

Iowa County Conservation –
Conservation Education School Program Descriptions: 2026-2027

If you are interested in an unlisted program topic, please let me know! I can work with you to develop another program dependent on curriculum. Grade levels are suggestions and programs can typically be adjusted for a similar age group of students. If you have any questions please contact:

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Preschool

Tails & Furry Animals

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will listen to a story about how animals use there tails differently, play an animal/tail matching game, and get to see and feel real animal furs.

Bear Snores On

Season: Fall/Winter

Location: indoors

Students will listen to the story Bear Snores On. They will learn about animals in Iowa that hibernate during the winter time, get to be hands on with animal furs shells and bones.

Insects

Season: Any

Location: indoors or outdoors

Students will learn the basics about insects. Listen to the story, learn about an insect's life cycle, get up close and personal with live insects by going on an insect hunt.

Prairie Adventure

Season: Fall

Location: any prairie setting

A basic prairie exploration program where children will discover the plants and animals that call the prairie home. Students will use their senses to explore the prairie.

Snow Explorers

Season: Winter

Location: outdoors or indoors

Students listen to a winter story and then will experience the outdoors in winter by becoming winter animals, searching for signs of animals in the snow.

Woodland Walk

Season: Spring

Location: any woodland

Students will learn about the plants and animals that live in a forest by looking for signs of animals and animal homes. We will use all five senses to explore the woodlands.

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Kindergarten

Talking Turkey

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about the Wild Turkey by listening to a story, playing a fun interactive game, and get to see and feel real turkey parts and pictures.

Salamanders

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about salamanders through a story, hide n seek game, color sheet and they will get to see a live salamander.

Feathers for Lunch

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will listen to the story Feathers for Lunch, by Lois Ehlert. Learn to identify different kinds of birds by hearing their calls, and seeing real feathers and bird nests.

Wild and Tame

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Participants will learn to identify the differences between wild and domestic animals. Students will talk about how wild and domestic animals get the things they need to survive, act out different animals, and look at animals in books to decide if they are acting like they would in real life.

Everyone Needs a Rock

Season: Spring/Fall

Location: outdoors

In this basic introduction to geology children will hear a story about the 10 rules for choosing a rock. After selecting a rock of their own, students will investigate the basic properties of rocks through experimentation.

Wacky Weather

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn basic weather terminology and find out how scientists measure and record the weather. Participants will have a chance to be a meteorologist and try out their weather reporting skills.

Habitat Hunt

Season: Any

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Children will be able to define habitat and identify the four basic needs of living things: food, water, shelter, and space. Students will then hike through a variety of habitats and search for these necessary components that a habitat must provide.

Terrific Trees

Season: Spring/Fall

Location: outdoor

Students will discover what makes a tree a tree, learn to distinguish deciduous vs. coniferous, and explore a variety of trees.

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First Grade

Nocturnal Animals

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about animals of the night (raccoon, opossum, owl, bat, salamander) through hands on bio artifacts and interactive games and activities.

Critter Litter

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will listen to a story and learn about what animals leave behind, tracks, scat and many other things! Get to make their own animal track art, and see examples of animal scat.

Squirrels and Acorns

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will look at Iowa squirrels (fox, gray, flying), listen to a squirrel story, feel furs, and play a game involving squirrels and how they hide nuts for winter.

First Americans

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about the culture and lifestyle of the first people to live in what is now Iowa.

Animals in Winter

Season: Winter

Location: indoors/outdoors

Students will find out what it takes for an animal to survive the winter. Program activities will demonstrate whether animals will migrate, hibernate, or stay active.

Spring Tree Trek

Season: Spring

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Learn about the different life stages of a tree, from the time that it first takes root as a seedling until it dies and returns needed nutrients to the soil through decomposition.

Is it Living?

Season: Any

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Students will define the attributes of living and nonliving things. They will hike to different locations to discover what is living or nonliving there.

Animal Olympics

Season: Any

Location: indoors/outdoors

How do you match up the jumping abilities of a frog or the wing flapping capabilities of a hummingbird? Students will experiment with their own human abilities and learn how and why animals are well adapted to survive in their environments.

