

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Winter 2007

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi.php

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.

Wapsi Center Happenings

by Bob Bryant, Retiring Director

Fall Field Trip Attendance

Approximately 1,855 students, teachers and parents participated in 27 field trips this fall. Even though there were two more field trips this fall, attendance was approximately 470 less. The average number per field trip last fall was 92 compared to 69 for this fall. We have been hearing that the number of students enrolled in school is decreasing, and it appears our attendance records are showing that.



If you are a school teacher and would like to schedule a winter or spring field trip, we recommend that you call well in advance if possible. To set up a field trip, contact us at (563) 328-3286.

Wapsi River Ecology Day

Thirty people attended the day's activities. The day started out with a morning canoe trip on the Wapsipinicon River. Late morning and afternoon programs included prairie treasure chest, fall prairie hike, nature games for the kids, silkscreening t-shirts and making centerpieces from dried prairie plants. The big hit of the day was a special appearance by "Buffalo Bill Cody". The kids really flocked to him.

Wapsi Center Deer Hunt A Success

For the past several years, the Scott County Conservation Board has been using hunting, a biologically accepted management technique, to control the deer population at Scott County Park and the Wapsi River Center. The objective of the plan is to maintain a deer population in balance with the plant and animal life in the park. These special hunts are proving to be effective in lowering the number of deer in Scott County Park and the gradual recovery of the park's plant community. However, at the Wapsi Center, the hunts have met with limited success. The biggest problem has been getting hunters interested in hunting at the Center.

This year the Wapsi River Center held a special hunt during the first regular season (Dec. 2-6) like the hunt at Scott County Park where hunters were issued special permits for antlerless deer only, which did not count against the number of regular permits a hunter could purchase. Those hunting for the first

time at the Wapsi Center or Scott County Park still had to attend a mandatory orientation class and pass a shooting proficiency test. Twenty-six hunters applied for the 12 slots to hunt at the Wapsi River Center this year. The twelve hunters purchased 22 special permits, and twelve deer were harvested under those permits. A salvage permit was issued for one deer, and another deer was found dead that was not claimed by anyone because there was no way to tell for sure how long it had laid there. Seventy-five percent of the hunters were successful and 55% of the special tags issued were filled. The special hunt proved to be very successful and will be held again next year.

Scott County Conservation Board 50th Anniversary Celebration

As a way of celebrating its 50th anniversary and recognizing the efforts of the Scott County Conservation Board, our loyal supporters and the Quad Cities, the Board hosted the 47th Annual Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards Conference, September 21-23. The theme for this year's conference was "Celebrating the Past - Visioning the Future". Total attendance was 319, representing 51 counties. We were very pleased with the turnout considering the budget challenges currently being faced by many Conservation Boards, and the significant travel distance with the conference being held in the very eastern part of the state.



Preconference activities held on Thursday included golf, trapshooting, fishing, van tour of local points of interest and an evening dinner cruise on the Celebration Bell. Education programs and the annual banquet were held on Friday. Saturday was spent touring the Board's areas and facilities by tour bus. West Lake Park, Scott County Park (including the Walnut Grove Pioneer Village and Glynn's Creek Golf Course) and the Wapsi River Center were the tour sites. The day was culminated with a beach party at West Lake Park including food, a live band and fireworks. There is not enough space to recognize all the in-kind contributions and support for the conference. However, special thanks must go the River Boat Development Authority for their generous grant for the beach party. Participants were very impressed with the Board's facilities and programs, and this year's conference was considered by many to be the best IACCB conference ever held.

HELLOS & GOODBYES ~ A NEW CHAPTER

Bob Bryant ~ In the last issue of *The W.R.E.N.*, I announced my plan to retire on December 29. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on my conservation career and thank all of my co-workers, colleagues, friends and those who have supported my conservation efforts. Like many in the conservation field, my interest in the outdoors started with my family. Some of my fondest memories were hunting, fishing and trapping with my dad, mom, uncle and aunt. My folks also owned and operated a mink ranch for 18 years. My aunt and uncle own a small parcel of land with cabins along the Mississippi River, which includes a small water-filled rock quarry. This was the favorite weekend spot for our family. My sister, three cousins and I looked forward to our stay with my aunt and uncle for a week of swimming, water-skiing, fishing and badminton.

