

25 YEARS | MASTER CONSERVATIONISTS | NATURAL RESOURCE NEWS | BALD EAGLE NESTING

NAHANT NEWS

WINTER 2026

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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).



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A Toast to the Next 25 Years

By Brian Ritter, Executive Director

During the past year, we spent time celebrating our 25th year. As I reflect on the past 25 years, it is incredible to see the impact we have had, not only on the community, but also on the plants and animals that call this place home. In the early days of Nahant Marsh Education Center, a series of large floods, financial worries, and lack of staff created many hurdles and much uncertainty. But during the past decade, with support from the community, we managed to persevere.

January Prairie Burn



Nahant Marsh's Annual Oberholtzer Awards



Annual Spring Cleanup



B.A.R.K Ranger Program



Since the year 2000, Nahant educators have provided programming for almost 300,000 people. Incredibly, 110,000 of those participants have come in the last 5 years. And during the past 25 years we grew to over 380 acres of protected and restored land, acquiring over 120 acres in just the last 7 years, providing a home to over 1,100 documented species of plants and animals. Sandhill cranes, bobcats, river otters, nesting eagles, and dozens of other species, all absent 25 years ago, have returned to the Marsh.

Wilderness Camp Students Learning



Stream Restoration Project Progress



Annual Monarch Release Party



Annual Fall Festival and Nahant's Birthday Bash



Our work is far from done and many challenges still remain, but with the momentum we've built over the past decade, the future seems brighter than ever. During the next few months, the Nahant staff and board will begin strategic planning to help lay out our priorities for the next three years. This includes finishing plans to restore wetlands and prairie on an additional 60 acres, creating a trail loop, and creating new educational opportunities. Stay tuned and see what Nahant Marsh will become during the next 25 years.

Planting the Seeds of Conservation in Iowa

By Amy Loving, Director of Education

Are you passionate about Iowa's land, water, and wildlife—and interested in learning how to protect them for future generations? **Then, consider joining this year's Master Conservationist Program!** The program is an engaging educational experience for adults interested in learning more about Iowa's natural resources and how to protect them. Offered in partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, County Conservation Boards, and local conservation professionals, the program combines online learning with hands-on field experiences.



Mississippi Palisades
State Park Field Trip



Participants complete four self-paced online modules covering Iowa's conservation history, ecosystems, management practices, and the human side of conservation. Learning is reinforced through guided field trips led by experienced naturalists and local experts.

The Marsh has offered this program since 2012, with nearly 200 graduates. Field trips visit notable natural areas such as Mississippi Palisades State Park, Manikowski Prairie, Wildcat Den State Park, and other sites that showcase Iowa's diverse landscapes, including prairies, wetlands, forests, and unique geological features.

The program is open to anyone age 18 or older, regardless of state residency. Graduates receive a certificate and are encouraged to stay involved locally as conservation stewards and advocates.

To learn more or register, visit:
www.nahantmarsh.org/master-conservationist

Please help spread the word to anyone who may be interested in conservation and the outdoors!



Codfish Hollow Prairie
Field Trip

Natural Resources Updates

By Kinsey Nielsen, Natural Resource Manager

January is the season of planning, data entry, and reflecting on the progress from the past year. We had an incredibly busy and productive 2025 which included planting 237 trees/shrubs, removing unwanted trees from three acres of prairie, and countless trash cleanups resulting in 196 bags of garbage and 60 tires removed from the roadways around Nahant Marsh. We couldn't do all of this without the help from our amazing staff, interns, and volunteers!



10-10-25

SAU lacrosse team with the pile of cottonwoods they removed from a sand prairie.

We also used 107 species of prairie seed to enhance 12.5 acres of prairie, all of which were harvested by volunteers and processed with our hammermill. Despite our best efforts, there is still plenty of work to be done in 2026! Some of our most important projects include continuing to work on cottonwood removal in our sand prairie, replanting trees that died from past flood events, removing herbaceous invasives such as sweet clover, musk thistle, and Queen Anne's Lace, and hopefully conducting some prescribed burns if weather allows. We are looking forward to a great year ahead.



11-05-25

Green Iowa AmeriCorps members Anne and Clare replanting a tree that died from flooding.



12-09-25

Volunteers overseeding the oak savanna restoration area that was burned in September of 2025.



Winter Gulls and Migratory Wonders at Nahant Marsh

By Jimmy Wiebler, Naturalist

As of current, Nahant Marsh has documented an impressive 222 bird species, suggesting the importance of the preserve as an important stopover site for migrants, as well as prime breeding habitat for both wetland and upland birds.

