

WEBSTER COUNTY WATER TRAILS



LIZARD CREEK WATER TRAIL
Lizard Creek is a "non-meandered" stream in Iowa law. That means that the State of Iowa owns the water flowing through it, but not the land adjacent to it or under it. That's all private land. Please respect it and don't trespass. Even though you can't get out or camp along this beautiful stream, there's plenty to see along the way!

DES MOINES RIVER WATER TRAIL
This whole stretch of river is amazingly beautiful. Officially designated a "meandered river", the state owns not only the water and the bottom of the river for the public, but also the shoreline to the high-water mark. Stopping along the river and camping on sandbars are permitted. In addition, much of the land adjacent to the river is also state-owned. Among the public holdings are Woodman Hollow State Preserve, Dolliver State Park, Brushy Creek State Recreation Area, and the Boone Forks Wildlife Management Area.

Fallen or low-hanging trees (strainers) can capsize boats and trap them under water. Avoid them.

WARNING! Low-head dams can trap and drown boaters. These dams can be difficult to see from upstream. Carry around all dams!

In case of emergency Call 911

Most of the land along the banks is private. Please respect private property.

Always check the weather before starting your trip.

Water levels change. Never paddling when the river is rising quickly or is at or near flood stage.

For more information, contact:

WEBSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION



Painted turtles may be seen basking on the logs, warming themselves in the sun and killing off the algae that may grow on their shells.



Check underneath the bridges you pass along the way for another incredible swallow architect, the cliff swallow. Using between 900 and 1200 pellets of mud for each nest, these birds glue their gourd-shaped nests under overhangs, keeping the rain from washing them away.



Soft sandstone bluffs and steep loess banks provide perfect spots for bank and rough-winged swallows to excavate their nests. Both live in holes in these banks, burrows that are from 12 to 48 inches deep into the bank! Watch them emerge, dive for a drink of water on the wing or soar back and forth across the river, catching insects in the air as they fly. They are sometimes joined by their cousins, the tree swallows, who nest in holes in trees along the banks, especially in more open areas along this stream.



Though you may be preoccupied in navigating the riffles, be sure to keep a look ahead, downriver, as you maneuver. Wildlife is lurking around every bend. Deer, woodchucks, and wild turkeys may be drinking at the water's edge. Raccoons may be "clamming" in the rocks, otters may be fishing in the pools, and wood ducks may be swimming in the shallows.

Lots of cobble and sand form bars on the inside edges of the stream and often in the middle. Killdeer and spotted sandpipers, both shorebirds, often "dance" among the rocks, searching for insects and other aquatic invertebrates to eat. The 4-foot high great blue heron also can be seen on these bars, waiting for unsuspecting fish or frogs for dinner. Their 6-foot wing span looks even larger as they fly in front of you down-river.



Below the Cunningham Access and the railroad trestle, the stream flows through a pasture for about three-quarters of a mile. Here the woodland gives way to a more savanna-like environment. Cattle can access the entire stream, wearing away banks and keeping the vegetation more open.

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KEY

- Recreational level
- Challenge level
- Caution Areas
- City/Town
- Public Land
- Roadways
- Access
- Dam
- Portage Trail
- Riffles/Rock dam
- Parking
- Water
- Restrooms
- Camping



Some trees fall into the current, get caught on some shoreline or mid-river sandbar providing hides for fish and turtles, and habitat for insects and spiders, and foraging areas for birds and otters.



As a result, the water is warmer and more turbid, and the resulting wildlife changes as well. Grackles and cowbirds are more typical, and bluebirds, a prairie species, may be seen here. With less cover, other types of wildlife are less common.