

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Winter 2003

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

Wapsi Center Happenings

by Bob Bryant, Director

Fall Field Trip Attendance

Approximately 2,337 students, teachers and parents participated in Wapsi River Center field trips this fall. As expected, attendance is less than last year at this time. This is largely because two schools hold their school's ecology day every other year at the Wapsi Center. School ecology days usually involved the whole school (250 - 400 students, parents and teachers). We also lost two field trips due to the closing of Davenport's Jefferson School. Class sizes seem to be a little smaller also this year.

Winter schedules are ahead of last year at this time, and we are already getting requests for next spring. If you are a teacher and would like to schedule a field trip, we recommend that you call well in advance if possible. To set up a field trip, contact us at (563) 843-2855.

Don't let the cold and snow stop you from taking a field trip! The Wapsi River Center is a place for all seasons and offers numerous seasonal-oriented programs and activities.

Wapsi River Ecology Day

Ecology Day's weather was great. Over thirty people attended this year's ecology day. This year's theme was "taking a step back into Iowa's past". One highlight for the day was the life of a mountain man. People really liked trying their hand at hatchet throwing. A historical perspective of the Mississippi River and Iowa's Prehistoric Indian Culture were very popular, also. The

Quad Cities Astronomical Society's Eastern Iowa Star Party was held in conjunction with Ecology Day. Approximately 25 amateur astronomers attended the two-day star party.

Aquatic Lab Update

More aquatic life has been showing up in the former swimming pool, which has been converted into a frog pond for aquatic studies. Six species of frogs (cricket, chorus, grey tree, green, northern leopard and bullfrog) and the American toad have used our newly created frog pond. To our surprise, we found 38 small carp swimming around in the pool. We don't know for sure how they got there, and definitely don't want them. Fish in a pond or wetland can be a limiting factor on amphibian populations. We haven't seen as many of the carp lately. Maybe the kingfisher that has been seen at the pool has gotten some of them.



The shower house, which is being converted into an aquatic lab, has had the exterior painted, windows repaired and new doors installed. The Clinton County Conservation Board is going to re-shingle the roof next spring.

Eagles Are Back

The third week of October, an adult bald eagle was seen at the Wapsi River Center. On most occasions, the eagles return to the night roost from 3:30 P.M. to dusk. As many as 50 eagles have been observed at one time on the roost. It is located within 250 ft. of the Eagle View Eco Center. Spotting scopes are available for indoor public viewing when the Center is open. Please be quiet when approaching the Eco Center!! **Winter hours for the Eco Center and its displays are Saturdays, 1-5 P.M., now through March. Admission is free.**

In Appreciation of Your Support of the Wapsi River Center

Ron Diess	Carol Rogers
Stan Bates	Dan Wild
Preston Durcan	Judy Wick
Bernie Peters	Dave Huber
Jean Wistedt	Warren Wiese
Betty Hagge	Jerry Wala
Carl Gerwulf	Connie Huber
Jeanne Bryant	Marilyn Davis
K. J. Rebarcak	Erma Wiszmann
Libby Platt	Justin Levetzow
Dottie Wala	Tom Deckert
Michael Overstake	
Claudia Vierneisel & Chastity	
Wilson Elementary 1 st & 2 nd Grades	
Francis Willard 4 th , 5 th & 6 th Grades	
Bettendorf 6 th Grade - Houses 1, 2 & 3	

The staff of the Wapsi River Center would like to apologize for any inconvenience resulting from the mailing of the Fall 2002 newsletter.

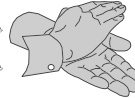
We experienced technical difficulties in mailing the newsletter. It's a possibility that some did not receive one, received one at an old address, or received one previously refused.



If you still did not receive a fall newsletter and would like to, please let us know and we will be happy to mail one to you directly.

Congratulations!

Anda Livek of Galva, IL, was the winner of the quilted wall hanging of native Iowa birds (created by Erma Wiszmann and raffled off at Ecology Day 2002).



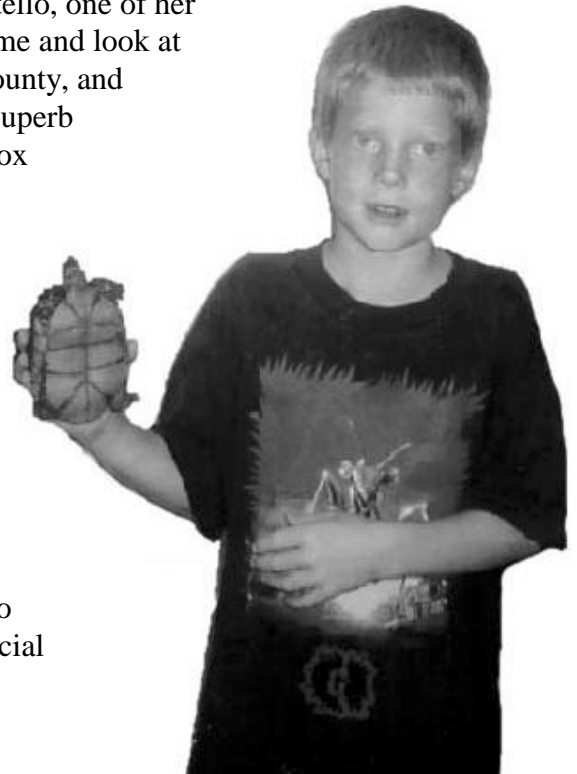
Patrick's Exciting Discovery!

by Michael Granger, Naturalist

Shortly after school started this fall, I received a call from Mrs. Farber-Sherman, a 3rd grade teacher at John Glenn Elementary in Donahue, Iowa. She said that Patrick Costello, one of her students, had brought in a turtle, and she wanted someone to come and look at it. Patrick discovered the turtle on his farm in northern Scott County, and the turtle had been delighting the classroom with its antics and superb worm-eating ability. The turtle turned out to be a male ornate box turtle, *Terrapene ornata*.

