



The Jasper County Jewel

Jasper County Conservation Board Quarterly Newsletter Spring 2026

Naturalists Earn IAN-ICEC Environmental Education Awards

By Christopher Braunschweig
Newton News, April 7, 2026

Two Naturalists with Jasper County Conservation were recognized by statewide groups this past month for their continuous work in engaging kids with nature.

Katie Cantu earned the Bohumil Shimek Environmental Education Award for her outstanding efforts as an environmental educator; and Greg Oldsen earned the Chris Holt Youth Environmental Education Award for providing outstanding environmental education programming for youth.

Sponsored by the Iowa Association of Naturalists and Iowa Conservation Education Coalition, the IAN-ICEC Awards for Excellence in Environmental Education are a reflection of Cantu's and Oldsen's contributions to Jasper County youth and their dedication to advancing conservation in the state.

For almost 25 years Cantu has been focused on providing outdoor learning opportunities for Jasper County schools. When she started at Jasper County Conservation—which was right out of



Above: Greg Oldsen and Katie Cantu, Naturalists with Jasper County Conservation, earned IAN-ICEC Environmental Education Awards for their efforts educating youth about nature.

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Jacob Krumm: A Dedicated Conservationist

In 2026, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve. Jacob Krumm was a lifelong bachelor and was 78 years old when he passed away in September 1976. Jacob's father, Henry Krumm, was a German immigrant, his mother Katherina Mathes Krumm, was of Pella Dutch descendants. Jacob was the third born in a family of eleven sons and one daughter. Farming and land stewardship were very important to Jacob's family. They were farmers in Poweshiek, Jasper, Hardin, and Marion counties, and their farming experience spanned over a century.

Jacob worked as a hired hand and then purchased the farm, which is now Krumm Preserve, when he was 25 years old. He planted and harvested corn, oats, and hay every year and raised cows, hogs, and horses for farming. The original farm house and hog buildings were located at the east entrance of Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve.

"Uncle Jake" spoke frequently of the need for lands to be set aside, left to regenerate the native plants, grasses and wildlife that once existed in Iowa. A dedicated conservationist, Jacob Krumm's wish was that his 350-acre farm be gifted to the Jasper County Conservation Board "so that a wildlife preserve and park may be developed for the use and enjoyment of the people of the State of Iowa, and in particular the people of Jasper and Poweshiek Counties, Iowa." The area was to be administered by the Jasper County Conservation Board, and developed as a park, wildlife and nature preserve.

The Jasper County Conservation Board prepared a Master Development Plan for Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve. Improvements at that time included seeding of native prairie grasses and forbs, landscaping, pond and marsh construc-

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college—staff saw about 4,000 people a year. Now conservation sees more than 15,000-16,000 participants each year.

Oldsen received his award, in large part, due to his leading the Jasper County Youth Fishing Club for students in grades 3-12. The club launched in September 2024 with 40 kids signed up. Since then, the club has grown to nearly 80 kids this season. Oldsen says it seems like every month new kids want to join.

The club meets once a month and holds tournaments throughout the summer. Oldsen said what makes the club stand out is the camaraderie amongst its members; whether they are boy or girl or the youngest or oldest in the group, they are having fun and interacting with each other regularly.

To be recognized statewide for their efforts is a “huge honor,” Cantu said. The award reminds her of what conservation was like 25 years ago. There has been so much growth and so many changes, she said, and so many kids impacted by their work. A lot of her former students are now parents with kids of their own.

“The parents are coming out with their students on field trips and saying, ‘I remember doing this field trip with you when I was there!’ So its kind of hitting me how long its been.” Cantu said. “They have really fond memories of those experiences, and they’re happy their kids are on those field trips now.”

She said it feels good knowing that she and Oldsen are the ones people think of when they think of parks and wildlife in Jasper County.

Oldsen said, “It’s really awesome when you’re out in the community and kids will recognize you in the store—but to get recognized by other professionals in your field is a pretty cool thing. And being able to share the cool things that are going on in Jasper County is a neat thing, too.”

Keeping kids engaged with nature and conservation is important to Cantu and Oldsen. Cantu said it is more important now than ever that kids spend more time outdoors and experience nature. Catching critters out of the pond and hiking through a trail learning about their environment can have a lasting effect.

