

# The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Fall 2003

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

[www.scottcountyia.com/conservation/wapsi.htm](http://www.scottcountyia.com/conservation/wapsi.htm)

The Wapsi River Center is owned, managed and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board with programming and development assistance from the Clinton County Conservation Board.

## The Lost and Almost Lost

by Bob Bryant

Wapsi River E. E. Center, Director

*The Lost and Almost Lost* is a series of articles on Iowa's game animals and how they have fared during the settlement of Iowa. The series is based on "A Country So Full of Game" by James Dinsmore (1994). This book is a comprehensive history of the interaction of man with Iowa's wildlife. Find out what species of wildlife we have lost, what species we could lose, and what species were lost but reintroduced.

The tallgrass prairie once covered much of Iowa and Illinois. Tall grasses such as big bluestem and Indian grass were the dominant grasses, along with prairie wildflowers such as compass plant and blazing star. In drainageways and wet depressions, lowland prairies became home to a variety of moisture-adapted plants. Lowland prairies are dominated by prairie chordgrass and a wide variety of sedges (grass-like plants). Flowers are not as prevalent on sedge meadows as on tallgrass prairies. Flowers such as swamp milkweed and blue flag (wild iris) are commonly found in sedge meadows. Before tiling, many of the sedge meadows were too wet to farm. They were often pastured and cut for hay. These areas were commonly referred to as wild hayfields.

Even though Iowa and Illinois were dominated by tallgrass prairie, other types such loess hill, hill, limestone and prairie savanna are found. In western Iowa along the Missouri River and a few locations along the Illinois River, loess hill prairies can be found. These prairies are a mixture of both tall and short grass prairie species. Loess hills were formed over time as windblown soil, called loess, was deposited. The rugged and steep loess hills of western Iowa contain the largest area of remaining Iowa prairie. The Loess Hills,

dominating the bluffs along Iowa's western border, are a nationally recognized land formation. Natural slumping of the steep slopes have marked them with characteristic horizontal benches known as "catsteps". Little bluestem dominates the loess hills prairies, along with other grasses such as side-oats. Many of the plants found in the Loess Hills are not as common or found elsewhere in Iowa and Illinois. Plants such as yucca, large flowered beardstongue, skeleton weed and prairie moonwort fern probably came in from the semi-arid west.

Hill prairies are small islands of grassland surrounded by woodland. Like the loess hills, they are found in rugged terrain and have well-drained soils. Hill prairies are more common in the eastern part of Iowa, especially in the driftless area of northeast Iowa. These prairies are sometimes referred to as goat prairies. They are often somewhat dry and contain both tall and mid-sized grasses. Some hill prairies can be found locally, but have been taken over by trees or destroyed by grazing.

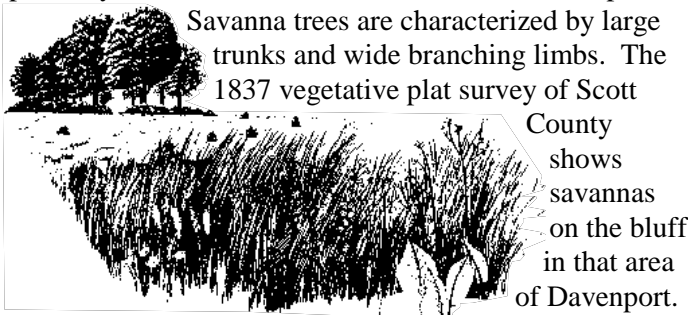
Along portions of Iowa's and Illinois' rivers, sand prairies were found. The sand prairies are composed of river and windblown sand deposits. Some of these areas were too dry to farm and can be found scattered throughout the states of Iowa and Illinois. Because of their dry nature, they have some of the same plants found on the loess hills. Because of their arid conditions some sand prairie escaped the plow. These remnants are the most frequently encountered prairies in our immediate area.

The Big Sand Mound (located in Louisa and Muscatine Counties) is one of the largest and best examples in eastern



Iowa. On the Illinois side of the river, there are several sand prairies between Fulton and Thomson. The largest tract of sand prairie in the area is the one located within the former Savannah Army Depot. Even though many sand prairies escaped the plow, many were lost in the 1950s & 60s due to tree plantings (especially pine trees).

Prairie savannas are composed of a mixture of grassland and woody plants. Savannas occurred as islands out on the open prairie or along wooded river valleys where the woods and prairie intermingled. One of the major trees found on savannas was the bur oak. Because of its thick bark, the bur oak was able to withstand the hot prairie fires, which occasionally roared across the prairie. Very few savannas survived, since many settlements were founded under the shade of the bur oaks and other savanna trees. One of the best savannas to survive in Iowa is located just north of Interstate 80 near Rochester, IA, in the Rochester Cemetery. Locally, a small tallgrass prairie remnant remains on the hillside below the Fairmount Cemetery mausoleum in Davenport, IA. There is one very large oak tree in the cemetery, which is probably a savanna tree because of its size and shape.



Savanna trees are characterized by large trunks and wide branching limbs. The 1837 vegetative plat survey of Scott County shows savannas on the bluff in that area of Davenport.