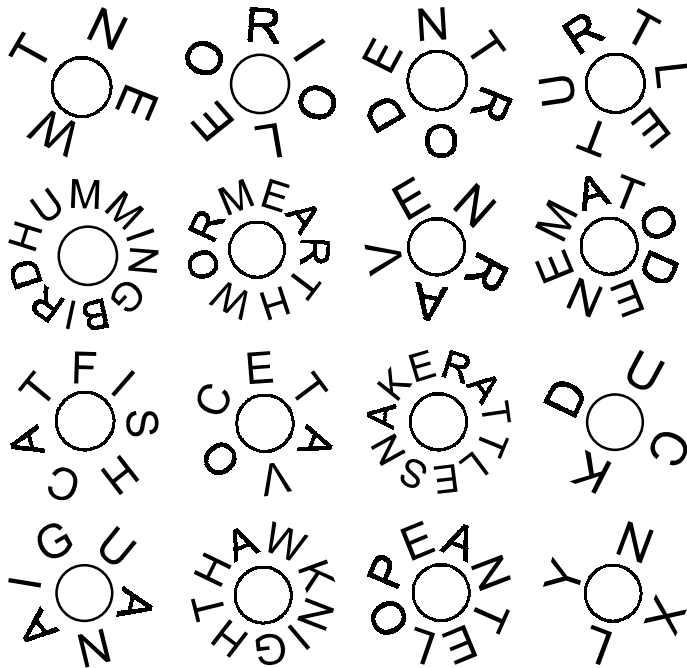
The ornate box turtle is found in sandy areas of eastern Iowa and in the Loess Hills of western Iowa. It is Iowa's only land-dwelling turtle. The ornate box turtle is threatened in Iowa and declining in numbers, so Patrick's turtle had to be released. After several photographs of Patrick and the turtle were taken, careful instructions were given so Patrick could release the turtle exactly where it was found.

It can definitely be said that Patrick and his 3rd grade class had a wonderful learning experience. The final question might be who will remember it more, Mrs. Farber-Sherman's class or their special friend, the ornate box turtle?



Kids' Column

This issue's kids' column revolves around a winter resident. The solution is in two parts. First, you must solve the puzzle below to learn its name. To do that, figure out what animal name surrounds each circle. When you've figured out the animal, write the first letter of its name in the circle.



Second, gather some colored pencils and color in the picture below according to the color key.



- | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------------|
| 1 - brown | 4 - orange | 7 - blue |
| 2 - dark red | 5 - tan | 8 - white/silver |
| 3 - black | 6 - yellow | 9 - red |

Living Green.. by Renne Lietz

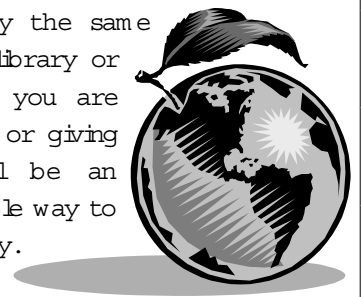
With the approach of another wonderful and unpredictable Iowa winter, it is often a good time to curl up with a good book. Why not read more about your environment?

If you are interested in learning more about our Iowa ecology, Richard Manning's Grassland, The History, Biology, Politics and Promise of the American Prairie is excellent. Another of my favorites on the prairie is John Madsen's Where the Sky Began. Madsen's book, Up on the River, has a lot of local Mississippi River lore. James Dinsmore's, A Country So Full of Game, explores the history of wildlife in Iowa; while, Sylvan T. Runkel's books on the Wildflowers of Iowa are a must for gardeners, hikers or anyone interested in native plants. And don't forget about field guides – there is a topic to interest everyone from several excellent publishers.

Many writers have explored the connection between faith and nature, including Jane Goodall's Reason for Hope and Wendell Berry's Life is a Miracle. Bill Bryson's A Walk in the Woods will have you laughing out loud and lacing up your hiking boots. John Muir's Nature Writings and Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac are wonderful collections of short stories about the natural world.

For a different viewpoint, try Lester Brown's Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth, or Frances Moore Lappe's Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet. Your Money or Your Life, by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robins, is an excellent resource on living a simpler financial life. Of course, the classic environmental impact book, Silent Spring, by Rachel Carson, changed the way we think about our environment. It has been called the most important book of the twentieth century.

These are just a few suggestions. You can find many of these, or others by the same authors, in your local library or bookstore. Whether you are reading them yourself, or giving as a gift, they will be an informative and enjoyable way to spend a cold winter's day.

