2: In a Bug's World September 6: Preparing for Winter \$5 Members / \$9 Guests

Visit <u>www.nahantmarsh.org</u> to learn more and register!

#### 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 8-9 am.

August 4: Nahant Marsh Summer Research September 1: Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Research \$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.

August 5 & September 2 | 9:00-10:00 am \$5 suggested donation



#### POSTER PRESENTATION

Summer research is underway at Nahant Marsh! Eight interns from six different colleges and universities are currently studying the local flora and fauna at Nahant Marsh. Projects this year include investigations of Purple Martins, Blanding's turtles, Rusty patched bumble bees, snakes, bats, fungi, and our oak savannah restoration. Join us for a poster presentation to learn about their summer research findings.

August 7 | 5:00-7:00 pm Free!

#### SAVE THE DATES!

More details to come at a later date, but you won't want to miss these events!

September 9: 8th Annual Monarch Release Party September 21 & October 5: Movies at the Marsh October 7: Nahant Marsh Fall Festival

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# **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.