Located across the river from the Wapsi River Center is Sherman Park. The northern part of Sherman is very sandy. Even though the area is mostly wooded, some small remnants of sand prairie remain. The woods are a mixture of prairie and woodland species. This area was probably a sand prairie savanna at one time. Many of the savannas that developed along the prairie and woodland edge through succession were destined to become woodlands.

Fire played a major role in preserving the health and diversity of prairies. Many western ranchers in the 1800s recognized the value of fire in managing rangeland. However, nothing was more frightening to early settlers than a large prairie fire sweeping across the open prairie like a herd of buffalo. Native Americans referred to the fast-moving prairie fires as “the red buffalo”. Controlled prairie burns are a major tool used in modern-day prairie management, especially to help stop the encroachment of woody vegetation onto a prairie.

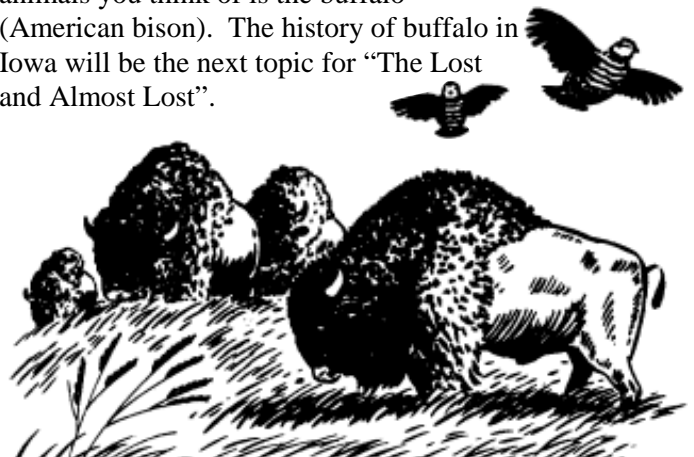
The black soil prairies dominated by the prairie grasses were the dominant prairie type in Iowa and Illinois. Because of its deep rich fertile soil, it became fields of modern-day corn and soybeans. One of the best examples of a black soil prairie remnant in east central Iowa is Duke Prairie, owned and managed by the Clinton County Conservation Board. The area was plowed once around 1900 and was too wet to farm. It was pastured until acquired by the Conservation Board in 1991.

One of the rarer prairie types in Iowa is the limestone. These prairies are very arid, with 30-40 % rock exposure. One of the best examples of a limestone prairie is the Clinton County Conservation Board’s Manikowski Prairie near Goose Lake, IA. A portion of the area had never been plowed but was pastured for years. Manikowski Prairie was dedicated as state preserve in 1985.

In the past twenty years, there has been a resurgence in the interest in prairies. Prairie remnants are being located and attempts are being made to preserve, protect and manage them. Organizations such as the Iowa Prairie Network, Iowa and Illinois Plant Societies and county conservation boards, along with many individuals, are playing a major role in preserving our prairie heritage.

Although grasses and a lack of trees identified a prairie at a glance, prairie animals are an integral part of a prairie. Plants and animals interact to make a diverse and complex the natural community. Animals depend on the prairie plants and other prairie animals and can often be found using specific types of prairies. Historically, Iowa and Illinois prairies contained a large variety of wildlife, which adapted to life on the open grasslands. Bison, elk, antelope, wolves and prairie chickens once were commonly found on the prairies in the bi-state area. It is unlikely that western species such as prairie dogs or black-footed ferrets were ever present.

When you think about prairie wildlife, one of the first animals you think of is the buffalo (American bison). The history of buffalo in Iowa will be the next topic for “The Lost and Almost Lost”.



In A ppreciation of  
Y our Support of the  
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# Fall Volunteer Workday Wages War on Autumn Olive

~ see Wapsi Center Happenings for details on this mission

**CHAAARGE!!**



**RETREAT!!**



## Kids' Corner

~ The Search for M igratory Birds ~

You won't have to search the skies for these 24 migratory birds. Just look to the right to find them spelled forward, backward, vertical, horizontal or diagonal. You'll need sharp eyes to locate these well-hidden feathered friends, so grab a pencil and begin your search — binoculars optional.

Bluebird	Junco	Thrasher
Bobolink	Kinglet	Thrush
Brown Creeper	Meadowlark	Titmouse
Canada Goose	Oriole	Towhee
Chimney Swift	Purple Martin	Vireo
Flycatcher	Robin	Warbler
Grosbeak	Swallow	Waxwing
Hummingbird	Tanager	Wren

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# PLANT PROFILE ~ AMERICAN BITTERSWEET

