

Newsletter

MAY–AUGUST 2026

President's Message

As I write this letter, spring is sporadically appearing in Ames. We've had 80s one day and 40s the next. When you read this newsletter we all should be enjoying spring.

We heard in March from Lynne Campbell about monarch habitat restoration; a follow-up on monarchs and pollinators is in this newsletter. Unfortunately, the April presentation was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances for the presenter. We are currently exploring the possibility of rescheduling the New Life into Old Fiddles presentation in the future.

Due to the complex restructuring of programs going on at ISU over the last many months, we will take a break from both our speaker series and the Rock On in Retirement Symposium in the coming year, September 2026 to April 2027. The symposium, in particular, requires a great deal of work and planning. The restructuring temporarily limits assistance for this and other events, prompting our decision to delay.

One of the results of our recent survey was that this newsletter is our most popular endeavor. I would like to express my gratitude to Susan Yager, our newsletter editor and feature writer. She has done a tremendous job expanding coverage of events on campus and in Ames. The Board joins me in expressing thanks for all she does. We hope you'll enjoy this issue!

All the best,
Barbara Pleasants, ISU Retirees Association President



Memorial Day Program Reminder

This is a reminder that the ISU Retirees Association's annual Memorial Day program will be held on Wednesday, May 20. Each year the association honors retirees, faculty and staff, and spouses and partners who have passed away since the previous Memorial Day observation..

Once again, the program will be offered in person at the ISU Alumni Center in Ames and online via Zoom. (For Zoom access, go to the ISU Retirees [Memorial Day page](#).) The Alumni Center and the Zoom connection will open at 9 a.m. CT for a time of visiting, followed by the program at 9:30 a.m. CT.

Ted Oberlander, vice-chair of the ISU Foundation Board of Directors and past-chair of the ISU Alumni Association, and Rev. Amanda Gordon, senior pastor at Ames First United Methodist Church, will join us as we remember our ISU community members who have gone before us. Family, friends, and colleagues will be invited to share stories, comments, or condolences after a reading of the names for those we remember.

The Retirees Association thanks Green Hills for sponsoring this program and providing table centerpieces. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Bristow at (515) 294-5790 or hbristow@iastate.edu.



“Move to Green Hills before you think you need to. You’ll appreciate this community so much when you do!”

– Paul & Ardeth Rietz

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Did You Know...?

Documentary Features 4-H History

If you weren't in 4-H yourself, chances are you know someone who was. Take another look at 4-H through a new documentary from Iowa PBS, "The Legacy of 4-H." This 54-minute film traces the origins of the nation's largest youth organization from the early 1900s. It focuses in particular on Jessie Field Shambaugh, known as the "Mother of 4-H," who had a broad and lasting influence on youth education. The documentary illustrates how 4-H has fostered leadership, skills, and a commitment to community. "The Legacy of 4-H" can be streamed from [Iowa PBS](#) or seen on [YouTube](#).

New Office Location for ISU Retirees Association and OLLI at Iowa State

Heather Bristow, director of the ISU Retirees Association and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Iowa State University, moved to the office of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) because of recent university re-organization efforts. However, the challenges of balancing an on-campus office with an off-campus clientele, as well as many off-site meetings and OLLI classes, made it clear that another change in location would be necessary.

Luckily, a few months ago Deb Schildroth, executive director of Heartland of Story County, contacted Heather regarding an office space opening at Sixty Forward (205 S. Walnut Ave., Ames). After thoughtful collaboration and acquiring the necessary approvals, Heather moved her office to Sixty Forward in April.

Major Changes to Lake LaVerne

Major updates are scheduled for Lake LaVerne this summer, with work starting this month to dredge the lake and stabilize the shoreline. Immediate plans are in place to create seating and an accessible route to the lake's edge. A little later on, a "lakeside amphitheater" large enough to hold performances will be constructed, as will a pedestrian bridge. The bridge will be named in memory of Tahira Hira, whose husband Labh Hira, emeritus professor and dean of the College of Business, made a gift of \$3 million to the project.