I have always had a strong interest in history and actually considered going into archeology. However, I still had a stronger attraction to the outdoors and decided to worry more about the living than the dead. In 1964, I enrolled at Southeastern Community College at Keokuk with plans of transferring to Iowa State. October of 1966, I enlisted in the Army and was trained in small arms repair. I spent two years as an armorer in a signal battalion in Germany. While in Germany, I joined the local Rod and Gun Club and started shooting skeet, a clay target sport. I also completed the German Hunter Safety Program and bagged a roebuck. I spent my last 6 months at Fort Riley, Kansas.

I was discharged October 1969, and went back to school the following year. Instead of enrolling in Iowa State, I used my GI Bill to enroll at Western Illinois University. While going to college, I worked part-time for a construction company where my dad worked. At that time, I didn't know how much the construction skills I learned would be put to use during my conservation career. I got my B.S. degree in 1974, with a major in zoology, minors in botany and history. Since I had some schooling before entering the Army, I had approximately a year and a half left of my GI Bill and enrolled in Western's Recreation and Parks Department graduate program, with an emphasis in resource management and environmental education. I also incorporated teacher education into my master's program and just finished up my student teaching before I got hired by the Clinton County Conservation Board (CCCB). I finished my master program in 1983.

In May 1975, my wife, Jeanne, our two children and I moved to Clinton County to become the first Director of the Clinton County Conservation Board. Being part of the County Conservation Board system was a natural fit for my educational background, construction experience and interests. As director of the CCCB, I was responsible for the administration and operation of the Board's parks, facilities and programs. I also served as the Board's first naturalist and developed the third County Conservation Board environmental education program in the state. I oversaw the construction of the nature center building (1977) at Eden Valley Refuge and the hiring of the board's first full-time naturalist. She and I were founding members of the Iowa Association of Naturalists.

The Board also co-sponsored the Camp Wyoming Environmental Education Workshop for teachers and college students.

I was also responsible for overseeing the development and management of the Board's parks and natural areas, and new land acquisitions. Eden Valley is still one of my favorite parks. Besides overseeing the construction and development of the nature center, I designed the observation tower and swinging bridge at Eden Valley. These were two major projects done by Clinton County's Iowa Conservation Corps (ICC). The program provided summer employment for county youths to do conservation-related work. The CCCB received six ICC grants, and I served as program supervisor and crew leader.

As much as I like to build things, I consider the identification and acquisition of natural areas as one of my most rewarding accomplishments. I played a major role in the acquisition of the Syracuse State Wildlife Area, Duke Prairie, the Hessler addition to Sherman Park and Manikowski Prairie State Preserve. The CCCB received a grant from the Iowa Academy of Science to survey the vascular plants of Clinton County and to identify rare plant communities. Because of this survey work, the Board received the Iowa Nature Conservancy Award for its efforts to identify, protect and manage the rare native species and unique natural areas in Clinton County. Clinton County was also one of the first counties to establish a roadside vegetation management program.

During the latter part of the 1980s, the CCCB hired a consultant to identify and evaluate areas suitable for a large central park in the county. One of the areas being considered was the Minneyata Boy Scout Camp (just across the river from CCCB's Sherman Park) which was going to be closed and put up for sale. The camp did not meet the criteria for a central park, but the consultant recommended that the board pursue the acquisition of the property as a possible education facility. This was too big of a project for Clinton County to take on by itself, and they already had an existing program and nature center. Since the camp was located on the county line, the Scott County Conservation Board, who did not have their own education program at the time, was approached about a joint regional education facility. As a member of the Minneyata planning task force, I wrote the Minneyata Feasibility Study and Master Plan to acquire the camp and to develop it into a regional center. The Quad City Conservation Alliance and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation stepped forward to help the two conservation boards acquire the property. An agreement was worked out with the Scouts to purchase the area. The camp would become the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and would be owned, managed and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board, with programming and development assistance from Clinton County. June 1991, I went to work for the Scott County Conservation Board to take over the development of the Wapsi River Center and moved to the Center. A good portion of the last two years of Clinton's ICC program was spent at the Wapsi Center cleaning the place up, developing trails, pouring sidewalks and beginning

renovation of the buildings. Of all the Center's development projects, the Eagle View Eco Center, with its displays and meeting facilities, is the facility I am most proud of. With the renovation of Redtail Lodge and building of the Owl's Nest Dormitory, the Wapsi River Center became a truly regional E. E. center, providing both day and overnight facilities.

