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Blank Park Zoo Monarch Festival

Blank Park Zoo's Plant.Grow.Fly. pollinator conservation project, 37 of its partners and the Latino Heritage Festival are pleased to announce the 2015 Monarch Festival.

For Immediate Release

The Festival, to be held at Blank Park Zoo on Sunday, September 20 from 12-4 PM will be a celebration of the monarch's journey from Canada, through Iowa, to Mexico.

"Each fall, the iconic monarch butterfly sets its sights on the mountains of Mexico. They travel, en masse, through our state on a journey that can be over 2,000 miles long. We are honored to partner with the Latino Heritage Festival, to highlight the importance of this butterfly to our two countries," said Jessie Lowry, conservation manager, Blank Park Zoo.

"We are excited to partner with Blank Park Zoo to bless the monarch butterflies on their long journey to Mexico. According to local legend, the monarchs arriving in Mexico this time of year are believed to be the souls of our ancestors returning home," said Joe Gonzalez, executive director, Latino Resources (oversees Latino Heritage Festival).

Monarch Festival Activities:

- Second Annual Children's BUG PARADE! Come dressed as your favorite insect, wear your wings, your orange and black, antennae or make your costume at the Zoo. There will be special prizes for First, Second and Third place BEST COSTUMES.
- Polk County Conservation will be leading Insect Hunts and a Monarch Tagging event. They will demonstrate how to safely catch monarch butterflies to attach a tag. If these special monarchs are found in Mexico, they can help scientists track the migration.
- Numerous Plant.Grow.Fly. partners will be represented at the Festival offering hands-on activities, demonstrations and crafts for the whole family.
- Los Ninos del Tepeyac - Danza Folklorica is a group dedicated to learning and teaching about the Mexican culture through dance. This group will be performing at the Festival and there will be a chance for participation.
- Spend time exploring our Butterfly Garden and experience traditional Mexican music by Mariachi Azteca.
- Families and kids of all ages will be encouraged to take part in an interactive performance workshop called FOLLOW THAT MONARCH! by Carol Taylor's Patchwork Puppets.
- There will be free seeds available for Festival-goers so you can create your own butterfly oasis in your yard.
- The Latino Heritage Festival is Sept 26 and 27 in Des Moines. Stop by their booth to find out more about the Iowa-Latino connection.

Thank you to our sponsors and supporters: Polk County Conservation, REAP, Wit's End Gardens, Whole Foods, Reiman Gardens, Latino Heritage Festival.



About Blank Park Zoo

Blank Park Zoo, Iowa's WILDEST Adventure, is open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. seven days a week through September. Beginning October 1, Blank Park Zoo's winter hours will be 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Admission rates are \$12 for an adult, \$7 for a child (3-12 years), and \$10 for a senior. Children two years and under and Blank Park Zoo members are free. The Zoo is located at 7401 SW 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50315. Visit the Zoo online at www.blankparkzoo.com. The Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) The AZA is America's leading accrediting organization that sets rigorous, professional standards for zoos and aquariums. The AZA is building North America's largest wildlife conservation movement by engaging and inspiring the 143 million annual visitors to its member institutions and their communities to care about and take action to help protect wildlife.

About Badger Creek Lake Watershed Project

The Badger Creek Lake Watershed Project was initiated to improve water quality in the lake which is impaired by excessive sediment and phosphorus loading. The watershed includes 11,700 acres in northeast Madison County and part of Dallas County, and the lake itself is located about 5 miles south of Van Meter, Iowa. We are working together with farmers and landowners in the watershed to use conservation practices that keep soil and nutrients on the farm and out of the lake. Visit www.facebook.com/BadgerCreekLakeWatershed

About Buchanan County Conservation Board

Buchanan County Conservation Board cares for 39 properties, and features an award-winning Environmental Education Program. Our mission is to "improve quality or life through programs of conservation and education." To learn more about where you can enjoy natural areas in Buchanan County. Visit <http://www.buchanancountyiowa.org/services/conservation/index.php>

About Des Moines Audubon Society

Organized 1923, Objectives: Conservation of wildlife in general and the study and protection of birds in particular. <http://dmaudubon.org/>

About City of Des Moines Parks & Recreation

The Park and Recreation department is responsible for the management of 76 parks across Des Moines. Besides the special features found in some of the signature parks (Ewing, Union, Greenwood, Gray's Lake and Pappajohn Sculpture Park) patrons can enjoy a variety of amenities such as, basketball courts, BMX track, boat and bicycle rentals, disc golf, enclosed and open-air shelters, equipment rental and concessions, horseshoe, ice skating, nature trails, picnic areas with tables and grills, playgrounds, ponds and fishing, sledding hills, soap box derby track, soccer fields, softball fields, tennis courts, volleyball courts, wading pools, skateboarding, dog parks and more. <http://www.dmgov.org/Departments/Parks/Pages/About.aspx>