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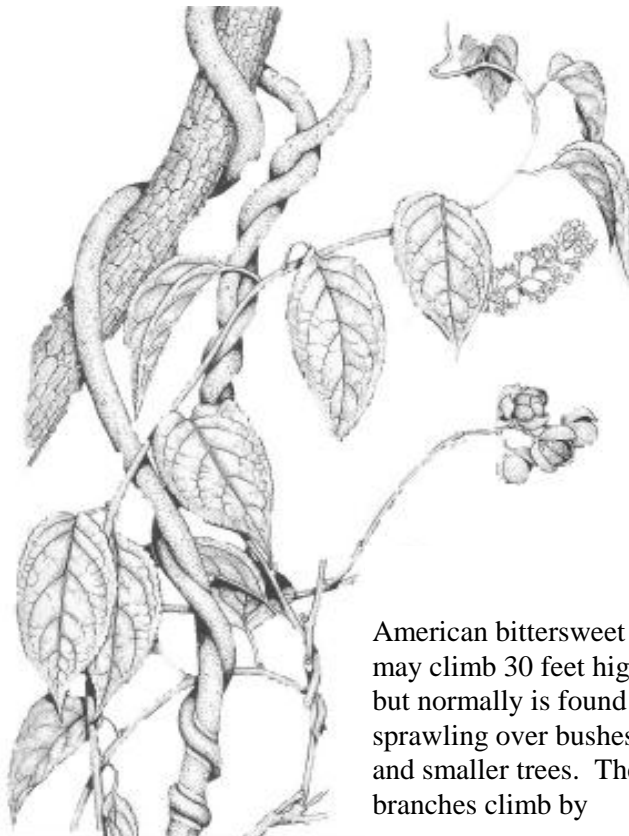
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by Michael Granger, Wapsi River Center Naturalist

This fall, as the days grow shorter and the nights grow cooler, nature will unveil a dazzling show of color. At the peak of the performance, Iowa's woodlands will be painted with shades of reds, oranges and yellows. After the leaves fall and the show draws to a close, the dazzling crimson-orange berries of American bittersweet take center stage.

The American bittersweet, *Celastrus scandens* L. (also known as climbing bittersweet) is a native vine found throughout Iowa's woodlands. It belongs to the Celastraceae or "staff tree" family. The family includes woody plants, which grow as climbing vines. American bittersweet was cultivated in the early 1700s and is commonly used along stone walls, trellises and landscaping. In the fall, the berries and vines are often used in decorations and arrangements.

A distinction must be made between the American bittersweet and the non-native *Celastrus orbiculatus* (round-leaved or Oriental bittersweet). This species originated in Asia but has been cultivated for landscaping uses. Unfortunately, it has escaped and can be found in Iowa and Illinois, and now it is considered an invasive species in Illinois.



American bittersweet may climb 30 feet high but normally is found sprawling over bushes and smaller trees. The branches climb by

winding themselves around other vegetation and occasionally itself. The plant grows loosely around smaller trees but can constrict larger trees. The green, yellow-tinted leaves are alternate and up to 4 inches long, oval-shaped, and rounded at the base. Tiny, greenish-white flowers are arranged in drooping clusters at the ends of new twigs. The flowers can be found from May to June. Interestingly, the female and male flowers are in separate clusters, and may even be on separate vines. Male vines will flower but never bear fruit.

Upon pollination, the American bittersweet prepares to produce seeds. All summer long, a dark green, pea-sized fruit capsule develops from each pollinated flower. By late summer, the fruit capsules will turn yellow-orange. As the capsules dry, their outer layers will split into three sections, revealing a scarlet red-orange berry. The berry is composed of 3 sections with two large seeds in each.



It is the American bittersweet's fruits that are the telltale signs for its presence in an area. After the leaves fall, look for the masses of brilliant orange fruits in the woodland canopy. These seeds provide wildlife with a reliable food source during scarce times. Rabbits, squirrels and at least 15 bird species are known to regularly eat the berries. Late-migrating robins are also known to eat the fruits to help them survive winter weather.

Although animals rely on its berries for nourishment, many references mention that the bittersweet is a poisonous plant. Native Americans and settlers used the outer bark on the plant's roots to induce vomiting. It is also believed that the settlers used an extract from the root and stem as an insect repellent. Actual poisoning cases from American bittersweet have not been documented. Much of the plant's reputation may have stemmed from European bittersweet varieties, which have poisoned people and horses. It may be a safe conclusion to say that the American bittersweet is poisonous and should not be eaten.

Once again, summer is drawing to a close and fall is fast approaching. Keep an eye open for the American bittersweet's brilliant fruits, which are a captivating sign of the season. Don't miss this fabulous production coming to a woodland near you.

# WILDLIFE PROFILE ~ NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO

by Greg Wolf, Interpretative Naturalist

Summer is almost over and the birds are starting to gather into large groups for the long migration. Other animals are beginning to collect and store food for the long winter. Fall is a busy time of the year for many animals. In Clinton County, we have many interesting species of animals that we are able to find and enjoy. This summer there appeared a strange and unusual one, an armadillo – not one, but two. Yes, armadillos! You are probably asking yourself how did it get here? Are they supposed to be here? Will they survive Iowa winters? Is this a natural expansion or did someone bring them here? Let's take a look and find out something about the armadillo and see if these questions can be answered.



Iowa had a species of armadillo that lived here about 12,000 years ago. It was the beautiful armadillo (*Dasypus bellus*). They were much larger in size and had a wider range. The beautiful armadillo is the historical counterpart of the modern nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*).

The species that was found in Clinton County is the nine-banded armadillo. This species is originally from South America and over the last 150 years has expanded into North America. This makes this armadillo the most widely distributed species of armadillos. The nine-banded armadillo was restricted to the south side of the Rio Grande River back in the 1850s. Even though they are good swimmers, this river was too much of a barrier. As the armadillo moved northward, the expansion was aided by American settlers. Increased travel across the Rio Grande resulted in more armadillos moving across the river. Lower hunting pressures, the lack of natural prairie fires and more brush growing in these areas allowed more invasion. Also, bringing animals across the Rio Grande by humans as a food source helped, because live armadillos would escape. Colonization of other states was helped by deliberate or accidental release of captive animals. The Florida armadillo population started by having a few animals released from a small zoo in 1924 and escapees from a circus in 1936. Movement of cattle from Texas to other states by railway also helped the spread of armadillos.