Programming is the heart of any E. E. program. The Center's extensive list of programs for schools and the general public, along with its facilities, has made the Center one of the most successful environmental education facilities in the state. The Wapsi River Center is a good example of how two counties can work together to meet a common goal and accomplish things that might not happen otherwise. The EDIWILD Teachers' Workshop, a four-day workshop, is one such program. Except for school programs, EDIWILD is the most rewarding and beneficial program the Center offers. Development of the aquatic lab, swan and deer displays, prairie for schools planting and teams course are some of the other joint accomplishments.

My time at the Wapsi Center was split between administration, programming, development and maintenance of the Center. Most of the major development projects have been completed, and the remaining development and maintenance projects will be handled by the board's maintenance staff from the other parks. This will permit the Center's director to spend more time with programming and marketing. The last couple of weeks, I have had the opportunity to spend time with Dave Murcia, who has been hired as the Wapsi River Center's new director. I have really enjoyed the time I have spent with him and was surprised to find out how much we have in common.

I really can't put into words how I feel about the Wapsi River Center, and it is now just starting to sink in how much I will miss it. Jeanne and I have moved to Davenport and are looking forward to my retirement. However, I do not plan on retiring completely and will continue to be involved with the Friends of the Wapsi Center, Nahant Marsh Education Center, doing some consulting work, possibly working part-time for the Conservation Board, continuing my involvement with the hunter safety education program and finishing my book on the ferns of Iowa.

There are just too many people to thank everyone individually for the support they have given me and the Wapsi River Center. However, I would like to personally thank Mike Granger and Lisa Gerwulf from the Wapsi River Center, Mark Roberts from the Clinton County Conservation Board, Greg Wolf, now with the City of Davenport, and the Friends of the Wapsi River Center. A special thank you to Dan Nagle, former SCCB director, who hired me and to Roger Kean, current director of the SCCB, for their support and for giving me the freedom to follow my dream of what the Wapsi River Center should be. I also want to thank my wife for putting up with the odd hours I kept, the times where work came before family, and all those hours she has spent proofreading the Center's newsletters and other publications.

J. Dave Murcia – Glad to be back “Home” ~ Hello and thank you for this wonderful opportunity to carry on such a rich education tradition here in Scott County. I would like to take this chance to introduce myself as the new Director of the

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and want to invite you to visit me any time.

I started my family here in the Quad-City area where I met my wife, Chris. I have been blessed with three daughters that keep me active and young (but my body says otherwise at times). Maya, Clare and Lizzie share an interest of the outdoors and are excited to return to common paths. I consider myself a native of Iowa and was fortunate to have a family that respected and admired our natural surroundings while growing up in Bettendorf (go Bulldogs!). I completed my A.S. in Conservation from Muscatine Community College before transferring to St. Ambrose University in Davenport where I received my B.S. in Biology. While I am formally educated in Midwest ecosystems, I have had a wide variety of work experiences and training, and feel privileged to offer my knowledge, skills and abilities to Scott County (and can't wait to try the old fishin' hole).

I started in the natural resource field as a landscape division supervisor for a local landscape nursery and climbed my way into a national tree and shrub care company with a love of plants. I then recognized an urge to contribute to the community and accepted a position for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IADNR) in the Parks and Preserves Division at Wild Cat Den State Park near Muscatine. I truly enjoyed being along the Mississippi River and helping to provide recreational as well as historical and cultural opportunities including education. I thought I had found my niche at the IADNR until a refuge manager from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) offered to hire me as a temporary wildland firefighter and I jumped at the opportunity.

I started with the USFWS at Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Wapello, Iowa, as a biological technician and covered anything from habitat management/restoration and wildlife surveys to educational tours. I later completed a year-long detail in the Rock Island Field Office of the Ecological Services branch of the USFWS where I worked with issues regarding endangered and threatened species, habitat restoration and development permit reviews, environmental contaminants, and outreach including education. My last station was at DeSoto NWR in Missouri Valley, Iowa, where I was offered an assistant manager position with duties including administration, biological programs, fire management and public use/visitor services. DeSoto NWR averages 250,000 visitors annually, sees about 60,000 visitors in the visitor center, and conducts environmental education programs for about 5,000 students each year as well. I was able to reach many people with historical, cultural, and natural resource education/interpretation during my last three years at DeSoto NWR and look forward to bringing my experience back “home” to Scott County.