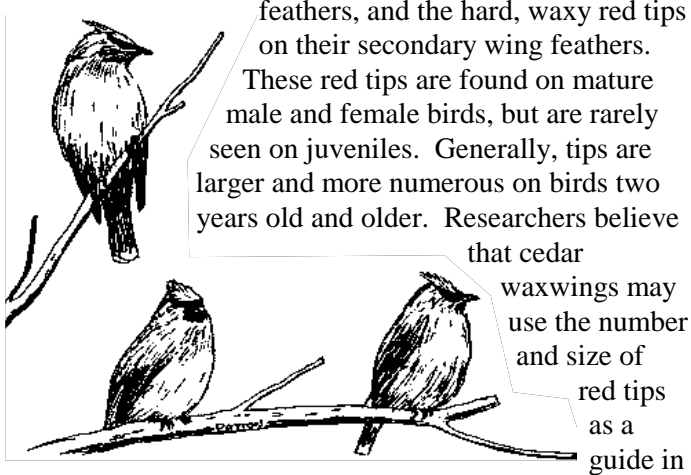


Wildlife Profile ~ Cedar Waxwing

by Danielle Schaffert, AmeriCorps Naturalist

On a raw and dreary day in late October, the greenbriar and Red Osier dogwood near our brush pile hosted a hungry flock of cedar waxwings (*Bombycilla cedorum*). Observing these birds lifted my spirits for a couple of reasons. First, I'm not an expert birder, so it always pleases me when I can correctly identify something more exotic than a blue jay. Second, their arrival did wonders for the atmosphere on that bleak afternoon. Their high, lispy *tsee* (likened to a mouse's snore) softened the harsh air; their distinctive markings added a bit of color and warmth to the scene. And they just seemed to be having such a great time stuffing their beaks that I couldn't help but enjoy myself, too, as I piled brush in their midst.

Cedar waxwings are easy to recognize if they happen to move through your area. Look for a sleek bird, smaller than a robin, with brown feathers above and muted yellow feathers below. Waxwings have a crested head with black-masked eyes. They are most easily identified by a bright yellow band across the tips of their tail



feathers, and the hard, waxy red tips on their secondary wing feathers. These red tips are found on mature male and female birds, but are rarely seen on juveniles. Generally, tips are larger and more numerous on birds two years old and older. Researchers believe that cedar waxwings may use the number and size of red tips as a guide in

selecting mates of their own age. It seems that waxwings become better parents through experience since individuals with lots of large red tips are able to successfully raise more baby birds than individuals with fewer, smaller tips. Among cedar waxwings, therefore, attractiveness to the opposite sex definitely increases with age!

Another characteristic that makes cedar waxwings easy to identify is their tendency to travel in big, round flocks of a few to several hundred lazily swirling birds. Each flock ranges far and wide in search of berries and other fruits, resulting in an erratic distribution throughout their

range. These birds are widely distributed in North America, with a breeding range extending from British Columbia at its northwestern corner and Cape Breton Island at its northeastern corner, south to Georgia, Arkansas and California. The birds over-winter from New England (NE) and British Columbia (NW) to Panama and the Greater Antilles. Cedar waxwings nest in Iowa and are present throughout the year. They are far more abundant, however, as migrants in the fall (late September - late November) and spring (late February - early May) than they are as over-winterers or summer nesters. Cedar waxwings are most often found in abandoned orchards, open woodlands, parks and cedar groves, where they feed on fruit and the occasional flying insect. They do not frequent bird feeders.

The life of these social birds is a travelling dinner party that never seems to end. Everyday, a cedar waxwing must eat three times its weight in berries in order to gain sufficient nutrition from its watery diet. This high demand for food doesn't seem to produce selfish, greedy birds. On the contrary, it's common to see several waxwings sitting in a row generously passing a berry from one bird to the next until a member of the group finally accepts and eats the food. Cedar waxwings are known to over-indulge on occasion. Sometimes several birds are left behind when the flock moves on because their wings are unable to support the extra weight of their huge, undigested meal. The over-eaters manage to catch up after they've digested their food.

A bird may be in for a longer layover if it gorges itself on berries that have begun to ferment. A few years ago, an entire flock of cedar waxwings became inebriated during a stopover at one exceptionally ripe Iowa City berry tree. By the time Animal Control Officers arrived at the scene, roughly fifty birds had flown into the glass windows of a nearby convenience store, thirty birds clung unsteadily to the berry tree, and forty more lay passed out on the ground.

"The bar is closed for the night," said Officer Chris Whitmore as she tied a tarp over the tree.

I'm willing to bet that we're in for quite a few more raw and dreary days before summer rolls around once again. I hope some of your gray days will be brightened by the cheerful gentility of cedar waxwings...when the travelling dinner party comes to a park near you.

Plant Profile ~ Wahoo

By Stephanie Byers, AmeriCorps Naturalist

On a recent educational hike out here behind the nature center, we happened upon an unknown shrub with very interesting berries. A shrub at this location had gone unnoticed for years, and it was only with the spectacular fall colors and fruit that our attention drew us to identify it as “wahoo” or “burning bush.”

Wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*) is a shrub or low tree belonging to the Celastraceae, or staff tree family, along with climbing bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) and the bladdernut tree (*Staphylia trifolia*).



