



Up and Down the River

JACKSON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD FALL 2020

Take advantage of the outdoors

By Nathan Jones, Executive Director

Jackson County Conservation parks have been busy to say the least. The craziness of 2020 has confirmed that outdoor recreation is still in high demand. With Fall on the horizon I hope to see the trend continue as people get outdoors and make memories that last a lifetime.

Autumn can be intoxicating in Jackson County as hillsides are blanketed in brilliant colors of orange, yellow and red. Rivers and streams team with wildlife preparing for the cold months ahead. Opportunities are almost endless. Let's take a look at outdoor recreation activities you can enjoy.



- ⇒ Go for a paddle and take advantage of the views. Chances are you are going to see migrating waterfowl, turtles basking in the fall sun, or deer out for a mid-day cruise. You will likely have the water to yourself and insects are generally gone. Remember to wear your lifejacket for safety and it will help keep you warm with the cooler temps.
- ⇒ Hit one of the county trails for a hike or a run. It's easier to stay motivated to exercise as temperatures cool. An added benefit... you may be in shape and ready for the fast arriving holidays!
- ⇒ Grab your fishing gear and hit the water. Fish become less temperamental as water temperatures cool. Fish feed heavily in the fall in preparation for the frozen water months ahead. Look for walleyes to start moving into holes below dams. Catfish will be finding the deepest stagnant hole in the bends of the river. Panfish likely will be in shallower brush piles trying to catch the last rays of the warm sun.
- ⇒ Campgrounds remain open through early fall as cooler weather can be pleasant for all types of camping.

Fall is an enjoyable time of the year and I don't think you can go wrong with whatever activity you chose to partake in. I hope to see you outdoors!

Exploring on your own

By Jessica Wagner, Environmental Education Coordinator

Well on a positive note for this crazy year, it has been great to see lots of people taking advantage of the outdoors and getting out to area parks. We have several self-guided explorations that we invite you to check out this fall as you get outside and enjoy your local county parks!

Tree Hike at Prairie Creek

A big thank you to our summer education staff Jenna Spain & Chloe Proffitt for putting together a self-guided trail hike at Prairie Creek Recreation Area. Visitors to the park can follow the "yellow" trail to learn about Trees of Iowa. Later this fall, it will be changed to Birds of Iowa.



StoryWalk at Hurstville

Wander through the maze of grasses and flowers on the Hurstville Prairie and enjoy reading a children's storybook along the way, one page at a time. The 1/3 mile trail is perfect for children of all ages. The current story is *The Acorn and the Oak Tree* by Lori C. Froeb.



Jackson County Hiking Club Challenge

Hit the trails at nine of our county areas and collect the passcode posted on a trail at each park. Areas include: Blackhawk, Buzzard Ridge, Cottonville, Hurstville Center, McNeil, Ozark, Papke, Pine Valley, and Prairie Creek. Look for the "Hiking Club Trail" sign at the parking lot and along the trail to the passcode. Send all 9 passcodes to tony@jacksonccb.com to receive a Hiking Club Certificate!



Sowing Seeds for the Future

By Jennifer Meyer, Naturalist

In our current landscape there are no longer million acre prairies with all of their associated species for seed dispersal and planting. This however does nothing to stop the continued need for prairie plant species to be available for the fauna to survive. So for us to add bits of prairie in any size we can is always going to be beneficial for the environment. In this article we'll be discussing the parts of the process necessary for starting your own personal prairie in the most economical way possible.

Agricultural and environmental benefits of prairie:

- ◇ Reduce erosion
- ◇ Limit nutrient loss
- ◇ Improve soil quality
- ◇ Sequester carbon
- ◇ Filter water and runoff
- ◇ Add biological diversity
- ◇ Suppress weeds
- ◇ Aesthetic beauty
- ◇ Provides wildlife habitat



Reestablishing prairies can be a bit of a process but every step is filled with opportunities to grow and learn from the land. Seriously, even a 2 square foot plot in town can bring beauty and joy to you and the local fauna. Typically a new planting site requires that you kill off the existing vegetation. In a small area a tarp laid out and anchored down for a few months is enough to do the job. Particularly weedy spots should be mowed and tilled before covering.

