MARSH UPDATES | NATURAL RESOURCE NEWS | NEW NATURE EXPLORER KITS | SPIDERWORT

NAHANT NEWS

FALL 2026

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NAHANT MARSH
EDUCATION CENTER

PHOTO: J MALAKE



About Nahant Marsh

Nahant Marsh preserve is one of the largest urban wetlands on the Upper Mississippi River. It is comprised of marshy areas; mesic, wet, and sand prairie; and bottomland forest.

The 382-acre preserve is owned by the Nahant Marsh Board, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the City of Davenport. Conservation and restoration efforts on the preserve are directed by the Nahant Board. The educational programming is in partnership with Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC).

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Kinsey Nielsen

Volunteer Coordinator
Allyson Smithson

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Allison Nodurft
Bri Opyd

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Nahant Marsh Becomes a Designated Site of Silos and Smokestacks

By Brian Ritter, Executive Director

At the beginning of the month, we learned that Nahant Marsh Education Center has been accepted as a Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area (SSNHA) Site. Silos & Smokestacks is one of 62 National Heritage Areas in the US and is a partnership with the National Park Service. SSNHA specifically focuses on the agricultural history and importance of our region.

You may ask, why is Nahant Marsh included in a National Heritage Area that focuses on agriculture? It is because Nahant Marsh's history and ecology is intricately tied to our agricultural past. For instance, did you know that intermittent farming occurred in and around the Marsh beginning in the 1830's, as farmers took advantage of the rich floodplain soils? Did you know that the first steam mill in Iowa, located here, in the old town of Rockingham, began grinding locally grown grain for early settlers in 1837? Did you know that local farmers occasionally harvested "wild hay" in the prairies at Nahant up until the early 1950's, likely helping to maintain the prairie ecosystem?

During the past few decades, Nahant has retired several parcels of farmland and returned them back to wetlands and prairie. With our new partnership with Silos & Smokestacks, we will be installing interpretative signage that will help to explain our agricultural heritage and the importance of prairie and wild places in maintaining healthy soil, water, and biodiversity. More information and a celebration of this new designation will be coming soon!



Monarch & Friends Party: Rooted in Biodiversity

By Amy Loving, Director of Education



The 11th Annual Monarch & Friends Party was a great success! Families and nature enthusiasts gathered at Nahant Marsh on September 12 to celebrate monarch migration and explore the incredible biodiversity of our natural world. With the monarch butterfly as our mascot, the event highlighted the diversity of insects and other invertebrates, the important roles they play in healthy ecosystems, and the many ways we can help protect them.

This year, we expanded our event beyond monarch biology, migration, and tagging to showcase the diversity of invertebrates. New education stations featured beetles, grasshoppers, mussels, snails, dragonflies, butterflies, and bumble bees. Families explored each creature through hands-on activities, earning a “Marshling” card–a Pokemon-inspired playing card–featuring the creature at each station. Once they collected the full set, they could claim a specialty Blanding’s turtle card!

The cards were a huge hit with both kids and adults. We loved hearing families get excited about collecting them—gotta catch ’em all! We’re already thinking about creating more Marshling cards for future family and community events.



A new Bug BioBlitz encouraged participants to search for creatures throughout the marsh using iNaturalist, a smartphone app that identifies and documents plant and animal species. It was a fun way to contribute observations to community science projects while learning more about the wild things living around us.

Monarchs remained an important part of the day, with participants tagging 47 wild and reared monarchs for Monarch Watch, another citizen science project geared towards researching and protecting monarch butterflies. Many wild monarchs were fluttering through the prairies during the event, providing an exciting glimpse of migration in action. The monarchs were most often spotted nectaring on native thistles—a wonderful reminder of the importance of native plants for migrating butterflies.

Migrating monarchs are often called the “super generation” because they can live 6–9 months, have delayed reproductive maturity, and are often larger than previous generations. New this year, Monarch Watch is collecting wing-length data from tagged monarchs to help track the health, development, and migration success of monarch populations. The average monarch wing length is approximately 50 mm or the length of a standard house key.







A Huge Thank You!