This mammal is expanding at an alarming rate. Biologists state the expansion is ten times faster than the average mammal expansion rate. What is going on here? There are some theories on armadillo expansion. One is that they have a high reproduction rate. They give birth to four identical young; one egg splits to produce the four young. This is unique for mammals. The young become mature and reproduce after one year. With a high reproductive rate, it takes few animals to start a viable population. The nine-banded armadillo is also known to live for twenty years. This knowledge gives better understanding how they can create a population.

If you have never seen an armadillo before, they are about cat-sized with armor. The body is 15-17 inches, the tail is 14-16 inches in length and they weigh between 8-17 pounds. Armadillos have little-to-no hair on the upper part of the body, but pale yellowish hair is present on the underside. They can be a mottled brown to yellowish-white in color. There are six to eleven moveable bands on its armored shell. Along with the long tail, the ears are extremely long. They have four toes on the front feet, while there are five toes on the back feet.



**Foreprint**  
1 3/4" long  
1 5/8" wide

Armadillos have well-developed claws that are used for digging burrows and finding insects, especially grubs. They will enter lawns digging up grubs, but when the armadillo is done, the lawn is in need of help. On occasion when insects or other invertebrates are not easy to come by, they will eat plants, such as berries and roots. Other items that armadillos are known to eat are frogs, spiders, young cottontail rabbits and eggs. Armadillos prefer dense shady cover and limestone formations, which Clinton County possesses. Armadillos are nocturnal animals, but it is not uncommon to see them foraging during the day. Armadillos have an average territory of twelve acres. So expansion will come from accidentals or young being pushed out due to overpopulation.



**Hindprint**  
> 2" long  
1 5/8" wide

Can armadillos survive in Iowa? They do have some biological and environmental limitations. Weather is one; the rainfall must be more than 15 inches a year. Temperature is the other limitation. Armadillos are not supposed to be able to establish stable colonies with an average temperature in January of 28 degrees Fahrenheit. So, this leaves a question. Can the armadillo adapt to Iowa winters? The answer is we do not know. As for the ones that have shown up in Clinton County, they are ones that have more than likely hitched a ride on a truck, train, barge or been brought up by people. Ron Andrews, Iowa DNR furbearer biologist, said about the ones found in Clinton County, "It did not make sense right now for them to be there." Armadillos have not expanded to eastern Iowa, but there is evidence that the expansion of armadillos is happening in southwest Iowa.

Iowa armadillos? It could happen. The mild winters that Iowa has had in the last several years could help in the expansion. The armadillo could adapt to our environmental conditions. Another mammal that has already done this, and successfully, is the opossum. Opossums are originally from South America and have spread all the way into Canada. Armadillo expansion is a possibility. If you see an armadillo, please contact us at the conservation office or your local DNR officer. Do not attempt to touch it; instead, take a picture for proof.





# Autumn

## September

**6<sup>th</sup> ~ Sunset & Moonlight Eco Cruises ~ 6:00 & 8:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ Take an



hour and a half Eco Cruise on the Mississippi with a Conservation Skipper. The 8:00 cruise will be a one-of-a-kind "moonlight stroll" on the big river. Call (563) 259-1876 or stop by the campground store to make reservations. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

**9<sup>th</sup> ~ Full-Moon Night Hike ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Mockridge Preserve** ~ Join a Clinton County naturalist for a moonlit walk through this unique area. We will try owl calling, search for turkeys and seek some late wildflowers. Take Y44 north of Calamus, then take 215<sup>th</sup> Street west to 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue and turn north. Mockridge Preserve will be ¼ mile on the left.

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ Call (563) 259-1876 to reserve a spot. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

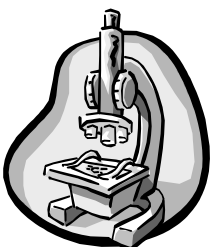
**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Animal Tracking ~ 8:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ By looking at animal tracks, you can tell what animals live in your neck of the woods. Join Michael Granger, Naturalist from the Wapsi River Center, for a lesson on animal tracks.



**13<sup>th</sup> ~ Canoeing & Campfire ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ Meet at the fire ring near the pavilion and join our naturalist for canoeing, a fire, music and stories of boating our area rivers.

**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Monarch Tagging ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ The monarch migration is in full swing and so is a national tagging program. The Clinton County Conservation Board tagged almost 100 monarchs last year before the insects headed to Mexico for the winter. Come learn the ins and outs of tagging and then put your newfound knowledge to the test as you catch and tag some monarchs of your own.

**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Microscopic Mysteries ~ 10:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Bob Bryant, Director of the Wapsi River Center, for a lesson on microscopic viewing. A butterfly's wing, a bird's feather and a leaf will be just some of the natural wonders to discover under a microscope. Since there is a limited number of microscopes, please call (563) 328-3286 in advance to register.



