



Iowa NatureMapping

Finding All the Pieces to Keep Common Species Common

Iowa State University, Extension Wildlife
WINTER-SPRING 2004/ Volume 2, Number 1
www.extension.iastate.edu/naturemapping

Coordinator's Comments

Well, spring has finally arrived, and so have many of the signs that it has. What have you been seeing lately? Turkey Vultures, American Robins, Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrels, Chorus Frogs, Eastern Phoebes, Blue-winged Teal? Yes, spring has arrived!

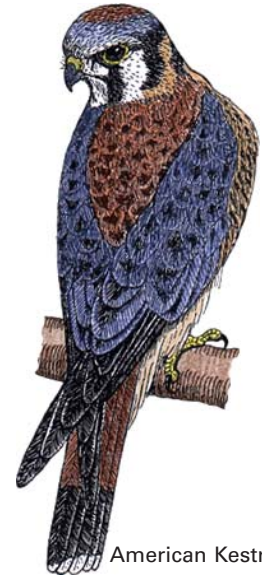
There are many things happening with the NatureMapping Program. The summer and fall have been quite busy. I have been preparing for several new training opportunities and Todd Vens has been busily working on our brand new web site, as well as diligently working out the kinks in our new data entry forms. For those of you who have waded through the first few months of this new system, with a few unexpected surprises, we appreciate your patience. It appears that the new forms are running smoothly (**Please let us know if they aren't**) and now it is on to the next advancement of the database system, data retrieval. *Don't forget to visit our web site often for the latest!*

We are very excited about this year! In April we begin a series of three traveling workshops, designed to say "thank you" for all your efforts for NatureMapping. Each trip will give you an opportunity to visit and learn about three different parts of the state. At each location, you will participate in specific monitoring projects. We will focus on rare species or species that we have very little or no data on in our NatureMapping database. Learn about these workshops inside this issue!

Also inside this issue, you will find information about our data entry form and an introduction to our data retrieval page. Finally, we will soon be sending you a survey that we would like you to complete. The survey will let us know how we are doing. In an attempt to review our performance, as well as remain responsive to your needs, we would appreciate feedback from you. Please take the time to fill out this survey.

Finally, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude for all of your time and talents you have contributed to Iowa NatureMapping. As volunteerism goes, those who practice it never completely reap the rewards of which they deserve. Don't forget to let us know all the great things you are doing for NatureMapping. We'd love to hear from you, so that we may feature you in this newsletter, but also recognize you more formally. Thank you for your involvement!

- Jason O'Brien



American Kestrel

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

All Artwork courtesy of Mark Müller

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Your suggestions on topics and sections are always welcome.

Newsletter Submissions

Your contributions to this newsletter are welcome. We'll accept your text electronically as a plain text or Word formatted file, email, or as typewritten copy. Photos should be either JPEGs (300 dpi) or actual prints. All submissions are subject to editing, formatting changes, and length. Throughout this newsletter are ways you can contribute. Please send all submissions to the following address:

Iowa NatureMapping
Newsletter Submission
Department of NREM
124 Science II
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-3221
jpobrien@iastate.edu



Eastern Meadowlark

Your Data is Important

Don't forget, your data is important for the continued success of NatureMapping and to your own efforts. If you are having trouble entering data, or need assistance, please let Todd Vens know.



Iowa NatureMapping is funded by a grant from the Resource Enhancement and Protection – Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) and Federal State Wildlife Grant Money through the Iowa DNR.

Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP), Invest in Iowa, our outdoors, our heritage, our people. REAP is supported by the state of Iowa, providing funding to public and private partners for natural and cultural resource projects, including water quality, wildlife habitat, soil conservation, parks, trails, historic preservation, conservation education, and more.

NatureMapping News

You can now view data online.

Todd Vens has been busily creating ways to view data that you and other NatureMappers have entered. Right now, we have one tool ready for you to use. Here's how it works:

1) From the NatureMapping home page, choose the "View Data" menu.

You will be taken to a page where you can "View species that have been observed in your county." You are asked to do the following:

2) First, from two menus, select your **County** and then the **Animal Group** (reptile, amphibian, mammal, and bird), and click **Submit**.