Each season brings in various species. For example, we see an abundance of warblers and waterfowl in the spring and fall. Summer is rife with swallows and herons. And winter welcomes flocks of gulls.

Ring-billed Gulls are the most common and abundant of the gull species sighted at Nahant. Herring Gulls—a similar-looking but larger gull—are also common and abundant in the winter months. On occasion, we'll spot a Lesser Black-backed Gull or the rare Iceland Gull.

Just as gulls are not always found by the sea (there's no such thing as a "seagull"), Iceland Gulls are not actually Icelandic year-round. They mostly breed in Greenland, and they only occasionally winter in Iceland, sometimes migrating as far south as the northern U.S., Canada, and the British Isles.

These "ghostly white" gulls have light gray wings; adults sport yellow bills, while juveniles have entirely black bills. They take four years to reach full adult plumage,

displaying a different appearance each year. Identification is further complicated by the presence of two to three forms, depending on whether taxonomists choose to lump or split closely related groups. These forms differ in size, structure, and typical range, though considerable overlap exists.

Although Iceland Gulls are rare in Iowa, seeing them isn't unheard of given their propensity to wander from typical winter areas. However, these gulls can be indicators of a changing climate. It's possible that warmer winters and reduced sea ice up north can force them south because prey can become harder to catch. Gulls are also attracted to the area because of the nearby landfill, which provides an abundance of food for them.

To sharpen your gull identification skills, or to simply enjoy the sights, sounds, and behaviors of a diversity of birds—join Jimmy Wiebler, Nahant Marsh Naturalist and Research Coordinator, for a guided Bird Hike held one Saturday each month from February through November. These hikes are open to everyone, from beginners to experienced birders, and loaner binoculars are available. Dates and details can be found on our calendar at nahantmarsh.org.





Come Explore your Wild Woodworking Skills

By Allison Nodurft, Naturalist

Looking for a fun hands on group activity?

You can now schedule a Wild Woodworking workshop! Just pick a project and we will do all the cutting. All materials and tools will be provided.

How It Works:

This hands-on woodworking workshop offers a selection of build options, including Leopold benches, bird feeders, and similar projects. Workshops are scheduled for groups of 6 or more, and each participant will create and take home their own project.

Registrations cannot be combined or shared; two people may not register together to build a single project.

Sign up today! **Contact allison@nahantmarsh.org or 563-888-3171 for pricing and scheduling.**

Projects that can be scheduled:

- Bird House
- Winter Sleds
- Squirrel Picnic Table
- Leopold Bench
- Screech Owl/Kestrel
- Wood Duck Boxes/Pileated Woodpecker



Bald Eagle Nesting Activity and Productivity Near the Proposed Development Site in Milan Bottoms During the 2025 Breeding Season

By Kelly J. McKay, Guest Writer

During the spring and summer of 2025, I conducted opportunistic random area search surveys within Milan Bottoms near the proposed development site (truck stop, car wash, marijuana dispensary, etc.). The primary purpose of these surveys was to document the composition of the terrestrial vertebrate community (i.e., amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals), in order to oppose this planned development by demonstrating the biological richness of Milan Bottoms. This development will not only severely impact the wildlife inhabiting Milan Bottoms, but the activities associated with these businesses will specifically have potentially catastrophic impacts to the Bald Eagle winter night roost, which is immediately adjacent to this site. To put these impacts in perspective, this is the largest Bald Eagle night roost that has ever been documented in the lower 48 states! During the course of these surveys, I also conducted intensive searches for the state endangered Blanding's Turtle. These searches produced a total of four turtles! Additionally, I attempted to document the productivity from three of the six known active Bald Eagle nests located in the vicinity of the proposed development.

Periodically through the spring and summer months, I observed and determined the nesting activity and eventually the reproductive success from the three nest sites closest to the proposed development on the west side of Illinois Highway 92. The location and determined productivity from each of the six known nest sites is summarized in Table 1. Overall, all six nests were active in 2025 (i.e., adult pairs were observed incubating eggs and/or brooding young). These six nests produced a minimum of seven fledglings in 2025!

By comparison, the developers hired Terracon Consultants, Inc. to assess eagle usage of Milan Bottoms near the proposed development. Terracon was charged with investigating both nesting and night roosting activities here. It appears they conducted both the breeding and wintering assessments in a single day (6 May 2025)! According to their results, there are no active eagle nests in close proximity (660 feet) to the proposed development site. In fact, based on my field studies, all six known active nests occur within 1.0 mile of the site.

