

2023 Annual Report

Deppe Family Conservation Area

Outdoor Alliance is pleased to partner with Story County Conservation (SCC) and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) to help acquire land for upland and wildlife refuge immediately south of McFarland Park. The Outdoor Alliance put a high priority in 2023 on helping Story County Conservation raise funds to purchase the land from Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and fund restoration and amenities. INHF had purchased the property from Bob and Carol Deppe, who wanted permanent protection for the land. The Deppe acquisition will add 124 acres to McFarland Park's 238 acres of existing habitat. The area includes timber, a small stream, and more than 90 acres of open field which will be restored to prairie.



Other proposed features include an accessible shelter, educational signage, and trails connecting to McFarland Park. INHF & SCC will embark on natural resource improvements while fundraising continues. This will include farming the property in preparation for a native prairie reconstruction.

JAX partnered with the Outdoor Alliance to raise funds for this purchase, the Round up for Outdoor Alliance campaign was held at JAX in September. A hot dog fund raiser was included over Labor Day weekend.



Stacy Brothers (JAX) & John Pohlman (Outdoor Alliance)

The Outdoor Alliance organized a volunteer day with Workiva on the Deppe Family Conservation Area in late winter. Ten Workiva and six Outdoor Alliance volunteers worked with a SCC staff member at the Deppe Property for an invasive brush removal day. Together, they were able to clear a hillside by cutting and stacking the invasive honeysuckle that had been growing on the property for many years, opening the hillside to new spring growth.



The Outdoor Alliance continues to help with fundraising and to staff volunteer opportunities to bring the Deppe Family Conservation Area into public use. If you want to help, contact us at info@oasco.org.

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A Walk in the Woods

The annual fall foliage walk is a way to take a moment to slow down and enjoy the changing seasons. This past year, the fall foliage walk was expanded into a series of three walks. We hiked Robison Wildlife Acres south of Nevada, Anderson Access and West Peterson Park, which are part of the South Skunk River Greenbelt. Look for a series of three fall foliage walks again in 2024.

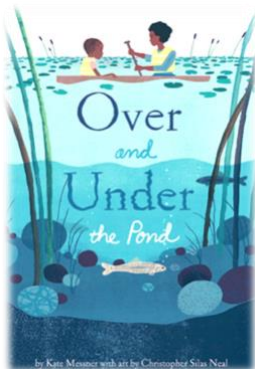
Then, after the holiday season, our series of winter walks on Thursday afternoon in January resume. Winter walks are a great way to shake off cabin fever and enjoy the winter vistas that both open up and quiet down.

In time, winter is followed by the ephemeral blooms of spring wildflowers. This spring there will be a series of three wildflower walks as we continue our seasonal explorations in our public parks and trails.

The walks are a great way to get outside, take some exercise in a natural setting and meet others that like doing so too. Check www.oasco.org for updates.



Over and Under the Pond – StoryWalk®



A StoryWalk® is an innovative and delightful way for children and adults to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. This StoryWalk® featured the book entitled *Over and Under the Pond* by Kate Messner and was held in August at Moore Park in Ames. About 20 children and parents participated.

Emma Bravard, Youth Services Librarian with Ames Public Library, led the walk and Outdoor Alliance volunteers assisted as needed. Emma read each page to the children at each book page post and asked them questions.

Also, as part of the walk, they had an easy scavenger hunt to do as they walked between the book page posts. Emma also provided a simple binocular craft to make and take home. Light refreshments were also provided. The trail through Moore Park is about 0.6 mile and there were about 20 book page posts. We look forward to more Story Walk® opportunities in the future. Check our website for updates.



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Monarch Magic



Outdoor Alliance was one of several organizations that sponsored and participated in September's Monarch Magic at Ada Hayden Heritage Park. Prairie Rivers of Iowa was the event organizer. Monarch Magic was a free, family-friendly event for all ages. Many kids experienced the magic of tagging a Monarch butterfly to help scientists track their migration and participated in many fun activities to learn more about the Monarch butterfly and other pollinators. There was good weather, a great turnout of families, and many dedicated volunteers to make it all possible.

"Monarch Passports" were marked as the families made their journey that day. Raising Readers passed out books, Monarch butterflies were tagged, children navigated an obstacle course as if they were a butterfly



trying to avoid all the ways a butterfly can get hurt, and in the process, families spent time with their children having fun outside and learning about the great Monarch butterfly's migration to Central America.

Young Birders of Iowa and Adventure Backpacks

Birding field days ignite enthusiasm, educate about the habitat each species of birds needs and the importance of conservation. Birding interest may wane after the field event ends for some without access to binoculars, bird field guides or knowledge where to go in their area.

To increase accessibility, The Young Birders of Iowa (Young Birders) are making available Birding Backpacks that can be checked out from the library. The backpacks have binoculars, field guides and information about where to go birding in that area. The Birding Backpacks are being distributed across the state and are now available at the Cambridge and Nevada Libraries in Story County.

The Outdoor Alliance is partnering with the Young Birders to place the Adventure Bird Backpack across the other libraries in Story County. Let us know if you would like to get involved. Partnering with the Young Birders and strengthening libraries in your community is a way to better reach young people, getting them outdoors, empowered and informed about our interconnected world from the wings of birds.



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loway Creek Stash the Trash

About 40 volunteers participated once again with “Stash the Trash” along the loway Creek in Ames from South Grand Avenue to Southeast 16th Street. This was a collaborative effort with Story County Conservation supplying canoes, buckets, and shuttle services; the City of Ames providing buckets, the dumpster and support staff; Prairie Rivers of Iowa offering signup services and lunch set up; the Outdoor Alliance purchasing and delivering lunch; and the Skunk River Paddlers contributing their canoes and leadership.

The trash collected weighed 3020 pounds and included 20 tires, 3 rims, and over 5 buckets of glass. The weather started out sunny and breezy and turned cloudy then rainy. Everyone enjoyed helping clean up this section of the loway Creek.

You are invited to the 2024 event the end of April by checking for updates at www.oasco.org.



Looking Ahead

The Outdoor Alliance invests in conservation with both our main partners, Prairie Rivers of Iowa and Story County Conservation. Our goals in 2024 reflect the increasing Importance of water, the use of public parks, trails, and participation in outdoor recreation:

- Continue our support for county water monitoring and protecting the water we depend upon.
- Increase member engagement in Outdoor Alliance sponsored events.
- Support outdoor youth programming.
- Assist Story County Conservation's land acquisitions through financial contributions and service projects.
- Increase outreach in rural Story County.

Thanks for helping the Outdoor Alliance support Story County Conservation and our other partners' many efforts to make Story County a great place to live, work and enjoy outdoor recreation. The projects highlighted in this report could not have happened without your help. If you would like to volunteer or participate in any of our projects, please contact us at info@oasco.org or visit our website, www.oasco.org, for upcoming events and to review our 2023 financial statement.

