



Tama County Conservation Educational Programming Guide

Tama County, IA | Updated June 2023 | rgenaw@tamacounty.org | 641-484-2231

Table of Contents

General programming information.....	2
Scheduling.....	2
Programming sites.....	2
Additional program offerings	3
Contact.....	3
Outdoor activities-all ages.....	4
Pre-K Programming.....	5
Early Elementary Programming (K-2nd).....	7
Elementary Programming (3rd-5th)	9
Middle School Programming (6th-8th).....	13
High School Programming (9th-12th).....	17
Adult Programming (Ages 16+).....	20

General programming information

There is NO FEE for our programming! Naturalists are available to come program at your site (a school, community center, business, etc.) or provide on-site programming at Tama County parks. Any group in Tama County is eligible for free programming!

Scheduling

Program availability depends on staff availability. Programs are generally scheduled at least a month in advance, though this is not a requirement.

When scheduling a program, please let us know:

- Preferred date(s) and time(s)
- Preferred location
- Name or description of programs you are interested in
- Number of people in group
- Number of groups (example: classes, teams, clubs, etc.)
- Arrival and departure
- Any other information on scheduling (example: lunch times, transition times, tentative schedule if available)
- Primary contact's name and contact information

To schedule a program, please call 641-484-2231 or email rgenaw@tamacounty.org.

Programming sites

Primary programming sites include Otter Creek Lake and Park (including nature center), TF Clark Park, Ike's Range, and Wolf Creek Trail. All Tama County parks may be used for programming purposes. For more information on sites and facilities, please go to <https://www.mycountyparks.com/county/Tama.aspx>.

Additional programming sites include schools, libraries, community centers, senior centers, festivals, and more.

Additional program offerings

Below is a non-comprehensive list of program offerings. Feel free to choose your own adventure! If you have an idea for a program that is not included on this list, please reach out. We will tailor our programming to meet your needs!

Programs are most commonly offered for summer camps and school groups, but any group can request a program!

Contact

For all programming inquiries, please email rgenaw@tamacounty.org or call 641-484-2231.

For information on public programming, please see the Tama County Conservation Facebook page for schedules & updates.

Outdoor activities-*all ages*

Build your outdoor skills with these activities.

<i>Nature exploration hike</i>	Go on a hike to observe nature. Pick the naturalist's brain with questions about what you see. This program is a self-guided learning experience and will vary depending on the group's interests.
<i>Birding</i>	Learn to use binoculars and observe birds in their natural habitat. May include ID guides and bird calls upon request.
<i>Canoeing</i>	Life jackets, paddles, and canoes provided.
<i>Fishing</i>	All supplies provided.
<i>Pond exploration</i>	Use dip nets and jars to explore pond life. Learn about macroinvertebrates and how we can use them to determine water health.
<i>GPS and Geocaching</i>	Explore geocaching, an outdoor game of hide-and-seek. Can include an outdoor puzzle race or searching for geocaches in the park.
<i>Wilderness first aid</i>	Learn basic first aid and wilderness safety
<i>Foraging</i>	Learn how to get food and medicine straight from the forest

Pre-K Programming

Pre-K programming focuses on developing interest and curiosity for the natural world. While fun facts will be included in programming, the main purpose of each experience is to build curiosity and confidence in nature exploration.

*Pre-K** ***Programs can include reading a story book and/or craft on request!**

<i>Pet-a-Pelt</i>	Learn about Iowa's animals through touching their skins. Includes a short talk about some of Iowa's animals.	
<i>Cool Cockroaches</i>	Learn about bugs with some live cockroaches! Participants will get to touch and hold cockroaches, as well as learn some fun facts about them.	Animal encounter
<i>Funky Frogs</i>	Learn about frogs with a live bullfrog.	Animal encounter
<i>Fun Fish</i>	Learn about what fish eat and where they live with a live fish.	Animal encounter
<i>Winter animals</i>	Learn about how animals stay warm & hidden in winter. Includes use of pelts for demonstration purposes.	
<i>Bird Buffet</i>	Learn about birds and what they eat. Make a simple pinecone birdfeeder. (Note: inform naturalist of any nut allergies so that safe materials can be used for the feeders!)	
<i>Wild about Worms</i>	Learn about worms and why they're important! Feel some live worms and observe them together.	Animal encounter
<i>Turtle Time</i>	Meet some of our live turtles. Learn about what they eat and how we can help them thrive in nature.	Animal encounter