Furthermore, Terracon stated that the winter night roost has not been used by eagles during the last two winters. However, they fail to explain how they can possibly determine night roost usage over the last two winters based on a one-day visit in May - a time of year when eagles never utilize night roosts. That would be like me going to your home one day for over an entire year, when I know you are out of town, and proclaiming that because you are not there that day, you have abandoned your house! Not only that, but no supporting information was provided for that conclusion.



Celebrating and Welcoming at Nahant

By Liv Humphrey, Volunteer Coordinator

Welcome Nahant Marsh's Newest Naturalist



"I'm looking forward to meeting everyone involved in making the Marsh a great place to be."

Brianna Opyd, our new Naturalist as of January, is excited to be a part of the Nahant Marsh team.

She graduated from Augustana College with degrees in Teaching Biology and Middle Grades Education: Science. Prior to joining us, she taught at public schools in the state of Iowa for five years, covering a wide range of subjects. Her favorite subject to teach, however, was always environmental and conservation based, hoping to empower her students to take conservation action. In recent years, she has focused solely on conservation education at Niabi Zoo, and now, with us here at Nahant Marsh!

Nahant's Winter Volunteer of the Quarter

This Winter, we would like to highlight Janelle Swanberg! Janelle has recently become an integral part of Nahant Marsh. She is Nahant Marsh's newest Board Chair and a robust volunteer! When asked about her favorite activity at the Marsh, she said, 'activities that involve monitoring bird populations at the marsh.' As Janelle is one of our newest citizen science bird surveyors.

From the Nahant Marsh Team,

Thank you, Janelle!



Make Getting Involved at Nahant Marsh Part of Your 2026

Feed Your Curiosity: Breakfast Nature Club 2026

We hope you're hungry to learn something new, as we have a great lineup of presenters this year for Breakfast Nature Club, our popular monthly program that aims to provide nature-based education while fostering a community of conservation-minded folks.

Upcoming topics include butterflies and their host plants; Sauk and Meskwaki history in the present-day Quad Cities; the importance of beaver reintroductions in Scotland and their implications for Iowa; conservation with The Nature Conservancy; searching Sax-Zim Bog for Great Gray Owls and other birds of the boreal forest; and much more. Programs take place from 8:00-9:00 a.m. and typically occur on the first Friday of each month. A light continental breakfast is always provided. We hope that you can make it to one or all of our presentations, as each one promises to fill you with nature knowledge, as well as donuts and coffee.

This year, Breakfast Nature Club will be generously sponsored by the Quad City Plus 60 Club, allowing us to provide this program free of charge to all attendees. We thank them for their support!

Seating is limited and food is pre-ordered, so we recommend that attendees please register at least 48 hours before the program. Upcoming events are posted on our calendar at nahantmarsh.org.

Volunteer With Us

Volunteers are vital to the ecological integrity of Nahant Marsh, and help is always needed!

Below is our current volunteer position we offer.

- Animal Care Assistant
- Bird Survey Volunteer
- Docent
- Educational Program Assistant
- Natural Resource Volunteer
- Event Volunteer
- Snack Steward

Learn more about each role and to fill out a volunteer application at www.nahantmarsh.org/volunteer-opportunities or email Liv Humphrey, Volunteer Coordinator, at liv@nahantmarsh.org.

Natural Resource Volunteers Pulling Trees



How would you like to be remembered?

For a lasting legacy, include Nahant Marsh in your will or estate

How does this benefit my family?

Planned giving with Nahant Marsh is an impactful form of charitable giving that benefits you, your family, and the causes you care about. If the work of Nahant Marsh has been an important part of your life, we invite you to consider making a planned gift that will ensure we are able to protect, enhance, and restore the Marsh for future generations.

How can this be achieved?

There are several ways you can make a gift to Nahant and benefit from tax savings and income benefits while creating a lasting legacy.

Gift Type	Purpose	Benefits
Bequest	Make a gift to Nahant Marsh when you pass away.	Estate tax charitable deduction.
Gifts of Stocks and Bonds	Make a gift of your appreciated securities.	Avoid paying capital gains tax. Receive a charitable tax deduction.
Gifts of Retirement Assets	Make a gift of your retirement assets such as a gift from your IRA, 401k, 403b, pension, or other tax deferred plan.	Estate tax charitable deduction. Gifts made through your RMD to avoid income tax.
Gifts of Insurance	Make a gift of your life insurance policy.	Income or estate tax deduction.

