

Nahant News

Fall 2025

Vol. 18, Issue 4

Photo by C. Shirk



Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

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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).



Nahant Marsh: A Touch of History and Mystery

by Brian Ritter, *Executive Director*

As we enter the fall season, it's a good time to look back at not only the past year, but also the deep history of the area. Nahant Marsh, now known as a thriving nature preserve, has a past steeped in mystery, transformation, and forgotten communities.

The area has been intermittently inhabited for at least 10,000 years. Long before it became a place for birdwatchers, field trips, and family fun, the surrounding land was home to two small towns—Rockingham and Nahant. Rockingham was once a lively settlement, vying with Davenport for the honor of becoming the county seat. When Davenport won, Rockingham's prominence faded, and in time the town disappeared into history. Nahant, a later unincorporated town, thrived briefly as a rail stop, steamboat harbor, and industrial community, but it too dwindled away, leaving behind only traces of its existence.

With towns that vanished and a landscape that often floods, Nahant Marsh carries with it an aura of the forgotten. Locals have long whispered about strange lights, eerie sounds, and the unsettling sense that the land remembers its past inhabitants. In the dim autumn evenings, with the cattails rustling and mist rising from the wetlands, it's easy to imagine the ghostly echoes of Rockingham and Nahant still lingering here.

For October's Breakfast Nature Club, I will be talking about the spookier side of Nahant Marsh. From unexplained deaths and disappearances, to train robberies and elaborate hoaxes. And we'll celebrate the area's long history and mystery.

Today, Nahant Marsh is celebrated as a place of beauty, resilience, and restoration—but as the days grow shorter and the nights longer, its spooky side reminds us that the land holds more than just wildlife. It holds stories, too, and perhaps even a few secrets.



A Season of Color and Life at the Marsh

By Amy Loving, *Director of Education*

Fall is one of the best times to explore the marsh. Cooler temperatures and brilliant seasonal colors create the perfect conditions for a long, leisurely walk along the trails. Several points of interest make the journey even more rewarding—popular stops include the bird blind and the floating dock. Each spot has benches, inviting you to pause and soak in the vibrant landscape. Sit quietly long enough, and the marsh will reveal its abundance of life.



On a recent tour, I stopped with a group at the bird blind. From there, we watched dozens of turtles basking on the turtle docks, a muskrat using its paws to scoop duckweed into its mouth, and countless insects and birds on the wing. The scene was alive with energy—so much abundance, so much life.

Just a few days later, hundreds of dragonflies swarmed over the prairie. They darted back and forth in a dazzling display, so quick and agile that any attempt to catch them with a net would be futile. Instead, I stood in awe, watching their aerial acrobatics and wondering: Why are the dragonflies swarming? Are they gathering to ambush prey? Reacting to the heat?

The answer is migration. Monarch butterflies and birds aren't the only creatures that make seasonal journeys—dragonflies do too. Green Darners, one of our largest dragonfly species, swarm in late summer and early fall as they head south. These individuals hatched from eggs laid by the previous generation earlier in the summer. As aquatic nymphs (sometimes called naiads), they spent weeks devouring water insects before crawling up an emergent plant, shedding their skin one final time, and taking flight as adults.



This transformation leaves them briefly vulnerable to frogs and birds, but those that survive join the swarms headed south. Their offspring will return north in spring to repeat the cycle. Interestingly, not all Green Darners migrate—some remain in the nymph stage through the winter, emerging the following year.

As fall deepens and trees shift from green to shades of yellow, red, and brown, I encourage you to step outside, wander the trails, and revel in the season's beauty.

A Record Breaker: 10th Annual Monarch Release Party

By Victoria Edwards, *Director of Development*

On a gorgeous September Saturday, Nahant Marsh held its 10th Annual Monarch Release Party. The Quad Cities and surrounding area showed up in support of Nahant and all things pollinators! The tag and release tent, face painting, bake sale, kid's craft activities, community partner tables, and much more brought double the attendance from 2024's Monarch Release Party. New this year for the 10th Anniversary were six, free-to-enter raffle baskets, provided generously by a sponsorship from Bob & Kim Waterman. Congratulations, basket winners!