A huge thank you to our vendors and partners who shared valuable resources and information about native plants, native landscaping, habitat restoration, and conservation for our 11th Annual Monarch & Friends Party:

- City of Davenport Parks and Recreation
- Wild Ones Quad Cities
- Scott County Master Gardeners
- Putnam Museum and Science Center
- QC Environmental Film Series
- Quad City Botanical Center
- Davenport Public Library
- Izaak Walton League of America
- Cub Scout Pack 667
- Normandy Natives
- Cookies by Design - Bettendorf
- Skeleton Key Art & Antiques
- Prairie Moon Nursery

Special thanks to our sponsors for helping make this event possible:

- Group O
- Wallace's Garden Center
- Waste Commission of Scott County
- Bob & Kim Waterman

We are especially grateful to our wonderful volunteers, who staffed our education stations and helped make the day engaging and welcoming for everyone.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this special 11th anniversary celebration! We're excited to continue growing the Monarch & Friends Party and inspire our community to appreciate, explore, and protect the natural world.



Attendees playing the dragonfly lifecycle game



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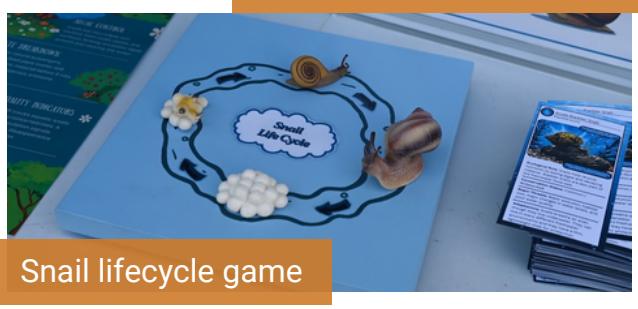
Attendees playing the grasshopper lifecycle game

Davenport Public Library reading to attendees





Nahant volunteer and attendee tagging monarchs



Snail lifecycle game

4th Annual Fall Festival Wrap

Nahant just held our 4th Annual Fall Festival, bringing in more than 1,000 people to the Marsh for an afternoon packed with family fun, nature, and community. Together, attendees helped us raise almost $19,000 to support Nahant Marsh Education Center!

Attendees this year enjoyed:

- Cracking open geodes
- Face painting
- Creating arts and crafts
- Grabbing a bite from The Full Nelson food truck
- Enjoying coffee from Argrow's Cafe coffee truck
- Grabbing a drink from Bent River's beer trailer
- Visiting the petting zoo
- Getting up close with live raptors during The RARE Group's presentation
- Watching drone flyovers of the marsh
- …and so much more!

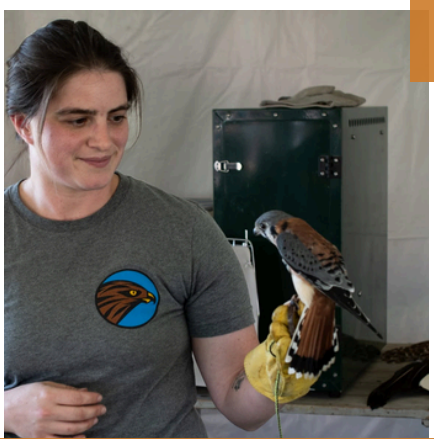
Thank you for making our 4th Annual Fall Festival such a huge success. We can't wait to do it all again next year!

A special shoutout to this year's sponsors:

- The Pribyl Family
- Modern Woodmen of America Home Office Retirees
- GreenState Credit Union
- CBI Bank & Trust
- Shaw Electric Inc.
- Legat Architects
- Logan Contractors Supply, Inc.
- Monson Truck & Trailer Repair, Inc.
- Seaberg Industries
- Terracon Consultants

Family taking a photo infront of the marsh





The RARE group presenting about Raptors

Volunteers and Nahant employees cracking geodes



Natural Resources Updates

By Kinsey Nielsen, Natural Resource Manager





Volunteers removing cottonwoods from a sand prairie. 7-23-26.

The natural resources crew survived the hot summer (and Kinsey being on maternity leave) and got lots of work done despite the heat. Staff and volunteers removed invasive species from our prairies including cottonwoods, willows, Queen Anne's Lace, Musk/Bull thistles, sweet clover, bird's foot trefoil, and many others. We also weeded pollinator gardens, cleared storm debris from the trails, and harvested prairie seed. This fall we are checking on over 1,500 trees in our wetland mitigation banks, collecting garbage along roadways, harvesting additional prairie seed, updating/sealing various wooden structures, and continuing to remove cottonwood trees from our sand prairie.