The species in the Animal Group observed in that county will appear in a "Species" box. Once the list of species appears, then you are asked to:

3) Click on an individual species from the **Species** box.

A list of observations made in your selected county for that species will appear in another box. The list of observations is the entire list of records submitted by all NatureMappers for that particular species in that county.

4) For each record, you can click on and view the habitat that the species was found in.

Remember, you can still use your personal data entry account to view only your species at each of the sites you monitor. We will continue to work on and offer other ways to retrieve and view data. If you have any ideas on other ways to view and retrieve data, please contact Todd at trvens@iastate.edu or 515/294-6825.

What's New Online

When you go to enter observations now, you will notice that things look a bit different. The Login screen (fig.1), with its obvious cosmetic alterations, is the first signal to the user that things have changed.

After logging in with the standard “Last Name” and “NatureMapper ID”, you are brought to the Main Menu screen (fig. 2). It is here, in addition to some old menu items, that you will see some new choices also being offered.

Let's click on the ‘Enter Observations’ link. We are taken to the “NatureMapping Data Entry Form” page (fig. 3). It is on this page that you will see some of the most extensive changes to the user's data entry routine.

The most significant change to the “NatureMapping Data Entry Form” is the ability afforded users to enter 10 observations at a time before submission. Also, whenever users select a choice from the “Animal Group” drop-down menu, the corresponding “Species Observed” drop-down menu is populated with matching species.

Now, let's go back to the “Main Menu” page (fig. 2) again and this time click on ‘View Observations’. You are taken to the “Observation List” page (fig. 4). This page displays all of the observations you have recorded for the NatureMapping program. You can sort the observations by clicking on any of the headings located at the top of the page. For example, clicking on ‘Site Number’ will sort the observations by site number.

To see an observation in detail, it is necessary that you click on an individual record. After clicking a record, the “Observation Detail” page (fig.5) opens.