If you can, visit prairies in your area and try to mimic their plant mixture regarding the soil type and climate. Many reputable companies will offer premade seed mixes that will work for each soil type and your



vision of whom you'd like to have visiting your plants. You can also take the fun of seed collection into your own hands. Falling in love with the plants and visitors can make the experience so much more fulfilling and satisfying. It's ok for you to be choosy as to which plants you want to join your landscape or to attract a certain type of pollinator for example. Personally, the open arms of blue purple blooms of New England asters are a fall blooming favorite of mine and I try to gather those seeds when I can. For an earlier bloom, bee balm and butterfly milkweed bring all the bugs to the yard. Don't worry if your plot only has 3 species to start off with. Get to know them and go from there.

Now that you know what you want to plant and where you want to plant it, how to get the plants you want? The easiest and least invasive way to get them is to get permission to hand collect the seeds. This is also a really fun way to get to know your plants through the seasons

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Goat Prairies in Jackson County

By Tony Vorwald, Naturalist



Jackson County has some of the most scenic and rugged landscapes in the great state of Iowa. Jackson County Conservation manages a number of properties that showcase these varied habitats, one example being goat prairies.

Goat prairies are one of my favorite habitat types I find extremely interesting! Goat prairies were an extension of the tallgrass prairies that once dominated the Midwest landscape. They are found on steep south and southwest facing slopes, in this case along the Maquoketa and North Fork of the Maquoketa rivers. With their steep slopes these prairies were never converted into cropland. Also with their southern exposure and thin, rocky, dry soils goat prairies support a prairie ecosystem that includes plant species that are more common in prairie lands farther west.

This spring and summer, conservation staff have been documenting every blooming plant found at the goat prairies on our areas. We do this by surveying them every three weeks in hopes that we catch the different plants as they come into bloom. We have documented a whole host of diverse plant species, some of which are rare. We have also been working on removing invasive species and woody vegetation by implementing prescribed burns. Staff has been at work removing unwanted trees with chainsaws and hand tools.

Hopefully as the years go on we can come to better understand these unique habitats and help them by trying to restore portions of the goat prairies that are at risk.

We are holding volunteer work days each month to work on removing woody vegetation and invasive species. We'll be working at Ozark Wildlife Area goat prairies September 9 & October 7 this fall, see calendar of events for more information. If you'd like to help, contact me to register.



Butterfly milkweed and lead plant blooming in late June.

Tony Vorwald, tony@jacksonccb.com, (563) 652-3783



Fall Events



Monarch Tagging

Friday, September 4 & 18 time slots starting at 9 am
Saturday, September 5, 12, 19, 26 at 1:00 pm
At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

The monarch butterfly migrates thousands of miles to its wintering grounds in Mexico. Learn more about the monarch's life cycle and journey south. Be a part of the research by helping to catch and tag this year's migrants. Nets will be provided.

Goat Prairie Volunteer Work Day

Wednesday, September 9 from 9:00 am — 2:00 pm
At Ozark Wildlife Area

Volunteers are needed to help with prairie restoration at these unique goat prairie areas. Volunteers should come prepared to hike and perform manual labor. Work includes removing woody vegetation and invasive species. Please dress for the weather, bring work gloves, sturdy shoes, water, and a lunch. Volunteers can meet at the Hurstville Interpretive Center at 8:30 am or at the west entrance of the Ozark Wildlife Area at 9:00 am.

Fossils of Iowa

Friday, September 11 time slots starting at 10 am
At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Let's take a scavenger hunt through Iowa's history and discover the fossils from shallow seas that once covered Jackson County. Participants will have the opportunity to learn more about the creatures that once inhabited our area and look for locally available fossils.

KinderNature—Monarch Butterflies

Thursday, September 17 time slots starting at 9 am
At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

KinderNature is our homeschool series geared for Kdg-3rd grade. This month, join a naturalist in learning more about monarch butterflies—their life cycle, migration and more!

Archery

Friday, September 25 time slots starting at 9 am
At the Hurstville Fishing Pond

Have you ever used a bow and arrow? Now is your chance! Youth ages 7 and up are invited to come and try out our bows using 3-D animal targets.

Seed Collection & Exploration

Friday, October 2 time slots starting at 9 am
At the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Fall is when many prairie plants are ready to start dropping their seeds. Learn about our prairie heritage, collect prairie seeds, and then help spread them!

Green Island Fall Colors Paddling Trip

Tuesday, October 6 from 4:00—6:00 pm
At Green Island Wildlife Management Area

Enjoy fall colors as we paddle on the wetlands of Green Island. Bring your own canoe/kayak or borrow from us.