To recognize the shrub when not flowering or fruiting, look for opposite leaves, twigs and buds. The leaves are from 2- to 5-inches long and egg-shaped, tapering at both ends, with pointed tips and finely toothed margins. One might at first think of dogwood, but dogwood leaves are barely, if at all, toothed. From above, wahoo leaves are bright green, and pale and hairy underneath.

The bark is thin, smooth and gray, while twigs are purplish-green, turning to brown later. On the twigs, the lenticels (pores) are pale and obvious.

Wahoo flowers in late April to June in clusters of 7 to 15 from the axils of the leaves. The flowers are purple to maroon with four petals, and are “imperfect”. The flowers of one tree are of one sex, so two trees of opposite sexes are necessary for fruits to develop on the female tree.

The fruits appear in autumn, and this is when these nondescript shrubs gain the spotlight. The fruits have been likened to Oriental lanterns, hanging in delicate scarlet brilliance. Each fruit is a capsule of four deep lobes about half an inch across, purple- to rose-colored, and splitting to reveal crimson seeds.

The range of wahoo extends from northern Alabama to east Texas, north to northern New York and west to Ontario, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming. It is locally uncommon, but still observable in our area. There are at least three locations found at the Wapsi River Center. Habitat preferences include wooded slopes, bluffs, open woods and thickets, and alluvial soils along streams.

The unique name is typical of an American plant with a history of human use; it is derived from a Dakotan Indian word and was used by Native Americans to treat various conditions. A solution of the inner bark was drunk to relieve uterine problems and applied as an eye lotion. Native Americans also used the powdered bark as tobacco and the strong wood for arrows. Early settlers came to appreciate the bark as a liver stimulant and laxative, and the plant became popular in Europe, as well, in the 19th century. An oil from the seed was used to treat head lice on both sides of the Atlantic.

In modern times, its cathartic nature has been exploited as a gallbladder remedy, liver conditioner and eczema treatment. The bark has been found to contain cardenolides (cardiac glycosides) related to digitoxin, alkaloids, sterols and tannins, and so has been used as a treatment for heart conditions. Having described such carminative properties, it should be noted that the bark is toxic and not to be used without professional supervision. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration lists a close relative, the spindletree (*Euonymus europaeus*), as unsafe due to its violent laxative properties.

Of course, where there is a human use, there is usually a wildlife use. The fruit persists on the stems for some time, extending into winter, and serving as food for many species of birds, including wild turkey. The leaves and stems are used as browse for white-tailed deer and cottontail rabbits.

As we head into winter, I hope we all have a chance to see these humble yet remarkable little trees adorned with their miniature lanterns. I am always amazed at nature’s expression of grace and beauty in such subtle little ways.



December



7th ~ Bird Hike ~ 9:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Participants should dress for the weather and bring binoculars as we venture out in search of the various birds inhabiting the Wapsi River Center's woodlands during the winter. Participants

will end the morning by making homemade suet.

Participants are asked to meet at the Eagle View Eco Center and **BYOM - bring your own mug.**

7th - 9th ~ Park Closed ~ All Day ~ Scott County Park ~ Scott County Park will be closed for the controlled deer hunt.

13th ~ Snowmobile Safety Course ~ 4:00 - 8:00 P.M. ~ Grand Mound, CCCB Meeting Room ~ It is required by law that anyone ages 12 through 17 must possess a Snowmobile Safety Certificate before operating a snowmobile on public lands or lands purchased with snowmobile registration funds. Participants **MUST** pre-register for this course, preferably before December 6; contact John Hoker, Eastern Iowa Snowriders, at (563) 374-1348 or Steve at (563) 374-3160.



14th ~ Bald Eagle Observation ~ 3:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ The Wapsi River Center's Eagle View Eco Center gets its name from the American bald eagles that congregate just outside the building on winter nights. There will be a slide show on the bald eagles while waiting for their arrival. People can sit inside in the warmth of the Eco Center, sipping hot chocolate (**BYOM**) and observing the eagles as they vie for position on the night roost.



15th & 17th ~ Christmas Bird Counts ~ 6:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M. ~ Mark your calendars, songbird enthusiasts! The Quad City Audubon Society conducts these yearly censuses to keep tabs on our feathered friends. **15th - Quad Cities, 17th - Lost Nation**

(CCCB-sponsored), **TBA** (watch local media) - Clinton. If you can help with any of these counts, either by joining a field party or watching your feeder, please call Kelly McKay at (309) 755-6731.

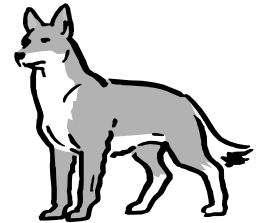


Winter

January

4th ~ Bald Eagle Watch ~ 8:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. ~ Clinton Community College ~ Speakers, exhibits and parking will be at the Clinton Community College. The exhibits and speakers will be there from 9:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M. Courtesy transportation will be provided by MTA from the college to the viewing sites along the Mississippi River. Participants should dress for the weather and bring binoculars. For more information, call Jim Kelley at (815) 259-3628.