<i>Slithering Snakes</i>	Meet a live snake and learn about why snakes in Iowa are (mostly) not dangerous.	Animal encounter
<i>Mud painting</i>	Paint with mud and learn why mud is important for plant life	
<i>Rainbow hike</i>	Go on an observational hike to look for something in every color of the rainbow!	Outdoor skills
<i>5 Senses of Nature</i>	Use all 5 senses to observe nature together.	Outdoor skills
<i>Talk Turkey</i>	Learn about turkeys through turkey calls, feathers, feet, and more. Great for fall.	

Early Elementary Programming (K-2nd)

*Early Elementary: K-2** ***Programs can include reading a story book and/or craft on request!**

<i>Bug Bonanza</i>	How many bugs can we catch? Grab some nets & jars and explore Iowa's vast array of insects.	Outdoor skills
<i>Winter animals</i>	Learn about how animals stay warm & hidden in winter. Includes use of pelts for demonstration purposes.	
<i>Animal Tracks</i>	Learn about different animal signs like tracks and scat. Take a hike or walk to search for animal signs.	Outdoor skills
<i>Sounds of Nature</i>		
<i>Wild about Worms</i>	Learn about worms and why they're important! Feel some live worms and observe them together.	Animal encounter
<i>Slithering Snakes</i>	Meet a live snake and learn about why snakes in Iowa are (mostly) not dangerous.	Animal encounter
<i>Fun Fish</i>	Learn about what fish eat and where they live with a live fish.	Animal encounter
<i>Cool Cockroaches</i>	Learn about bugs with some live cockroaches! Participants will get to touch and hold cockroaches, as well as learn some fun facts about them.	Animal encounter
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<i>Mud painting</i>	Paint with mud and learn why mud is important for plant life	

<i>Rainbow hike</i>	Go on an observational hike to look for something in every color of the rainbow!	Outdoor skills
<i>Bird Buffet</i>	Learn about birds and what they eat. Make a simple pinecone birdfeeder. (Note: inform naturalist of any nut allergies so that safe materials can be used for the feeders!)	
<i>Pet-a-Pelt</i>	Learn about Iowa's animals through touching their skins. Includes a short talk about some of Iowa's animals.	
<i>Batty for bats</i>	Learn about bats and why they're important. Play an echolocation game.	
<i>Build a Bird's Nest</i>	Learn about how birds make their nests and the materials they use. Build your own nest using materials in nature.	
<i>5 Senses of Nature</i>	Use all 5 senses to observe nature together.	Outdoor skills
<i>Artist-Tree</i>	Make art through bark rubbings and leaf rubbings while learning to identify common Iowa trees.	
<i>Talk Turkey</i>	Learn about turkeys through turkey calls, feathers, feet, and more. Great for fall.	

Elementary Programming (3rd-5th)

Elementary: 3rd-5th Grade ** **Programs can include a craft or art activity on request!**

<i>Decomposers</i>	Learn about how nature “recycles” everything from dead leaves to bones. May include an observational hike and animal encounter with hissing cockroaches.	Animal encounter
<i>Food chains (AKA Riparian ecosystems)</i>	Who eats who? Learn about predator-prey relationships with a fun game! If at Tama County Nature Center, tour our exhibit on Riparian ecosystems.	
<i>Junior Paleontologists</i>	Learn about and touch some real-life fossils including a woolly mammoth vertebra, megalodon teeth, a dinosaur bone, and more! Practice your paleontology skills by extracting a “fossil” (dinosaur figure) from a “rock” (hardened clay).	Outdoor skills
<i>Bug Bonanza</i>	How many bugs can we catch? Grab some nets & jars and explore Iowa’s vast array of insects.	Outdoor skills
<i>Orienteering</i>	Learn about map reading and how to use a compass.	Outdoor skills
<i>Wild about Worms</i>	Learn about worms and composting! Feel some live worms and observe them together.	Animal encounter
<i>Campfire cooking</i>	Make a meal together at a campfire. May include bread on a stick, smores, pasta dishes, soups, stews, and more. All main dish recipes are requested to be vegetarian. Pairs well with survival skills & fire starting.	Outdoor skills

