



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 24, 2023

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Campground hosts needed for upcoming recreation season

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking people who enjoy the outdoors, camping and meeting new people, to consider becoming volunteer campground hosts for the upcoming recreation season.

Volunteer campground hosts live in state parks from one to five months assisting DNR staff with light maintenance duties, checking in campers, and being a resource for visitors enjoying state parks and forests.

Campground hosts are provided a free campsite while they are actively hosting during the camping season. Hosts volunteer 20 – 40 hours per week, including weekends and holidays, while living on site in their own camper.

Host positions are available at:

- Bellevue
- Clear Lake
- George Wyth
- Honey Creek
- Lake Ahquabi
- Lake Darling (Campground and Cabin Host Needed)
- Lake Wapello
- Pikes Peak
- Springbrook
- Yellow River

Information about campgrounds and state parks is available online at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/about-dnr/volunteer-opportunities>. To discuss the host position, contact the state park directly, or call 515-443-2533.

Number of donors to the Chickadee Check-off continues to decline

Last year, more than 6,200 Iowa taxpayers helped wildlife conservation with donations to the Fish and Wildlife Fund on their state tax form, which is nearly 1,000 fewer than who donated in 2020. and represents about 0.4 percent of total taxpayers in Iowa.

The donors contributed nearly \$150,000, which was a decrease of roughly \$25,000 from 2020.

“Donations on the 2020 tax form were especially generous so it’s maybe not a surprise it declined but we’d hoped that higher level could be maintained,” said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Diversity program. “However, we are extremely thankful for those who donated to wildlife conservation with their tax refunds this cycle. The funds are vital to our work on habitat development and restoration programs for some of Iowa’s most vulnerable animal species.”

The Fish and Wildlife Fund, commonly known as the “Chickadee Check-off,” is a mechanism the Iowa Legislature created in the 1980s for Iowans to donate to wildlife conservation on the Iowa state income tax form. Before this time, so called “non-game” wildlife had no dedicated funding.

Non-game wildlife are the 1,000-plus species such as songbirds, bald eagles, salamanders, turtles, monarchs and bees and more that make up the majority of wildlife in Iowa. The Chickadee Check-off is one of the only funding sources for the Iowa DNR’s Wildlife Diversity program, which is responsible for these species.

Funding helps to improve wildlife habit, restore native wildlife, provide opportunities for citizens to learn about Iowa’s natural resources and much more. Recent projects have been investigating the nesting success of barn owls and determining the status of the endangered rusty-patched bumblebee.

“One thing to be aware of if you’re interested in donating is that the tax check-off line is pretty inconspicuous and can be easily missed. Be sure to remind your tax preparer that they have a client that wants to donate,” said Shepherd.

Once located, donating is easy: simply write the amount to donate next to the Fish and Wildlife Check-Off, line 57 on Form 1040, and the sum is either automatically deducted from the refund or added to the amount owed.

“If every Iowa taxpayer donated just \$1, it would mean \$1.6 million for wildlife and nature conservation,” Shepherd said.

New this year, if hopeful donors miss donating on the tax form, they can still make a donation to the non-game program on the web at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/donations>.

DNR CONTACT: Stephanie Shepherd at 515-230-6599 or stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov

Indian Creek Nature Center to host trumpeter swan program on Feb. 4

Indian Creek Nature Center is hosting an event on Trumpeter Swans on Feb. 4, from 1 to 4 p.m., at Amazing Space at Indian Creek Nature Center, 5300 Otis Road SE, in Cedar Rapids.

The event is open to the public, but registration is required. Cost is \$12 for adult members of Indian Creek Nature Center; \$15 non-members; \$5 per child; children aged 2 and under are

free. For more information and tickets go to <https://indiancreeknaturecenter.org/trumpeter-swans-an-iowa-comeback-story/> Walk-in participants are not accepted.

Learn from experts in this area of conservation, and bring the kids along to participate in this family friendly event which includes several crafts and activities. Join in for a preview of "Return of the Trumpeter Swans" a North American film documentary produced by Steve Harryman

Hot cocoa and coffee will be provided. After the program, guests have the option to view a pair of trumpeter swans at Kirkwood Community College. Attendees are responsible for their own transportation.

As North America's largest waterfowl species, these magnificent all-white birds can weigh up to 32 pounds with an eight-foot wingspan. Once common to Iowa, by the late 1880s they were gone from the state and, in the early 1930s, only 69 remained in the lower 48 states.

Beginning in 1993, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources developed a plan to restore trumpeter swans to the state. After 115 years of absence, the first modern day hatch of three wild trumpeter swan cygnets occurred in 1998 in Dubuque County. Additional nest attempts and successful broods have continued to occur and increase throughout Iowa since. More than 1,200 swans have been released as part of the program.

This event is sponsored by Indian Creek Nature Center, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Kirkwood Community College, Iowa Wildlife Federation and the Trumpeter Swan Society. Plan to dress for the weather, as some activities will take place outdoors.

For more information or questions, contact Andria Cossolotto, Indian Creek Nature Center Education Manager, (319) 362-0664 Ext. 306, or David Hoffman, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-425-0737 or David.Hoffman@dnr.iowa.gov.