Pollinators

Season: Any

Location: indoors/outdoors

Students will learn the basics of pollination. They will become a bee in a game that demonstrates how pollination helps produce new plants.

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Second Grade

Magnificent Monarchs

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about the magnificent monarch butterfly through hands on bio artifacts, interactive game and activities. Topics include their biology, migration, and lifecycle. If this program is held during fall, students may also get to see and tag live caterpillars and butterflies.

Spiders

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about different kinds of spiders, their body parts, habits, and webs. Then play a spider game.

Bats

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about Iowa bats by a fun bat trivia game, studying bat mounts, and learn how bats hunt for their food by playing the Bat & Moth Game.

Pioneers

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Discover what life was like on the prairie. Students will be able to gain a new perspective on pioneer life on the frontier.

Skull Detectives

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will use clues from skull size, shape, and dental characteristics to determine an animal's eating habits and will try to identify its species.

Sneaky Seeds

Season: Fall

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Participants will act out the different ways seeds move away from the parent plant, and go on a hike through various habitats to find examples of the seed types.

Frogs and Toads

Season: Any

Location: indoors

After learning about frog and toad adaptations through a dress up activity, students will explore how and why frogs call.

Pond Study

Season: Spring

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Students will discover what is swimming, flapping, diving, hopping, and crawling around the pond in the springtime using nets, jars, and tubs. **Note:** Can be combined with Frogs and Toads program.

What's That Critter?

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn the differences between vertebrates and invertebrates. They will be able to identify basic characteristics of the five vertebrate types: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.

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Third Grade

Composting

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn what composting is, how it benefits them, and how it benefits the environment. We will discuss tips and tricks for getting compost started at home. A vermicomposting (composting done with worms) box will be part of the program, and creating one for the classroom could be an option (materials must be provided by the teacher).

Turtles

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about many kinds of native Iowa turtles, feel turtle shells and egg shell pieces, and they will have chance to see a live turtle.

Owls

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will discover more about the elusive nocturnal owl with pictures, get to feel owl wings and feet, observe owl pellets, learn about owl adaptations, and play an owl hunting game. Game requires a large open area.

Water Cycles

Season: Any

Location: indoors/outdoors

Students will experience the water cycle first hand as they become part of the Incredible Journey. They will also learn how limited our supply of fresh water is on earth and why it is so important to conserve our water resources.

Recycling & Reduction

Season: Any

Location: indoors

An introduction to the basics of recycling and waste reduction, students will learn how and why we recycle, what they can do to reduce waste, and then recycle in the classroom through making their own paper beads.

Bird Behaviors

Season: Fall/Spring

Location: outdoors / indoors

The concepts of bird behaviors and adaptations will be learned through an interactive bird feeding game. Depending on location, the program can include bird watching.

Rotten Log Exploration

Season: Fall/Spring

Location: Any woodland

Students will experience decomposition first hand as they dig through their own rotten log to discover what is living inside. They will discuss how a log can be used for a habitat.

Food Chains

Season: any

Location: outdoors

Students will discover the basics of a food chain and food web. They will explore outside to find living things and figure out how they fit into a food chain.

Life Cycles

Season: any

Location: indoors/outdoors

Students will learn about different kinds of animal life cycles and plant life cycles through a hands-on card game and life cycle models.

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Fourth Grade

Bald Eagles

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about the majestic Bald Eagle with hands on activities and bio artifacts from eagles, a fun eagle game, and make some eagle art.

Snakes

Season: Any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about the snakes of Iowa, feel snake skins, and get a chance to see live snake

Renewable or Not?

Season: any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about renewable and nonrenewable resources and how resources tie into recycling. They will participate in an activity, which demonstrates how individuals use resources.

Winter Animal Tracking

Season: Winter

Location: indoors/outdoors

Students will first learn how animals move by playing tracking games in the snow and then go on a hike to look for animal signs in winter. *Indoor option:* Students will decode an animal track “crime scene” and investigate some clues that animals leave behind.

How Many Coyotes?

Season: Any

Location: large open space

Students will transform into a population of coyotes as they experience the concepts of limited resources and carrying capacity.