Kinsey with Benjamin (3.5yrs), and Emma (3mo) exploring Nahant after the Volunteer Appreciation dinner. 8/27/26.



Juvenile spiny softshell turtle found while working along the East trail. 9-9-26.



A Record-Breaking Summer of Research at Nahant Marsh

By Jimmy Wiebler, Research Coordinator and Naturalist

This summer, Nahant Marsh welcomed its largest group of Research Interns to date! Eleven undergraduate students from four colleges each took on an independent research project, collecting, analyzing, and communicating their findings through research posters presented in August.

Their work contributes to Nahant Marsh's long-term monitoring of birds, bats, beavers, turtles, snakes, water quality, and soil health.

Here's a brief look at what each student discovered:



Bella Vivirito (Augustana College) studied the physical and chemical characteristics of soils and sediments across the preserve, establishing a baseline for long-term soil monitoring. She found that several parameters including magnesium, potassium, nitrate, and phosphorus varied among sites and ecosystem types, potentially reflecting differences in hydrology, vegetation, and proximity to runoff.



Anna Hodges (Iowa State University) surveyed submerged aquatic vegetation, an understudied component of Nahant's wetlands. She documented eight species, including one invasive species, and found the greatest aquatic plant diversity in areas farther from human disturbance.





Abbigail Raes (Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) investigated the relationship between bats and beaver activity. She found significantly higher bat activity in areas with greater beaver activity, supporting a potential connection between beaver-created wetlands, the insects they support, and the bats that feed on them. She documented all nine bat species known from Iowa, including the federally endangered northern long-eared and Indiana bats and the tricolored bat, which is proposed for federal listing.



Aidan Yaddof (Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) assessed Nahant's beaver population by documenting lodge and dam sites and identifying areas of high activity. Comparisons with other studies suggest Nahant's beaver population is within the range expected for a healthy population. His study provides a baseline for long-term beaver monitoring at the marsh.



Carson Ford (Iowa State University) returned for his second summer of water-quality monitoring at Nahant. Using new water-testing equipment, he measured parameters including dissolved oxygen, pH, chloride, and nitrates. He found that nutrient and chloride levels generally declined as water moved through the marsh toward the Mississippi River, supporting the idea that the wetland helps filter and improve water quality.





Meah Harfst (Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) continued our six-year Purple Martin monitoring project while investigating potential causes of martin mortality. Working with the Iowa DNR, she found evidence of physical trauma and fungal infections that may be associated with predators, competitors, or wet nesting material. Her findings will help inform future monitoring and management of the colony.

Kaelea Danielsen (Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) tracked Blanding's turtles using radio telemetry and GPS. She found that turtles use a wide range of habitats and can travel throughout the preserve, while still tending to return to particular areas. Flooding also appeared to influence turtle movements and behavior.







Khaliah Knox (Augustana College) monitored painted turtles, red-eared sliders, and common snapping turtles as part of our ongoing effort to understand the impacts of Nahant's 2025 mass mortality event. Although populations remain below previous levels, declines were less severe in the second year following the event, suggesting possible stabilization. Red-eared sliders showed signs of recovery in some wetlands.

Riley LeVan (University of Illinois) used acoustic monitors to document birds of current or historical conservation concern. These species were more prevalent in areas experiencing less human disturbance, while overall bird diversity was also higher in areas without public trails. Her findings highlight the importance of less-disturbed habitat for bird communities.





Maddie Waite (Augustana College) studied macroinvertebrates (i.e., "water bugs") as indicators of water quality. She found that artificial substrates may provide a more comprehensive picture of the macroinvertebrate community than traditional dip-net sampling alone. Diversity also increased farther from the marsh's stream inlet, supporting the findings that water quality improves as water moves through the wetland.

Kaelyn Kamholtz (Augustana College) examined how fine-scale habitat features influence snake presence. She documented five species and found snakes were most common in open habitats near edges, particularly restored prairie edges. Her findings also suggest that prescribed fire does not negatively affect snake populations, while the habitat patchiness created by fire may provide indirect benefits.





Together, these projects add another year of valuable information to Nahant Marsh's long-term research and monitoring efforts. Each summer, our interns help us build a better understanding of the preserve and the wildlife, plants, and water that make it unique. Their work not only answers important questions today but also provides data that will help Nahant Marsh guide conservation and management decisions for years to come. We're incredibly proud of what this year's interns accomplished and grateful for the time, effort, and curiosity they brought to their research.

