

May 3, 2023

Subject: Press Release

From: Friends of Blackburn State Park
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Student Earth Day at Blackburn State Park

The Friends of Blackburn State Park hosted an Earth Day outing April 19 for thirty tenth-grade biology students from Fremont-Mills High School. The outing was initiated by Mike Younts, the class teacher and vice president of the Friends group. Said Younts, "Being associated with Blackburn State Park has given me the opportunity to take my students out so they can learn about nature and hopefully give them a better appreciation of it. Hopefully making them lifelong learners about nature along the way." The class was welcomed by Matt Moles, Park Manager.



Addison Brandt and Anne Chambers



Class on new overlook deck

The students enjoyed a number of events at the park including: a tree tour by Lindsey Barney, District Forester with Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR); a wildlife presentation by Marlowe Wilson, Conservation Officer with Iowa DNR; a historical tour by Bill Blackburn and Ken Forney of the Friends of the Park group; archery by Anne Chambers with Fremont County 4-H and Sarah Lammers, Park Technician; and a scavenger hunt by created by Ken Forney and Mike Younts. The students roasted hot dogs over the open fire for lunch.

In addition, several park improvements were completed. New signs were posted for the Bobcat and Paradise Valley trails.

An impressive new handicapped-accessible observation deck was dedicated by the Friends group, which initiated the project. The deck was designed by Korpela Engineering and constructed by Madison Construction. The project was funded by a \$40,000 grant from the Gilchrist Foundation, a \$15,000 donation from Bill and Sara Blackburn, and other donations from Barbara Gardner, Mary Carlson, Ann Wederquist, Cherine Bishara, and the Jean Blackburn Memorial. Volunteers assisting with the event included Sara Blackburn, Mike Blackburn, Greg and Bonnie Pierce, Luke Forney, Dustin Brake, Greg Jones, Dale Stephens, Glenn Pollock, Brian Forney, and Sharon Nyquist.



Ken Forney, Mike Blackburn, Wyatt Smith, Bella Gute, and Hannah Wilson



Marlowe Wilson and Shanti Langille



Fremont-Mills Tenth-grade Biology Class

Blackburn State Park, located at 1292 Cemetery Road northeast of Thurman, IA, is the state's newest park. It welcomed over 5,000 visitors last year.

The Friends of the Park will be hosting a volunteer weekend in September and another Earth Day event next April. If you'd like to join the Friends group, please contact Sharon Nyquist (sharon.nyquist@outlook.com).

Tax-deductible donations to Friends of Blackburn State Park may be made at the Glenwood State Bank at Tabor or online by Googling "Blackburn State Park-Golden Hills".