Special Precautions for Programs during the Pandemic

Registration: all participants must register for a program in advance (at least 48 hours). Some programs may have multiple time slots to accommodate more people.

To register for a program call (563) 652-3783 or email jacksonccb@jacksonccb.com

Program Numbers: programs are limited to maintain smaller groups. Due to limited space, programs may fill up fast. All youth must be accompanied by an adult.

Social Distancing/Face Coverings: we ask participants to social distance with others not in their family group. When 6 feet social distancing cannot be maintained for a portion of the program, we may ask you to put on a face covering. Staff wear face coverings during programs.

Special Needs Our public programs are designed for enjoyment and education for all ages and varying abilities. If you have special needs, please contact our staff prior to the event.

Cost Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Donations are accepted.

Building Better Birders Workshop Series

Have you ever wanted to become a bird watcher but don't know where to start? Here is your chance! Join experienced birders in learning more about bird watching and improve your skills. Sign up for one or more of the classes. More classes will be held in 2021.

Thursday, September 17

8:00 am at the Hurstville Interpretive Center

10:00 am at Prairie Creek Recreation Area

Participants will learn about bird identification and bird species of Iowa during an indoor presentation at the Center. Participants can then put that knowledge to practice during a birding hike at Prairie Creek.

Monday, November 2

8:00 am at the Hurstville Interpretive Center

10:30 am at Green Island Wildlife Management Area

Participants will learn about waterfowl species in Iowa during an indoor presentation at the Center. We'll then travel to Green Island to view and identify waterfowl during fall migration.

Funding for these workshops is provided by the Resource Enhancement and Protection-Conservation Education Program (Reap-CEP). This workshop will be conducted by Kelly McKay (BioEco Research and Monitoring Center), with assistance from Mark Roberts (Clinton County Conservation) and Brian Ritter (Nahant Marsh Education Center).

Fall Paddling Trip on the Mississippi River **September 29 – October 1**



Take part in a multi-day paddling trip on the Mississippi River from Dubuque to Bellevue. Enjoy fall colors and educational programs while taking in the sights and sounds of the river. Learn about many aspects of the river community, including mussel research, turtle and fish populations, the return of the peregrine falcon, and the history of voyagers.

Tuesday, September 29: Paddle ~8 miles from AY McDonald Park to Massey Marina

Wednesday, September 30: Paddle ~15 miles from Massey to Spruce Creek Park

Thursday, October 1: Paddle ~7 miles from Spruce to Pleasant Creek

Sponsored by Dubuque and Jackson County Conservation departments.

Participants can bring their own vessel or borrow a canoe or kayak from the county conservation departments. Cost is \$10 per day or \$25 for all 3 days. Cost includes: use of canoes or kayaks (if you don't have your own), education programs, and guided trip. Participants need to provide their own food. Cost of camping is not included; participants wishing to camp can pay the day of at the respective campgrounds (Massey \$13-19 /night; Spruce Creek \$18-22/night - campsites will be available for tents and campers). For more information call (563) 556-6745 or (563) 652-3783. To register, go online to MyCountyParks.com, click on Jackson County, then events.

Goat Prairie Volunteer Work Day **Wednesday, October 7** from 9:00 am — 2:00 pm **At Ozark Wildlife Area**

Volunteers are needed to help with prairie restoration at these unique goat prairie areas. Volunteers should come prepared to hike and perform manual labor. Work includes removing woody vegetation and invasive species. Please dress for the weather, bring work gloves, sturdy shoes, water, and a lunch. Volunteers can meet at the Hurstville Interpretive Center at 8:30 am or at the west entrance of the Ozark Wildlife Area at 9:00 am.

Birding School for Kids **Friday, October 9** time slots starting at 9:00 am **At the Hurstville Interpretive Center**

Do you enjoy looking at birds? Do you sometimes wonder what they eat, where they live, or how to tell them apart? This class is for you! Learn more about bird identification and birds of Iowa. For youth ages 8 & up.

KinderNature—Birding **Thursday, October 15** time slots starting at 9 am **At the Hurstville Interpretive Center**

KinderNature is our homeschool series geared for Kdg-3rd grade. This month, join a naturalist in learning more about birds of Iowa!