Meet the Education Team

Hi, I'm Addie, I am the new Green Iowa AmeriCorps! I'm a recent graduate of Truman State University with a B.S. in Biology and a passion for all things environmental science. You may have seen me around this summer helping the education team with camps and other events as a seasonal naturalist.

Over the summer, I discovered how much I enjoy teaching, especially when I'm sharing my love of wildlife and the outdoors with others. Some of my favorite programs to lead are our reptile programs and Furs & Skulls! I'm excited to continue exploring this newfound passion as a member of the education team at Nahant and other sites through my term with Green Iowa AmeriCorps, starting in October.

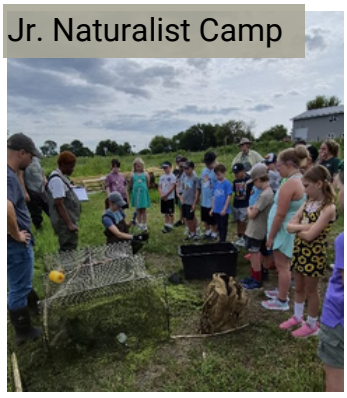
I can't wait to see what's in my future for natural resources and environmental education.



Children Exploring the Marsh

By Allison Nodurft, Naturalist

Jr. Naturalist Camp



Another summer camp season is in the books! We had an amazing summer of 15 different camps for ages Pre-K to 8th grade, totaling 262 campers. Highlights included turtle trapping, canoeing, fishing, crafts, cockroach races, insect catching, hikes and so much more. We also took field trips to West Lake Park, Wildcat Den State Park and Loud Thunder Forest Preserve. Our summer camps provide kids of all ages the opportunity to explore nature in a variety of ways.



Critter Camp

We had several amazing guests help us enhance our programming this summer as well. Dave Murcia from the Wapsi River Environmental Center brought live birds and taught about owls and other birds of prey. Anna Oldfield with U.S. Fish and Wildlife demonstrated bat mist netting (mist netting is a process used to safely catch bats for research) and talked about the species of bats found in Iowa and Illinois. Our very own Research Interns trapped and surveyed turtles, including some exciting snapping turtles, for our campers. Brit Gray helped our campers create cyanotype masterpieces to take home. Becky Nakashima Brooke guided us on an earth element and mindfulness hike. We cannot thank them enough for their contributions to our summer.



Nature Adventure Camp

Lastly, we would like to thank our amazing interns and summer members that helped make these camps special, Green Iowa Americorps members Anne Thomas and Sophia Slyter and Nahant summer interns Addie VandeWalle and Lucero Torres. A good time was had by all!

Fall Education Programs

Toddler Tales

Toddler Tales is a nature-inspired program designed especially for curious little learners! Each session combines engaging stories, hands-on activities, and simple nature adventures that help toddlers connect with the world around them. Perfect for toddlers ages 3 to 4, this program makes learning about nature fun, interactive, and memorable!

Children should be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. A take home snack will be available.

Homeschool

Our homeschool program gives students the opportunity to explore and learn about nature through seasonal activities, science, art and so much more! Perfect for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. *Upcoming topics include grasshoppers, leaves, and turkeys.*

Thanks to a wonderful and generous matching donation from Modern Woodmen Home Office Retirees, both Toddler Tales and Homeschool will be free to all families through May 2027.

Dragonfly or Damselfy?