Check out the event numbers below!:



Youth: 308 (2024: 142—more than double!)



Adults: 494 (2024: 286)



Volunteers: 14



Vendors/Partner Organizations present: 7



Butterflies released: 103



Smiling faces: Unlimited!



Thank you, attendees and supporters, far and wide, for attending the event and continuing to advocate for the important work that we do here at Nahant. Until the next Monarch Release, enjoy these photos from the event, taken by longtime Nahant Volunteer Julie Malake!



Fall Natural Resources News

by Kinsey Nielsen, *Natural Resource Manager*

Summer flew by, and we were able to accomplish many projects despite the heat and storms. Countless hours were spent removing invasive species from our prairies including cottonwoods, willows, Queen Anne's Lace, Musk thistle, sweetclover, and many others. A variety of interns and volunteers assisted with these projects. We also checked on over 1,500 trees in our wetland mitigation banks, collected garbage along roadways, maintained trails, and planted additional species in our pollinator gardens. Our main projects this fall will consist of cottonwood removal from prairies, seed harvesting, and planting new trees to replace some that died from flooding.



- 1.** 6-26-25: Interns Sophia, Isaac, Oliver, and Julia clearing brush along trails.
- 2.** 7-02-25: Staff and interns sealing the deck.
- 3.** 8-14-25: Volunteers removing cottonwoods from a sand prairie.

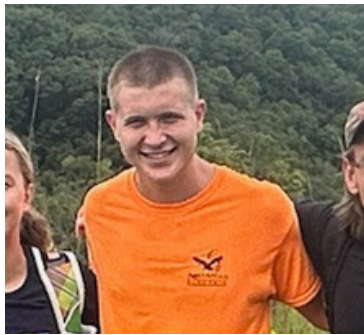
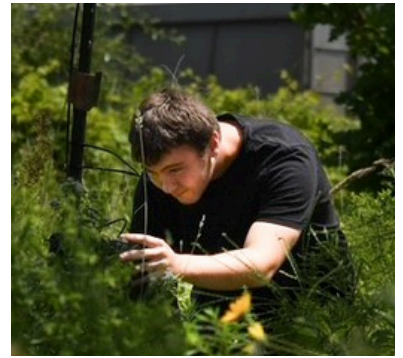
Summer Research Recap

by Jimmy Wiebler, *Naturalist & Research Coordinator*

Each summer, Nahant Marsh provides internship opportunities to students interested in education, research, and conservation. Our research internship program is funded by the National Science Foundation and offers an Undergraduate Research Experience, where students are immersed in ecology-based projects—from birds and bats to turtles and snakes—here at Nahant Marsh. The program is directed by Research Coordinator, Jimmy Wiebler, who mentored eight students this summer, guiding them through data collection and the communication of their findings at our annual Research Poster Open House.

Each student designed and presented a research poster that showcased their findings and the conclusions they drew from their data. **Here are some highlights:**

Cohen Callaway (recent graduate of North High School, dual-enrolled in Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) studied the influence of train noise on bat activity at Nahant Marsh. Using ultrasonic recorders, he looked for a relationship between bat activity and distance from train tracks or crossings, hypothesizing that bat activity would increase with distance from trains. Although no significant relationships were found, he noted that bat activity overall has declined at Nahant Marsh compared to previous years—a finding consistent with the global decline of bats in North America and one that warrants further investigation.



Isaac Wilhelm (Iowa State University) studied plant diversity in Nahant Marsh's restoration sites. Knowing that Nahant uses prescribed fire as a management tool, he compared species composition in burned and unburned areas and found that burned areas had fewer unwanted plant species—especially woody encroachment from eastern cottonwood trees. Overall, he found that Nahant's prairies are diverse and dominated by native vegetation—a confirmation that our management is working!

Sachi DeWinter (Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) studied Purple Martins—our largest swallow species and one that relies on humans to provide nesting cavities. She meticulously documented nesting productivity and found that this summer's colony produced more eggs, hatchlings, and fledglings than any previous year at Nahant Marsh. In total, 109 fledglings were successfully raised in the colony!