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About Des Moines Area Community College

Des Moines Area Community College, a public institution serving the educational and career training needs of Iowans, is committed to the lifelong success of its students. As Iowa's largest two-year college, DMACC offers 153 programs, certificates and transfer degrees, annually serving more than 75,000 credit and noncredit students on six campuses and in five learning centers. Thanks to college-wide innovation, new programs and affordable tuition, DMACC has experienced record growth and is the 15th fastest growing two-year college in America. <http://www.dmac.edu/>

About Drake University

Drake University is recognized as one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the Midwest. A midsized, private university in Des Moines, Iowa, we offer the benefits and resources of a larger institution along with the advantages of intimate class sizes and close personal relationships. Visit <http://www.drake.edu/>

About Friends of the Garden

The Friends of the Garden mission is to "inspire the discovery, understanding and appreciation of nature by creating and maintaining gardens at the Springfield Botanical Gardens and by supporting the mission of the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center and Park Board." We offer 114 acres of gardens, arboretum and grounds including the Dr. Bill Roston Native Butterfly House, the Gray-Campbell Farmstead, free tram service plus many other features. Visit <http://www.friendsofthegarden.org/>

About Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden

Whether you visit on your own or explore with a group, you will find the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden a place where you can learn about fascinating plants, hone your gardening skills or immerse yourself in beautiful gardens. To learn more visit: <http://www.dmbotanicalgarden.com/>

About Hardin County Conservation Board

It is the mission of the Hardin County Conservation Board to provide safe and healthful recreational opportunities, to protect and enhance county natural resources and to offer opportunities for our residents to participate in conservation education. We have acquired 63 public natural areas and manage over 2,798 acres of timber, prairie, wetlands, parks, campgrounds and the Calkins Nature Area. <http://www.hardincountyconservation.com/>

About Iowa Environmental Council

The Iowa Environmental Council is an alliance of diverse organizations and individuals working together to protect Iowa's natural environment. Since 1995, the Council has worked toward creating a safe, healthy environment and sustainable future for Iowa, focusing on water and land stewardship, clean energy and air quality. <http://www.iaenvironment.org/>

About Iowa Native Plant Society

The Iowa Native Plant Society is a forum for native plant enthusiasts, gardeners, and professional botanists to exchange ideas and information, and to work together to:

encourage conservation and ethical use of Iowa's native plants
promote education about Iowa's native plants, their habitats and cultural habits, and the preservation of these plants and their environment
appreciate and enjoy Iowa's native flora

INPS organizes field trips and promotes other native plant events. Visit <http://iowanativeplants.org/index.php>

About Iowa Prairie Network

Our purpose is: To Learn About, Teach About, Enjoy and Protect Iowa's Prairie Heritage. Our motto is: Prairies are our Rain Forests
<http://www.iowaprairienetwork.org/>

About Jackson County Conservation

Jackson County Conservation's mission is to provide outdoor recreation and education opportunities for residents and visitors to our Jackson County. We manage more than 35 areas, including campgrounds, wildlife areas, river accesses, historic sites, nature center, recreation trails and we encourage the development and conservation of Iowa's natural resources. Visit <http://www.jacksonccb.com/>

About Jones County Conservation

The Jones County Conservation Board strives to provide programs that preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources and provide recreational opportunities for all people. Visit <http://www.jonescountyiowa.org/Pages/Conservation.aspx>

About The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture is a research and education center on the campus of Iowa State University created to identify and reduce negative environmental impacts of farming and develop new ways to farm profitably while conserving natural resources. www.leopold.iastate.edu

About Linn County Conservation Department / Wickiup Hill Learning Center

The vision of the Linn County Conservation Board is to improve community through people, parks, trails and open space. This vision is accomplished in many different ways, including increasing environmental awareness. In order to meet the mission of increasing environmental awareness in citizens, the Conservation Board built the Wickiup Hill Learning Center in 2002 and completed an expansion in 2012. One of the Center's longstanding goals is to provide opportunities for people to experience the outdoors and develop an awareness and admiration of nature. www.linncountyparks.com

About Living History Farms

Living History Farms is an interactive, 500-acre outdoor history museum which educates, entertains and connects people of all ages to Midwestern rural life experiences. www.LivingHistoryFarms.org

About Madison County Conservation

The Madison County Conservation Board manages over 2,000 acres and 13 county parks and natural resource areas in Madison County, Iowa. Through environmental education and natural resource management, the board and its employees provide outdoor recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, water trails and premier hunting and fishing locations to bring citizens in contact with their natural resources. MCCB offices are located just south of Winterset on Clark Tower Road. For more information, maps, and services offered visit: www.madisoncountyparks.org