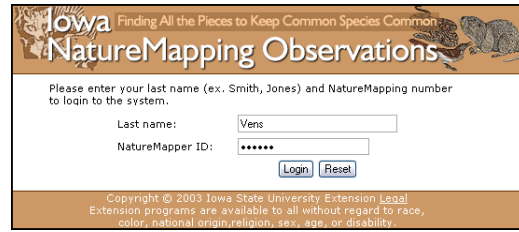


Figure 1

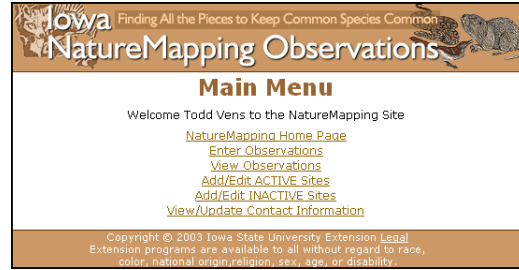


Figure 2

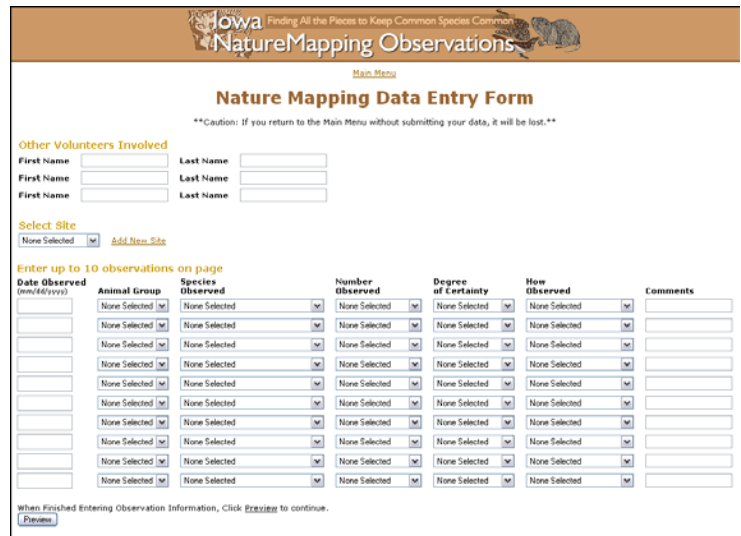


Figure 3

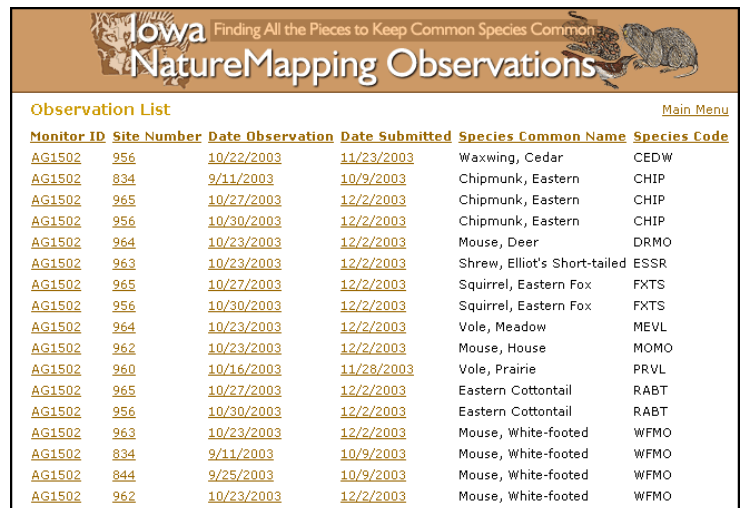


Figure 4

On the “Observation Detail” page (fig. 5) you can view additional aspects of an individual observation, i.e. ‘Other Volunteers Involved’, ‘Number Observed’, etc. You can also make corrections/additions to your record on this page, but you cannot delete an observation.

Now, let’s go back to the “Main Menu” page (fig. 2) again and this time click on ‘Add/Edit Active Sites’. You are taken to the “Active Site Listing” page (fig. 6). This page displays all of the Active sites you have registered. An Active site is one that you are currently conducting NatureMapping activities on. These are the sites that will appear in your ‘Select Site’ drop-down list on the “Nature Mapping Data Entry Form” page (fig. 3). This page is almost exactly the same as the “Inactive Site Listing” page, except the Inactive page does not have a link to add a new site.

The “Active Site Listing” page displays some information pertaining to each site, but for more site detail you need to click on one of the site names, i.e. Buffalo Grove I, which will open the “Site Information” page (fig. 7). From this page you can make an Active site Inactive (if you are no longer actively monitoring a site), or edit an Active site’s details.

From the “Active Site Listing” page (and the “NatureMapping Data Entry Form”) you can also add a new site by clicking on the ‘Add New Site’ link. This link opens a blank “Site Information” page that you fill in with the new site’s details. You will notice on the “Site Information” page that there are now additional scale categories, including ‘Linear’; a place to add an extra set of UTM’s for Transect or Corridor sites; three selections for Site Descriptions; and the ability to add up to six Habitat Designations, with Habitat 1 being the primary habitat that exists at a site. Our hope is that these changes offer you more flexibility for data collection as well as a new way to describe a site.

NOTE: When you click on a site name on the “Active Site Listing” page or the “Inactive Site Listing” page, or you click on the ‘Add New Site’ link on the “Active Site Listing” page or the “NatureMapping Data Entry Form”, you are essentially brought to the same page, the “Site Information” page (fig. 7). This page either displays existing site details for an Active or Inactive site, or no details if you clicked the ‘Add New Site’ link.

The last thing we’ll look at is the “User Detail” page (fig. 8). From the “Main Menu” page (fig. 2) click on ‘View/Update Contact Information’. This opens the “User Detail” page. From here you can examine or change your personal contact information.