Cantu said, “Kids are learning about those things in the classroom, but we can take it one step further and really impress on them the importance and why we need to take care of our natural resources.”

Oldsen added, “It’s about instilling that appreci-

ation of our natural places and why its important to protect them. Obviously, we want to have areas like this for my kid and everybody’s else’s kids as they get older.”

Krumm Preserve, continued from page 1...

tion, picnic area construction, shelter house and latrine construction, wildlife habitat restoration, reforestation, environmental education activities, and extensive nature, hiking and skiing trails.

Additional property was later acquired to the west with the help of the Ahrens Foundation to bring the total acreage to 450 acres. With this additional land, it was possible to construct a 25-acre lake for fishing and canoeing at “Ahrens Access.” Fishing opened in this lake in the spring of 2000.

Over the past 50 years, many more improvements and events have occurred at the park. Current development include: a picnic shelter and modern restroom at Ahrens Access, the “Uncle Jake’s Sugar Shack” where maple syrup is made, new boat and fishing docks, a new shop building, the “Waldo Walker Bird Blind” and many restoration projects including oak savanna development, a new marsh area with a lookout tower, planting more forb diversity within the prairie, and a “bison bone dig” area that is used on school field trips.

The preserve is a natural laboratory for those studying the ecosystem. The rolling land shaped by glaciers thousands of years ago, the native hardwood timber, the native prairie and the restored prairie, ponds, wetlands, the lake, along with all the many species of wildlife that call this area home, Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve is and will remain one of our area’s great natural treasures.

You can visit the preserve by taking Exit 179 off I-80 and going east on the gravel road, Jacob Avenue. Help us celebrate this special area on Friday, July 10th by taking a naturalist-led prairie walk and/or paddling a kayak or paddleboard around the lake. More details are on page 5.



Pictured above: Jacob Krumm

Summer Camps: The Wild is Waiting! 3

Summer Camp Registration

JCCB is offering programs for kids of all ages this summer! Registration begins on **Wednesday, April 15 at 12:00pm** through www.mycountyparks.com. Each child is initially limited to **2 camps only** until after April 22, when any remaining spots can be filled.

Payment for each camp is required online at registration. If a child fails to attend the camp they signed up for, their registration fee will be considered a donation to Jasper County Conservation.

A big thank you to our summer camp sponsor, Newton Noon Kiwanis!



Astronomy Night

for kids ages 10-14 years old

Friday, June 5, 8:00pm

Ashton Observatory at Ashton Wildwood Park
Fee: \$10.00/camper; limit 15 campers and their families

Enjoy an informative astronomy presentation by the Des Moines Astronomical Society, followed by stargazing and blacklight animal tracking. Campers are required to have at least one adult with them for this program and participants may stay as late for stargazing as they wish!

All About Bugs Camp

for kids ages 8-12 years old

Tuesday, June 16, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Wednesday, June 17, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Fee: \$40.00; limit 10 kids, must attend both days

Explore all things bugs for this 2-day camp! Campers will learn about different groups of insects, ways to search for and collect them, and build their own insect collection box. We will use our new microscopes at the Environmental Education Center to take a closer look at the critters. Kids can expect to get muddy at this camp, so please wear clothing you don't mind getting dirty. Please also bring a sack lunch, water, and sunscreen each day.

Junior Naturalists

for kids ages 8-12 years old

Group 1: Thurs., June 18, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM

Group 2: Fri., June 19, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM

Ashton Wildwood Park

Fee: \$30.00; limit 12 kids per camp

Campers will explore the woods with a focus on outdoor survival skills, wildlife, and nature discovery. We will go on a creek hike and learn various outdoor skills such as fire and shelter building. *Special note: the creek hike is very steep and challenging—this is only for kids who are good hikers and don't mind getting muddy!* Please bring a sack lunch to camp.



Nature Quest

for kids ages 5-7 years old

Tuesday, June 23, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton

Fee: \$15.00; limit 10 kids per camp

After meeting at the Environmental Education Center, our quest will be to have fun and explore the outdoors with activities including hiking, pond netting and fishing. Equipment and a snack will be provided.