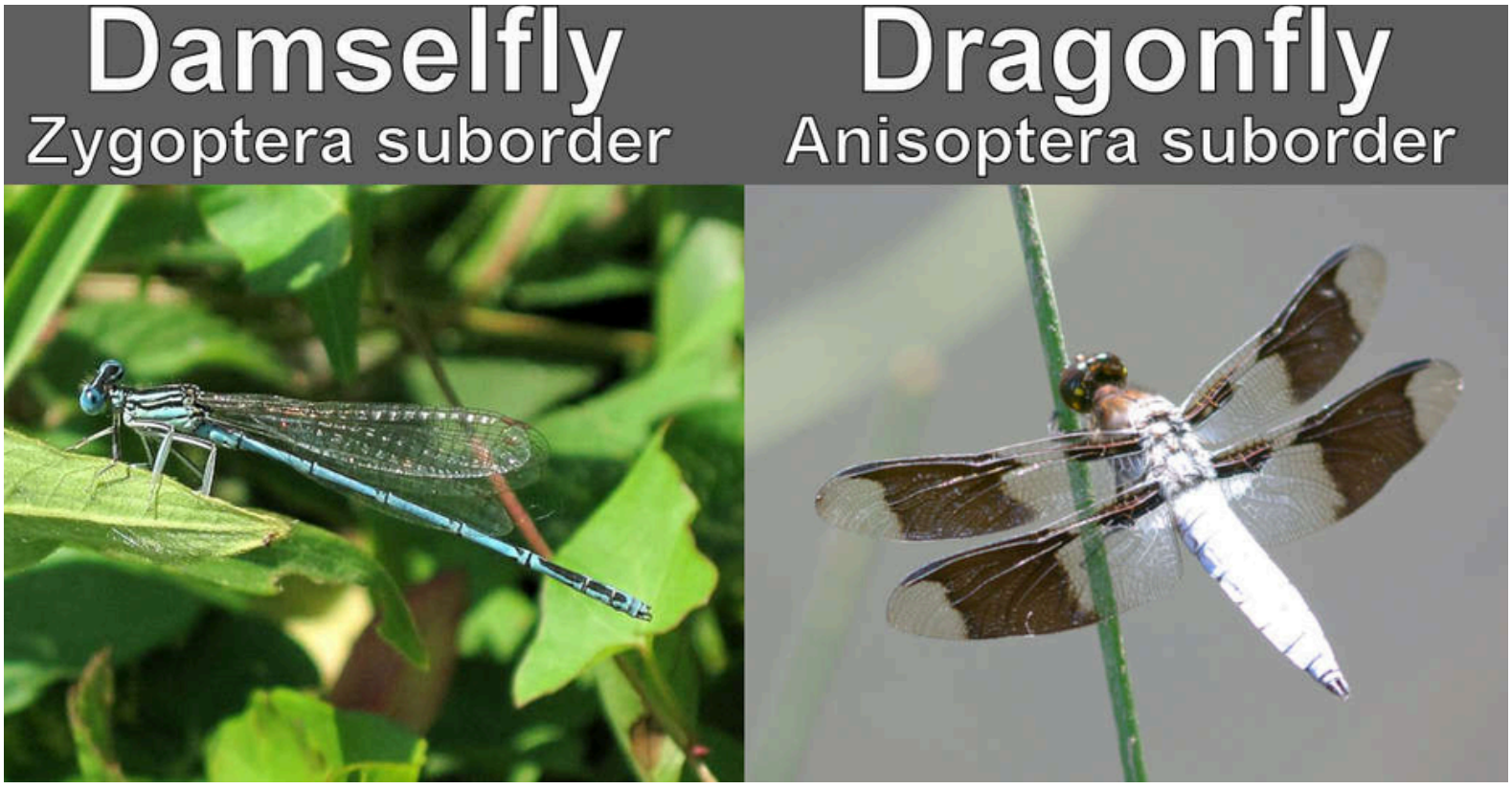
By Bri Opyd, Naturalist



On a warm day, you may spot a colorful insect zipping around a pond, stream, or backyard garden and you may find yourself wondering–is it a dragonfly or a damselfly? Both of these colorful insects belong to the insect order Odonata and are an important part of healthy aquatic ecosystems. They have four wings, large eyes, long bodies, and are excellent aerial hunters. Despite these similar traits, there are a few easy ways to tell them apart.

The biggest difference is how they hold their wings when resting. Dragonflies usually hold their wings straight out to the sides, while damselflies generally fold their wings together over their backs. Dragonflies also tend to have larger, sturdier bodies and are powerful fliers. They can zoom, hover, and change direction quickly while chasing mosquitoes, flies, and other small insects. In comparison, damselflies are usually smaller and more delicate-looking. Their flight is often less powerful, and they tend to stay closer to vegetation around the water. The eyes of these insects provide another useful clue. A dragonfly's large eyes are positioned close together and usually meet at the top of its head while a damselfly's eyes are more widely separated, leaving a noticeable space between them.

The next time you see one of these fascinating insects, take a closer look. If it has a large body and rests with its wings spread out, it's likely a dragonfly. If it has a thin, delicate body and it rests with its wings folded over its back, it's likely a damselfly.