**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Beautiful Butterflies ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Karen Beitzel, a local butterfly enthusiast, will share her knowledge about these beautiful insects and the lives they lead. If you have a butterfly net, please bring it, as equipment is limited.

**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Family Movie Night ~ Dusk ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ A family movie will be shown at the pavilion. Popcorn is free of charge to guests.

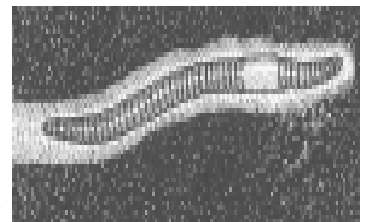
**22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Blue Heron Eco Cruise to Lock & Dam #13 ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Clinton Marina** ~ Take an hour and a half Eco Cruise on the Mississippi with a Conservation Skipper. Cruisers will learn about commercial navigation and recreational use of the lock and dam system, see the dam up close and lock through if available. Call (563) 259-1876 for reservations. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16. Please park curbside.



**23<sup>rd</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> ~ Hunter Safety Course ~ 6:30 - 9:30 P.M. (Tue) & 8:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. (Sat) ~ Clinton Izaak Walton League** ~ Call R&R Sports at (563) 243-4696 for required sign up and more information.

**25<sup>th</sup> ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ Call (563) 259-1876 to reserve a spot. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

**25<sup>th</sup> ~ Composting 101 ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center** ~ Laura Liegois, Director of Operations and Education for the CCASWA, and Greg Wolf, Interpretive Naturalist for the Clinton County Conservation Board, will be hosting a composting program at the Soaring Eagle Nature Center. Residents that attend the program will build their own worm bin that can fit under the kitchen sink (\$6 per bin). The bin will allow the worms to eat leftover kitchen scraps and turn them into rich compost. Please call Greg at (563) 847-7202 by Friday, September 19, to register.



**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Twelfth Annual Ecology Day ~ 9:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Have you always dreamed of doing *something* in nature, but just wasn't sure how to start? This year's ecology day, "Beginning Basics of Nature", should give you that rudimentary knowledge you've yearned for. Come join us for a wonderful learning experience for the whole family. See special section for more details.

# Activities



**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Fall Fling Thing ~ 4:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~** Join the Rock Creek family for a kick-off to autumn bash. We are offering free hayrack rides through the park from 4:00 P.M. until dark. Caramel apple making, apple bobbing and a hot dog and s'more roast will be offered. Call (563) 259-1876 for details.

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Eastern Iowa Star Party ~ 8:00 - 10:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~** The Quad City Astronomical Society will hold its annual Eastern Iowa Star Party and invites the public to join them for a celestial celebration. This is the *BEST* public Star Party of the year!

**27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> ~ Hawk Watch ~ Effigy Mounds National Monument ~** These are two great days with live raptor presentations, hawk banding, observation areas, raptor ID, not to mention fantastic blufftop views of the Mississippi River, prehistoric Native American burial mounds and museum. All fees are waived for this weekend. Call Effigy Mounds at (563) 873-3491.



**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Calamus-Wheatland Invitational Cross-Country Meet ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~** The Wapsi River Center is the site for this annual high school event.

## O ctober

**2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Sunset Eco Cruise ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~** Call (563) 259-1876 to reserve a spot. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

**3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> ~ Free Canoe Weekend ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~** Take a canoe out for a spin during this free canoe weekend. The Mississippi backwaters provide an excellent opportunity to see the abundance of wildlife the area has to offer. Canoes will be available on a first-come, first-served basis and must be used in the Rock Creek Marina & Campground area.



**4<sup>th</sup> ~ Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever Banquet ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Millenium Ballroom ~** Pheasants Forever's Clinton County Chapter is holding its annual fund-raiser at the Millenium Ballroom in Goose Lake, IA. The group provides funds to local landowners and agencies for the establishment of wildlife habitat. Cost is \$40, which includes a one-year membership and dinner. Call Mark Roberts at (563) 659-2422 for tickets.

**4<sup>th</sup> ~ Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park ~** Join the Quad Cities Astronomical Society at Sherman Park's north end to explore the night sky.

**9<sup>th</sup> ~ Fall Colors Eco Cruise ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~** Take an hour and a half Eco Cruise on the Mississippi with a Conservation Skipper. Cruisers will enjoy the autumn colors and learn about the Mississippi River. Call (563) 259-1876 for reservations. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.



**10<sup>th</sup> Fall Color Walk ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Eden Valley Refuge ~** Hike the Blackridge Scenic Trail above Bear Creek in Eden Valley Refuge. We will be looking at forest changes and discovering why fall colors occur.

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Fall Volunteer Workday ~ 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~** See special section in Wapsi Center Happenings for details. Please call (563) 328-3286 to volunteer.



**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Maquoketa River Canoe Float ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Royertown Access ~** Register for this fall color trip down the most scenic stretch of this northeast Iowa river by calling (563) 847-7202. The group will meet at Royertown access north of Baldwin, Iowa. We will put in at the Long Branch in Canton, travel downstream to Buzzard Ridge County Park, hike to the overlook and then continue down to Royertown. The trip will take 4 or 5 hours, depending on the skills of the boaters.