Bat House Workshop **Friday, October 9** time slots starting at 1:00 pm **Saturday, October 10** time slots starting at 1:00 pm **At the Hurstville Interpretive Center**

Bats don't just live in caves! A bat house can mimic a tight place for a bat to roost and use as a nursery. This workshop provides all the materials for participants to build a bat house to hang in their yard. Bat house kits can also be picked up to build at home. Participants should bring a cordless drill (if you have one) and a partner to help them in building their bat house. Cost is \$25. Register by Oct 2.

Fall Family Paddling Trip **Friday, October 16** at 10:00 am **On the Maquoketa River: Royertown to Joinerville** Enjoy fall leaf colors on this family friendly paddle! This paddling trip is designed for families wanting to take their children canoeing on the river safely. Our naturalists will be your guides and help teach water safety and paddling skills. Bring your own canoe or borrow from us. Our 6 canoes can fit 3-4 people and will come complete with life jackets and paddles. Be sure to pack a lunch and water. This paddle will take about 3 hours including sandbar exploration.

Night Hike Luminary Walk and Bonfire **Saturday, October 17** at 6:30 pm **At Prairie Creek Recreation Area, meet at Pavilion** Come get in the Halloween spirit and learn about what goes bump in the night. No we are not talking about ghosts and goblins, we are talking about nocturnal animals! Join a naturalist for a night hike through the park. Luminaries will light our path as we walk. Following the night hike participants are invited to warm themselves by a bonfire!

Leopold Bench Workshop **Friday, October 23** time slots starting at 1:00 pm **Saturday, October 24,** time slots starting at 1:00 pm **At the Hurstville Interpretive Center** Make your own Leopold Bench, designed at this make and take workshop. Leopold benches make a great addition for yards and gardens. All materials will be provided at this workshop. Kits can also be picked up to build at home. Cost is \$40 for a bench using treated lumber and \$25 for a bench using recycled wood. Participants should bring a cordless drill (if you have one) and a partner to help them in building their bench. Register by Oct 16.

Fall Scavenger Hunt **October 21—31** **At Jackson County Conservation Parks** Let's go for a bear hunt! A teddy bear hunt that is. Starting October 21st hunters will be able to pick up a 'hunting license' from the Hurstville Center or from our website with clues and maps on where to go to find the bears. Once you find the bears, marked with a zip-tied label, participants will be asked to take a selfie with the bear and put it back for the next person to find. Participation prizes will be available!

Remember, all programs require advance registration. Call (563) 652-3783 or email jacksonccb@jacksonccb.com to register.

Summer Activities with Jackson County Conservation



A shout out to our summer conservation workers who worked diligently alongside our park rangers and operation technician to maintain our county parks for the increase in park users this year! Great job Jack Mix, Isaac Carter, and Ken Smith!!



Kids and adults enjoyed tubing on Prairie Creek this summer. Pictured here are YMCA summer camp kids floating on the creek on the bend around the Pavilion.

We began offering public programs again in July after a 3-month hiatus. Families enjoyed our marsh exploration, while social distancing. We caught crawdads, insects, tadpoles and frogs!



Article Sowing Seeds continued from page 2

and build all that great anticipation of waiting for the seeds to be ready. You'll want to be prepared with gloves, scissors and something to collect them in. I like using a small basket I can clip on my belt to keep both hands free (a milk jug with the top enlarged works great). Be sure to leave plenty of seed behind. A labeled paper bag is an easy way to keep seeds separate and allow them to dry. Be sure not to lock them up in a hot car as that can kill them. To get an idea of when to collect, visit the Tallgrass Prairie Center's website and look for their Prairie Restoration Technical Guide Series #1. (Their book; The Tallgrass Prairie Center Guide to Prairie Restoration in the Upper Midwest is available from the University of Iowa Press).

After collecting the seeds, getting them dried is crucial to prevent mold and rot. Break up seed heads and remove any extra vegetative material. Store the seeds in a cool, dry, dark area. If you are doing a bare ground planting, late November is a great way to take advantage of the natural wintering process that breaks down the seed coats to assist in germination. If spring is a better time for you or you want to get them started to transplant you'll need to find out how much cold time, how wet they like to be and when they should make the transition into soil. (Guide #3) Then comes the patience. Some plants will spend years focusing their growth in amassing a formidable root structure that has helped their species survive the elements. You may have to do some weeding to find their little starts but it'll be worth it to bring a bit of that prairie wildness to your land.