Figure 5

Site Name	Site #	UTM X	UTM Y	Zone	Datum	Source	City	County
Buffalo Grove I	1001	408285	4629008	UTM 15	NAD83	IGIMS	Perry	Boone
Buffalo Grove II	1000	409720	4629409	UTM 15	NAD83	IGIMS	Perry	Boone
Home	706	433846	4642937	UTM 15	NAD83	IGIMS	Luther	Boone
Iowa Wildlife Area	646	430516	4644315	UTM 15	NAD83	IGIMS	Luther	Boone
Bear Creek	708	426483	4649318	UTM 15	NAD83	IGIMS	Luther	Boone

Figure 6

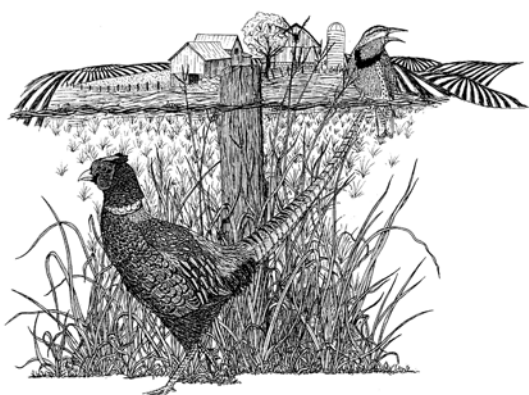
Figure 7

Figure 8

Volunteer Views

We want to hear from you! In each issue, we want to highlight the things you are doing. *In what ways are you using NatureMapping?* Write a description of your efforts. *Do you want to share an amazing critter sighting?* Send in your story and critter list, and if you have photos, include them too! *Have you discovered a book or field guide that you really like?* Write a critique. *Has your class created a project and compiled data?* Have your students send us a report, charts, and pictures!

We will return all original photos to you. Submissions are subject to editing, formatting changes and will be limited to 700 words, equivalent to 4 columns, and 1-2 photos.



Habitat Happenings

Are you creating habitat? In each issue, we will leave room for someone who wishes to share what they are doing to create habitat on their property. Have you constructed a wetland, planted a prairie, or planted trees? Have you restored a prairie remnant or savannah? Have you enrolled your property in a conservation easement? Do you manage buffer strips, fencerows, or terraces? Or, have you planted your backyard to attract wildlife? Let everyone know all the good you are doing for wildlife habitat. Submissions are subject to editing, formatting changes and will be limited to 200 words, equivalent to one column. Send us your accomplishments and a photo (300 dpi) of your habitat.

Meet the NatureMapping Trainers

In September, NatureMapping added some new members to the family. Six regional trainers are responsible for conducting at least 2 Level I workshops within the next year. In addition to providing the program with much needed workshops, they are available to all trained NatureMappers to answer questions, provide advise about local and regional locations and wildlife that need monitored, and act as a liaison between you, the main program, and other experts who may be of help as you conduct monitoring on your land and other wild places. These trainers add many years of experience, expertise, and dedication to the Iowa NatureMapping Program. Here is the list of trainers and the regional map.

Region 1 (NW)

Sunday Ford, Sioux County Conservation Board
712/552-3057, aford@acsnet.com

Region 2 (NE)

Darrin Siefken, Bremer County Extension
Stacey Snyder, Tripoli Community School District
Darrin: 319/882-4275, dsiefken@iastate.edu;
Stacey: 319/882-4201, snyders@tripoli.k12.ia.us

Region 3 (SW)

Kay Neumann, SOAR – Diversity Farms
712/683-5555, dfarms@pionet.net

Region 4 (SE)

Brad Freidhof, Johnson County Conservation Board
319/645-2315, conservation@co.johnson.ia.us

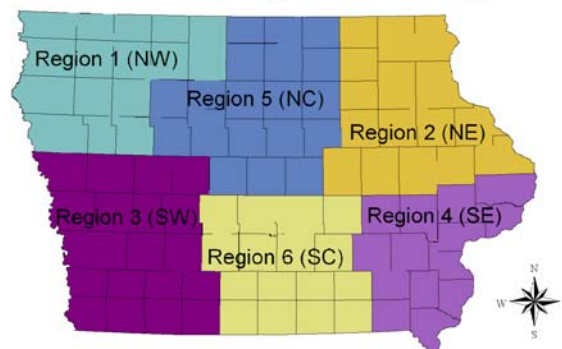
Region 5 (NC)

Laura Elfers, Floyd County Conservation Board
641/456-3490, fpcenter@omnitelcom.com

Region 6 (SC)

Laura Zaugg/Chris Adkins, Dallas County Conservation Board
515/465-3577, Laura: prairiesun@hotmail.com
Chris: koyannisgasti@aol.com

NatureMapping Trainer Regions



Critter Corner (By Jason O'Brien)

Two Confusing Birds

Perhaps you have noticed this, too. Over the years, there has been an increase in the presence of a particular bird species year-round at backyard bird feeders. This bird is sparrow-sized, but the male carries a rather handsome reddish crown and chin. The entire female and the rest of the male are gray-brown. Both have some streaking.