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Blue Heron Rides ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~** Every hour, on the hour, we will be taking people out on the *Blue Heron* Pontoon Boat for a nice ride on the river. A maid-wrong sandwich or hot dog plus a lemonade or hot drink is included in the cost. Call (563) 259-1876 or stop by the campground store to make reservations. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Eden Valley Bluegrass Jam ~ 1:00 - 9:00 P.M. ~ Eden Valley Refuge ~** It will be a toe-tapping time as musicians from the surrounding areas gather to bring the bluegrass sound to listeners of all ages. The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Bluegrass Jam will be held at the Eden Valley Refuge campground along Bear Creek. If inclement weather, the program will be held in the nature center. A potluck and chili dinner will start at 4:00 P.M.; bring table service and your lawn chair. This event is free and open to all. For more information, call Mary McAndrew at (563) 391-0114.



**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Fall Colors Eco Cruise ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ Come and enjoy an autumn-splendor float through the Mississippi backwaters and main channel. Call (563) 259-1876 for reservations. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Tree ID Hike ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Stephanie Byers, Wapsi River Center naturalist, will lead a hike to discover area trees. Bring the whole family for a fun exploration followed by a tree-related craft for the young ones.



**21<sup>st</sup> ~ 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center** ~ Pam Steinhaus, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Refuge Ranger, will be the guest speaker for this look at the Upper Mississippi. We will have birthday cake following the program to celebrate! A \$2 donation is requested per adult (non-EPNS members) to benefit the Nature Society.



**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Hocus Pocus Hike ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center** ~ Come and enjoy a "spooktacular" night hike, exploring the origins, legends and myths of Halloween. Discover the truths about several misunderstood nocturnal creatures.

**25<sup>th</sup> ~ IOWATER Snapshot ~ 8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. ~ CCCB Headquarters, Grand Mound** ~ Volunteers are needed to help sample streams throughout the county to take a "snapshot" of stream health. IOWATER training is helpful, but not required. Call (563) 847-7202 for registration.

**25<sup>th</sup> ~ Campfire Cooking ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Spend an autumn afternoon with Danielle Schaffert, Wapsi River Center naturalist, around an open fire learning to prepare delicious food in the great outdoors. Participants are asked to meet at the ring-of-pines. Be sure to bring a place setting and an appetite! Pre-registration is required by October 21 ~ (563) 328-3286. Program fee \$3.



**26<sup>th</sup> ~ Fall Festival ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center** ~ Pumpkin carving, a weenie roast, campfire music and hayrack ride make this annual event fun for the whole family. A small fee of \$5/12 and over and \$2/child under 12 will be collected at the door.



**28<sup>th</sup> ~ Creatures of Darkness Hike ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Learn how to make the most of your night vision, then take a festive and spooky stroll through Jack-o-lantern Woods. Along the way, participants will become better acquainted

with creatures that go bump in the night. Participants are asked to meet at Redtail Lodge.

## N o v e m b e r

**8<sup>th</sup> ~ Nahant Marsh Cleanup ~ 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ Nahant Marsh** ~ River Action and the Putnam Museum ask you to join local efforts to cleanup Nahant Marsh. Crews will be directed to points along the Concord and Wapello Avenues of entry to the Nahant Marsh Educational Field Station. River Action will provide trash bags and gloves. The Field Station will be open to visitors from Noon - 2:30 P.M. Jody Patterson, Nahant Marsh Education Coordinator, will be on hand to provide information on educational opportunities available at Nahant Marsh. For more information about the cleanup, please call River Action at (563) 322-2969.

**8<sup>th</sup> ~ Homemade Birdfeeders ~ 12:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Fall is a great time to get set up for winter feeding. Milk jugs, cartons and pop bottles will be magically transformed into useful feeders. Types of seeds, common winter inhabitants and homemade bird treats will be discussed. Reserve your spot by November 5 by calling (563) 328-3286.



**8<sup>th</sup> ~ Bald Eagle Eco Cruise ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ This will be the public's last opportunity this year to take an Eco Cruise on the *Blue Heron* Pontoon Boat. The American bald eagles are starting to congregate along the Mississippi for the winter, and we hope to see several of the birds, plus many other species, during the cruise. Before freeze-up, the bald eagles are spread out along the river, and the best way to see them is to go to them via boat. Later in the winter, the eagles gather around the Lock & Dams to take advantage of open water. Call (563) 259-1876 for reservations. Cost is \$5/adult and \$3/child under 16.

**8<sup>th</sup> ~ Nature Writing & Journaling Workshop ~ 2:00 - 4:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ This workshop is designed for senior high school students and adults of all writing abilities. Joe Taylor, President/CEO for the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau, will facilitate the workshop. Participants will learn techniques for nature writing and journaling through hands-on writing exercises and explore the outdoors to gather information for nature writing. The workshop is free. Participants must provide notebooks, journals and pens. Please dress appropriately for the



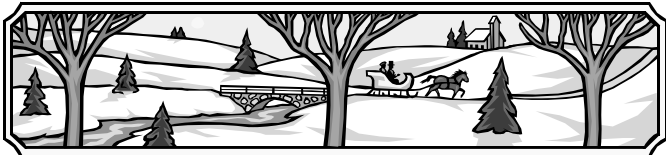


weather. Refreshments will follow the workshop. Pre-registration is required by calling the Wapsi River Center at (563) 328-3286.

