

# Conservation Corner

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This week Conservation is hosting its annual Jr. Naturalist Day Camp for young nature lovers. It's always fun watching young people enjoying, exploring, and learning more about our wonderful world. Who knows, perhaps there's a future science major, engineer, or even naturalist in this year's group of campers.

Our 2016 camp theme is Nature's Building Blocks. Our Thursday field trip will be a tour of Sean Kenney's LEGO® sculptures now on display at the Reimen Gardens in Ames. Just as LEGO® Bricks interconnect, the many bricks of nature interconnect to build the complex structure we call Planet Earth.

Are you a Lego fan? My family had an early set back in the sixties, red and white bricks with some doors and windows, if I remember right. Our older kids enjoyed playing with technic, castle, and Star Wars sets in the eighties. Today our son Luke teaches robotics with the help of Lego pieces while our grandkids visit Legoland on vacation. Lego pieces have been carried to the top of Mt. Everest, put in orbit around Jupiter, and even appear in the movies.

Yes, Lego's have come a long way since Ole Kirk Kristiansen opened a small carpenter's workshop in Denmark in 1932. He named his new company The Lego Group, an abbreviation of the Danish words "leg godt" which means to "play well." In Latin, *lego* means "I put together." Today his grandson Kjeld heads the international enterprise that is one of the largest toy makers in the world. Lego's have been named "Toy of the Century" – twice!

Last Monday I took time out from camp prep to meet the Alt family of Leesburg, Virginia, at the Wiegert Prairie Farmstead. Curt had contacted us earlier this summer about touring the farmstead and prairie on their way to visit family in Minnesota. Curt grew up in Ames and now works for the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., while Lara teaches high school English.

It was fun watching a new family enjoy, explore, and learn more about life in Iowa as we stepped back in time to a 19<sup>th</sup> century farm. With the drumming of woodpeckers and the buzzing of cicadas for background traffic noise, we explored the smoke house, barn, and crib, and sat in the wooden school desks and church pews. We ended the tour with a walk through Kalsow Prairie.

It was fun sharing local stories of asteroids, glaciers, and pioneer life while the Alt family shared a little of the Virginia history program where fourth graders take field trips to Jamestown and Williamsburg and attend class in a one-room country school-house much like Lincoln #5.

It was fun to be reminded of the many connections we share as Americans instead of focusing on the many issues now dividing our country. I was somewhat surprised at the many bricks we had in common – ties to family, agriculture, teaching, even to our namesake Pocahontas. A good start to the week - new friends and a renewed appreciation for our family, farming, and natural heritage right here in Pocahontas County.