I feel truly privileged to be offered the opportunity to carry on such a tradition of excellence and pride that Scott County stands for. I can not think of a better “job” where I have the ability to have an impact on our citizens and children while relating our natural resources to our daily lives. Please feel free to contact me with questions, comments, or suggestions at any time. I would like nothing more than to walk the path with anyone else who cares for our earth as I do.

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 run 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) 328-3286 to volunteer.

Saturday, January 6

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 7

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

IN APPRECIATION OF YOUR SUPPORT OF THE WAPSI RIVER CENTER

Jeanne Bryant Dan Mayes
Renne Lietz Dottie Wala
Carol Rogers Connie Huber
Erma Wiszman Dave Huber
Frances Willard ~ Mrs. Hays' 4th Grade
Ridgewood Elementary ~ East Moline, IL
▲ Ridgewood Elementary ~ Rock Island, IL

Winter Sports Opportunities

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

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.

Scott County Park

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.

West Lake Park

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!

Kids' Column ~ Forest Finds

Adapted from NatureScope – Trees Are Terrific

What would life be like without forests? It would be harder than you can imagine. The following picture includes more than 40 objects created from forest products. Circle as many as you can find.



Answers are below, flip page upside-down to read them.

Wood Products – Umbrella handle, tennis racket, tables, stools, spools for thread, stereo cabinet and speakers, stairs, sofa, picture frames, paintbrush handle, wall molding, bowl, fence, door, counter, clock, chairs, cabinets, bulletin board frame, broom handle, bookshelf, blocks, baseball bat, window frame, wood inside walls and banister.

Bark Products – Baseball (has cork center) and cork bulletin board.

Paper Products – Record album covers, paper towels, notes on bulletin board, newspaper, milk container, gift wrapping and box, cereal box, candy wrapper and books.

Foods – nuts, chocolate bar (made from cocoa tree beans).

Other Products – Buttons, comb, curtains, eyeglass frame, hairbrush handle, luggage, paint, pillows, rubber gloves, rug, upholstery on sofa. (Cellulose, the major component of the cell walls of trees and other plants, can be added to certain substances to make plastics. Tree saps can be turned into paint and other products).

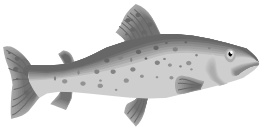
Answers to Kids' Column:

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

The Catch of a Lifetime

Area anglers can now enjoy and experience fishing as never before in east central Iowa. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has begun stocking rainbow trout in the Lake of the Hills, West Lake Park. These 10- to 12-inch fish are being released across the state of Iowa in order to introduce anglers to fishing and to help provide more fishing opportunities locally.

So far, 1,500 trout were released on October 21. During each release, 4 larger breeder trout, weighing more than six pounds each, will also be placed into the lake. These fish would be the catch of a lifetime! The next release will happen on Saturday, January 13, 2007, at 10:30 A.M. The final release will be shortly after ice



out; please check the local media for details.

Rainbow trout are not native to this area; they are produced in Iowa fish hatcheries and re-stocked each year because they cannot reproduce. Although this is a non-sustainable fishery, it is an excellent opportunity to discover the joys of fishing and participate as a family. These trout are highly catchable and provide great table fare. Trout coming to West Lake Park will arrive from the Manchester Fish Hatchery.

When trout are released at these events, personnel from the DNR, Quad Cities In-Fisherman, and Gander Mountain will be on hand to help out beginners. Remember that Iowa residents and non-residents, regardless of age, must pay a trout fee to fish for or possess trout. Individuals, 16 years and older, must also have a valid fishing license. Children, under 16 years, fishing with

a properly licensed adult (i.e. fishing license and trout fee), do not need a trout fee to fish for or possess trout, but together their daily limit is five trout. For more information on fishing rules, see the 2006 *Iowa Fishing Regulations* booklet.

For more information, please contact the Southeast Iowa Fisheries Office at (319) 694-2430 or the Scott County Conservation Board Office at (563) 328-3280.