**13<sup>th</sup> ~ Snowshoe-making Workshop ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center** ~ Snowshoeing is a great way to get around in the winter. Whether you're a deer hunter or just want to escape the cabin, you will want a pair of handmade Ojibwa- or Alaskan-style snowshoes. We will walk you through the steps in crafting your own pair from a high-quality kit. Cost is \$75 per pair, bindings are \$25 per set. **Deadline for the snowshoe-kit orders is November 6; call (563) 847-7202 to order.**

**22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Sherman Park** ~ Join the Quad Cities Astronomical Society at Sherman Park's north end to explore the night sky.

**30<sup>th</sup> ~ Christmas in the Village ~ Noon - 5:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village** ~ Begin your holidays early with a historic walk through the beautifully decorated village. While there, make and take crafts, enjoy refreshments and visit with Santa. Admission is free!



## December

**6<sup>th</sup> ~ Brunch with the Birds ~ 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 are asked to meet at the Eagle View Eco Center. Refreshments will be served after the hike. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.



**6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> ~ Park Closed ~ All Day ~ Scott County Park** ~ Scott County Park will be closed for the controlled deer hunt. See special section if you are interested in participating in the hunt.

**12<sup>th</sup> ~ Snowmobile Safety Course ~ 4:00 - 8:00 P.M. ~ CCCB Headquarters, Grand Mound** ~ 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.

A few years ago, the Scott County Conservation Board implemented a plan to manage the deer at Scott County Park. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources designated Scott County Park a Special Deer Management Zone. Over the past few years, a controlled hunt has been conducted to maintain a deer population that is in balance with plant life and other animal communities in the park. The following information is in regards to this year's controlled hunt:

- The hunt will consist of one, 3-day hunt ~ December 6 - 8.
- 50 hunters will be selected.
- Applications will be available August 30 at the Scott County Park Entrance Station, Campground Office at West Lake Park (Gate 5) and on-line at [www.scottcountyiowa.com](http://www.scottcountyiowa.com). Applications must be received by September 26 for a lottery drawing that will be held the first week in October. All applicants will be notified by mail of the results.
- The license fee is \$26.00 for the first antlerless tag and \$11.00 for the second or subsequent antlerless tag. License fees will be paid directly to the designated vendor (B&B Shooting Supplies) **after** the selection process and completion of proficiency testing.
- First-time hunters selected for this special hunt must pass a safety/orientation class and demonstrate shooting proficiency before a license will be issued. The class and test will be offered November 1 at the Davenport Police Range. Hunters are encouraged to practice for the shooting proficiency test. Only one chance is permitted to pass the test.



White-tailed Deer  
(doe)

## Wapsi Center Happenings


by Bob Bryant, Director

### Fiscal Year Attendance

Attendance for the 2003 fiscal year (July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003) was approximately 26,853. Although this number is down from 2002's record-setting year, we expect an overall increase in the coming months due in part to the return of several all-school field trips.

### Fall School Field Trips

Quite a few field trips have already been scheduled for this fall. The Center's new teams course (designed for upper elementary and higher grades) is becoming a very popular activity. We encourage teachers to call early and take an active role in planning and conducting their field trip. The Wapsi Center has a planner, which is very helpful for this purpose. If you are a teacher and want to schedule an outing with us or get a copy of the field trip planner, give us a call at (563) 328-3286. Don't forget: *The Wapsi River Center is a place for all seasons.*



**Winter Hours Change**

Starting November 1, the Eagle View Eco Center and its displays will be open on Saturdays, 1 - 5 P.M.

### Bald Eagle Viewing

Eagles have shown up in late November, but the best viewing has been December through early March. On most occasions, the eagles start returning to the night roost one to two hours before dusk. Spotting scopes will be available when the Eagle View Eco Center is open.



### EDIWILD 2003 Teachers' Workshop, "Environmental Stewardship: Making the Right Decision"

The EDIWILD (Educators in the Wild) Workshop (June 23 - 26) was sponsored by the following partnership: Wapsi River Center, Scott and Clinton County Conservation Boards, Nahant Marsh Field Station and River Action, Inc. The workshop used an interdisciplinary approach of teaching environmental stewardship issues to aid teachers in the incorporation of environmental education into the school curriculum.

Thirty-seven teachers and educators completed the workshop. Two hours of continuing education or graduate credit were available through Area Education Agency 9 and Drake University. The workshop is an annual event and will be offered again next year.

### Outdoor Adventures

Attendance was up appreciably this summer for the Center's "Outdoor Adventures" program. Over 1,200 individuals participated in 37 field trips. The program provides one-day field trips for city youth programs, daycare centers and other summer youth programs.

So far this calendar year, we have had 12 dorm rentals. This already equals last year's rentals. A full dorm rental is \$300 per night. Partial rental options start at \$80. For more information on the dorm and the Center's other rental facilities (meeting rooms, lodge and cabin), call the Wapsi Center at (563) 328-3286.