Celeste Johnson (Eastern Iowa Community Colleges) surveyed our local snake population by systematically placing cover boards around the preserve to attract snakes. Her cover board surveys uncovered an increase in the number of common garter snakes documented; however, plains garter snakes were not found this year—possibly due to an increase in flooding frequency at Nahant.

Summer Research Recap, Cont.



John Stofferahn (Augustana College) analyzed the presence, frequency, and activity of bird species at Nahant Marsh using monitors that recorded bird songs and calls at dawn and dusk throughout the spring and summer. He found that Warbling Vireos, Tree Swallows, Prothonotary Warblers, Indigo Buntings, and Red-winged Blackbirds were the top five vocal species detected at the marsh, with presence varying by location. Notably, he also detected some less common species, such as the Loggerhead Shrike.

Hanna Rusk (Augustana College) used radio telemetry to track the movement patterns of Blanding's turtles, a species of conservation concern across its range. While some turtles tended to stay in a single wetland, others traveled relatively long distances to various wetlands at Nahant—some going back and forth between wetlands for no apparent reason. Although no distinct movement patterns emerged, her data helps us better understand local population needs and informs management decisions for the preserve.



Tori Adamson (Western Illinois University) studied the population effects of a recent mass mortality event in which at least 453 dead painted turtles and red-eared sliders were found in late winter/early spring—possibly depredated by otters—at Carp Lake. She found a major shift in species composition post-event, with snapping turtles now making up a larger proportion of the population. It's now estimated that fewer than 100 painted turtles remain, and future trapping efforts will help reveal how the population rebounds.

Carson Ford (Iowa State University) studied the physical and chemical characteristics of the marsh to assess the water quality of our wetland ecosystems. He found some interesting patterns and confirmed with data that the marsh is helping to break down and remove local runoff contamination—a well-documented benefit of wetlands.



These students did a wonderful job this summer, and the data they collected is vital to continuing our mission to protect, enhance, and restore the marsh. We're so proud to have worked with these bright individuals and wish them the best this fall semester. We also want to thank the National Science Foundation for funding the student research internship program at Nahant Marsh.

Please visit our website at nahantmarsh.org to view past research projects and learn about upcoming internship opportunities.

Grant-Fueled and Muddy-Shoed: Jr. Naturalists Get Wild!

by Allison Nodurft, *Naturalist*

This summer's Junior Naturalist camp was awarded a grant from the Quad Cities Community Foundation - Mark W. Schwiebert Fund for Environmental Studies. This grant helped provide three days of activities and added naturalist gear to 29 aspiring Junior Naturalists. Each camper earned a Junior Naturalist patch and their own naturalist kit to continue exploring. We were also able to enhance our program for campers this year and the years to come; providing new insect nets and enclosures, equipment for pond study, owl pellets, water testing supplies, scat replicas, games, markers, crayons, and so much more! We would like to say thank you to Quad Cities Community Foundation - Mark W. Schwiebert Fund for Environmental Studies for helping us to provide this opportunity to young members of our community.