About Monarch Joint Venture

The Monarch Joint Venture (MJV) is a partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic programs that are working together to support and coordinate efforts to protect the monarch migration across the lower 48 United States. To learn more visit: <http://www.monarchjointventure.org/>

About The Nature Conservancy

Our Mission: To conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our Vision: A world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.

nature.org/iowa

About Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1990. The mission of the Refuge is to actively protect, restore, reconstruct and manage the diverse native ecosystems of tallgrass prairie, oak savanna, and sedge meadow. The Refuge serves as a major environmental education, volunteer and outdoor recreation hub for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy. The Refuge also strives to provide assistance to local landowners as they improve their lands for wildlife habitat. Lastly, the Refuge tries to increase scientific knowledge and understanding of the prairie and savanna through ongoing, targeted and innovative research. The Refuge achieves all of these goals through community involvement and by working and partnering with others. Visit www.fws.gov/refuge/neal_smith

About O'Brien County Conservation Board

The Conservation Board manages 650 acres of land in 24 locations throughout the county for outdoor recreation and wildlife benefits. We want you to spend time enjoying your outdoor areas! The O'Brien County Conservation Board is here to provide positive outdoor recreation and natural resource opportunities for YOU! Visit <http://obriencountyconservation.com/>

About Plant Iowa Natives

Plant Iowa Natives works to promote, educate, and create awareness of the use of native plants for horticultural, conservation, and habitat-improvement across Iowa. It is managed by the Tallgrass Prairie Center at UNI. Visit <http://www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org/plantiowanative/>

About Polk County Conservation Board

The Polk County Conservation Board's mission is to provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education, and long term protection of Polk County's natural heritage. To learn more about how Polk County Conservation is helping pollinator's, please visit: <http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation>

Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Polk SWCD mission is to provide leadership to help people improve, conserve, and sustain our natural resources while educating them about the importance and practicality of maintaining our environment and quality of life. Visit www.polk-swcd.org

About Reiman Gardens

There's been a horticulture garden at Iowa State University since 1914, and now Reiman Gardens is one of the finest and most unique gardens in the country available to student, faculty and staff exploration, research and learning. To learn more about how they are involved in pollinator conservation, visit: <http://www.reimangardens.com/education-ideas/butterfly-insect-links-and-articles/>

About Science Center of Iowa

Science Center of Iowa's hands-on exhibits, special-format theaters and other unique facilities attract Iowans and distant visitors. SCI also supports the larger interests of the Des Moines metro area by being a significant place for community gatherings and maintaining collaborative partnerships with neighborhoods, cultural groups, Iowa businesses, the educational system, sponsoring investors and others who share the mission of developing skills and encouraging cultural exchange. To learn more visit: <http://www.sciowa.org/>

About Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter

Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club Iowa Chapter, formed in 1972, enjoys approximately 5,000 members with members in every Iowa county. Sierra Club's Iowa Chapter is the largest member-based, environmental non-profit in Iowa that endorses candidates, lobbies at the Capitol and empowers volunteers to engage with elected officials. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. Visit <http://iowa.sierraclub.org/>

About STRIPS

STRIPS stands for Science-based Trials of Rowcrops Integrated with Prairie Strips. The project is composed of a team of scientists, educators, farmers, and extension specialists working on the prairie strips agricultural conservation practice. Visit <http://www.nrem.iastate.edu/research/STRIPs/>

About Story County Conservation

Story County Conservation (SCC) manages over 3,500 acres of parks and natural areas for outdoor recreation and takes an active role in developing and managing wildlife habitat throughout the county, including assistance to private landowners. SCC also oversees the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management program. To learn more about how SCC is involved in the pollinator program visit: <http://www.storycountyiowa.gov/index.aspx?NID=95>

About Trees Forever

Trees Forever is a nonprofit organization nationally headquartered in Marion, IA that is dedicated to planting trees, encouraging volunteer and youth involvement and environmental stewardship. For over 25 years, we've been planting a better tomorrow. For more information visit www.treesforever.org

About US Army Corps of Engineers, Saylorville Lake

Visit <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/SaylorvilleLake.aspx>

About Warren County Conservation Board

The Warren County Conservation Board currently manages over 2,200 acres of land for the benefit of its citizens. Visitors can enjoy outdoor education and recreation opportunities on areas being conserved for this generation and generations to come. <http://www.warrencb.org/>

About Woodbury County Conservation Foundation - Dorothy Peacut Nature Center

The Dorothy Peacut Nature Center is a public educational facility managed by Woodbury County Conservation Board that opened its doors in 1995. This award-winning Nature Center is located in the northwest corner of Sioux City, Iowa in Stone State Park. We invite you to hike the Loess Hills prairie and woodlands, meet a live bird of prey, enroll in a nature education program, play at the Discovery Forest Nature Playscape and view wildlife and insects in and around our center.

<http://www.woodburyparks.com/index.html>

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