### Volunteer Workday (October 11) will Wage War on Autumn Olive

Autumn olive, a large shrub, was at one time recommended for wildlife and landscape plantings. For many years, autumn olive did not show a tendency to be invasive. However, in the past ten years, it has become very invasive, taking over open woodlands and grassy areas. Many areas of the Wapsi River Center are being taken over by it. Autumn olive is as bad as, if not worse than, multi-flora rose. The Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. and other volunteers will go on the offensive against this invader, armed with chain saws and bow saws. The workday will be from 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. The Friends group will provide lunch. You don't have to have a chain saw or bow saw to help. The troops will be divided into squads consisting of tree cutters, haulers and stump treaters. Leather gloves and long sleeves are recommended. If you would like to enlist, call the Wapsi River Center at (563) 328-3286.

### Would You Like to Get *The W.R.E.N.* by Way of the Internet?

With more and more people having access to the Internet, it is natural for the Wapsi River Center to take advantage of this. Since the spring of 2002, *The W.R.E.N.* has been posted on the Scott County Web site ([www.scottcounty.iowa.com/conservation/wapsi.html](http://www.scottcounty.iowa.com/conservation/wapsi.html)). We currently are printing approximately 2,300 newsletters quarterly. We would like to give our readers the option of accessing the newsletter on the county's Web site. Sometimes delays can occur when printing and mailing the newsletter; by accessing it over the Internet, the newsletter could be available 7-10 days earlier than a printed copy. In addition, there would be a cost savings to the county.



If you would like to access the newsletter via the Internet and wish to be removed from the mailing list, please notify us. You can send a 3x5 card with your name and address to Wapsi River E. E. Center at 31555 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue ~ Dixon, IA 52745 or give us a call at (563) 328-3286.

**Ecology Day 2003 ~ "Beginning Basics of Nature"  
Saturday, September 27 ~ 9:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.  
Wapsi River Environmental Education Center**

**9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Canoeing** ~ Individuals will get the opportunity to canoe a stretch of the Wapsipinicon River from Syracuse to Sherman Park. Those interested in canoeing need to call (563) 847-7202 to reserve a spot. Individuals will be eating lunch on the river, so bring a meal or snack packaged in a waterproof container with the ability to be tied onto the canoe. If you have a properly fitting lifejacket of your own, please bring it.

**1:00 - 2:00 P.M. ~ Furbearers of Iowa** ~ Join Bob Bryant as he discusses the furbearers of Iowa. The life history, current status and commercial uses will be discussed. Several pelts will be available for handling. Included in the program will be information on new wildlife sightings in the state, including some of local interest.

**2:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ Canoeing Eastern Iowa Rivers** ~ Join Chuck Jacobsen, Clinton County naturalist, as he takes you on a virtual tour of eastern Iowa rivers.

**3:00 - 4:00 P.M. & 4:00 - 5:00 P.M. ~ Beginning Basics of Nature (Concurrent Sessions)** ~ Have you always dreamed of doing *something* in nature, but just wasn't sure how to start? These concurrent sessions should give you that rudimentary knowledge you've yearned for. Individuals will have the opportunity to experience two of the four sessions with all sessions starting at 3:00 P.M. and again at 4:00 P.M.

**Wild Edibles** ~ Join Shelli Tague, naturalist-at-heart, and Lisa Gerwulf, Wapsi River Center naturalist, as they discuss many wild edibles, some of which are available right in your own backyard. Participants will be sampling some wild cuisine, so bring an open mind and a light appetite.

**Packing Light** ~ Join Stephanie Byers, Wapsi River Center naturalist, as she demonstrates some of the basic principles of packing light and reveals a few tricks of the trade for paring down your load.

**Beginning Birding** ~ Join Greg Wolf, Clinton County naturalist, for a course in Birding 101. He will discuss birding etiquette, equipment and show participants what to look for in identifying those elusive, feathered creatures.

**Pond Study** ~ Join Mike Granger, Wapsi River Center naturalist, as he explores the murky depths of the "pond" at the Wapsi River Center. This program is geared toward children and will give them the opportunity to learn about water quality and aquatic inhabitants. Several hands-on activities are planned during this program.

**5:00 - 7:00 P.M. ~ Supper & Hayrack Rides** ~ Supper will be provided by the Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. Donations are accepted, so bring your own table setting and enjoy a hearty meal cooked over an open fire. Naturalist-lead hayrack rides will leave at 5:00 and 6:00 P.M. for those interested.

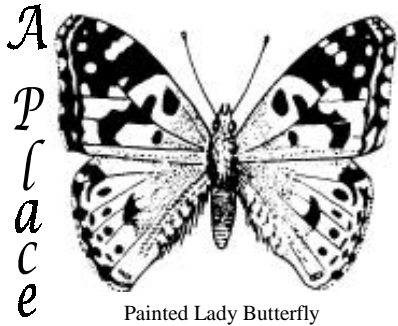
**7:00 - 8:00 P.M. ~ Beginning Astronomy** ~ Join Wayne Jens, Quad City Astronomical Society member, as he discusses how to get started in astronomy. Basic equipment, telescope types, cost, local clubs and learning to locate constellations with a planisphere will be covered.

**8:00 - 10:00 P.M. ~ Eastern Iowa Star Party** ~ Join the Quad City Astronomical Society at the Monsignor Menke Astronomical Observatory during this annual event as they invite the public to join them for a celestial celebration to finish out the day's events.

**WAPSI RIVER E. E. CENTER**  
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*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.

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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.