4th ~ Family Dogsledding ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Teach your dogs to pull their weight and then some! Join AmeriCorps naturalist Stephanie Byers for an introduction to family- and pet-friendly dogsledding. Bring your dogs, leashes, sleds, 10-ft. rope for each sled, kids and mugs for hot cocoa. We will supply sledding harnesses, doggy biscuits and hot drinks. Please call (563) 843-2855 to pre-register and **wear warm clothes!**



11th & 12th ~ Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days ~ The Quad Cities Conservation Alliance, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Army Corps of Engineers are sponsoring this huge event. There will be a wildlife art show, information booths, and of course, viewing of our national bird, the American bald eagle. The event is held at the QCCA Expo Center at 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, from 10:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. on Saturday, January 11, and 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 12. **Visit Us!!**

16th ~ Cross-Country Ski Outing ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Mockridge Preserve ~ Sign up to borrow the Clinton County Conservation Board's equipment, or bring your own, for ski excursions around the wonders of Mockridge. Call (563) 847-7202 to register.



Events

18th ~ Ice Fishing Tournament ~ 7:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina and Campground ~ R&R Sports, Clinton Herald and Rock Creek Marina sponsor this great Mississippi River event. Cash prizes for biggest catches and many door prizes from local merchants will be offered. Cost is \$12.00 per two-person team. Bait is available at the Camp Store, as well



as food, refreshments and licenses. Pre-register by visiting or calling R&R Sports at (563) 243-4696.

- 7:00 - 8:00 A.M. ~ Registration
- 8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. ~ Fishing
- 1:00 - 1:30 P.M. ~ Weigh In
- 1:30 - 2:00 P.M. ~ Prizes & Awards

19th ~ Snowmobile Radar Run ~ Noon - 4:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~ The Scott County Sno-Seekers snowmobile club will once again hold this annual event on the backwater ice at Rock Creek Marina, ice permitting. Anyone is welcome to race their snowmobile against a radar gun. Minimum donation is \$1.00 per run, with all proceeds going to the Spina Bifida Foundation of Iowa. The club also holds a wheelie contest. Hot food, drinks and snacks will be available for purchase on-site. Spectators are welcome. Call Cliff Voss at (563) 386-0419 for more information.



25th ~ Cross-Country Ski Clinic ~ 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ Eagle Point Park ~ Come out and enjoy a wintry day with the family! An informational cross-country ski clinic will begin at 9:00 A.M. at the main lodge. Skis and snowshoes will be available for use from 10:30 A.M. - Noon. Eagle Point Park is located off Highway 67 and North 3rd Street at the north end of Clinton. Contact the Clinton County Conservation office to reserve a set of skis, (563) 847-7202.

February

1st ~ Winter Fun Day ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come to the Wapsi River Center for a fun-filled day of winter activities.



This is an event the whole family can enjoy, so plan to come out and discover winter at its best. A limited number of skis and snowshoes are available, so please call to reserve equipment (563) 843-2855. **BYOM - Bring your own mug.**

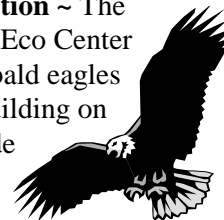
* **9:00 A.M. ~ Cross-Country Ski Clinic ~** Bob Bryant, Wapsi River Center Director, will teach participants about proper skiing techniques, safety and equipment. Participants may bring their own equipment.

* **12:30 P.M. ~ Snowshoe Nature Hike ~** Join Greg Wolf, Clinton County Naturalist, on this excursion into the Wapsi River Center's woodlands. We will be traveling the way of the Native Americans and early pioneers, looking for signs of life in the still winter woods.



* **2:00 P.M. ~ Winter Survival ~** Join Lisa Gerwulf, Wapsi River Center Naturalist, and gain insight on how to survive what nature throws our way this winter. Participants will have the opportunity to test their survival I.Q. and gain valuable experience through demonstrations.

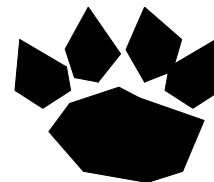
* **3:30 P.M. ~ Bald Eagle Observation ~** The Wapsi River Center's Eagle View Eco Center gets its name from the American bald eagles that congregate just outside the building on winter nights. There will be a slide show on the bald eagles while waiting for their arrival.



* **7:00 P.M. ~ Frostbite Star Party ~** Winter is a great time for astronomy. The sky is never clearer than on cold, sparkling winter nights. The winter constellations center around Orion, the Great Hunter. In the sword hanging from Orion's Belt, one can find the Orion Nebula which is one of the most spectacular objects to be seen through a telescope. The St. Ambrose University's Menke Astronomical Observatory is the location; park in lot A.



8th ~ Snowshoe Tracking ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Mike Granger, Wapsi River Center Naturalist, as he takes participants on a stroll through the Wapsi woods. While making tracks of their own, via snowshoes, participants will have the opportunity



to search for animal tracks and other signs of animal activity in this winter wonderland. **BYOM**

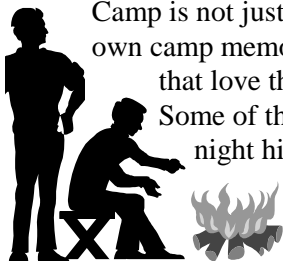
11th ~ Birdhouse Workshop ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center

~ You can build your own bluebird, wren, bat, robin, kestrel or woodduck nest box from a kit to provide for wildlife in your world. You will also learn about placement and maintenance of the boxes. The kits will be available for a small donation to cover materials. Fees are \$5.00 for a wren, robin or bluebird, \$7.00 for a bat house and \$20.00 for woodduck and kestrel boxes. You must call (563) 847-7202 before February 7 to order your kits. **BYOM**