These artist's sketches give an idea of what the lake will look like. On the left is a seating area planned for the north shoreline, and on the right, a plaza area planned for the southeast corner (adjacent to the Lincoln Way/Morrill Road intersection) that would be used by both visitors to the lake and the campus team that cleans and maintains it.

Did you know that Lake LaVerne was named for its major donor, alumnus LaVerne W. Noyes? Admittedly, "Lake Noyes" isn't as mellifluous as Lake LaVerne, but given the goose population there the last few years, that name would also be appropriate!



SENIOR EXPO

PRESENTED BY *Seniors in Story*

FRIDAY, MAY 8TH

9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

GATEWAY HOTEL &
CONFERENCE CENTER

2100 GREEN HILLS DR, AMES

FREE TO ATTEND

REGISTER AT [SENIORSINSTORY.ORG](#)

Seniors in Story

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

THIRD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH | 9:00 AM

[SENIORSINSTORY.ORG](#)



Get Outside This Summer

A six-pack of less obvious places

Most people with a taste for the outdoors know about the biggest parks and scenic spots in their community, such as the wonderful Ada Hayden Park in north Ames. But sometimes it's nice to enjoy nature with fewer people and more quiet. For retirees living in or near Story County, here are some out-of-the-way spots to consider.

- [Ketelsen Marsh](#)
Just east of I-35 and just north of 13th Street along 570th Avenue. There's a mowed trail around the prairie and wetland perfect for a short hike. Dogs can be off leash from July 16 to March 14 each year. Early in the spring, chorus frogs can be heard in the wetland portion of Ketelsen.
- [Bear Creek Access](#)
To reach this part of the Skunk River Greenbelt, drive north from Ames on Highway 69. Turn right (east) on 150th Street and drive until you cross the South Skunk River. Then turn right (south) on Pleasant Valley Road and go almost to the end to a small parking area. A mowed trail passes through a mature river bottom forest with numerous silver maples and walnuts. This is a great place to access the river to fish for smallmouth bass on a warm summer afternoon.
- [Skunk River Flats](#)
Travel east from Ames on Highway 30 and turn right (south) on 580th Avenue. Turn right again on 270th Street and follow it to the Skunk River Flats parking lot. You'll find a mowed trail all the way around the perimeter and nice spots to view the South Skunk River. It's not unusual to see bald eagles soaring above the river. Dogs can be off leash from July 16 to March 14 each year.
- [Dickcissel Park](#)
Traveling west from Ames on Highway 30, turn right (north) onto Highway 17. The parking area is just north of the intersection on the left-hand side of the highway. This Boone County refuge area has a mowed trail around the 15-acre pond, in which you can find largemouth bass and bluegills. It's an easy place to introduce a youngster to fishing.
- [Lekwa Access](#)
Maybe you're wanting to take a mid-summer canoe trip. If so, head north out of Ames on Highway 69. Turn right (east) on County Hwy E18 (130th Street) and drive until just before you cross the South Skunk River. On your right is the parking area of Lekwa Access. Good flow levels to canoe the river are from about 200 to 400 cubic feet per second, a measure of the amount of water flowing in the river. At lower flow levels, you'll need to get out and drag your canoe from time to time. At higher levels, the current and obstacles in the river can become dangerous. Always wear a personal flotation device (PFD). Deer, raccoons, great blue herons, and bald eagles are common along the river. If you're lucky, you might see a river otter. A good take-out spot is [Anderson Canoe Access](#).
- [Prairie Valley Preserve](#)
A visit to one of Story County's newest public areas might also be of interest. Head north from Ames on Highway R-38 (County Line Road). Turn right (east) on Highway E23 (170th Street) just after crossing Ioway Creek to get to the parking area at the top of the hill. This refuge area includes both remnant prairie and a water pollution mitigation wetland, partly funded by Ducks Unlimited. As the wetland develops, it will become a hotspot to see waterfowl. Dogs can be off leash from July 16 to March 14 each year.

If accessibility is an issue and you're in mid-Iowa, don't forget the beautiful [Iowa Arboretum & Gardens](#), where most trails and pathways, as well as Treehouse Village, are accessible by wheelchair and walker.

