

# Conservation Corner

By Corinne Peterson  
Pocahontas County Naturalist



January 13, 2016

New Year's Day found many Iowans watching the Tournament of Roses Parade from Pasadena that celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the National Park Service. Will you "Find Your Adventure" at a national park in 2016?

In August of 1916, when Europe was entering the war to end all wars, President Woodrow Wilson signed a recently passed congressional act that created a National Park Service within the Interior Department. While America already had 14 national parks and 21 national monuments, a single agency was needed to manage, defend, and oversee any expansion. Today our National Park Service includes not only parks and monuments but also battlefields, forts, lakeshores, seashores, rivers, parkways, preserves, landmarks, and trails.

Our country's early parks were all set aside to protect the scenic wonders of the American West – natural cathedrals that could compete with the manmade cathedrals and monuments of old Europe. Yellowstone, set aside in 1872 before Wyoming gained statehood, was the first national park anywhere in the world. Other early parks include Yosemite (California, 1890), Wind Cave (South Dakota, 1903), Glacier (Montana, 1910), and Rocky Mountain (Colorado, 1915). Some of the early national monuments include Grand Canyon (Arizona, 1893), Devils Tower (Wyoming, 1906), Chaco Canyon (New Mexico, 1907), and Muir Woods (California, 1908).

Soon protection of living creatures also became part of the idea of national parks, specifically the American Bison in Yellowstone and the Sierra Redwoods in Yosemite. Today the goal of the National Park Service is simply to preserve nature in all its diversity and to tell America's story.

How many of America's stories, as told by the National Park Service, have you read? Some of our family's favorite scenes include Mount Rushmore, Devils Tower, and Yosemite. This year I encourage everyone to open a National Park Service book and walk a page of America's story. In total, there are over 400 volumes to choose from, including 59 National Park editions. Sounds like a good New Year's resolution – plan a visit to at least one national site and help celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the National Park Service.

But you don't have to travel across the country to keep the resolution. Did you know Iowa is home to four places under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service? We have one national park, Effigy Mounds National Monument along the Upper Mississippi River in northeast Iowa. We have one national historic site, the birthplace of Herbert Hoover in West Branch located just off I-80. We also have two national historic trails. The Mormon Pioneer Trail traverses southern Iowa from Fort Madison to Council Bluffs, while the Lewis & Clark Trail follows the Missouri River along our western border. Although the Lewis & Clark Trail crosses eleven states from Camp Dubois, Illinois, to the Pacific Ocean as it retraces the 1804-06 journey of the Corps of Discovery, it ranks second in length among historic trails. I'll save the longest trail's story for next week.