Information from this article came from The Tallgrass Prairie Center at the University of Northern Iowa. Check out their website for more information. tallgrassprairiecenter.org.



New signs have been installed at some of our county parks! Pictured here is staff with the new sign at Bridgeport River Access near Maquoketa.

Park Spotlight Videos

Interested in an armchair tour of our parks? Or maybe you'd like to see what highlights our parks have to offer before heading out to explore.



This past spring and summer, our education staff have been creating videos for each of our county parks. We aren't quite done though; more videos to come this fall!

The videos feature activities, landmarks and other amenities at the park. Videos can be found on YouTube by searching Jackson County Conservation, as well as on our website JacksonCCB.com under the individual parks: Blackhawk, Buzzard Ridge, Maquoketa River Water Trail, McNeil Nature Preserve, and Papke Wildlife Area.



Friends of Jackson County Conservation

The Friends of Jackson County Conservation brings people together through educational and recreational opportunities in partnership with the Jackson County Conservation Board and inspires people to understand and care for our environment

**Next Friends Meeting is
Tuesday, October 13 at 7:00 pm**

At the Hurstville Center

Friends members can watch for an email update as this meeting date draws nearer to see if the meeting will happen or change.

Solar Array for the Hurstville Interpretive Center

Conservation Staff, Board Members, and Friends Members have been talking about solar opportunities for the Hurstville Interpretive Center for the past few years. And now a plan is starting to take shape!

Not only would a solar array lower the Center's long term cost for electricity, but it would provide renewable energy for the building AND provide an educational opportunity for the community. We are excited about this opportunity!

The Friends Board has pledged to help the Conservation Board raise dollars for the solar array. To kick off a fundraising campaign and to educate the public about solar, Friends will be hosting a Virtual Solar Event on October 22. The event will highlight a few homes, businesses and non-profits in our community that are already using solar. Participants will also be able to learn more about the Hurstville Center's solar project. More details to come!

Mark your calendars!

Virtual Solar Event Thursday, October 22

Membership

Friends of Jackson County Conservation is a non-profit membership organization. We welcome anyone to become a member. Membership is on a yearly basis. 2020 membership dues are: Student: \$5, Senior Citizen: \$5, Regular: \$10, Family: \$20, Sustaining: \$50, Life: \$500. Please send membership dues along with your name, address, phone number and email to Friends of JCC 18670 63rd Street Maquoketa, IA 52060.

Volunteers

We miss you! This year has brought on a lot of changes for all of us. We haven't been offering very many volunteer opportunities as we all try to do the best we can to keep our community safe. However, if you are interested in volunteering we may have some opportunities for individuals or families to do, while still social distancing. Projects include work at our parks, in our pollinator garden, and various other tasks. Please contact our staff at (563) 652-3783 or email jess@jacksonccb.com to talk more about volunteer opportunities this fall.

**A big thank you to all those who
donated on Great Give Day this past
May! We appreciate your contribution
to the Friends Endowment Fund and
helping to ensure we serve out our
mission into the future!**

Leopold benches for sale

Friends member and volunteer Dean Nelson has been busy this year building Leopold benches from recycled lumber. What a great upcycle project! Thanks to Dean's donation of his time and skill, all proceeds from the sale of these benches goes to Friends of Jackson County Conservation. Cost: Small (toddler) \$25; Medium (child) \$35; Large (adult) \$45. Please call (563) 652-3783 or email jess@jacksonccb.com if you are interested in purchasing a bench. Note the different back designs in the photos.





A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

Jackson County Conservation would like to thank and acknowledge the following individuals, organizations and businesses for their continued support and donations. With your help, we have been able to do so much more!!!

Volunteered for JCCB— Dean Nelson, Pam Bahr, Kim Jochum, Mary Hayward, Ray Hamilton, David Manning, Sarah Hobbs, Ben Wagner, Karen Manning, Izzy Yoeder, Isiah Yoeder, Rachel Hayes, Ruth Hayes, Jim England, Lori Rolling, Kathy Wosaba, Mike Griffin, Larry McDevitt

Cash Donations—Amanda River, McGraw Hill (employee match), Angie & Curt Lichter, Barb McCray, Kevin & Debra Spurgeon, Roger & Sandra Dusil, Betty Miller, Carol Jean Hammill, Paul & Chris Heinrich, Craig Mulhausen, Mulhausen Family, Clarissa Ferguson, River Ridge Brewery, Peg Brown, Preston School Staff