Improve Wildlife Habitat on Your Small Acreage Spring Tree-Planting Season

Do you own a small acreage (1 to 10 acres), and want to improve the wildlife habitat on your property? The Iowa State Forest Nursery is offering a variety of special shrub and tree seedling packets that will help private landowners attract wildlife to their property for the spring 2007 planting season. Seedlings can also be used to establish or improve forest cover, erosion control, water conservation and create Christmas tree plantations. There is a variety of special packets available for attracting wildlife such as ones for turkey (200 plants), pheasant (200 plants) and quail (200 plants), songbirds (20 plants), and a create-a-packet (200 plants). In the create-a-packet, you get to select 4 different species to fit your own specific habitat needs. There are over 30 different tree and shrub species available for planting. To secure the number and types of trees and/or shrubs you need, it is highly recommended that you order now. To order or for more information, contact the State Forest Nursery at (800) 865-2477 or on the web at www.iowadnr.com/forestry. If you have forestry-related



questions or need assistance designing a new tree planting, contact Mark Vitosh, District Forester, IA DNR at (319) 351-8886 or Mark.Vitosh@dnr.state.ia.us.

New Threat to Ash Trees: Use Local (IA) Firewood Only

Through the winter months, many Iowa residents use firewood in their homes and buildings to keep warm. Firewood is a great way to reduce heating costs, but if the material comes from out-of-state sources, it could threaten the health of ash trees in the state of Iowa.



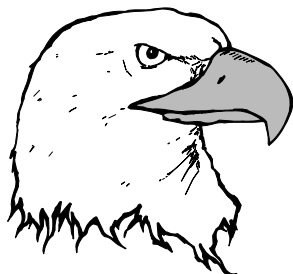
The threat to Iowa's ash trees is a tiny green beetle called the emerald ash borer. This tiny beetle can survive in pieces of ash firewood, and it can be transported from infested areas to areas where there are healthy trees. This pest was accidentally introduced into the United States from Asia, most likely in the late 1990s. Since being discovered in 2002, this borer has killed at least 25 million ash trees in the United States. This insect has been found in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and most recently (summer 2006) in the Chicago area.

Where the emerald ash borer has been found, it has attacked all species, varieties and cultivars of ash. In Iowa, it is estimated that at least 20 percent of the trees in our communities are ash, and there could be as many as 10 to 20 million native ash trees in our rural forests. Currently, this pest has not been found in Iowa, and the best way to keep it out of the state is to not bring any firewood from across our borders. The moral of this story is "the best firewood is IA firewood". For information on the emerald ash borer, go to the web at www.emeraldashborer.info.

January



Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather conditions allow, check the local media for cross-country skiing and snowshoe outings throughout the winter. Or, for those with e-mail addresses, write [cjacobson@clintoncounty.iowa.com](mailto:cjacobsen@clintoncounty.iowa.com) and place yourself on our handy adventurers' list. Adventurers will receive a short message whenever snow events are planned.



6th ~ Annual 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. - 3:00 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.

9:45 A.M. ~ On the Wings of the Wind ~ Video

10:15 A.M. ~ Furbearers of Iowa ~ Chuck Jacobsen, Naturalist, Clinton CCB

11:15 A.M. ~ Birds of Prey ~ Paul Woodin, Naturalist, Rockford Park District

12:45 P.M. ~ Eagles of the Upper Mississippi ~ Pam Steinhaus, USFWS Ranger

1:45 P.M. ~ Call of the Wild ~ Hoo Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education Center

Between ~ Music & Songs Inspired by Wilderness ~ Chuck Jacobsen, Naturalist, Clinton CCB

6th & 7th ~ 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 6, and 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 7. Come see us at the Wapsi River Center display.



11th ~ Ice Fishing Clinic ~ 6:30 - 7:30 P.M. ~ West Lake Park Campground Office (Gate #5) ~ Come learn the basics of ice fishing. Join Gary Jantz from Gander Mountain to learn about the latest in gear, tackle and techniques. This special event is limited to 25 participants, so call the Wapsi River Center at (563) 328-3286 to pre-register.

13th ~ Cross-country Ski Clinic ~ 9:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Environmental Education Center ~ Join Bob Bryant, former Wapsi River Center Director, for this beginning skiers' class. He will teach about proper ski techniques, safety and what to look for in purchasing equipment. This clinic will take place with or without snow. Participants are asked to meet at the Eagle View Eco Center.

13th ~ Trout Release ~ 10:30 A.M. ~ Lake of the Hills ~ West Lake Park (Gate #1) ~ Join personnel from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Quad Cities In-Fisherman, Gander Mountain and the Scott County Conservation Board to release rainbow trout at Lake of the Hills, West Lake Park.