15th & 16th ~ Winter Camp for Adults ~ 2:00 P.M. (Sat.) - 11:00 A.M. (Sun.) ~ Wapsi River Center

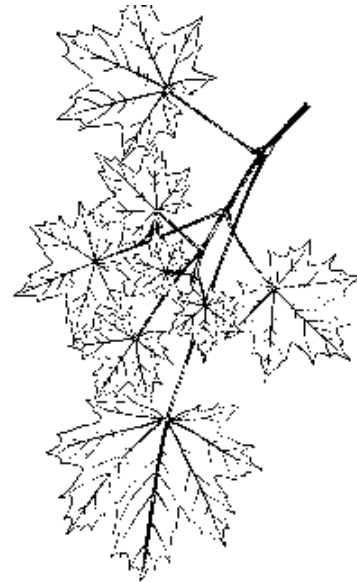
Camp is not just for kids anymore. Create your own camp memories and make some new friends that love the outdoors as much as you do! Some of the featured activities will include: night hike with owl calling, music around the fireplace, live birds of prey, eagle watching, games, birding, reptile handling, snowshoeing *,



cross-country skiing * and astronomy * (* weather permitting). Cost is \$20.00 per person, which includes lodging in the Owl's Nest Dormitory and meals. Pre-registration is required; call (563) 847-7202.

22nd ~ Maple-Syruping Demonstration ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center

~ Join Tom Green as he discusses the history and procedure of tapping trees for syrup. Handouts and where to find tapping equipment will be provided to participants. Please call (563) 843-2855, if you are interested in attending.



M a r c h

1st ~ Maple-Syruping Demonstration ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center

~ Due to the popularity of this program and nature's unpredictability, Tom Green will be conducting another maple-syruping demonstration. Please call (563) 843-2855, if you are interested in attending.

What's New at the Wapsi River E. E. Center?

by Greg Wolf, Naturalist

In recent years, the Wapsi River Center has made wonderful strides to add new exhibits, public programs and curriculum for our school visitors. We have added such things as the trumpeter swan exhibit, a full-mount of a deer, the addition of several other mounts, a worm bin and vermiculture lesson, a stream table and converted a swimming pool into a frog pond.

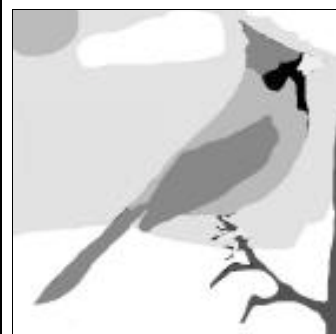
Once again, we are adding something new and exciting to our list of "Things We Do". After a long and strenuous planning and construction period, our teams course is completed! You are probably wondering what a teams course is and what it is used for? Well, in short, the teams course is a permanent, team-building program that includes physical elements that work on communication, problem solving and group dynamics. Our focus audience is school groups, youth groups, businesses and other organizations. The course is led by trained staff and can only be conducted by this staff. Many of the elements can be altered to focus on environmental issues, and the participating group can create possible solutions.

We are excited to get this teams course off the ground! This spring, the teams course will be opened for the first time. Keep your eyes open for a full-page article in the spring newsletter. If your group is interested in running through the course, call the Wapsi River Center at (563) 843-2855 to schedule a time.

Answer's to Kids' Column

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Newt | Catfish |
| Oriole | Avocet |
| Rodent | Rattlesnake |
| Turtle | Duck |
| Hummingbird | Iguana |
| Earthworm | Nighthawk |
| Raven | Antelope |
| Nematode | Lynx |

NORTHERN CARDINAL



The Lost and Almost Lost

by Bob Bryant

Wapsi River E. E. Center, Director

In this installment of *The Lost And Almost Lost*, I was supposed to be starting the history of Iowa's prairie wildlife. Since this series started in the winter of 2002, there have been new developments in Iowa in regards to mountain lions, bears, bobcats and wolves. The following information is from a conference I attended last spring and information recently received through the e-mail mailing list of the Iowa Native Plant Society from the Iowa DNR.

According to DNR wildlife biologists, the reports of black bears, bobcats, wolves, and even mountain lions, have increased dramatically during the past several years. Although reminiscent of the 1800s pioneer era, the sightings of such fearsome predators in Iowa are not an aberration, but merely reflect what is already occurring in bordering states.

"During the past two years, we've received nearly a dozen separate reports of free-ranging mountain lions within Iowa borders," says DNR Furbearer Specialist, Ron Andrews.

Most lion sightings have been reported from southwest Iowa and the rugged, Loess Hills region of extreme western Iowa. A DNR wildlife biologist made a plaster cast a footprint from an animal sighted in Decatur County in southern Iowa. A female with two young, was reported twice near the southern Iowa community of Woodburn, in Clarke County. However, one sighting came from along the Des Moines River corridor near Dayton in Webster County. Personnel with the Webster County Conservation Board presented Andrews with a plaster casting of the animal's track. A roadkilled mountain lion in Jasper County had been declawed and probably was someone's pet or from a game farm. A mountain lion was killed by a motor vehicle on Highway 59 northwest of Harlan, in Shelby County, last year. The animal was an adult male in prime condition, measured nearly eight feet in length and weighed over 125 pounds. The only sighting (uncnfrmed) in eastern Iowa was from Cedar County.

