

Conservation Corner

By Corinne Peterson
Pocahontas County Naturalist



May 23, 2018

Finally, we're in the fields, including field trips here at Conservation. Each year we plan and present programs and outings to hundreds of area students from pre-school to high school age. Many mornings will find us loading up the canoes and kayaks as well as the fishing poles and tackle as students and teachers head to the hills, ponds, and woods for nature walks, fishing trips, river floats, and, of course, School Days.

This year's special day for county fifth graders fell on May 15, the first dry, sunny day in recent memory. Well, perhaps that's stretching the truth a little bit. I trust each of the 132 students and 20 adults from Gilmore City-Bradgate, Laurens-Marathon, Newell-Fonda, Pocahontas Area, and Pocahontas Catholic School Districts created several sunny memories of our cultural, natural, and family heritage to keep and take home.

Many of you know the story of the Wiegert family, how they emigrated from Germany in the 1870s and settled in Bellville Township, how they farmed with horses, saved some of the prairie sod from the plow, and lived without electricity or indoor plumbing. Today Wiegert Prairie Farmstead stands as a living Iowa History lesson to children of the 21st century.

In the Wiegert farmhouse, Dorothy Lamberti and Connie Dallenbach of the Pocahontas County Historical Society Museum led the students on a scavenger hunt of the kitchen, pantry, parlor, and bedroom as they relived and tasted a day in the life of a 1900's farm family. In the farmyard, Lisa Zeman and Holly Frerk of ISU Extension and Outreach led the students on a farm tour, sharing the history of the outbuildings and stories of farm chores and animals, including a cow/calf pair and horse brought to the farm by Bailey Vainreb. In the schoolhouse, Marcia Leu once again led the students through a typical day of reading, 'riting, and 'ritmetic.

At Cooper's Cove, everyone enjoyed canoeing and kayaking on the pond, a fun memory for many of our students. This year's hike along Whitetail Ridge featured artifacts from the Dunn Family Collection of the First Iowans to travel and live along the trail. One of the pottery fragments even featured an etching of the trail's namesake. We also had a chance to hold a tiger salamander for whom the creek, *Waassakapompa*, is named. Underneath a large burr oak tree by the keystone bridge, Roger



Photo by Scott Kilbride

Eichelberger and Doug Bush shared their collection and knowledge of blackpowder guns. Over lunch, Doug shared his memories of helping trench waterlines to the park as well as a frosty winter picnic along Whitetail Ridge that remains a vivid memory for he and his wife.

I'd like to thank our faithful volunteers as well as PCCB staff members Brian, Kyle, Aaron, James, Jill, and our summer staff for everyone's help in preparing the grounds, handling the canoes and kayaks, and presenting programs. The guys were finishing up mowing as the buses arrived. Thanks for the memories!