**Mark W. Schwiebert Fund for
Environmental Studies Grant**



Picturesque Pintails

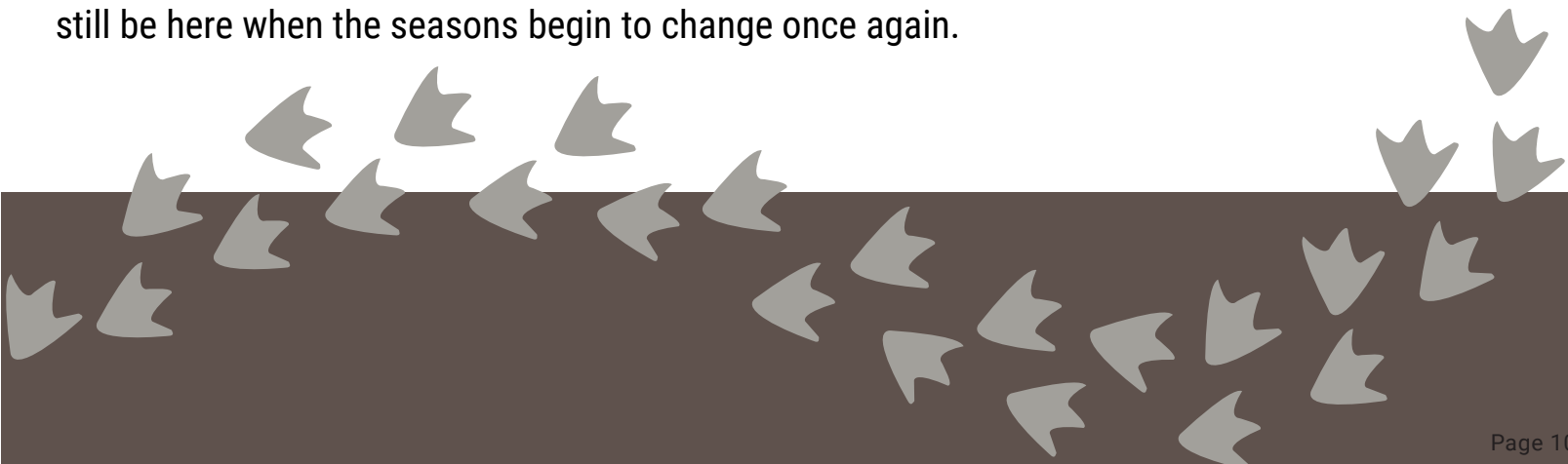
by Emily Schallert, *Naturalist*

If you look up “elegance” in the dictionary, you may very well find a photo of a Northern Pintail duck (*Anas acuta*) gliding through the still waters of Nahant Marsh. Named for the male duck’s long, pointed tail feathers, these striking birds are a staple in the diverse waves of migrating waterfowl that pass through the marsh every fall. Easily identified by their long, slender profiles and beautiful coloring; the females have a plain brown head and lace patterned body, while the males wear a chocolate brown mask with a stark white swoop along the neck.



While listed as a Least Concern species, they are not as common as they once were- the 2025 State of the Birds reports pintails as a “Yellow Alert Tipping Point Species.” This means that the population has declined by more than 50% over the course of 50 years, which is considered a slow, but concerning decline. The main cause is loss of habitat; wetlands across the country continue to disappear under human activity. Luckily for the ducks,

Nahant Marsh isn’t going anywhere, their favorite pitstop and the onlookers who love them will still be here when the seasons begin to change once again.



Fall Volunteering!

by Liv Humphrey, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Fall 2025 Volunteer Spotlight

This fall, we would like to highlight **Curtis Lundy!** Curtis has been part of Nahant Marsh since the beginning of time. He is currently a Friends of Nahant Marsh member and Nahant Marsh's Board Chair! When asked what is his favorite thing about the Marsh, he says, 'When I walk in Nahant's fields, forests, near the pond and am flooded with the realization this is all happening thanks to the effort of Nahant staff, the vision of Nahant leaders and partners and the resources of the community.'

From the Nahant Marsh Team,

Thank you, Curtis!



Looking for Fall Festival Volunteers!

Come Volunteer for the 3rd Annual Fall Festival

Volunteer roles we are in most need of:

- 12:00pm - 3:00pm - Event Help Setup - 3 People
- 1:30pm - 5:30pm - Parking Assistance - 3 People
- 2:00pm - 5:30pm - Bonfire Station Help - 1 Person
- 4:00pm - 6:00pm - Fundraising Booth Attendant - 1 Person

If you do sign up to volunteer, that does not exclude you from enjoying the event! We welcome all volunteers to come and explore before or after their volunteer shift time.

Volunteers will also get a Nahant swag bag.

Can't volunteer, but want to help? Donate baked goodies to our bake sale.

REGISTER TO VOLUNTEER HERE



UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

Upcoming: October 3, November 14, December 5

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: October 4, November 1, December 6

BIRD HIKE

Join us for a naturalist-led bird hike through Nahant Marsh! Over 200 species of birds are found at Nahant Marsh throughout the year, and participants can expect to see or hear a variety of them on these hikes, which are for everyone—from beginner to expert.