"The fact that DNR biologists are receiving increased reports of cougar sightings really comes as no surprise," said Andrews. "I'm getting similar reports from biologists working in Nebraska, northern Missouri and southeastern South Dakota. Although no one can say for sure why it's happening, there is certainly a

wealth of circumstantial evidence that mountain lions are slowly expanding their range. Individual cats can travel a hundred miles or more without detection. I think we (biologists) are all convinced that at least a limited number of lions are currently moving in and out of the state."

In the brushy habitats of extreme western, southern and southeastern Iowa, bobcat populations are faring extremely well – so well, in fact, that the DNR is currently in the process of removing bobcats from the state's endangered species list.

"We have also had a handful of confirmed black bear sightings in Iowa during recent years," said Andrews. "Almost all of these have come from the extreme northeastern corner of the state, and I think that it's safe to speculate that these animals have moved down from Minnesota or across Mississippi River ice from Wisconsin. One female had two young, but we think she probably brought them with her. Although I wouldn't say for sure, I doubt we're seeing any reproduction on this side of the river. It is also possible that some of these animals may have escaped from game farm operations."

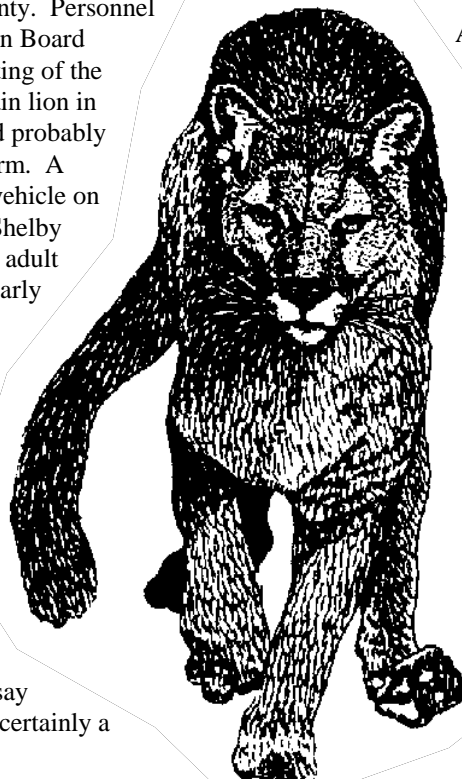
Andrews added that Arkansas black bears are currently expanding their range into Missouri. Given enough time, Missouri bears could eventually end up in the Mississippi River blufflands of southeastern Iowa.

There is also speculation – and at this point that's all it is- that gray (timber) wolves may have recently explored portions of extreme northeast Iowa. Gray wolves are being documented as far south as Winona, Minnesota. Wolves are also noted for long-distance movements, and employees with both the National Park Service and the DNR predict that at least a few stragglers will be leaving their tracks along northeast Iowa ridgetops within the next five or six years.

Andrews notes that wolves, lions and bears currently enjoy no legal protection in Iowa.

However, the DNR is becoming interested in providing the species with "furbearer status" which would allow them the same considerations granted to other Iowa mammals.

"What this does not mean is that it's time to grab your babies and run for cover. Iowans will always retain the right to protect life, limb or property," said Andrews. "With the exception of bobcats, I doubt that we'll ever see any significant numbers of large predators in Iowa. Because of their secretive nature, there may be an occasional litter of young, but I think that they will be few and far between. All of these animals are generally regarded as wilderness species. But as civilization continues to advance, it is really amazing how adaptable they can be."



Forcing a Little Spring in to Winter

by Lisa Gerwulf, Assistant Naturalist



Lilac

Using plants to force a little spring into winter has been a practice of horticulturists the world over. If you think about it, the Rose Bowl Parade would have no theme if flowers could only bloom in the spring. Forcing bulbs has appealed to both expert and novice gardeners because of its simplicity, quickness and certainty of results. Flowering shrubs and trees can be forced as well.

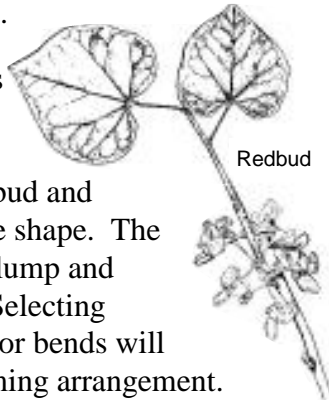


Forsythia

Once thoroughly moistened, stand the branches in a pail of water in a place where you can control the temperature. To ensure lustrous color, adequate size and longevity, 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit is best for the developing flowers. Direct sunlight is not advised. Placing the container in a cooler location at night will also help them last.

Start by selecting branches loaded with flower buds.

A simple way to tell the difference between a leaf bud and flower bud is to look at the shape. The flower bud will be more plump and rounded than a leaf bud. Selecting branches that have curves or bends will create an interesting blooming arrangement.



