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## The Sounds of Spring

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Spring is an unpredictable season that is a full of changing weather, new growth, and exciting new sounds that have been absent for months.

Amphibians bring us some of the most beautiful sounds of Spring. Chorus frogs are one of Iowa's smallest frogs and the first to fill the air with beautiful music in the Spring. They begin calling in early March and as the days get warmer the volume and length of their calls increase. Their call sounds like the noise made when dragging a fingernail along the teeth of a comb. They prefer shallow grassy areas that have been flooded. Although you can pin point where there sound is coming from it is nearly impossible to see one. Their camouflage and size give them the upper hand. Following the Chorus frog, Gray treefrogs and Cricket frogs begin their musical serenade in late April and May. Tree frogs have a bubbly trill that sounds like they are singing under water. Cricket frogs are extremely loud with calls being heard up to a half mile away. They sound like two marbles being hit together. Later in the season toads and Bullfrogs are common sounds heard.

Other sounds bring mixed emotions to people. Some of the loudest sounds of the spring come from thunderstorms. Loud cracks of lightning followed by rolling drums of thunder are welcomed with excitement by some, but sends fear into the hearts of others. The soft sound of rain on the roof however is generally a calming sound appreciated by all.

Probably the most popular sound of Spring is that of songbirds. Robins, wrens, bluebirds, finches and red wing blackbirds all welcome us back to nicer weather.

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## Meet Your *WILD* Mills County Neighbors!

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American badgers have a bad reputation but are they really as bad as they seem? Badgers are typically found in open grasslands, farm and hay fields, and the edges of woodlands. They have a thick, flat body with short legs and a pointy face. Some

distinguishing characteristics are the white stripes on their face and short tail. This mammal is the largest member of the weasel family known as Mustelidae. Badgers are known as fossorial carnivores that are extremely efficient predators. The shape and size of its body is suited perfectly for pursuing prey underground. They have large claws that can reach nearly 2 inches in length. With these impressive claws they are able to dig in pursuit of prey such as gophers, ground squirrels, mice, amphibians and reptiles.

Badgers are important for local ecosystems. They control pest population and dig numerous burrows that others wildlife utilize. Badgers will not go out of their way to attack you or pursue a human in any way. However, they are very aggressive animals that will defend themselves when pestered. Never corner or try to provoke a badger and you have nothing to worry about. If you are lucky enough to spot one, keep as quiet as possible and take the opportunity to watch an animal that many people never get the honor of seeing.

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## Kenny's Woods

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Located at the corner of 255th ST and Jagger Rd. This is a new property that was donated to the MCCB by Kenny Asmussen. Kenny's Woods is nearly 20 acres of woodlands with a small creek running along one edge of it. Future plans include a small parking area and some walking trails. You can expect to see signs for this new area during the spring after the ground has thawed.

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## Classroom Connection

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Envirothon is a fun competition offered to high school students across the nation to test their knowledge of the environment. MCCB hosts a training day at our office that allows students to learn from some professionals in the conservation field around the area. The 2013 topic is Sustainable Rangelands and students are quizzed in the areas of aquatics, forestry, wildlife, and soils. This year we were honored to have the help of John Hammerly and Rick Sprague from the NRCS. The students spent a

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full day learning about soils, wildlife and grasslands. During a previous training day in Red Oak they learned about aquatics and forestry hosted by the DNR. This is a wonderful competition that introduces students to the importance of our natural resources and the challenges managers face daily trying to protect them.

The regional competition is held in Red Oak on March 19th. We wish all of our local students good luck and hope they advance to the state competition.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Hike at West Oak Forest- March 23rd @ 11:00**

Join the Naturalist for a hike at West Oak Forest in the Loess Hills. We will explore the prairies and woodlands at West Oak and learn about some of the unique feature it has to offer. Hike will be moderately difficult. Dress appropriately and this program is dependent on weather.

### **Festival of the Young Child- April 13th @ 10am-1:00pm**

Stop by our booth at the Glenwood YMCA, we will have live animals.

### **Amphibian Awareness - April 20th @ 11:00**

A fun program at Lake George focused on the different species of amphibians found in Mills County and the problems amphibians face today. There will also be a bullfrog race. DO NOT BRING YOUR OWN FROG! Bull frogs will be provided by the MCCB. Pre- registration is required.

### **Family Nature Day at Gifford Farms in Bellevue NE- May 4th @ 10am-2pm**

Come find our booth at Gifford Farms located at 700 Camp Gifford Rd., Bellevue, NE, 68005. Contact (402) 597-4929 for more information regarding this event.

### **Saving Snakes- May 18th @ 11:00 am**

Join us at Pony Creek Park to learn snake identification and the status of snakes in Iowa and the United States. Live snakes will be used for this program.

**To pre-register for these events or for more information, please call Dessa at (712) 527-9685 or send us an email at [millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com)**

**GO GREEN!** If you would like to receive your Conservation Matter's newsletter straight to your email inbox please send your request to [millsccbia@hotmail.com](mailto:millsccbia@hotmail.com)

It is also available on the MCCB website:  
<http://mccb.millscoia.us>

This will also put you on the email list to receive event reminders.

## *Important Dates*

March 20th-*First Day of Spring*

March 27th- *Full Moon*

April 22nd- *Earth Day*

April 25th- *Full Moon*

April 26th- *Arbor Day*

May 25th- *Full Moon*

May 18th thru 27th- *Snake Count*

### *Spring Turkey Hunting*

April 6-14 *Youth Season*

April 15-18 *Season 1*

April 19-23 *Season 2*

April 24-30 *Season 3*

May 1-19 *Season 4*

Consult DNR Hunting Regulations booklet for more information about Turkey hunting.



## LITTLE CRITTERS FUN PAGE

*Dutchman's Breeches* are one of the first wildflowers to bloom in the Spring and can be found in moist woodland areas. They typically bloom late March to May. Get out to a local woodland and look for this beautiful flower so you will know what color this picture should be. Pony Creek Park and West Oak Forest are two great locations to look for this pretty little flower.



CELEBRATING WILDFLOWERS

*Dicentra cucullaria*  
Dutchman's Breeches

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## SPRING IS A GREAT TIME TO GET OUT AND ENJOY THE WABASH TRACE NATURE TRAIL.

The Wabash Trace Nature Trail is a former railroad corridor that has been converted to a multi-purpose trail with a limestone surface. The trail is a total of 63 miles long, with 25 miles of the trail being in Mills County. This creates approximately 300 acres of linear park within Mills County that is open year round to bicycling, walking / running, cross country skiing and nature viewing.

Want more information about the trail? Visit the Wabash Trace website at [www.wabashtrace.org](http://www.wabashtrace.org) or the Mills County Conservation website at [mccb.millscoia.us](http://mccb.millscoia.us)

