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Padding professor to give talk on wildlife of urban waterways

In and along the rivers and creeks of Greater Des Moines is a hidden wealth of wildlife – the topic of the next speaker in The Tomorrow Plan 2016 Speaker Series.

Dr. Jim Pease, associate professor emeritus in the Natural Resource Ecology and Management department of Iowa State University, will give a talk titled “The Wild Life of Des Moines’ Urban Streams,” featuring the photos he took of plants and animals during a paddling exploration of nearly 150 miles of waterways in Greater Des Moines. His talk begins at 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 14, at the Raccoon River Nature Lodge, 2500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines. The event is free and open to the public; no registration is required.

“The Des Moines River is a surprisingly wild place in the midst of agriculture and urbanization,” Pease said, noting the presence of eagles, beavers, cliff swallows, and great blue herons. “Rivers are the only surviving ecosystem that is relatively intact in Iowa, if you compare them to prairies, savannahs or woodlands. They serve as habitat corridors and they are absolutely critical to the survival of species that live along the rivers.”

Pease paddled nearly 150 miles of rivers and creeks in the metro area to document wildlife for the Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Master Plan, which the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization is developing on the behalf of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Once developed, the plan will provide the region and local governments with a road-map for enhancing citizen experiences in and along the 150 miles of creeks and rivers. A draft plan is due out later this month.

For more information on the speaking event or the water trails plan, please call or email MPO staff at 515-334-0075 or info@dmampo.org.

The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series is an implementation strategy of The Tomorrow Plan, a plan for the sustainable development of Greater Des Moines, as a resource to community leaders to learn best practices from some of the country’s leading thinkers. The 2016 Speaker Series will touch on a wide range of topics related to creating a high quality of life in metropolitan areas, including the sharing economy, the effects of transportation and housing on public health, walkability, water quality, public transit and more. For more information, please visit www.dmampo.org/the-tomorrow-plan/2016-speaker-series/.

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) acts as a regional forum to ensure coordination between the public and local, state, and federal agencies in regard to planning issues and to prepare transportation plans and programs. The MPO develops both long- and short-range multimodal transportation plans, selects and approves projects for federal funding based upon regional priorities, and develops methods to reduce traffic congestion.