20th ~ Cross-country Ski Tour ~ 9:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join a Wapsi River staff member to explore the winter woodlands of the Wapsi River Center on cross-country skis. Participants are asked to call (563) 328-3286, to reserve equipment.



20th ~ Educators Certification GPS Workshop ~ 1:00 - 5:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ This workshop, conducted by I.S.U. Extension personnel, will teach you the basics in orientation, from the use of a compass to the latest in GPS

(Global Positioning Satellite) technology. Participants will learn to navigate through a standard GPS unit, set and find way-points, and upon completion, be certified to check out the county extension's GPS kit so that they may instruct others in the use of this ever-popular technology. There is a \$15 fee for the workshop. Call (563) 847-7202 to reserve your spot.

21st ~ Snowmobile Radar Run ~ Noon - 3:00 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. Donation suggested per run, with all proceeds going to the Spina Bifida Foundation of Iowa. The club also holds a wheelie contest. Registration will begin at 11:00 A.M. Hot food, drinks and snacks will be available for purchase on-site. Spectators are welcome. Watch local media for details or call Joe Purcell at (563) 529-2586 for more information.



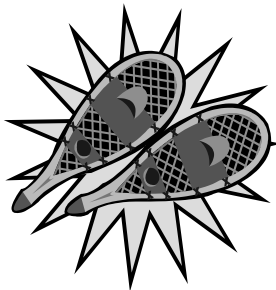
Events



27th ~ 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.



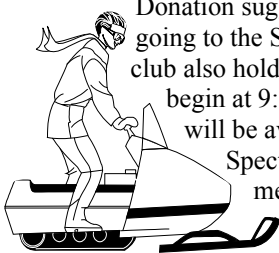
27th ~ Snowshoe Tracking ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Mike Granger, Wapsi River Center Naturalist, as he takes participants on a stroll through the Wapsi woods. While making tracks of their own, via snowshoes, participants will have the opportunity to search for animal tracks and other signs of animal activity in this winter wonderland. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug.**



27th ~ Recycled Card Crafts ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Did you know that during the holiday season we generate 5 million tons of trash? Recycling is the key! By attending this fun afternoon program, participants will learn to make gift boxes, decorative tags, ornaments and much more from recycled holiday cards. Scissors, glue, rulers and pencils will be provided; participants need only to bring cards. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug.**



28th ~ Snowmobile Radar Run ~ 11:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~ The Eastern Iowa Sno-riders snowmobile club will host this event on the backwater ice at Rock Creek Marina, ice permitting. Anyone is welcome to race their snowmobile against a radar gun.



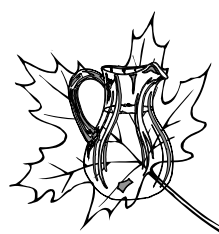
Donation suggested per run, with all proceeds going to the Spina Bifida Foundation of Iowa. The club also holds a wheelie contest. Registration will begin at 9:30 A.M. Hot food, drinks and snacks will be available for purchase on-site. Spectators are welcome. Watch local media for details or call Dr. Kirk Meyer at (563) 941-5492 for more information.

February

Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather

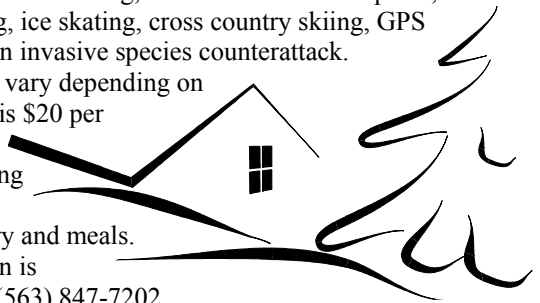
conditions allow, check the local media for cross-country skiing and snowshoe outings.

3rd ~ Skate Sherman's Woods ~ 1:00 P.M. - Dark ~ Sherman Park ~ Glide over a frozen pond protected from the biting wind by the surrounding forest of Sherman Park. We will clear the snow from the ice, provide a warming fire and roasting forks should you bring along weenies or marshmallows. If you don't have skates and we have snow, you may check out a pair of snowshoes or cross-country skis and explore the park's many trails. Equipment will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Sherman Park is located 5 miles south of Calamus, Iowa, at the corner of 270th Street and 160th Avenue.

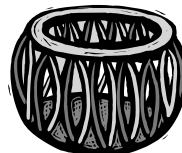


10th ~ Maple-Syruping Demonstration ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Tom Greene as he discusses the history and procedure of tapping trees for syrup. Handouts and where to find tapping equipment will be provided to participants. Please call (563) 328-3286, if you are interested in attending.