And if you live further away, don't fret! Although Iowa has a small percentage of publicly accessible land (only about 2% of Iowa), interesting spots to visit appear throughout the state. The [Iowa Department of Natural Resources](#) has online tools that will help you find public hunting areas that are rarely used in spring and summer (and are open to the public at any time of year), fishing spots, rivers to paddle, and trails to hike and bike. If you're not in Iowa, look for your state's DNR online to find the best outdoor places to visit.

Submitted by Jim Colbert, professor emeritus in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology

What's Going On Over There?

This highlights events and developments of possible interest to retirees who haven't been "over" to campus lately, whether you're a mile or a thousand miles away.

A New Major at Iowa State: Game Design

Game-playing has long been a part of learning – think of spelling bees, quiz bowls, and role-playing lessons. Game-making is also a way to learn – a time-honored way of preparing for a test is to create “Jeopardy!”-style review sessions. Now, Iowa State students can both play and create games through a new, multidisciplinary program leading to a Bachelor of Science in Game Design.

Although housed in the College of Design, this new major includes courses from the colleges of Engineering, Human Sciences, and Liberal Arts and Sciences. For example, one degree requirement can be fulfilled by taking Game Design and History, a course cross-listed with history, or Game Design and Cultures, cross-listed with religious studies. Students take a core set of courses, including computer programming, drawing, and career development, and choose a focus area in game art, game computing, or game worlds. With third- and fourth-year courses that require collaboration and teamwork, students in all three focus areas will learn to work with classmates' diverse strengths.

The Game Design Learning Lab in Parks Library is intended to foster small-group work and collaboration. Though available to all students, it's designed to support game design majors and students enrolled in game-related courses. Opened just last fall, the “lab” is a spacious room that contains five tables, each of which holds five high-performance computers featuring the latest game-related software. It's already a popular spot within Parks, as game students gather in this lab for classes, open hours, and in the evenings.

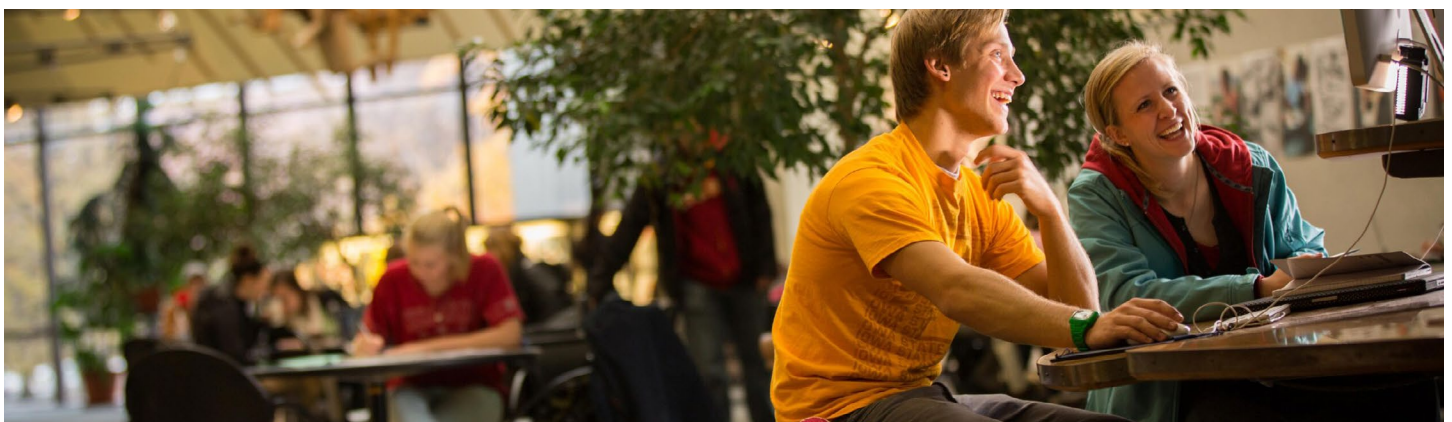
According to Jeffrey (Jeff) Wheatley, assistant professor of philosophy and religious studies and a member of the team that developed the new major, it was anticipated that game design would attract about 30 majors in its first year, but it currently enrolls 54 – a pleasant challenge to have, but still a challenge! Not all these majors are first- or second-year students, so faculty are planning to “streamline” the curriculum, for example offering third-year courses sooner than had been envisioned.