Oneida Update

By Maddie Kull, Animal Care Technician

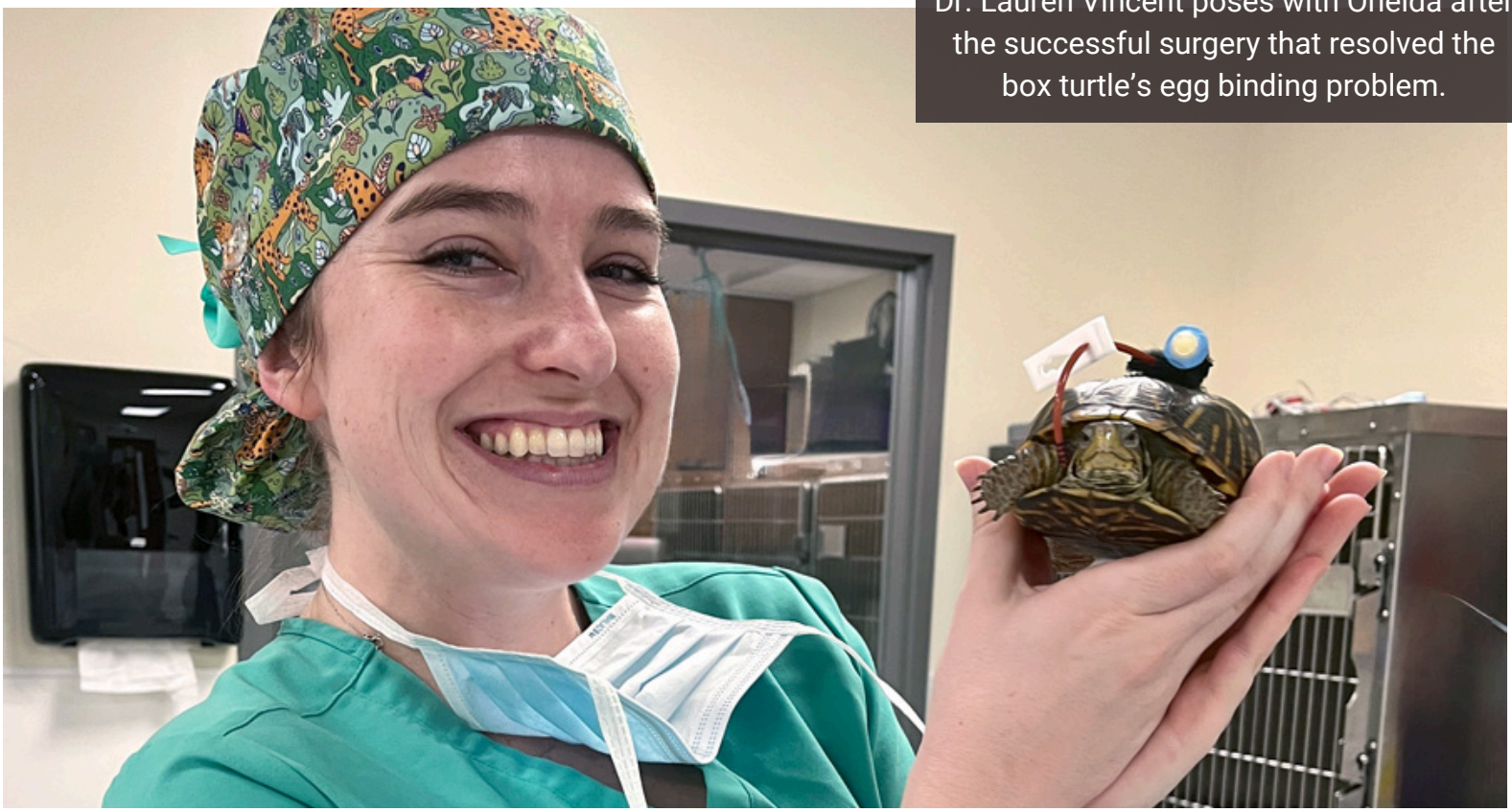


Oneida, Nahant's ornate box turtle, is doing fantastic seven months post life-saving surgery! All thanks to the generosity of our community and donors like you.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College of Veterinary Medicine shared a wonderful article with us specifically about Oneida's journey. It shares never before seen pictures plus details of Oneida's surgery from the Doctor's eyes (warning: one picture in the article may be considered graphic to some). The full article can be found by visiting the college's website at https://vetmed.illinois.edu/ and searching *The Case of the Egg Bound Box Turtle*.