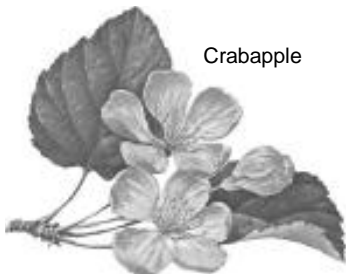
Redbud

This year, why not try a new hobby and force a little spring into winter? Just imagine, fresh flowers adorning every facet of your indoor living space while Jack Frost decorates the windowpanes.



Honeysuckle

Submerge the branches overnight in a deep pail or tub of water, or wrap them in a damp cloth and put them in a plastic bag for a few days. This will loosen the bud scales and allow them to fall off as the flowers expand.



Crabapple



Dogwood

Below is a list of shrub and tree species recommended by the state of Illinois Cooperative Extension for forcing:

Shrub or Tree	Time to Force	Comments
Forsythia	1 week	Many yellow flowers
Honeysuckle	3 weeks	Fragrant pink or white flowers
Wisteria	3 weeks	Blue-violet or white flower clusters
Bridal Wreath	4 weeks	Small white flowers in "sprays", double flowers last longer
Lilac	4 weeks	Fragrant lilac, blue, purple or white flowers
Redbud	2 weeks	Dark branches, small magenta-pink flowers
Magnolia	3 weeks	Large cream-white to deep red flowers, easy to force
Crabapple	4 weeks	White, pink or red flowers in clusters, singles easier to force
Buckeye	5 weeks	White pyramidal flower clusters
Flowering Dogwood	5 weeks	Large white flowers, long-lasting



GREETINGS & SALUTATIONS

Hello, everyone; my name is Stephanie Byers and I'd like to introduce myself as one of the new AmeriCorps naturalists. I grew up in rural Bettendorf, often hiking out here with my family and later by myself. I feel fortunate that we have a place like the Wapsi River Center in Scott County, and was excited to learn of an opportunity to continue here after completing an internship this past summer. I graduated from the University of Iowa this past August, with a bachelor of science degree in biology, with an emphasis on ecology. My career goals include: continuing in the environmental sciences, possibly going on to graduate school and doing what I can to preserve and protect our natural world. I look forward to the upcoming year; so far, it has been truly wonderful working with the knowledgeable staff and meeting the many visitors. Please come and say hello.

Hi, there! I'm Danielle Schaffert, a new AmeriCorps naturalist at the Wapsi River Center. I've been on the job since the end of September, and I'm having a blast! I feel very fortunate to be able to visit such an attractive and diverse natural area each day, learn interesting new facts and skills and pass that knowledge on to our school groups and visitors. I grew up in Davenport and received a bachelor of science degree in animal ecology from Iowa State University. I spent a couple years in Oregon, studying forest insects and pathogens at Oregon State University, before deciding to move back home to be nearer to my family and the big, beautiful Mississippi. I currently live in Davenport with my husband, Todd. I'm very happy to be back in the area, and I'm looking forward to watching the seasons change at the Wapsi River Center.



W in ter S ports

W apsi R iver E . E . C enter

The Center's 1.5 miles of groomed cross-country ski trails provide the perfect opportunity for wildlife viewing. Cross-country ski and snowshoe equipment is available during Center hours on Saturdays from 1-5 P.M., free of charge.

S cott C ounty P ark

The park's 4 miles of cross-country trails provide a journey rich in scenery. The trails are not groomed; however, they will be cleared of debris.

W est L ake P ark

Trails are open to cross-country skiing; however, they are not groomed. The park's four lakes are the perfect location for the ice-fishing enthusiast. Be sure to check ice conditions before venturing out!



Volunteers Needed at Bald Eagle Days!!

The Quad City Bald Eagle Days at the Q.C.C.A. Expo Center is quickly approaching, and we need volunteers to help man the Wapsi River Center booth. Below is a list of times, how many individuals are needed and what day your assistance is needed. Call (563) 843-2855 to volunteer.

Saturday, January 11

9:30 - 11:00 A.M.	1 person
11 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.	2 people
1:00 - 3:00 P.M.	2 people
3:00 - 5:00 P.M.	2 people
5:00 - 7:00 P.M.	2 people

Sunday, January 12

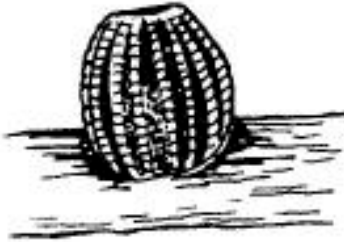
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Painted Lady Butterfly Egg

For All Seasons

The Wapsi River Environmental Education Center is a joint project between the Scott and Clinton County Conservation Boards. "The W.R.E.N." is published quarterly by the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and the Scott County Conservation Board.

Scott County Conservation Board

Members:

John "Skip" O'Donnell	Rich Mohr
Leone Bredbeck	Gene Weis
Carol Fennelly	

Director:

Roger Kean

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Scott County Conservation Board
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Mike Granger, Naturalist
Lisa Gerwulf, Assistant Naturalist

Clinton County:

Mark Roberts, E. E. Coordinator
Greg Wolf, Interpretative Naturalist

Mailing List

If you would like to receive "The W.R.E.N." free of charge, please send a post card to the Wapsi River E. E. Center at the address above.

The Scott County Conservation Board in the provision of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes they have been subject to discrimination, they may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Scott County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington D.C. 20240.