This particular bird can be mistaken for the *Purple Finch* (*Carpodacus purpureus*), which is a common migrant, but an uncommon winter resident, most common in October and from late April to early May (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).

The NatureMapping database indicates 61 records for the *Purple Finch*. According to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union (IOU), 29 August is the earliest arrival date and 7 May is the latest departure date for this species (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).

One NatureMapping record indicates a *Purple finch* on 7 June 2003, which leaves this record open for scrutiny. All other records fall within the range of dates that *Purple Finches* reside in Iowa. Yet, one must at least consider the possibility that some of the records are misidentifications of another finch species.

The *House Finch* (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) is often confused for the *Purple Finch*, but there are distinct differences in the two species. Here is a comparison of each by key field marks:

Size:

The *Purple Finch* is stockier than the *House Finch*. This is quite apparent after seeing both together.

Color:

Purple Finch - male is rose-red, more raspberry than purple, color begins low on breast and flanks and is extensive on crown, back, and rump; female lacks red of male, and is a brownish color. *House Finch* - male has bright red, almost an orange tint, on the breast, crown, and rump, but not as extensive as the *Purple Finch*; female lacks red of male, and is a drab gray-brown color.

Streaking:

Purple Finch - male has indistinct brown streaking on red back, lacks streaking on flanks like male *House Finch*; female has pronounced light stripe behind eye and dark stripe on jaw, and distinct dark streaks on

breast and flanks. *House Finch* - male has streaked flanks and indistinct streaks on brownish back; female has an unstreaked head and blurry grayish streaking on flanks and breast.

Tail:

Purple Finch has a shorter, more deeply notched tail than the *House Finch*.

The IOU list of Iowa birds indicates that both are regular visitors in Iowa, meaning that they are seen every year or nearly every year, at least 8 of the last 10 years. However, the *House Finch* is a year-round nesting resident, whereas the *Purple Finch* does not nest in Iowa.

These field marks may seem confusing, but when you see the *Purple Finch*, you'll never forget it. It is quite striking in its coloration, and if you know what to look for, you'll never confuse it with its cousin, the *House Finch*.

The *House Finch* has an interesting story. Prior to the 1940's, the *House Finch* did not exist east of the Mississippi River. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (Kammermeier, 1999),

“the eastern *House Finch* population originated on Long Island, New York, in the 1940s... *House Finches* were being sold illegally as caged birds, known as Hollywood Finches. Pet traders presumably released the birds to avoid prosecution under the auspices of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Those few released birds thrived, and, by the 1980s, their descendants had reached the Mississippi River. Today, the eastern population is meeting its western kin in the Great Plains states.”

Iowa's first *House Finch* record was on 3 June 1982 in Pocahontas County (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996). It is thought that the expansion is largely due to the species' successful adaptation to areas altered by humans, such as urban and suburban habitats, which have also rapidly expanded since it was released. Bird feeders have also contributed to its success.

References:

- Kammermeier, L. 1999. *Population dynamics of the House Finch*. *Birdscope*. Volume 13, Number 2:15.
- Kent, T.H. and J.J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Privately published, Iowa City and Ames, 400pp.
- Sibley, D.A. 2000. *The Sibley guide to birds*. A.A. Knopf. NY. 544pp.
- www.iowabirds.org

Are These Your Sites?

In the last newsletter, we listed some monitoring sites that were unidentified by NatureMapper ID Code*. We still haven't heard who these belong to. *Please contact Todd Vens, trvens@iastate.edu/515-294-6825, to let him know if any of these sites are yours. We don't want to delay your progress as you monitor your sites.*

*Setting your browser to "Block All Cookies" causes your ID code to not enter. Contact Todd Vens to find out how to keep this from happening in the future.