<i>Pollination exploration</i>	Learn what a pollinator is and why they're important. Includes a demonstrative pollinator game. Pairs well with Bug Bonanza.	
<i>Owl Prowl</i>	Learn the sounds and signs of owls. Go on a night hike to test your observation skills and search for owls.	Outdoor skills
<i>Aquaponics</i>	Learn about our aquaponics system and how it works.	
<i>Survival skills & fire starting</i>	Learn some basic survival skills and how to make a fire. Pairs well with shelter building and campfire cooking.	Outdoor skills
<i>Slithering Snakes</i>	Meet a live snake and learn about why snakes in Iowa are (mostly) not dangerous.	Animal encounter
<i>Fun Fish</i>	Learn about what fish eat and where they live with a live fish.	Animal encounter
<i>Cool Cockroaches</i>	Learn about bugs with some live cockroaches! Participants will get to touch and hold cockroaches, as well as learn some fun facts about them.	Animal encounter
<i>Turtle Time</i>	Meet some of our live turtles. Learn about what they eat and how we can help them thrive in nature.	Animal encounter
<i>Funky Frogs</i>	Learn about frogs with a live bullfrog.	Animal encounter
<i>Skulls & bones</i>	Check out the bones of Iowa animals. Compare differences and similarities between skulls and learn about some adaptations.	
<i>Camouflage</i>	Discuss how animals hide and their adaptations for camouflage. Play a camouflage game (like hide and seek).	

<i>Bird Beaks</i>	Learn about different bird beak adaptations and specializations. Play a bird beak game using differently shaped utensils to scoop up “food” items. Discuss which shapes were better for different food types and how that relates to birds.	
<i>Batty for bats</i>	Learn about bats and why they’re important. Play an echolocation game.	
<i>Build a Birdhouse</i>	Build birdhouses and learn about some common Iowa birds. Pairs well with birding.	
<i>Build a Bat House</i>	Learn about bats & why we need them. Make a bat house.	
<i>Tree-ific Trees</i>	Learn about why trees are important through a tree scavenger hunt. Look for bird nests, acorns, galls, and more. Discuss why these things are important	
<i>Owl Pellets</i>	Learn about owls and dissect owl pellets	
<i>Build a Bird’s Nest</i>	Learn about how birds make their nests and the materials they use. Build your own nest using materials in nature.	
<i>Build a Beaver Dam</i>	Be an engineer for a day! Make a beaver dam and see how well it can stand up to water.	
<i>Musical Trees</i>	Learn about how deforestation impacts animals by playing musical trees. Students will realize that when we remove trees due to logging, storm damage, illness, etc., animal homes are destroyed.	
<i>Weather Watching</i>	Learn about different types of clouds and how we can use them to predict weather	Outdoor skills
<i>Artist-Tree</i>	Make art through bark rubbings and leaf rubbings while learning to identify common Iowa trees.	

<i>Talk Turkey</i>	Learn about turkeys through turkey calls, feathers, feet, and more. Great for fall.	
<i>Enviroscape</i>	Learn about erosion and how human activities affect land, water, and natural resources using an Enviroscape model.	
<i>Flower dissection</i>	Learn basic flower anatomy and how plants reproduce. Would pair well with Pollination exploration.	
<i>Bee Hotels</i>	Make a hotel for bees and learn why bees are important.	
<i>Nature Poetry</i>	Explore poetry about nature and get inspired by the outdoors. Develop your writing skills and share your creations as a group.	
<i>Tree dating detectives</i>	How can we tell how old a tree is? Find out with a hands-on activity.	
<i>Tree ID hike</i>	Use a guide to identify different types of trees at Otter Creek Lake and Park.	

