

# Conservation Corner

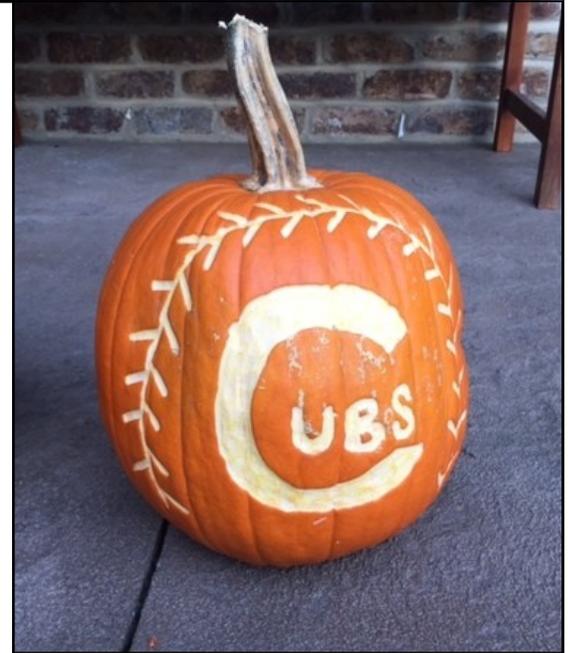
By Corinne Peterson  
Pocahontas County Naturalist



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Last week we reviewed and previewed the many colors and seasons of art grazing our fields and walking the streets of Pocahontas. This week it's been fun to follow and view the games of the World Series. Yes, the wait is finally over. After an historic comeback and nerve-wracking Game 7, Cubs players and fans everywhere are celebrating. Were you among the 40 million people who tuned in to watch the ending of a baseball season, a curse, and a century of waiting?

Thursday was a new day, time to turn my attention from baseball back to nature as I attended the IAN Fall Workshop in Floyd County. It's always good to meet with fellow naturalists from around the state as we catch up and look ahead. This year's gathering spot was the Tosanak Recreation Area located along the Shell Rock River near Marble Rock in north central Iowa.



Tosanak is a Winnebago word meaning “slippery one” and refers to the many otters living along area stream and river banks. The Shell Rock River, named for the fossil shells found in outcroppings along its bank, flows from Albert Lea Lake in southern Minnesota before joining the Cedar River north of Cedar Falls. Along with its limestone riverbed and clear waters, it's also known for its fishing, kayaking, and white water rafting.

The Tosanak Recreation Area opened in 2013 on the grounds of the former Winnebago Boy Scout Reservation (1954-2012). Today the Welcome Center features several displays honoring the Boy Scouts of America while the park features cabins, lodges, and miles of trails on the 320 acres of prairie, woodland, and riparian habitats.

One of the educational sessions I attended was entitled “Saving Pollinators One Garden at a Time.” Polk County Naturalists Heidi Anderson and Erika Schoenberg shared their experience of working with ten churches in the Greater Des Moines area to plant pollinator gardens. From site prep in the spring through Monarch tagging in the fall, they worked together to plan, dig, plant, mulch, fence, and weed. When they returned in late summer to install interpretive signs, everyone's hard work was rewarded with chrysalises hanging on the chicken wire, ‘holy’ milkweed plants growing in the gardens, and a new appreciation and understanding of pollinators growing in the people.

“How do you reach teens?” was the title of the session led by Dallas County Naturalist Mike Havlik. Using the circle of awareness – value – action, he urged everyone to find something you care about. And while there will be ups and downs working with teens, it's also rewarding to capture the excitement of a student holding and banding a kestrel – an experience not soon forgotten.

For me, the highlight of the workshop was the geo-caching scavenger hunt. And while I learned more about GPS units and the many committees of IAN, the best part was the part spent walking through the leaves under the red oaks on a sunny November day along the Shell Rock River.