- Deb's Yard
- Deb's Woodland
- Stennett Creek
- Seven Mile Bridge
- Des Moines Y Camp
- Bob Shetler Ponding Area
- 10 Longview Knoll
- s end McBride causeway path
- roadside US1 S of IC
- Big Marsh Wildlife area
- Big Marsh Wildlife area next to hwy 14

Traveling Workshops Scheduled

NatureMapping is offering 3 traveling workshops in 2004. These workshops are open to all trained NatureMapping volunteers and their spouses. A limited number of \$150 scholarships are available for each workshop, with first priority going to teachers seeking Staff Development or Graduate credit. For more information, please visit the NatureMapping web site at:

www.extension.iastate.edu/naturemapping.

See page 8 for further details about each workshop.

Schedule:

- April 23-25, 2004 – Southwest Iowa, Loess Hills area
- May 14-16, 2004 – Northeast Iowa, Yellow River State Forest and Effigy Mounds National Monument
- July 9 –11, 2004 – Northwestern Iowa, Okoboji, Prairie Pothole region



NatureMapping Workshops

Here is a list of the upcoming training workshops for 2004:

Level I NatureMapping:

- April 3rd: Story County, McFarland Park; 6 hours, taught by Laura Elfers, Floyd County Conservation naturalist and one of NatureMapping's new regional trainers
- April 3rd: Johnson County, Kent Park; 6 hours, taught by Brad Freidhof, Johnson County Conservation naturalist and one of NatureMapping's new regional trainers

NatureMapping DNR Modules (open to all trained NatureMappers):

Birds - None at this time

Reptiles and Amphibians -

- March 20: Woodbury County Conservation Board, Dorothy Pecuat Nature Center, Sioux City, IA
- April 17, 2004 Jones County, Conservation Board Center Park Nature Center, Center Junction, IA

For more trainings, visit "Workshops" on our web site

NatureMapping Advisory Committee

Doug Harr

IDNR Wildlife Diversity Program

Barb Gigar

IDNR Aquatic Ed Program

Jerry Keys

County Conservation Boards

Patrick Brown

Iowa GAP

Todd VonEwegen

Iowa Conservation Education Council

Ric Zarwell

Iowa Audubon

Paul Bartelt

Waldorf College, Biology Department

Jim Ayen

Iowa NRCS

Rich Leopold

Iowa Environmental Council

Traveling Workshops

This year, Iowa NatureMapping is offering our volunteers the unique opportunity to travel to various places in Iowa to do some wildlife monitoring. During each trip, we will be live-trapping three different mammal species, which have so far eluded volunteer eyes: Spotted Skunk, Red-backed Vole, and Franklin's Ground Squirrel. Along the way, you will see some spectacular landscapes that make Iowa unique and learn about why each area is the way it is. Cost has not been set, but will run around \$250.00 each, which includes all food, transportation, lodging, and materials. SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE. Cost may vary if transportation or lodging is not required. Further details and a registration form will be made available to you via mail and the web site, as soon as details are finalized. In the meantime, if you are interested, and have not mailed in an interest form, please cut out and mail back the form found at the bottom of the page. Here is some of what is being planned for the NatureMapping Traveling workshops.

April 23-25: SW Iowa

- Depart Ames @ 1pm
- Visit Springbrook State Park - learn about effects of deer abundance on forest health
- Visit Sheeder Prairie - Explore a quality native tallgrass prairie remnant and learn about the ecology of prairies and their management, as well as look for early blooms
- Live trap for spotted Skunks and small mammals near Riverton Wildlife Area and Waubonsie State Park.
- Visit Hitchcock Nature Area (Pottawattamie County) to learn about management on this part of the Loess Hills
- Arrive in Ames by 2-3pm

May 14-16: NE Iowa

- Depart Ames @ 1pm
- Visit Hartman Reserve (Black Hawk County) - Learn about a newly designated State Preserve and the forest management practices of the Reserve, and possibly search for Red-shouldered Hawk nest
- Hartman Reserve is also an alternative departure point
- Visit Backbone or Bixby State Park - See examples of Algific Tallus Slopes, and their unique species
- Live trap for red-backed voles, mist net for bats and observe colorful neotropical migrant birds on their way through Iowa in Yellow River and Effigy Mounds
- Canoe down the Yellow River
- Arrive in Ames by 2-3pm