Donations to Friends Endowment—David Kunzweiler, Ann & Kevin Burns, Brielle Reicks, Jeanette Hartung-Schroeder, RaeAnn Dickinson, Kendra Beck, Wendy Hainstock, Dennis Mans, Jo Ellen Langerman, Karen Manning, Roberta Rosheim, John Hoff, Heather Waack, Jane Kutsch, Elaine Edwards, David Manning, Connie Breno, Maquoketa State Bank Employee Match, Michael & Teresa Nickeson

Donations—Chris Tubbs (milkweed plugs), Jason True (carpet cleaner), Bel Tubbs (books, rocks, basket), Friends of the Caves (recycled lumber)

Donations made in honor/memory of:

In memory of Lou Behrends
In memory of Billy Croce
In memory of John Beranek



Mentored Fishing for Adults



Have you always wanted to learn how to fish but not sure where to start? Or maybe you'd like to learn more about fishing techniques or equipment. We are working with some seasoned fisherman to set up a mentored fishing program. If you are interested in being teamed up with someone who has experience fishing the rivers and ponds in Jackson County, please contact Jess Wagner at Jess@jacksonccb.com or (563) 652-3783. This program is for adults and a fishing license is required.

Jackson County Conservation

Conservation Board Members

Jim England, <i>chair</i>	Maquoketa	563/652-3213
Lori Rolling	Bellevue	563/872-3299
Kathy Wosaba	Monmouth	563/673-4551
Mike Griffin	Springbrook	563/357-1736
Larry McDevitt	Maquoketa	319/541-6357

The Jackson County Conservation Board meets the third Tuesday of every month at 6:00 pm. Public welcome. *May-Sept, the board tours a park prior to the meeting. Call our office for meeting locations.*

Conservation Staff

Nathan Jones	Executive Director
Pam True	Office Manager
Jessica Wagner	Environmental Ed. Coordinator
Jennifer Meyer	Naturalist
Tony Vorwald	Naturalist
Jeannie Collins-Heer	Park Ranger
Jerry Widel	Operation Technician
Katelyn Yauslin	Park Ranger

Address & Contact Information

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Fax: (563) 652-2191

Spruce Creek Shop (563) 872-3621

E-mail JacksonCCB@JacksonCCB.com

JacksonCCB.com

www.facebook.com/HurstvilleInterpretiveCenter

JCCB Park News

- ⇒ All Jackson County Parks are OPEN for day use.
- ⇒ South Sabula Lake Park & Spruce Creek Park are open for camping through Nov 1. Water will be turned off October 15 (weather depending).
- ⇒ Some of our parks sustained storm damage in mid-August when the derecho came through. Park staff have been working to clear trails.
- ⇒ Camping coupon books for Spruce Creek Park and South Sabula Lake Park will no longer be available for purchase after this camping season (or until our current supply runs out).
- ⇒ Contractors will be at Spruce Creek, South Sabula Lake Park and Joinerville Park this fall to finish up FEMA work.
- ⇒ Increased fishing opportunities are coming to Papke Wildlife Area thanks to a Fish Habitat Grant through the Iowa DNR. Work will begin this fall to increase the pond size, depth, and add fish habitat.

Address Service Requested

Activity Corner

Fallen Log

It's amazing how many things live in and on rotting logs. Discover the many organisms that call a fallen log home and learn more about how decomposition takes place in this micro-habitat.

Instructions

1. Take a walk in the woods with your family and look for a fallen log or rotting tree stump.
2. Carefully turn over the log to see what you can find living on and under it. Take a small container, spoon and hand lens to help in observing the critters. Please remember to be respectful of living things. Release the critters back to their home when you are finished and put the log back in place.
3. Discuss these questions with your family: What happens to a tree after it dies? How did the tree die? Are there signs of animals, including insects, on the log? Are there any plants? How are the plants and animals connected to the log? What are decomposers?
4. You can take pictures or sketch what you find. You can then research things later on the internet or check out books from your local library.



Decomposers

You may notice a lot of life on and under the log. You will probably find decomposers, consumers of the decomposers, or other critters using the log for shelter.

Decomposers are animals that eat decaying matter (dead plants and animals).

Decomposers you might find include: worms, fungi, pillbugs, and millipedes.

Decomposers break down nutrients in the dead plants and animals and return it to the soil. The decomposers help complete the food chain, returning essential molecules to the producers.

