

*Important  
Dates:*

March 7th-  
Home Sweet  
Home

March 28<sup>th</sup>-  
Solitary Bee  
House Building

April 1<sup>st</sup>-  
Tiny Nature  
Adventures

April 4<sup>th</sup>-  
Easter Egg  
Scavenger Hunt

April 26<sup>th</sup>-  
Woodland  
Wildflower  
Wander

May 6<sup>th</sup> –  
Tiny Nature  
Adventures

May 16<sup>th</sup>-  
Slithering Snakes

Full Moons:  
March 9<sup>th</sup>  
April 7<sup>th</sup>  
May 7<sup>th</sup>

April 22<sup>nd</sup>-  
Earth Day

*Mills County Conservation Board*

## Meet the Conservation Board members



From the left: George Marshall, Ted Golka, Kreg Kinzle, Debra Swirmiky, Lana White

Mills County Conservation is overseen by five dedicated board members who are appointed by the county board of supervisors. These volunteers serve a five-year term with the chance to be re-appointed. The job of the board is policy making and administration. They must be responsible and willing to conserve local natural resources, to provide as well as utilize these resources, and to promote the health and welfare of the local people through an organized program of public recreation. The board is made up of individuals, and the knowledge and past experiences of each of these individuals is needed in order to make sound judgments on conservation matters. These individuals need to be willing to make decisions and follow through with them. Once the board has made a decision, each member must stand behind the majority decision. During a monthly meeting the board and conservation staff work together to determine what needs to be accomplished and the best routes to make it happen. Let's meet the Mills County board members:

Lana White has served on the board since 2005 when she moved back to her family farm here in Mills County. This area has always been very special, and she wanted to find ways to give back to the community. Generations of past family members instilled the importance of good stewardship regarding the farmland and natural habitat and Lana intends to pass this along to their grandchildren. Over the past 15 years she has been fortunate to be involved in the significant growth of the Conservation Board, from the addition of park property, increase in full time staff members and the dream of Pony Creek Nature Center becoming a reality.

(continued next page)

Kreg Kinzle has served on the board for almost ten years. Working as teacher in Glenwood for 36 years he always encouraged his students to be environmentally minded and taught many students how to fish. After retirement Kreg is an active outdoorsman who spends every chance he can fishing and bird hunting and enjoys sharing his knowledge and experiences with people of all ages. He also enjoys playing pickleball, walking and photography with his wife Janiece. He joined the board because he wanted to help provide natural places, recreation and education in Mills County. Being part of the tremendous growth of park properties and structures during the past decade has been icing on the cake to a wonderful life here in Mills County.

Ted Golka has been a member for 4 years and joined to be more involved in the community and conservation was the perfect fit. Ted has many years of experience in animal husbandry and raises Indian Fantail show pigeons and numerous other exotic species of animals. Before retirement he worked as a home improvement contractor and still enjoys woodworking.

George Marshall joined the conservation board in 2013. George is a veteran of the Vietnam Conflict, was an EMT and charter member of the Silver City Ambulance Service, worked for Union Pacific Railroad for 41 years and served as an outstanding Mills County 4H leader. He grew up on a farm hunting, fishing and trapping. Owning a timber in Mills County brought an even deeper interest in conservation practices and preservation of the land. Conversations with Charles Vinton, a long-time member of the Conservation Board in early years, prompted George's interests in serving on the board also.

Debra Swirmiky is our newest board member that started serving in 2018. She has been active outdoors for as long as she can remember, growing up in Texas she often fished, gardened and explored with her family. During those early years a passion for this beautiful earth and caring for it began. One of her first experiences once she moved to Mills County was volunteering with Keith McGinnis who was a local prairie guru. His intense passion for the native plants and his concern for the damage that mankind has inflicted on this delicate ecosystem instilled in both her and her husband a deep desire to educate people about good natural resource stewardship. The Swirmiky's enjoy fishing, birdwatching, gardening, beekeeping and outdoor adventures. Debra joined the board with the hope of making a positive impact in helping others both now and future generations to develop a love of the environment and responsibility to care for it.