Do you know what else makes Oneida's surgery so impactful? Not only did it provide her life-saving surgery, but it provided real career experience to the University's aspiring Veterinary students. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College of Veterinary Medicine article states, "Experiences like this provide critical clinical exposure and contribute to the development of highly skilled specialists."

We invite you to come visit Oneida during regular business hours on Tuesdays and Fridays.



Dr. Lauren Vincent poses with Oneida after the successful surgery that resolved the box turtle's egg binding problem.

Volunteering at the Marsh!

By Liv Humphrey, Volunteer Coordinator

Meet Nahant Marsh's New Volunteer Coordinator



Meet Allyson Smithson! Allyson has been at Nahant Marsh since April of 2026, serving as the Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Assistant. She earned her Bachelor's of Science in Forestry and Animal Ecology, focusing on restoration and wildlife biology, respectively, at Iowa State University.

In her free time, Allyson enjoys swimming laps, being outdoors, needlework, and spending time with her friends and family.

She looks forward to working with all of the wonderful Nahant volunteers!

Nahant's Fall Volunteer of the Quarter

This fall, we would like to highlight Liza Pearson! Liza has been a volunteer at Nahant for a few years, helping with cleanups, events, and assisting in outreach for Nahant. Her favorite activity is attending the Valentine's Day hike with her husband.



From the Nahant Marsh Team,

Thank you, Liza!

UPCOMING EVENTS

NAHANT MARSH
EDUCATION CENTER

BREAKFAST NATURE CLUB

BNC meets year round on the first Friday of the month. Enjoy a continental breakfast while listening to nature-themed presentations from 8:00-9:00 am.

**Breakfast Nature Club is proudly sponsored by the Quad-City Plus 60 Club for 2026. Their generous support makes this program free for participants.*

Upcoming: November 13, December 4

NATURE HIKE

Hikes are offered year round on the first Saturday of the month and give visitors an opportunity to learn more about the diverse flora and fauna of this unique natural area.

Upcoming: November 7, December 5

BIRD HIKE

Join us for a naturalist-led bird hike through Nahant Marsh! Loaner binoculars are available for participants. Please reserve your spot online; $5 Goodwill Donation is appreciated at checkout.

Upcoming: November 21

TODDLER TALES

Toddler Tales is a great way to introduce young children, ages 3-5 years old, to the wonders of the outdoors! Once per month on Wednesdays, Nahant Marsh educators will lead a nature-themed story, craft, and outdoor adventure.

**Toddler Tales is proudly sponsored by Modern Woodmen Home Office Retirees through May 2027. Their generous support makes this program free for participants.*

Upcoming: November 18, December 16

HOMESCHOOL

A monthly series of natural science classes designed to supplement at-home learning. They are designed for grades K-8th. This program is delivered in a flexible format that is specially designed for homeschool students, and aims to immerse children in the natural world.

**Homeschool is proudly sponsored by Modern Woodmen Home Office Retirees through May 2027. Their generous support makes this program free for participants.*

Upcoming: November 18, December 16

FIRST DAY HIKE

Join a Naturalist for an interpretive trail walk through the Marsh to get your year started off on the right foot!

Coffee and Hot Chocolate will be available in the Education Center afterwards to warm you up.

January 1 | 10:00AM—11:00AM

8TH ANNUAL OBERHOLTZER AWARDS

Recognizing past, present, and future Conservation Leaders in the Quad City Region.

Nahant Marsh's Oberholtzer Awards were started to recognize local people who have dedicated their lives (or will dedicate their lives) to protecting our natural world. Often times these people go unnoticed, or have been largely forgotten for their contributions. The awards are a way to recognize their hard work and leadership in conservation, to bring awareness to the causes they believe in, and to inspire others to take action.

This year's event takes place on March 6, 2027 from 9:00AM - 12:00PM at The Bend Event Center in East Moline, IL. A buffet style brunch (vegetarian options available) will be served accompanied by live music, followed by the awards ceremony, fund-a-cause, raffles, and a live auction.

SAVE THE DATE! Stay tuned to our email and social media for more details!