Jeff and his colleagues are confident that game design majors will find work in their fields, even though the video game industry, like many others, is in a period of crisis. It is still growing, however, and according to Jeff earns more globally than music and film combined. Game design majors are encouraged to seek out smaller game developers, including some in Iowa, and to think of “adjacent” fields as well, such as digital communication, graphic design, or app design.

Some students will soon add to their game design portfolios by partnering with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs). Faculty and students from the game design program will expand on CALs' student degree-planner by developing “Build Your Pathway,” an interactive digital platform with game-like features, and creating a new game, “Pathfinder,” that will assist soon-to-graduate students in searching for their first professional jobs. Within a year, versions of these games should be ready for students in other colleges.

While most students gravitate toward video games, course assignments require “analog” and table-top games. “Here's paper and pencil,” says Jeff, “and a deck of cards. Now, make a game.”

Submitted by Susan Yager, ISU Retirees Newsletter Editor



Celebrate America's 250th This Summer

For many of us the U.S. Bicentennial, with its televised “minutes” and brightly painted fire hydrants, may seem like yesterday. But here we are at the semiquincentennial or quarter-millennium – in short, 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Multiple ways to celebrate “America250” are planned for Ames, the state, and the nation. Here are a few:

The Farm House Museum presents a free and accessible exhibit, “[America 250: Prairie, Plows, and the People's College](#),” through Oct. 16. Here you can view the 1896 Bomb yearbook featuring George Washington Carver, an 1884 cookbook from the nation's first Department of Domestic Economy, and more.

The [Ames History Museum](#) (usual admission \$8) has two ways to celebrate. The first, “We the People of Ames: A USA 250 Exhibit,” featuring “local stories with national impact,” runs through Nov. 14. The second is a free “big bash” on Friday, July 3 from 4-8 p.m. Plans for this event, which will be held both inside the museum and outside on Douglas Ave., include a vintage car show, food trucks, family fun zone, local bands, and a World War I poster display.

Elsewhere in Iowa, if you want to get an early start on drumming and flag-waving, check out the [North Iowa Band Festival Parade in Mason City](#). It will be held soon – on Saturday, May 23 – but the festival runs all week, May 21-25.

Or you can explore the [Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway](#). This organization's [Facebook page](#) is featuring 250 Stops in 250 Days, and will be about halfway done when you receive this newsletter. One stop along the byway, Niland Corner near Colo, will hold a food- and music-filled celebration on Sunday, June 14.

The Iowa State Fair's theme this year is “Fair Spirit,” and it should be fairly spirited with nightly drone shows, a new permanent art installation, and a veterans’ memorial in addition to the usual music, food, and fun.

