

Summer Season

Summer is the hottest and brightest season of all. It occurs between spring and autumn. The months of summer include mid-June, July, and August. Daylight hours are the most extended, and darkness hours are the shortest. The reason is that the Northern Hemisphere leans toward the Sun in its revolution, and the Sun is more perpendicular to us than in any other season.

The summer solstice is an event that occurs when the earth's poles are completely tilted toward the Sun; this event happens twice a year, once in each hemisphere, and marks the longest day and shortest night of the year. This day indicates the beginning of the summer season.

Summer critters such as thirteen-lined ground squirrel, turkey vultures, eastern cotton rabbits, cliff swallows, snapping turtles, white-tailed deer, widow skimmers and many more can be observed at Otter Creek Lake and Park.



Are you ready for an adventure?

Use the activities and supplies in this backpack (Park-Pack) to explore Otter Creek Lake & Park with your group. This backpack includes materials for up to 4 people in your group. When you're done, return the supplies and the backpack and clean up any activities you completed. Remember, the best way to keep our park clean is by leaving no trace!

Then, make plans to visit another park in one of Iowa's 99 counties! Can you visit them all? Get the full list at www.traveliowa.com/99parks.

Summer Season Park-Pack Supplies:

- **Scavenger Hunt /Autumn Crossword Puzzle**
 - ✓ Pens
 - ✓ Activity sheets
- **Hiking Activities**
- **Crafts**
 - ✓ Office paper
 - ✓ Crayons
 - ✓ Plastic spoon
 - ✓ Rubber band
 - ✓ Pom-poms
 - ✓ Multi-purpose glue
- **Recommended readings:**
 - ✓ *I am Green*
 - ✓ *The Silver Dandelion*
 - ✓ *Guide to Common Trees & Shrubs of Iowa*
 - ✓ *Birds of Iowa Field Guide*
 - ✓ *Dragonflies and Damselflies Pocket Guide*
 - ✓ Iowa Water Macroinvertebrate Key
 - ✓ Tama Co. brochure
- **Stream Activity**
 - ✓ 1 net
 - ✓ 4 Containers
 - ✓ 4 Magnifying glasses

Caution

All activities included in this Park-Pack should be done under the supervision of an adult. To have an incredible nature adventure, don't forget to wear sunscreen and insect repellent. Check the forecast and make an emergency plan if necessary. Dress appropriately for the weather, especially during winter and summer, and do not put yourself (willingly) in any dangerous situation. Last, but not least, always respect our parks; one of the best ways to do so is by leaving no trace and picking up after yourself; also, don't forget to have lots of fun!

Beware



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Wild or yellow parsnip is a wild invasive plant from Europe/Asia. It contains a chemical in sap/juice (found in seeds, stems, leaves, and flowers). When exposed to sunlight, contact with the skin could cause localized skin burns and blisters.



Tut Underwood/SC Public Radio

Poison ivy contains an oil called urushiol, which some people might be allergic to. Touching any part of the plant can cause red, swollen skin, blisters, and severe itching. A saying to help identify this plant is "leaves of three, let it be."

SUMMER SENSORY SCAVENGER HUNT

LISTEN FOR



LOOK FOR



FEEL



OBSERVE BIRDS AT LAKE

LOOK FOR A WATER
BUG



FIND
ANIMAL
TRACKS



LOOK FOR COMMON
MILKWEED



LOOK FOR A
CRAWLY BUG



FIND A
COMPASS
PLANT



FIND AND OBSERVE
MUSHROOMS



VISIT THE NATURE CENTER,
COME SEE THE EXHIBIT
ROOM!

FIND A THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND
SQUIRREL



Explore Stream/Pond

Materials: Explore a Pond Worksheet, Iowa Water Macroinvertebrate Key, 4 containers, 1 net

1. To begin activity, pick one of the lakes found at Otter Creek Lake & Park.
2. Use provided net to safely catch critters found inside the water, when catching critters, place them in one of the empty containers.
 - Use caution when handling critters, we aim to observe them without killing them.
3. Make sure your container has enough water so the critters in it don't die.
4. Match critters to the ones found in the Iowa Water Benthic Macroinvertebrate Key. Examine critters with magnifying glasses. How many legs do they have? What color are they? How do they move?
5. After successfully identifying critters and learning about them, gently place them back in the same spot where they were initially obtained, back in water.
6. **Safety tip**
 - Adults should supervise and aid in catching and returning critters safely.

Birding

Materials: Birds of Iowa Field Guide

1. Walk around Otter Creek Lake & Park, and pay attention to the trees, under trees, or on tree branches.
2. Look for nests; some birds like to nest high on trees, and others like to nest near the floor or on floor level.
 - To be successful with this activity, keep low to quiet voices; this will prevent birds from scaring and flying away.
3. Try identifying the birds you saw in your Birds of Iowa Field Guide, or use the Merlin ID App.

Nature Art

Materials: paper & glue

1. Collect leaves, flowers, or even mud!
 - Try collecting from what has already been dropped, pay close attention to poison ivy and yellow parsnip.
2. Grab a piece of paper, use collected resources and glue them to create your masterpiece!

NATURE LAUNCHER

Materials: pom-pom (or acorns), plastic spoon, sticks (2), rubber band or hair tie

1. **Find** two sticks, each 8-12 inches long. One stick must have a straight appearance and at least ½ inch thick. The other should be about 1 inch thick.
2. **Use** the rubber band to connect the end of the spoon to the straight stick. The spoon should be facing up.
3. **Wedge** the thicker stick between the straight stick and the spoon.
4. **To launch:**
 - Place one hand on the straight stick to steady the launcher. Place pom-pom (or acorn) on the spoon.
 - With one finger push the spoon down and let go to launch.
 - Why do pom-poms launch farther away than acorns? What adjustments can you make to your launcher to increase the distance the acorn flies?
5. **Safety tip:**
 - Adults should help support, create, and carefully supervise launchers.

HIKE A TRAIL

- **I spy-** One person chooses an object and gives clues until others guess the object.
- **I'm going on trip and bringing...** the first player answers, "Apple," the next player says, "I'm going on a trip and bringing an apple and binoculars." The next player must add something beginning with "C" and so on through the alphabet. The answers will probably get sillier as you go.
- **"How many"** questions- How many birds can we see? How many squirrels? How many streams have we crossed? How many steps until the log up ahead? How many ponds are there at Otter Creek Lake & Park? How many trails are there at Otter Creek Lake & Park?
- **Tree Huggers-**This activity is like musical chairs but with built-in tree identification. One person serves as the "Tree Master." As you're hiking the Tree Master calls out the name of a tree (oak, for example). Everyone then runs and hugs an oak tree. The last one to run and hug an oak tree is out. Continue until only one person remains. The last person will be the new Tree Master.