We are fortunate to have a great group of board members that work hard to keep themselves educated and aware of current events around the area. Each member brings to the table a unique view and set of strengths that make the meetings run smoothly with positive advancements for the citizens of Mills County and the surrounding areas.

*Thank you all for your service!*

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## Mills County Neighbor

Every spring it is common to hear that someone has spotted their first American robin of the year. We all picture robins hopping around on lawns across the country searching for worms and singing their beautiful song during the spring and summer, but where do they spend the rest of their year? This large songbird spends most of its time in woodland areas and roosting in evergreen trees eating berries during the cold months when worms are not available. The change in their feeding behavior and habitat choices makes it seem as they have disappeared, but they are here year-round. Robins gather in flocks of hundreds during this time and are quite the sight to see. During the next cold season get outdoors to a local woodland and see how many robins you can spot!

Robins live an average of two-years, but the oldest recorded life span was thirteen. They can have three broods in one year with only about 40% of nests producing successful young and of those only 25% of fledglings survive to November. Nest sights are chosen by females and it is built from the inside out, for a perfect fit. Once the cup is formed, she reinforces it with worm castings to make it a sturdy structure.

Three to five eggs are laid and then incubation takes 12-14 days. Hatchlings are featherless and blind but grow very quickly with the male and female feeding them constantly, and they fledge (leave the nest) in less than two weeks! This is the time when many caring people find a “baby” bird that needs rescued; however, they are being watched and cared for by the male while they perfect their flying skills. During this time the female has already busied herself with building a new nest and laying eggs. By the time the new eggs hatch the “older” babies will be on their own with the skills needed to forage, roost and fly. Robins are a fun backyard bird and often build their nests in areas that are easy to view, take the time to enjoy the life cycle of this popular bird but never disturb a nest. It is illegal to destroy or possess bird nests or feathers, so enjoy them in their natural habitat.

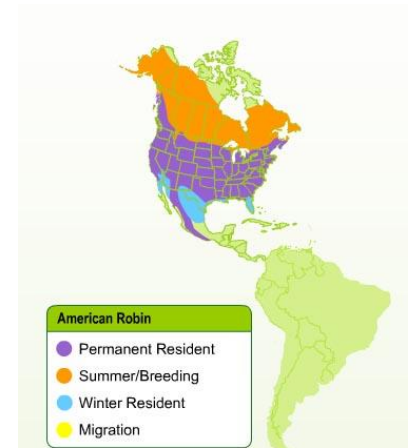


Fig. 1 General distribution of the American Robin in North America. Source: Birdzilla



## Summer Day Camps

The calendar says it is finally Spring and that means it's time to think one season ahead for the fun, summer days camps offered at Pony Creek Nature Center. A quick snapshot of what is offered:

- Tiny Nature Adventures, every Wednesday morning in June from 10:00 am-11:00 am for ages 3-5 years old with siblings welcome to tag along. Adult must stay with child.
- Nature Detectives, every Tuesday in June from 9:00 am to noon for ages 6-9 years old. Drop your nature loving child off with us for 3 hours of exploring, learning, and crafts. Pre-registration is required, and space is limited.
- Wild Connection, every Thursday in June from 9:00 am to noon for ages 10-13 years old. Ditch the devices and let your child enjoy canoeing, fishing, hiking and crafts at Pony Creek Park. Pre-registration is required, and space is limited.



## Spring Outdoor Look Out List- How many can you check off?

Things to spot! Record the date and location if it is the first sighting of the season- it is interesting to compare them to next year.