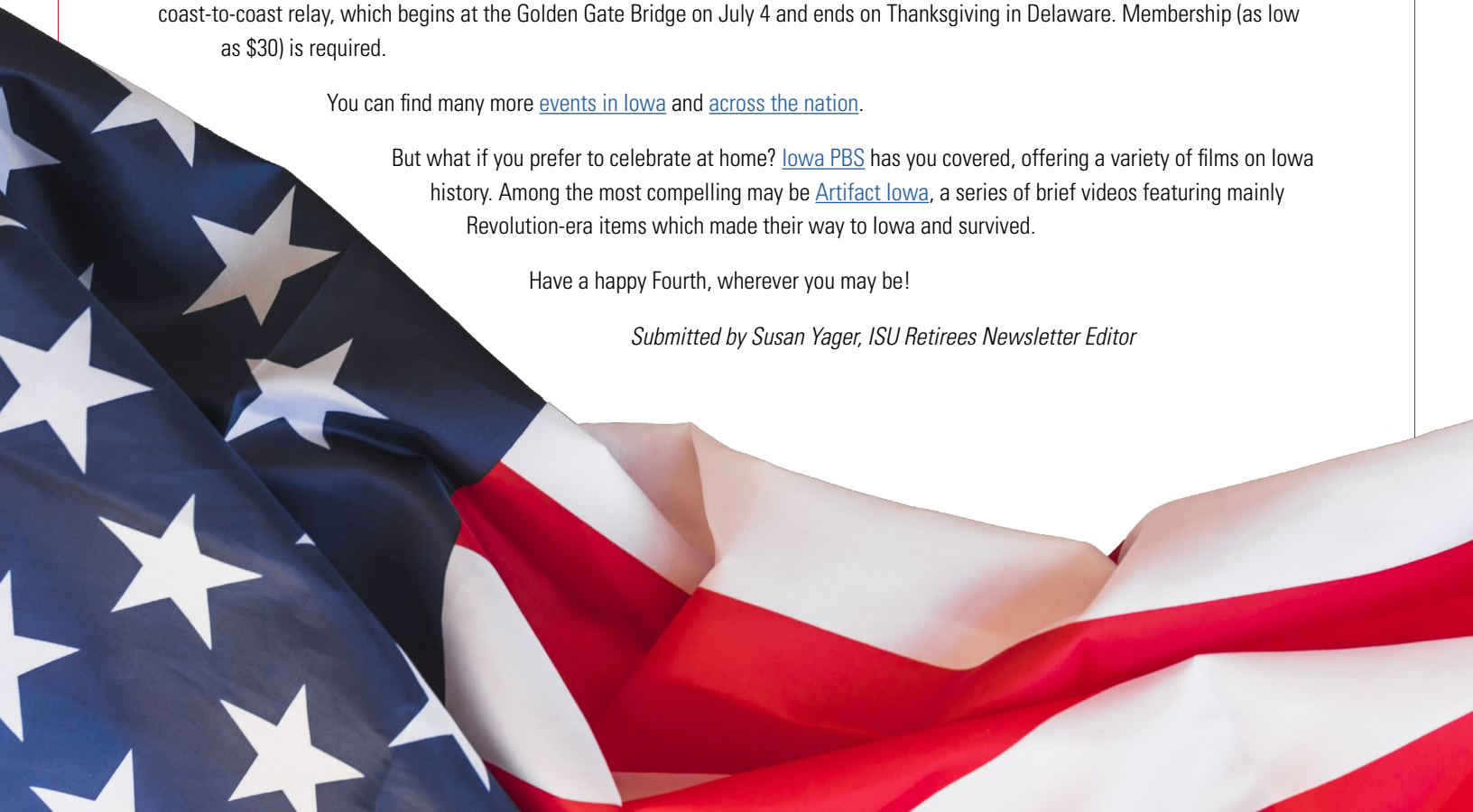
If your thirst for celebration isn't quenched by September, you can join the [American Discovery 250 Relay](#), a communal trek that will cross Iowa from Council Bluffs to Rock Island during the last week to 10 days of September. Walkers, runners, and bikers can participate in this coast-to-coast relay, which begins at the Golden Gate Bridge on July 4 and ends on Thanksgiving in Delaware. Membership (as low as \$30) is required.

You can find many more [events in Iowa](#) and [across the nation](#).

But what if you prefer to celebrate at home? [Iowa PBS](#) has you covered, offering a variety of films on Iowa history. Among the most compelling may be [Artifact Iowa](#), a series of brief videos featuring mainly Revolution-era items which made their way to Iowa and survived.

Have a happy Fourth, wherever you may be!

Submitted by Susan Yager, ISU Retirees Newsletter Editor



Continuing the Conversation

Q & A with Max Rothschild, distinguished professor emeritus in animal science



In February, the Retirees Association heard from world-wide traveler Max Rothschild. He spoke about a “bucket list” adventure in the Amazon in Brazil. Here, we continue the conversation with Max.

You’ve shared details of a couple of your “bucket list” trips with the Retirees Association. Does any one trip you’ve taken stand out to you?

We have travelled to over 70 countries and have had so many wonderful experiences. In terms of urban areas, I particularly like Paris and France. As for wildlife adventures, I think the big three have been the Galapagos, gorilla trekking in Africa, and the Amazon trips. But there are also so many great places in the U.S. and so many gorgeous national parks to see here.

Have you ever felt you were in danger on any of your trips?