July 9-11: NW Iowa (Okoboji Area)

- Depart Ames @ 1pm
- Visit Kalsow Prairie - Learn about this high quality native prairie remnant and its unique prairie species
- Visit an NRCS wetland restoration site on private land - Learn about how this project was implemented and is being managed
- Travel through Mallard and Curlew, and take a look at the wetlands/lakes along the way, learning the history of the place names, culture, etc.
- Live trap for Franklin's Ground Squirrels at various locations in the prairie pothole region
- Visit several unique prairie and wetland preserves - Learn how their geology makes them so unique

To learn more about these trips and to register, visit our website and look for the "Traveling Workshops" link. Cost for each workshop has yet to be set. SCHOLARSHIPS OF \$150.00 EACH WILL BE OFFERED ON A LIMITED BASIS.

This is not a registration form, but you will be put on the mailing list for additional information as it becomes available. Do not send money now as the cost is subject to change.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Day/Evening

Mark the workshop or workshops you are interested in at this time?

___ April 23-25, 2004 ___ May 14-16, 2004 ___ July 9-11, 2004 ___ *If a stipend is requested.* Mail to:

Traveling Workshops, Iowa NatureMapping, Dept. of NREM, 253 Bessey Hall, Ames, IA 50011-1021



Iowa Conservation Education Council

Join E-literate

Do you value and understand the need for education about nature and the environment? If so, the Iowa Conservation Education Council (ICEC) – the state’s largest and foremost environmental education organization – invites you to join in efforts to promote and strengthen environmental literacy in Iowa. Join the growing number of teachers, naturalists, conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts, youthleaders, and parents who are a part of ICEC, and become one of many who choose to be *E-Literate!*

All ICEC members receive a certificate and colorful bumper sticker to let others know they are *E-Literate*. Have questions about wildlife, or a specific environmental issue? ICEC E-Literate coordinators in each of seven regions throughout Iowa field and funnel questions from ICEC members. Anyone with an interest in nature or the environment, and an appreciation for the value of education, can be a member of ICEC. Benefits of membership include:

- *Pathways to Education!* - Each year, three issues of the ICEC newsletter provide news and resources for a better understanding of nature and environment.
- *Field trip opportunities!* - Members can take advantage of fun and educational field trips – about 20 a year! Field trips are available in all areas of the state.
- *Service projects!* - Join others in caring for nature and the environment. Members are provided with service project opportunities throughout the state.
- *Special recognition!*

Members are recognized annually for their commitment to learning and service. Simply complete one of many service projects, or attend three field trips.

Organizational membership

Businesses, non-profit groups, and government entities with an appreciation for education about nature and the environment, can become members of ICEC. In addition to the benefits of individual members (above), organizations benefit in the following ways:

- *Helping Hands!* - E-Literate ICEC groups can call upon other ICEC members for help with service projects such as natural landscaping and tree planting, cleanups, and fundraisers.
- *Advertising and Networking!* - ICEC brings together learners and teachers, funders and projects, and resource people.
- *Special recognition!* - Organization members receive plaques annually for their commitment to learning and service. Simply host one quality service project, help fund an educational or environmental project, or provide three field trips.



Membership Application (from NM newsletter)

Name: _____

Organization (if applicable):

Membership type (check one):

- Education Professional (Individual)
- E-Literate (non-professional Individual)
- Non-profit (organization)
- Government (organization)
- Business (organization)

Address: _____

Home Phone: ____/____

Work Phone: ____/____

E-mail: _____

I have enclosed my \$25 individual membership fee

I have enclosed my \$50 organization membership fee (Included two workshop registration discounts)

Mail to:

ICEC Membership
P.O. Box 65534
West Des Moines, IA 50265

For more information on environmental education, visit
www.iowaee.org

ICEC members are chief supporters of education and educators. As a member, you help promote quality education inside and outside the classroom. ICEC sponsors educator workshops, aids in developing education materials, provides teacher stipends, and promotes quality education at local and state levels.



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Address Service Requested