Middle School Programming (6th-8th)

Middle School: 6th-8th ****Programs can include a craft or art activity on
Grade** request!**

<i>Food chains (AKA Riparian ecosystems)</i>	Who eats who? Learn about predator-prey relationships with a fun game! If at Tama County Nature Center, tour our exhibit on Riparian ecosystems. Includes animal encounter with Madagascar hissing cockroaches on request.	Animal encounter
<i>Junior Paleontologists</i>	Learn about and touch some real-life fossils including a woolly mammoth vertebra, megalodon teeth, a dinosaur bone, and more! Practice your paleontology skills by extracting a “fossil” (dinosaur figure) from a “rock” (hardened clay).	Outdoor skills
<i>Paper making</i>	Learn about reusing and recycling materials and how this can be used in art. Make paper using recycled material. The paper must dry, so this will be a multi-day project.	Outdoor skills
<i>Animal adaptations</i>	Discuss animal adaptations and how they relate to their lifestyles. May be focused on birds, bats, mammals, humans, etc.	
<i>Archery</i>	Learn how to safely shoot a bow. All supplies provided.	Outdoor skills
<i>Campfire cooking</i>	Make a meal together at a campfire. May include bread on a stick, smores, pasta dishes, soups, stews, and more. All main dish recipes are requested to be vegetarian. Pairs well with survival skills & fire starting.	Outdoor skills

<i>Shelter building</i>	Learn how to build a shelter in the wilderness. Discuss animal shelters and how they keep animals safe.	Outdoor skills
<i>Orienteering</i>	Learn about map reading and how to use a compass.	Outdoor skills
<i>Wild about Worms</i>	Learn about worms and composting! Feel some live worms and observe them together.	Animal encounter
<i>Pollination exploration</i>	Learn what a pollinator is and why they're important. Includes a demonstrative pollinator game. Pairs well with Bug Bonanza.	
<i>Bug Bonanza</i>	How many bugs can we catch? Grab some nets & jars and explore Iowa's vast array of insects.	Outdoor skills
<i>Owl Prowl</i>	Learn the sounds and signs of owls. Go on a night hike to test your observation skills and search for owls.	Outdoor skills
<i>Survival skills & fire starting</i>	Learn some basic survival skills and how to make a fire. Pairs well with shelter building and campfire cooking.	Outdoor skills
<i>Wild about Worms</i>	Learn about worms and why they're important! Feel some live worms and observe them together.	Animal encounter
<i>Slithering Snakes</i>	Meet a live snake and learn about why snakes in Iowa are (mostly) not dangerous.	Animal encounter
<i>Fun Fish</i>	Learn about what fish eat and where they live with a live fish.	Animal encounter
<i>Cool Cockroaches</i>	Learn about bugs with some live cockroaches! Participants will get to touch and hold cockroaches, as well as learn some fun facts about them.	Animal encounter
<i>Turtle Time</i>	Meet some of our live turtles. Learn about what they eat and how we can help them thrive in nature.	Animal encounter

<i>Funky Frogs</i>	Learn about frogs with a live bullfrog.	Animal encounter
<i>Skulls & bones</i>	Check out the bones of Iowa animals. Compare differences and similarities between skulls and learn about some adaptations.	
<i>Camouflage</i>	Discuss how animals hide and their adaptations for camouflage. Play a camouflage game (like hide and seek).	
<i>Bird Beaks</i>	Learn about different bird beak adaptations and specializations. Play a bird beak game using differently shaped utensils to scoop up “food” items. Discuss which shapes were better for different food types and how that relates to birds.	
<i>Build a Birdhouse</i>	Build birdhouses and learn about some common Iowa birds. Pairs well with birding.	
<i>Build a Bat House</i>	Learn about bats & why we need them. Make a bat house.	
<i>Owl Pellets</i>	Learn about owls and dissect owl pellets	
<i>Aquaponics</i>	Learn about our aquaponics system and how it works.	
<i>Secrets of the Soil</i>	Learn about soil and why it’s important. Use a soil testing kit to analyze soil samples.	
<i>Build a Beaver Dam</i>	Be an engineer for a day! Make a beaver dam and see how well it can stand up to water.	
<i>Musical Trees</i>	Learn about how deforestation impacts animals by playing musical trees. Students will realize that when we remove trees due to logging, storm damage, illness, etc., animal homes are destroyed.	