I have never felt any danger from man or beast. Having said that, I will not travel in some places, and always view the U.S. State Department recommendations and warnings.

Did you take any river voyages before your Amazon adventure – say, down the Rhine or the Mississippi?

We haven’t taken any European river cruises or down the Mississippi as we have seen most of those areas by land. Although we’re not fans of large cruises, we have taken three “small boat cruises” – the inside passage to Alaska, the Sea of Cortez in Mexico, and more recently a cruise of the Greek Isles. All of them were great.

You mentioned that you’ve gone on trips with Road Scholars and Odysseys Unlimited, and that each has its strong points. With which of these have you had the best experience[s]? Do they both attract people of retirement age?

We have used Odysseys Unlimited for an Alaska land tour, Patagonia, Peru, and Iceland, and Road Scholars for our Amazon and Greek Isles experiences. All cater to people in their 60s to 90s and they vary by activity level. I was very pleased with all of them. Odysseys Unlimited often arranges the ISU alumni trips.

You also mentioned that it was “early to bed, early to rise” on the river part of your Amazon trip. Is that the norm with trips you’ve taken?

There’s no “norm,” really. If you want to go on wildlife trips, those are early morning and late in the day. But most tours start at 8 or 9 am otherwise.

Your Amazon trip sounded perfect for an animal lover. Has your field of study, animal science, influenced your choice of trips to take?

Not really. I was an avid wildlife person all my life and luckily my wife also enjoys the outdoors and seeing birds and other animals. When our kids were young, I often traveled by myself for ISU business, but later my wife travelled with me if the trip looked interesting.

From something you said in your talk, it sounds like Costa Rica is a good destination for people who would like an adventure but aren’t quite ready for the Amazon basin. Could you share some more about that?

Costa Rica is a lovely country and close to the US by air. You can drink the water, eat everything, and often pay in U.S. dollars. Travel is safe and easy to arrange and good tours exist. The coastal areas are gorgeous as is the interior with its forests and volcanos.

Where are you heading next?

We’re planning to revisit Italy and also see some national parks in the far west this year.



Congratulations, New Retirees!

Rosalyn Branaman
Theresa Dropps
Cindy Gannon
Carole Gill
Timothy Hicks

Sheila Klaver
Julie Kline
Shirley Knipfel
Gail Koobs
Bonnie Kraus

Karl Kraus
Peter Lelonek
Wenlu Li
Brenda Martin
Patricia Netcott

Denny Richards
Vicky Thorland-Oster
Scott Wendt
Matt Wiggins
Kim Wyatt





10 Things You Might Not Know about Monarchs

(plus two bonus items)

In March, educator and butterfly activist Lynne Campbell spoke to the Retirees Association about monarch butterflies, their life cycle, and their needs. Here are 10 takeaways from her presentation. Lynne also mentioned some organizations that support butterflies and other pollinators – we'll add a few as items 11 and 12.

1. Just as the most important thing in real estate is “location, location, location,” the most important thing to do to support monarchs is “plant milkweed, plant milkweed, plant milkweed!”
2. The Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium has set a goal of 1.6 million more milkweed stems in Iowa by 2038. This amounts to some 1346 stems per county, per year.
3. Despite that daunting goal, any amount of milkweed that is planted is helpful, even a tiny patch in a yard. Milkweed can thrive – and support monarchs – in ditches, near fields, in right-of-ways, in yards. It is also necessary that habitats be connected – think of a loose chain of pollinator plants in neighborhoods, parks, countrysides.
4. Ideally, monarchs would lay only a single egg on one milkweed stem. If you see a stem with many eggs on it, the female monarch probably dumped her eggs because of a scarcity of habitat.
5. Monarchs need trees as well as milkweed to thrive, since they roost in trees at night. They also need nectar-yielding plants such as goldenrod, aster, and blazing star for their trip south.
6. Several generations of monarchs live and die in the course of their annual migrations. It is the fourth or fifth generation that makes the long trip back to the monarchs’ winter home in Mexico.
7. Some studies show that only 1% of monarch eggs survive to become butterflies.
8. Monarch populations in Mexico are up 64% this year, which is welcome news, but it is an increase from a greatly diminished base. Before glyphosate was introduced as a herbicide, monarchs wintering in Mexico covered the equivalent of 36 football fields. The low point was the equivalent of four such fields, and the recent increase brings it to eight or nine fields, far lower than the population 50 years ago.
9. Tiny, solar-powered radio tags can now track butterflies as they move about and migrate. Previously, physically attached tags noted where and when a monarch had been tagged, but its flights could be recorded only at the points where it was found.
10. To foster a child’s love of butterflies, and of science in general, an ideal gift is a simple microscope – they can even be found in thrift shops.
11. Monarchs have partners! One, the International Crane Foundation, aims to protect wetlands and foster biodiversity. Part of that support consists of prairie restoration with milkweed and nectar-rich plants; some of these restorations have been recognized as [Monarch Waystations](#).
12. Pheasants Forever, another partner, offers appetizing [educational programming](#) that demonstrates how much the ingredients in ice cream sundaes depend on pollinators (the same is true with pizzas, tacos, and cold-cut sandwiches). Why not hold a pollinator picnic?