Threatened and Endangered

Season: Any

Location: indoors / outdoors

Students will be able to define threatened and endangered species, understand why particular species become threatened or endangered, brainstorm what humans can do to help them, and examine artifacts from actual threatened and endangered species. Game option where students become migratory birds that try to survive the hazards of migration, this requires a large open space.

Wildflower Walk

Season: Spring

Location: woodland

Students will hike to discover the beauty of the ephemeral wildflowers found only in the springtime. Students will gain basic experience at using a flower identification guide.

Amazing Animals

Season: any

Location: indoors

Students will put on their detective hats, using clues to figure out some mystery animals and the adaptations that make them unique.

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Fifth Grade

Wickiup Investigation

Season: any

Location: indoors

Students will learn about one of the Native American shelters, the Wickiup, through a hands-on investigation of a real archeological dig in the mid-west.

Animal Tracks

Season: any

Location: indoors

Students learn how to identify some tracks from Iowa animals by reading clues about each animal. They will also have a chance to make plaster tracks to keep.

Fish Iowa

Season: Spring/Fall

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Topics include casting, basic equipment, fish identification, and fishing experience. Classes can be split between days or all take place in one day at Lake Iowa. School is responsible for providing bait for fishing experience.

Who Dirtied the Water?

Season: Any

Location: indoors

This activity causes students to examine the impact human activity has on our water quality. Related activities allow students to brainstorm ways that humans can work to protect our water resources.

Soil Investigation

Season: Spring/Fall

Location: outdoors

Students will get the dirt on soil as they discover what it is made of, how it is made, and why there are different types of soil.

Orienteering

Season: Any

Location: Lake Iowa

Students will learn the basics of navigating with a map and compass and test their new skills out on an orienteering course.

Energy Cycles

Season: any

Location: outdoors

Students will be able to follow the path of energy from the sun to plants to animals. They will learn the basics of an ecosystem through interactive activities.

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Sixth Grade and Up

Canoeing & Kayaking

Season: early fall/late spring Location: Lake Iowa

Students will learn Canoeing and Kayaking basics and safety, then get to try them out on Lake Iowa.

Prairie Surveying

Season: Fall

Location: any prairie

Students will get experience surveying the prairie. Participants will learn to identify common prairie plants and discover some prairie restoration techniques. Seed collection is available as an optional activity.

Basic Winter Survival

Season: Winter

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Students will be able to define a person's priorities in a survival situation and learn some useful skills for survival, including fire- and shelter-building.

Water Quality Testing

Season: Spring/Fall

Location: body of water

Participants will act as water quality specialists completing a variety of tests to determine the health of a body of water. Students will discover how and why these tests are completed and what is done with the results.

Instincts for Survival

Season: Spring/Fall

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Students become predators or prey animals on a mission to survive life in the forest during this large scale simulation. Requires at least 4 adults per group participating.

GPS Basics/Geocaching

Season: Fall/Spring

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Students will become familiar with GPS units, including marking and navigating to locations (or "waypoints"). They will then participate in a geocaching competition.

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Special Programs

Atlatl

Season: Fall/Spring

Location: Lake Iowa

Students will learn history of the atlatl, how Native Americans made and used them. Then get to try throwing them at life sized animal targets.

Monarch Migration

Season: Fall

Location: any large open space

Students will learn about the monarch butterfly with hands on materials, and a migration game that will teach them threats to monarchs as they migrate. They will also get to see live monarch caterpillars and possibly butterflies. This activity requires a large area or gym.

Snowshoe Hike

Season: Winter

Location: Lake Iowa Park

Available for grades 4 and up, snowshoeing is a great activity to combine with the animal tracking program. Sixteen “kid-sized” pairs of snowshoes are available. Larger classes may be split in half. At least 6” of snow must be on the ground.

Archery

Season: Fall/Spring

Location: Lake Iowa Park

International style target archery is available for grades 4 and up. Large classes can be split in half so students have a shorter wait time.

Bison in Iowa

Season: any

Location: indoors/outdoors

Students will discover more about the largest land mammal in North America. Participants will investigate various bison parts to see the traditional ways they were used by Native Americans, as well as learn about the bison’s extirpation from Iowa.