Already have Nahant included in your planned giving? Please let us know. Have questions on how to make these gifts? **Contact Victoria Edwards, Director of Development at (563) 888-3167 or victoria@nahantmarsh.org**

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: February 6, March 6, April 3

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: February 7, April 4

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: February 20, March 20, April 17

LEOPOLD BENCH WORKSHOP

Celebrate the legacy of conservationist Aldo Leopold through a brief presentation, then build your own Leopold Bench—a design he used for observing wildlife and connecting with nature. All materials provided. Leave with a unique, functional bench inspired by Leopold's love for the outdoors.

January 28 | 10:00AM—11:00AM

VALENTINE'S DAY LANTERN HIKE

On this self-guided, lantern-lit walk, follow the lanterns along the trails and then warm up by the bonfire. Savory hors d'oeuvres, sweet treats and hot cocoa will be available in the education center. A headlamp or flashlight is recommended. Price is per couple. Registration closes on February 10th.

February 13 | 4:30pm—6:30pm

7TH 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 7, 2026 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.

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

March 7 | 9:00AM—12:00PM

DON'T FORGET

At the Education Center, our winter hours start on 11/1 and run through 3/31

WINTER HOURS:

Sun: CLOSED

Mon: 8:30AM—4:30PM

Tue: 8:30AM—4:30PM

Wed: 8:30AM—4:30PM

Thu: 8:30AM—4:30PM

Fri: 8:30AM—4:30PM

Sat: 9:00AM—12:00PM

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



3.7.2026 | 9AM - 12PM



7th Annual
**Oberholtzer
Awards**

The Bend Event Center | East Moline, IL
Brunch • Awards Ceremony • Live Auction • Raffles

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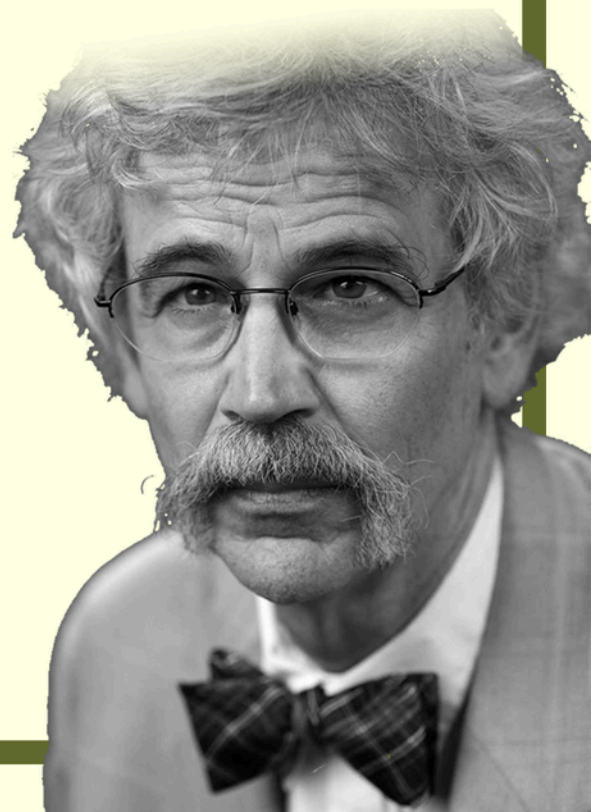
Corey Kendrick

Keynote Speaker

Art Cullen



To purchase tickets: scan
this code, email Colin at
colin@nahantmarsh.org
or visit nahantmarsh.org



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Granting Organizations

American Water	Lundahl Trust	QCCF: Nonprofit Capacity
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IHMVCU		Sheila Murphy Foundation
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Animal Adoptions

Bob | Three-toed Box Turtle

Ambrose and Marlowe Kerr
Robert Thompson & Judith Lee

Buddy | Painted Turtle

Cassie Druhl
Cathy White
The Rakus & Wille Families
Sadie Miller

Captain | Blanding's Turtle

Mark & Lisa Cleve

Ethel | Red-eared Slider

Cathy White
Mark & Cindy Slater
Kendall & Susan Schwartz Family

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

Rocky | Bullsnake

Dave and Laura Schmidt

Squirtle | Ornate Box Turtle

Cathy White
Rescued
Squirtle the Dog

Sunny | Fox Snake

Aryanne (Cha Cha) Encarnacion-Cox
Elysa & Caden Huynh-Smith

EDUCATION CENTER HOURS

Monday–Friday: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (November - March)

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.