<i>Gyotaku fish printing</i>	Make prints with a fish and discuss fish anatomy and shapes.	
<i>Bee Hotels</i>	Make a hotel for bees and learn why bees are important.	
<i>Nature Poetry</i>	Explore poetry about nature and get inspired by the outdoors. Develop your writing skills and share your creations as a group.	
<i>Meteorology</i>	Learn about weather using a meteorology field kit. We can study rainfall, maximum/minimum temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, barometric pressure, and cloud types.	
<i>Tree dating detectives</i>	How can we tell how old a tree is? Find out with a hands-on activity.	
<i>Garbology</i>	Learn about garbage, waste management, and waste reduction strategies. Discuss contemporary issues relating to garbology like the Pacific garbage patch.	

High School Programming (9th-12th)

High school programming is focused on developing outdoor skills and having fun in nature with educational experiences. Through developing a love for the outdoors and wildlife, young adults may begin to show an interest in conservation and preserving the beauty of nature.

High School: 9th-12th Grade

<i>Nature relaxation</i>	Spend some quiet relaxation time in nature. Be guided in relaxation techniques to better your mental health.	
<i>Paper making</i>	Learn about reusing and recycling materials and how this can be used in art. Make paper using recycled material. The paper must dry, so this will be a multi-day project.	Outdoor skills
<i>Campfire cooking</i>	Make a meal together at a campfire. May include bread on a stick, smores, pasta dishes, soups, stews, and more. All main dish recipes are requested to be vegetarian. Pairs well with survival skills & fire starting.	Outdoor skills
<i>Shelter building</i>	Learn how to build a shelter in the wilderness. Discuss animal shelters and how they keep animals safe.	Outdoor skills
<i>Orienteering</i>	Learn about map reading and how to use a compass.	Outdoor skills
<i>Archery</i>	Learn how to safely shoot a bow. All supplies provided.	Outdoor skills
<i>Foraging</i>	Learn about useful Iowa plants. Snack on wild forageables as we hike.	Outdoor skills

<i>Food chains (AKA Riparian ecosystems)</i>	Who eats who? Learn about predator-prey relationships with a fun game! If at Tama County Nature Center, tour our exhibit on Riparian ecosystems. Includes animal encounter with Madagascar hissing cockroaches on request.	Animal encounter
<i>Survival skills & fire starting</i>	Learn some basic survival skills and how to make a fire. Pairs well with shelter building and campfire cooking.	Outdoor skills
<i>Slithering Snakes</i>	Meet a live snake and learn about why snakes in Iowa are (mostly) not dangerous.	Animal encounter
<i>Fun Fish</i>	Learn about what fish eat and where they live with a live fish.	Animal encounter
<i>Cool Cockroaches</i>	Learn about bugs with some live cockroaches! Participants will get to touch and hold cockroaches, as well as learn some fun facts about them.	Animal encounter
<i>Turtle Time</i>	Meet some of our live turtles. Learn about what they eat and how we can help them thrive in nature.	Animal encounter
<i>Skulls & bones</i>	Check out the bones of Iowa animals. Compare differences and similarities between skulls and learn about some adaptations.	
<i>Animal adaptations</i>	Discuss animal adaptations and how they relate to their lifestyles. May be focused on birds, bats, mammals, humans, etc.	
<i>Build a Birdhouse</i>	Build birdhouses and learn about some common Iowa birds. Pairs well with birding.	
<i>Build a Bat House</i>	Learn about bats & why we need them. Make a bat house.	

