

Conservation Corner

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We had a great time at Jr. Naturalist Camp last week—a time filled with new experiences, new skills, and new friends. Some of our new experiences included building a wickiup in the park and working with deer rawhide and bone. On our field trip we learned a new skill of flint-knapping. Throughout the week, as we listened to stories and legends of the First Iowans, played games in the park, touched mammoth and bison bones or stone artifacts, we were also meeting and making new friends who, like us, were interested in nature.

My favorite part of camp this year was our field trip to the Prairie Heritage Center near Peterson. I'd been to the O'Brien County Conservation Center before but always during the winter. The prairie in August was alive with sights and sounds – bison grazing on big bluestem, eagles soaring high overhead, prairie wildflowers providing a touch of color amongst the green. It was easy for me to visualize early nomadic hunters following bison along the rolling hills of the Little Sioux River Valley as they entered their new home.

Pocahontas Conservation would like to thank everyone who helped make camp a reality this summer. We couldn't have done it without you! Thanks to everyone who pitched in to help prepare materials for our bone necklaces, ring & toss games, and deer rawhide rattles & drums. I'm glad Bev, Cael, Jaden, Brooklyn, Ron, Jill, Kyle, Daniel, and Aaron came to my rescue.

As always, we appreciate our faithful camp helpers Brooklyn, Gage, Jacob, Jaden, Nicole, and Zach as well as our field trip supervisors Courtney Hamilton, Amy Hubbell, Carla Coon, Joni Gerdes, Dan Erickson, Bev Holzmueller, Richard & Sharon Garner, and Jeff Halder, who also served as our bus driver. Courtney, Amy, and Joni did a great job helping lead stations. Last but definitely not least, I'd like to thank Naturalist Charlene Elyea, Summer Intern Meara Hansen, and all the O'Brien County Conservation Staff for bringing bison, flint-knapping, the prairie, and the Mill Creek culture to life for our campers.

I'll close with an old Mesquaki Indian saying that I believe echoes the feelings of many early and present-day Iowans. "The north is too cold, the west too barren, the south too hot, and the east too bloody. Iowa is just right."