Loaner binoculars are available for participants.

Upcoming: September 27, October 11, November 22

HOMESCHOOL

A monthly series of natural science classes designed to supplement at-home learning.

The program activities are designed for grades K-8th. Classes meet once a month on Fridays from 2:30-4:00 pm.

Upcoming: October 17, November 21, December 19

YOGA AT THE MARSH

Come end your week with a Vinyasa flow here on the lawn at the Marsh. Our instructor, Liv Humphrey, will walk you through an hour of nature-based yoga with incorporations of mindfulness. Beginner level friendly!

Please bring your mat, water, and any modification props needed for your flow.

Upcoming: September 27

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

3RD ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL & 25TH BIRTHDAY BASH

Join us for a day of fall fun at Nahant Marsh's 3rd Annual Fall Festival Fundraiser—a family-friendly celebration to support environmental education and conservation in our community! This year is extra special, as this event will also serve as our 25th Birthday Party!

Festival Highlights Include:

- Petting Zoo
- Inflatable Obstacle Course
- Carnival Games
- Special Cupcake Birthday Celebration
- Live Music with Mo Carter
- Live Raptors with RARE
- Bent River Brewing Co. Beer Trailer
- Pie Auction
- Booze Pull
- The Full Nelson Food Truck
- Coffee & Crumb Coffee Truck
- ... and more surprises!

October 4 | 2:00PM–7:00PM

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





OCTOBER 4, 2025

2:00PM - 7:00PM

Nahant Marsh Education Center
4220 Wapello Ave, Davenport, IA



SCAN FOR MORE INFO

3rd ANNUAL
FALL
Festival

& 25TH BIRTHDAY BASH

- Inflatable Obstacle Course
- Petting Zoo
- Carnival Games
- Cupcake Birthday Celebration
- Live Music with Mo Carter
- Live Raptors with 
-  Beer Trailer
- The Full Nelson Food Truck
- Coffee & Crumb Coffee Truck
- Pie Auction
- Booze Pull
- **& MORE!**

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Education Wish List

Did you know the Nahant Marsh Education Team has an Amazon wish list? Help us spark curiosity, imagination and enhance our youth programs by purchasing items from Amazon. Our list includes books and supplies to help with field trips, outreach programs, summer camps, and all other programming! Orders can be shipped directly to us or dropped off in person.

Thank you for helping young minds grow and create a love for nature!

<https://a.co/8xck7KX>



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 Tony & Helen Schiltz
 Tori Adamson
 Total Detailing Auto Spa
 Townsquare Media
 Trish Fuess
 Victoria & Alex Edwards
 Visit QC
 Wallace's Garden Center
 Whitey's Ice Cream
 Wide River Winery
 Wild Birds Unlimited
 Wild Ones QC Chapter
 Will Moon
 William McFarlin
 Wynne & David Schafer
 Xenotronics Company
 Zachary Campbell
 Zoo Med Laboratories, Inc.

**Denotes deceased

Granting Organizations

American Water	Hubbell-Waterman	Quad Cities Community Foundation
Arconic Foundation	Foundation	QCCF Mark W. Schwiebert Fund for
CAT	IHMVCU	Environmental Studies
Charles Deere Wiman Trust	Lundahl Trust	Rauch Family Foundation
Doris and Victor Day	Mary Iva Gittens Knouse Trust	RDA
Foundation	Moline Regional Community	Sheila Murphy Foundation
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Foundation	SCRA
		The Bechtel Trusts

