

Friends of the Wapsi Center Minutes
Thursday, Nov. 21, 2019
Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

Attendees: Naturalist Becky Baugh, seasonal naturalist Paige Ehrecke, Norm Nichols, Carol Rogers, Bill Robbins, Lucia Dryanski, Julie Ross, Jim Ross, and Joy Sheeley.

Treasurer Report: The current bank balance is \$14,309.86, with \$8,869.87 of that amount in checking, the remainder in CDs.

Staff news: 4H AmeriCorps member Faith Heinrich has begun her yearlong term, and has attended new member orientation. Wapsi Center director Dave Murcia has completed his annual pesticide training, and all staff members attended the Fall IAN workshop in Webster City. All staff received training for RecTrac, a new computer system that will be used for rental of cabins and other facilities.

Grounds: Only strawberry plants remain in the garden. A new hopper-style bird feeder has been installed at Red Tail Lodge. The feeder had been returned to Wild Bird Unlimited, which donated the feeder and a mounting pole to the Center.

Facilities: Work on the old dormitory continues. The heat is on indoors, and new Pella windows and an internet access line will soon be installed. The building's exterior will have gray siding and shakes, native stonework along the front base, and a native copper roof.

The Center has had several leaky water pipes lately. Hosts were asked to be alert for new leaks, and to alert the caretaker if a leak is seen or suspected.

Education: Onsite programs were given to 23 groups totaling 898 people this month, and off-site programs were given to 5 groups totaling 183 people. No programs were cancelled. Thirty-two people visited the Center.

We have a new tiger salamander, found scurrying across a snow bank by a Scott County Park ranger. The salamander's name is Winter.

We also have a new milk snake, one of a hibernating cluster found in a wall by someone doing home renovation. He took the snakes to the DNR, who offered the milk snake to the Center.

Old Business: Norm completed the Lyodellbasell grant application, and just learned that we have been awarded \$2,000. The money will be used to purchase trail and exhibit signage, as well as a bench for the river access trail. Becky recommended that a stone or concrete bench be purchased, and that it be placed at the top of the hill to prevent losing it in a flood.

Carol attended a Friends of Conservation Summit at Jester Park Nature Center in Polk County on Nov. 9. She said it offered lots of good ideas for membership recruitment and retention. We discussed things we could do to encourage more folks to participate, including sending welcome letters or thank you cards to people who join, offering bumper stickers or membership cards to new members, featuring new member profiles in the WREN, or scheduling workshops to teach new members to handle the Center animals. Carol will send some powerpoints from the workshop to Becky.

New Business:

We agreed to purchase four handcrafted cedar birdhouses at \$15 each for the gift shop. They will be sold for \$20. We also will purchase some nature-themed magnets for the gift shop. Lucia has donated some of her handmade candles for sale there as well.

We have deposited the \$400 endowment from Caroline Kimple at Wild Bird Unlimited to pay for winter bird feeding supplies. Four bags of seed have been purchased with those funds so far, with about half of the money remaining. We may also purchase one more bird feeder for the Kestrel Cabin. As of now, there are feeders at the Center, Red Tail Lodge, and the office.

Becky announced that Bald Eagle Days will take place Jan. 10-12, and invited group members to sign up for a shift if possible.

Dates have also been set for some February activities. Winter Fun day will be held on Feb. 1, Lucia may offer a candle-making workshop on Feb. 8, and the Great Backyard Bird Count workshop will be held on Feb. 15.

Volunteer Workday will be held on April 18.

The Center is still in need of newspapers for the bird cages.

Becky thanked hosts, program volunteers, and all who assisted with the Halloween activities.

The group will meet next at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, January 16 at the Eldridge Library. There is no December meeting.