Wildlife Explorers

for kids ages 8-12 years old

Tuesday, June 23, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM

Wednesday, June 24, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM

Thursday, June 25, 7:00 AM-11:00 AM

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

Fee: \$50.00; limit 12 kids, must attend all 3 days

Our group will explore the things that fly, swim, trot and slither in Iowa's great outdoors. On Thursday, we will join licensed bird bander Bob Van Ervelde to net local bird species. Transportation will be provided from Krumm Preserve to the bird netting location. Please bring sack lunches.

4 Summer Camps: The Wild is Waiting!

Little House on the Prairie Camp

for kids ages 8-12 years old
Monday, June 29, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM
Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve
Fee: \$20.00; limit 12 kids

Spend a day like Laura, Mary, Carrie, Ma, and Pa! Kids will dress up in aprons, bonnets, vests, and hats (provided), build a log cabin, hike through the prairie, study wildlife on the prairie, and learn about the Osage Nation (the Native Americans that lived where Laura's family settled). Please bring a sack lunch.

Youth Photography Camp

for kids ages 8-12 years old
Group 1: Tues., July 7, 9:00 AM-12:30 PM
Group 2: Wed., July 8, 9:00 AM-12:30 PM
Mariposa Park
Fee: \$30.00; limit 12 kids per camp

Outdoor photography is a great way to enjoy our parks all year long. Summer offers a wonderful variety of wildflowers, birds, and scenic views that can be captured by young photographers. Campers will learn how to compose landscape and macro photos focusing on elements such as lighting, contrast, and leading lines. Each participant will receive a custom print with a photo captured during camp. Please bring a sack lunch.

Botany & Art Camp

for kids ages 10-14 years old
Thursday, July 9, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM
Friday, July 10, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM
Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton
Fee: \$50.00; must attend both days, limit 10 kids

Take a closer look at what makes plants unique, using art, science experiments, and outdoor exploration. Participants will hike, paint water color botanical art, write in journals, and make various natural art projects. Please bring a sack lunch both days.

Weather Camp

for kids ages 7-10 years old
Tuesday, July 14, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM
Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton
Fee: \$20.00; limit 12 kids

Learn more about meteorology in this weather camp! We will look at different weather patterns, have hands-on science experiments and create storm shelters. Please bring a sack lunch.

Princess Adventures

for girls ages 6-8 years old
Friday, July 16, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM
Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton
Fee: \$20.00; limit 10 girls

Do you know a little girl who loves princesses? Want to encourage her to dress up AND have fun exploring the outdoors at the same time? Girls ages 6-8 are invited to come in "princess attire" (whatever that means to them). We will learn about a courageous conservation woman from the past, participate in a nature activity, followed by a tea party with a snack.



Watersports Camp

for kids ages 8-16 years old
Group 1: Tues., July 21, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM
Group 2: Wed., July 22, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM
Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve
Fee: \$30.00; limit 15 kids per camp

Spend a day on the water kayaking and paddle boarding. Slide down the giant slip and slide and take part in a fun relay. Equipment will be provided, including life vests. Bring a water bottle, sack lunch and sunscreen. Campers may only participate in one watersports day!

Kids Pond Science Camp

for kids ages 6-9 years old
Thursday, July 30, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
Friday, July 31, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton
Fee: \$40.00; limit 10 kids, must attend both days

Explore all things pond science from aquatic insects to reptiles, amphibians, and water quality! Campers will enjoy two-days as a true pond scientist using microscopes, pond netting techniques, and real water quality test measures at our two ponds located at Kramer Park. Kids can expect to get muddy at this camp, so please wear clothing you don't mind getting dirty. Please also bring a sack lunch and sunscreen each day.

Programs at Ashton Observatory

The Ashton Observatory telescopes at Ashton Wildwood Park will be open for public programs at 8:00 PM Saturday evenings, April-October. There will be talks given in the observatory, followed by observing through the telescopes. For more detailed information, go to the Des Moines Astronomical Society's (DMAS) website at www.dmastronomy.com.

Youth Fishing Club

Monday, May 11, 5:30 PM

Monday, June 15, 5:30 PM

Newton Izaak Walton League

889 Hwy. F-36 W, Newton

This group is for Jasper County youth in grades 3-12. Please contact Greg Oldsen for more information at goldsen@jasperia.org. You can also follow the group's Facebook page: @JasperCountyYouthFishingClub.

Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors (OWLS)

10:00–11:00 AM

Jasper County Armory/Annex Building

1030 W. 2nd St. S., Newton

Come for coffee and a short presentation.

May 13—Movie Feature: “The Extraordinary Caterpillar”

Peek into the world of nature's tiniest superheroes. We're hosting a special screening of *The Extraordinary Caterpillar*, a beautifully shot 60-minute documentary that reveals the vital—and often overlooked—role caterpillars play in our ecosystems. From blooming meadows to city parks and backyard gardens, this inspiring film celebrates the magic of nature while showing families practical ways to make a difference. Along the way, you'll see the groundbreaking work of The Caterpillar Lab, entomologist David Wagner, and Doug Tallamy, co-founder of Homegrown National Park.

June 10—Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt

Cassie Cook, Conservation Ecologist with Polk County Conservation, will share the history of the Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt and talk about current management practices. This magnificent wildlife area sustains over 8,388+ acres of wetlands, prairies, woodlands, and old Skunk River oxbows, and extends into Jasper County. Learn about wildlife ranging from eastern box turtles to sandhill cranes in this informative presentation!

Rendezvous with the Chichaqua

Free Skinners

Saturday, May 9, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM

Sunday, May 10, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM

Ashton Wildwood Park

See early 1800's lifestyles of mountain men on the frontier at this free public event. Catch craftsmen and artists at work demonstrating skills from the 18th and 19th centuries, including blacksmithing, basket weaving, scrimshaw, leather working, and more. Many craftsmen offer their handmade items for sale or trade.

Also witness mountain men contests using primitive skills: bow shoots, tomahawk and knife throws, cooking contests and a cannon ball toss. Don't miss the Candy Man with his Candy Cannon, several times each day!



50th Anniversary of Jacob Krumm

Nature Preserve Hike and Paddle

Friday, July 10, 6:30-8:30pm

Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve

15148 Jacob Ave., Grinnell

Help celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Krumm Preserve by enjoying the park with some naturalist-led activities. Participants can paddle kayaks or paddleboards around the lake, go on a naturalist-led prairie walk, and hike the trails on your own while looking for items on a scavenger hunt.

Uncle Jake's Syrup for Sale

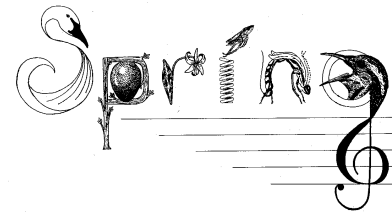
Uncle Jake's Sugar Shack at Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve had an early and short season. About 500 gallons of sap boiled down to 11 gallons of finished product.

Jars of our pure maple syrup are available for \$12/12 oz jar. We are limiting syrup purchases to two bottles per household. They will sell out fast, so don't delay getting yours! We are also selling heather-green Uncle Jake's Sugar Shack t-shirts that have the syrup logo on the front. They are \$15/shirt.

Money from the sales goes directly back into the Sugar Shack operation. These items are available for purchase by setting up a pickup time at the Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, 5284 Liberty Ave. in Newton. Please call the office ahead of time at (641)792-9780. Thanks for supporting conservation!

Jasper County Conservation Board
5284 Liberty Ave.
Newton, IA 50208

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Jasper County Conservation Board

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email: conservation@jasperia.org
website: www.jaspercountyconservation.com

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A Big Thank You To...

Our 2026 Youth Fishing Club sponsors: Newton Izaak Walton League, Magnum Automotive, Pheasants Forever, Otto Law Office, Brooker Plumbing and Heating, Sign Pro, Spire Property Management, Megan Meyer Iowa Realty, Ferguson, City Supply Corp, Johnson Family Farms, 1802 Farm Stand, Goldsberry Farms, Bespoke Builders, Runner Seed, Fly Fish Iowa, and River Certified. Thank you!

We've Moved!

Jasper County Conservation offices have been moved to the Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center, located in Kramer Park, 5284 Liberty Ave., Newton. A grand opening for the center is being planned for later in 2026. Construction of Phase 2 is in progress, so please call us first at (641) 792-9780 during this time.

Jasper County Conservation Board's programs are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, age and handicap. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination, they may file a complaint with the Jasper County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, Washington, D.C. 29240