Submitted by Susan Yager, ISU Retirees Newsletter Editor





OLLI

| at |

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

UPDATE!

OLLI at Iowa State is currently hosting its Spring 2026 courses. There are only a few left that begin in May, so be sure to check out the online course catalog and register today. Details can be found on the Course Information page of [OLLI's website](#). The courses yet to begin are:

- Counterfeit Consumer Goods II
- Discovering Outdoor Delights: Tramp New Zealand's Tracks
- World Cup Soccer Coming to America!
- C.Y. Stephens—The Man Who Changed Iowa State
- Baking Blue Ribbons: Stories and Recipes from the Iowa State Fair Food Competitions
- Iowa's Prairie Habitats, Remnants, Renovations, and Reconstructions
- Explore the Parks of Ames
- Ukrainian Vision: Artists and Their Homeland
- Smartphone Geocaching – A Fun Outdoor Recreational Activity
- ACTORS Tour

You are also invited to join OLLI at Iowa State members and their families and friends for First Friday Coffees at Sixty Forward (205 S. Walnut Ave, Ames) or online via Zoom. We gather at 9 a.m. CT for a time of conversation and connection.

Plans are also underway for the annual Ice Cream Social. Be sure to check out the events page of the OLLI website for more information about all upcoming events.

Because the OLLI curriculum team worked so efficiently, the fall 2026 course term is completely full! Be sure to join us via Zoom on **Wednesday, Aug. 5 at 1:30 p.m. CT** for the fall Course Preview event (you can also get a sneak peek of the course list at the Ice Cream Social this summer). OLLI is now actively accepting course proposals for the winter and spring 2027 terms. If you or someone you know would like to share knowledge and/or experiences with others, please reach out to Heather Bristow at (515) 294-5790 or hbristow@iastate.edu to discuss possibilities.

Submitted by Heather Bristow, Director, OLLI and ISU Retirees Association

OLLI, a lifelong learning program, was developed by the ISU Retirees Association in 1993 and later was invited to become an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Today, OLLI at Iowa State is one of 124 programs at colleges and universities from Maine to Alaska to Hawaii that are partially sponsored by the Bernard Osher Foundation.



2025-26 Board of Directors

The ISU Retirees Association (ISURA) board of directors is an official university committee. Representatives from each college, the University Library, Extension, merit staff, professional and scientific staff, and the University Benefits Committee are appointed to serve on this committee. Other committee members include a Faculty Senate representative and the ISURA newsletter editor.

Barbara Pleasants (LAS): President
Scott Elston (Business): Past President
Jan Breitman (P&S): Secretary
Susan Yager: Newsletter Editor

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Ex Officio
Heather Bristow, ISU Retirees Director

Office Hours and Contact Information

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. • <https://olli.iastate.edu/isu-retirees-association/>

Heather Bristow, *Director*
hbristow@iastate.edu
(515) 294-5790

Contact Information Updates



Be sure to send us your most current contact information so we can keep you up-to-date on the latest news and events for ISU Retirees. You may access the information form online at <https://olli.iastate.edu/isu-retirees-association/> or by using this QR code.