- Flock of snow geese \_\_\_\_\_
- Red-wing black bird \_\_\_\_\_
- Turkey Vulture \_\_\_\_\_
- Frog calling \_\_\_\_\_
- Redbud trees blooming \_\_\_\_\_
- Bird making a nest \_\_\_\_\_
- A baby mammal \_\_\_\_\_
- Monarch butterfly \_\_\_\_\_
- Hummingbird \_\_\_\_\_
- A snake \_\_\_\_\_
- Dutchman's breeches blooming \_\_\_\_\_
- Baltimore oriole \_\_\_\_\_
- Baby geese \_\_\_\_\_
- Tree leafing out \_\_\_\_\_
- Rainbow \_\_\_\_\_
- Snail \_\_\_\_\_
- Barn swallow \_\_\_\_\_
- Dragonfly \_\_\_\_\_
- Mosquito \_\_\_\_\_

## Upcoming Public Programs

### Home Sweet Home

**March 7<sup>st</sup> @ 3:00pm**

Join MCCB Naturalist at Pony Creek Nature Center to learn about the wildlife in our area and some ways to provide habitat in your yard or acreage. A bluebird house, a wood duck box and a bat box will be given away during this program. Native prairie seeds will be available for everyone that attends. Pre-registration is greatly appreciated.

### Solitary Bee House Building

**March 28<sup>th</sup> @ 3:00 pm**

Supplies to build a variety of different bee houses will be provided at Pony Creek Nature Center. Easy project that will help you add nesting sites for solitary bees in your garden or yard. Pre-registration is required.

### Easter Egg Scavenger Hunt

**April 4<sup>th</sup> @ 11:00am**

Easter Eggs will be placed in locations throughout Pony Creek Park. Clues will help you hunt down each location, as you explore the park and gather eggs. Sturdy shoes for hiking are recommended. Weather permitting! Please call 712-527-9685 to get registered for this program.

### Woodland Wildflower Wander

**April 26<sup>th</sup> @ 1:00 pm**

Woodland wildflowers are a refreshing site in the early spring. Join us at Pony Creek Park to walk the trails and learn various wildflower species and enjoy the beauty of spring. Trails can be somewhat strenuous, so sturdy shoes are highly recommended! Pre-registration is required, 712-527-9685 or email, [millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com).

### Slithering Snakes

**May 16<sup>th</sup> @ 3:00 pm**

Come learn about SNAKES! What they eat? Where they live? Join us at Pony Creek Nature Center to learn snake identification and the status of snakes in Iowa and the United States. Live snakes will be used for this program.

**Pre-registration contact information:**

**Phone: 712-527-9685**

**Email: [millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com)**

**Pre-registering helps us plan accordingly for programs.**



**Tiny Nature Adventures is moving back to 10:00 am on the first Wednesday of each month.**

**April 1<sup>st</sup> and May 6<sup>th</sup>**

For children age 3-5 years old, siblings welcome! Nature themed activities and outdoor exploration. Adult must stay with child and pre-registration is required for planning purposes, 712-527-9685.

If there is enough interest a 2:30 class can be added in the future. Please share your thoughts!

## Contact information

Mills County Conservation  
Pony Creek Park  
56235 Deacon Rd  
Pacific Junction, IA 51561

PHONE:  
(712) 527-9685

E-MAIL:  
millsccbia@hotmail.com

Website:  
[www.millscoia.us/index.php/depts/conservation](http://www.millscoia.us/index.php/depts/conservation)



## Mills County Conservation Board:

### MCC Staff:

Jerad Getter, Director  
Dessa Montgomery, Naturalist  
Zach Kohlhoff, Specialist  
Chase Brumm, Technician

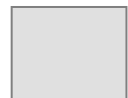
### MCC Board Members:

George Marshall, Malvern  
Lana White, Hastings  
Kreg Kinzle, Glenwood  
Ted Golka, Glenwood  
Debra Swirmiky, Glenwood



The Mills County Conservation Board is committed to providing the citizens of Mills County with quality outdoor recreation areas and opportunities for environmental education experiences. Please take advantage of these services and visit the nearly 1,800 acres of public land available!

**CONSERVATION MATTERS**  
MILLS COUNTY CONSERVATION  
56235 DEACON RD  
PACIFIC JUNCTION, IA 51561



Spring 2020