March 6 | 9:00AM—12:00PM

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR UPCOMING PROGRAMMING AND TO REGISTER FOR UPCOMING EVENTS, SCAN THIS CODE:

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Anderson Shaw Family
Angelica Jimenez
Ann Kerschieter
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Becky Buhman
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Jami & Marty Kistler in Memory of Mary Anne Johnson

Pamela Druger & Paul Lewellan in Honor of Becky & Michael Wiese

In Memory of Mike Stopulos:
Curtis Lundy
Mark & Rita Bawden
Frank & Ann McCarthy

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Peggy Barnard
Emily C. & Jeffrey D. Snyder
Robert F. Heimer & Victoria Quijas Navarro

Hector Lareau in honor of Dr. Julie Johnson & Kevin Deich

A Thank You to Our Donors!

Thank you to all of the donors who have filled out and returned the Nahant Marsh Legacy Circle survey! We are delighted to know your thoughts, feelings, and plans for the future.

Nahant Marsh is thrilled to share that because of these surveys, we now have ten donors who have made the commitment to include Nahant Marsh in their planned giving:

- Anonymous
- Britt Vickstrom
- Cal & Jill Werner
- Caroline Kimple
- Curtis Lundy
- Janelle Swanberg & Don Fish
- Julie Malake
- Ralph & Gail Heninger
- Robert Loch
- Tim Murphy

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to all of our donors for making planned gifts, considering planned gifts, and continuing to support Nahant Marsh now and into the future. The Marsh will surely live on for generations!

If you have any questions about including Nahant Marsh in your planned giving or have already done so, please contact Victoria Edwards, Director of Development, at 563-888-3167 or victoria@nahantmarsh.org

Granting Organizations

Arconic Foundation
Change Happens Foundation
Clean River Advisory Council
Day Foundation
Mark W. Schwiebert Fund
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Moline Kiwanis Foundation
Moline Regional Community Foundation
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Quad City Plus60 Club
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Rock Island Community Foundation
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SCRA
The Bechtel Trusts

Animal Adoptions

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Barbara Elmore
Robert Thompson & Judith Lee

Buddy | Painted Turtle
Cassie Druhl
Marlene Zarn
The Rakus & Wille Families

Captain | Blanding's Turtle
Cathy White
Mark & Lisa Cleve

Ecto | Tiger Salamander
Cathy White

Ethel | Red-eared Slider
Mark & Cindy Slater

Leopold | Northern Leopard Frog
Caroline Kimple

Micheline | Ornate Box Turtle
Schramm Family in Memory of
Shirley Horstmann

Oneida | Ornate Box Turtle
Caroline Kimple
Gregg Charvoz
Live Well Chiropractic
Rich Kerckhove
Tracey Kuehl & John Hintze

Pancake | Spiny Softshell Turtle
Jackie Jones
Kendall & Susan Schwartz Family
Patti Holmlund
Terry Collins
Tracey Kuehl & John Hintze

Pretzel | Corn Snake
Terry Collins
Thomas Thompson

Rizzo | Black Rat Snake
Cathy White

Rocky | Bullsnake
Dave & Laura Schmidt

Squirtle | Ornate Box Turtle
Rescued

Sunny | Fox Snake
Aryanne (Cha Cha) Encarnacion-Cox
Elysa & Caden Huynh-Smith

Want to adopt an animal ambassador?

Visit our website
https://www.nahantmarsh.org/adopt-an-animal
or contact Liz Schramm, Director of Operations at
elizabeth@nahantmarsh.org.

EDUCATION CENTER HOURS

Monday–Friday: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Saturday: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (April - October)
There is no fee to visit the Education Center, but donations are always appreciated.

PRESERVE HOURS

Open daily from sunrise to sunset.
If the main gate is locked, trails are accessible from the front parking lot.
Look for the opening in the fence near the kiosk.



GETTING TO NAHANT MARSH

Nahant Marsh
4220 Wapello Avenue
Davenport, IA 52802

From Davenport, Iowa—Take Highway 22 south (Rockingham Road), turning left on Wapello Avenue (the last turn before the I-280 overpass).

From Rock Island, Illinois—Take I-280 into Iowa to the Highway 22/Rockingham Road exit. Turn right onto Highway 22, and then right onto Wapello Avenue. Follow Wapello Avenue toward the river. Nahant Marsh will be on the left just before the railroad crossing.

NAHANT MARSH
EDUCATION CENTER