Animal Adoptions

Bob | Three-toed Box Turtle

Ambrose and Marlowe Kerr

Buddy | Painted Turtle

Cassie Druhl

Cathy White

The Rakus and Wille Families

Sadie Miller

Captain | Blanding's Turtle

Mark and Lisa Cleve

Ethel | Red-eared Slider

Cathy White

Mark and Cindy Slater

Leopold | Northern Leopard Frog

Caroline Kimple

Micheline | Ornate Box Turtle

Liz Schramm in Memory of Shirley

Horstmann

Oneida | Ornate Box Turtle

Caroline Kimple

Pancake | Spiny Softshell Turtle

Kendall & Susan Schwartz Family

Patti Holmlund

Terry Collins

Pretzel | Corn Snake

Terry Collins

Thomas Thompson

Rizzo | Black Rat Snake

Tom and Leo Rizzo

Rocky | Bullsnae

Squirtle | Ornate Box Turtle

Cathy White

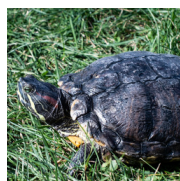
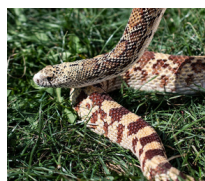
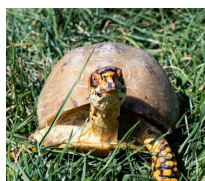
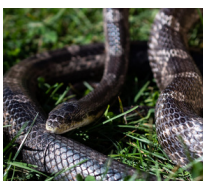
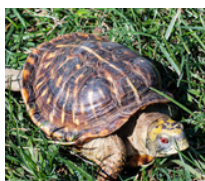
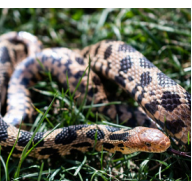
Rescued

Squirtle the Dog

Sunny | Fox Snake

Aryanne (Cha Cha) Encarnacion-Cox

Elysa and Caden Huynh-Smith



Staff

Executive Director

Brian Ritter

Director of Development

Victoria Edwards

Director of Education

Amy Loving

Natural Resource Manager

Kinsey Nielsen

Director of Operations

Elizabeth Schramm

Naturalist & Research Coordinator

Jimmy Wiebler

Natural Resource Crew

Zach Strong

Marketing & Events Coordinator

Colin Shirk

Naturalist

Allison Nodurft

Natural Resource Crew

Madeline Kull

Volunteer Coordinator

Liv Humphrey

Seasonal Naturalist

Emily Schallert

Board

Chris Barnard

Ellen Bluth

Denise Bulat

Nicole Cline

Brock Earnhardt

Josh Hoffman

Amy Kay

Curtis Lundy

Kathy Morris

Tim Murphy

Tobey Pribyl

Bryce Stalcup

Pete Stopulos

Janelle Swanberg

John Telleen

Cal Werner

Kathy Wine



EDUCATION CENTER HOURS

Monday–Friday: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Saturday: 9 am to 3 pm

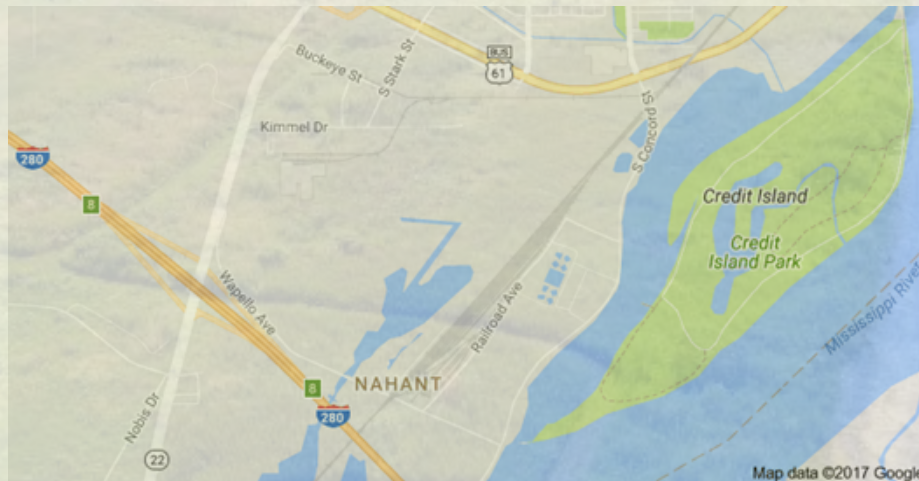
There is no fee to visit the Education Center, but donations are always appreciated.

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 Ave.
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.