<i>Entomology</i>	Learn about insects and how to pin and preserve them. Practice pinning and preserving insects for the park collection.	
<i>Found object mosaics</i>	Make mosaics using found objects like glass pieces, bottle caps, etc. May include sharp objects.	
<i>Aquaponics</i>	Learn about our aquaponics system and how it works.	
<i>Secrets of the Soil</i>	Learn about soil and why it's important. Use a soil testing kit to analyze soil samples.	
<i>Forestry</i>	Learn about trees and how to measure them using forestry tools.	
<i>Gyotaku fish printing</i>	Make prints with a fish and discuss fish anatomy and shapes.	
<i>Nature Poetry</i>	Explore poetry about nature and get inspired by the outdoors. Develop your writing skills and share your creations as a group.	
<i>Meteorology</i>	Learn about weather using a meteorology field kit. We can study rainfall, maximum/minimum temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, barometric pressure, and cloud types.	
<i>Natural inks</i>	Use plants, soil, and more to make your own natural inks. Be guided on a short hike to collect material and then process it. This is a multi-day project.	Natural inks
<i>Garbology</i>	Learn about garbage, waste management, and waste reduction strategies. Discuss contemporary issues relating to garbology like the Pacific garbage patch.	

Adult Programming (Ages 16+)

Adult programming is focused on enjoying nature through various outdoor activities and educational experiences.

Adult

<i>Nature relaxation</i>	Spend some quiet relaxation time in nature. Be guided in relaxation techniques to better your mental health.	
<i>Foraging</i>	Learn about useful Iowa plants. Snack on wild forageables as we hike.	
<i>Natural inks</i>	Use plants, soil, and more to make your own natural inks. Be guided on a short hike to collect material and then process it. This is a multi-day project.	
<i>Paper making</i>	Learn about reusing and recycling materials and how this can be used in art. Make paper using recycled material. The paper must dry, so this will be a multi-day project.	Outdoor skills
<i>Campfire cooking</i>	Make a meal together at a campfire. May include bread on a stick, smores, pasta dishes, soups, stews, and more. All main dish recipes are requested to be vegetarian.	Outdoor skills
<i>Slithering Snakes</i>	Meet a live snake and learn about why snakes in Iowa are (mostly) not dangerous.	Animal encounter
<i>Fun Fish</i>	Learn about what fish eat and where they live with a live fish.	Animal encounter

<i>Cool Cockroaches</i>	Learn about bugs with some live cockroaches! Participants will get to touch and hold cockroaches, as well as learn some fun facts about them.	Animal encounter
<i>Turtle Time</i>	Meet some of our live turtles. Learn about what they eat and how we can help them thrive in nature.	Animal encounter
<i>Pollinator Gardens 101</i>	Learn about why pollinators are important and show to use beneficial native plants to attract pollinators	
<i>Fossil Finds</i>	Check out our fossil collection and learn about ancient life.	
<i>Meteorology</i>	Learn about weather using a meteorology field kit. We can study rainfall, maximum/minimum temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, barometric pressure, and cloud types.	Meteorology
<i>Forestry</i>	Learn about trees and how to measure them using forestry tools.	Forestry
<i>Entomology</i>	Learn about insects and how to pin and preserve them. Practice pinning and preserving insects for the park collection.	
<i>Found object mosaics</i>	Make mosaics using found objects like glass pieces, bottle caps, etc. May include sharp objects.	
<i>Aquaponics</i>	Learn about our aquaponics system and how it works.	
<i>Build a Birdhouse</i>	Build birdhouses and learn about some common Iowa birds. Pairs well with birding.	
<i>Build a Bat House</i>	Learn about bats & why we need them. Make a bat house.	
<i>Gyotaku fish printing</i>	Make prints with a fish and discuss fish anatomy and shapes.	

<i>Archery</i>	Learn how to safely shoot a bow. All supplies provided.	
<i>Garbology</i>	Learn about garbage, waste management, and waste reduction strategies. Discuss contemporary issues relating to garbology like the Pacific garbage patch.	