10th & 11th ~ Winter Camp for Adults ~ 1:00 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: maple-syruping, night hike with owl calling, music around the fireplace, eagle watching, ice skating, cross country skiing, GPS training, and an invasive species counterattack. Activities will vary depending on weather. Cost is \$20 per person, which includes lodging in the Owl's Nest Dormitory and meals. Pre-registration is required; call (563) 847-7202.



11th ~ Counterattack; Invasive Species Removal ~ 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. ~ Sherman Park ~ We are going after them! The invaders and usurpers of our native plant kingdom. Bring yourself and any manual trimmers (we will supply some of these), loppers, and/or saws and join others in beating back woody invasive species at Sherman Park. Armed or unarmed, with your help we can lick them back a good one and provide space for the natural return of native species. We'll take regular breaks and enjoy home-baked goods with coffee, cider and hot chocolate. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug, refreshments will be served.**

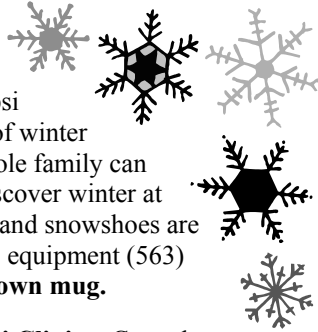


17th ~ Nature Basket Class ~ 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ Join us in making a versatile, classic basket that can be completed within the class time. We

will also explore creative ways to incorporate natural, readily available materials from the prairie and timber. Cost for the each basket kit is \$10. To register, contact Karma at (563) 659-2422.

17th ~ 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) 328-3286. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug.**



9:00 A.M. ~ Cross-country Ski Clinic ~ Come learn the basics of cross-country skiing. Participants will learn about proper skiing techniques, safety and equipment. Participants may bring their own equipment.

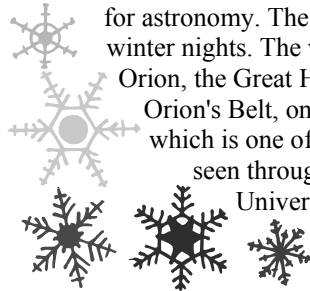
12:30 P.M. ~ Snowshoe Nature Hike ~ Join Michael Granger, Wapsi River Center Naturalist, on this excursion into the Wapsi River Center's woodlands. We will be traveling the way of the Native Americans and early pioneers, looking for signs of life in the still, winter woods.

2:00 P.M. ~ Eagle View Eco Center Discovery ~ Come join a naturalist, to make some exciting discoveries in the Eco Center. Visitors will learn about some of our local wildlife through displays and live animals.

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.

5:30 P.M. ~ Supper ~ The Friends of the Wapsi Center will be providing a hearty supper. Donations are accepted, so bring your own table setting and enjoy live music by Chuck Jacobsen.

7:00 P.M. ~ Frostbite Star Party ~ Winter is a great time for astronomy. The sky is never clearer than on cold, 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.



24th ~ Maple-Syruping Demonstration ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Due to the popularity of this program and nature's unpredictability, Tom Greene will be conducting another maple-syruping demonstration. Please call (563) 328-3286, if you are interested in attending.

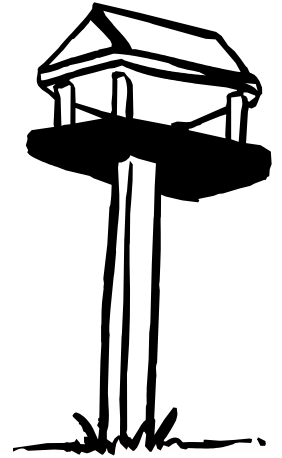
27th ~ Folk Concert ~ 7:00 - 9:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi Center ~ Relax and enjoy an evening of acoustical guitar and vocal offerings of the music of Paul Simon, Peter Meyer, John



Denver, John Prine and several others as rendered by local talents. You may participate by using one of our collection of simple percussion instruments, bringing your own, singing along, slapping your knee, tapping your foot or just being a quiet listener. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug, refreshments will be served.**

March

8th ~ 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 for a wren, robin or bluebird, \$7 for a bat house and \$20 for woodduck and kestrel boxes. You must call (563) 847-7202 before March 6 to order your kits. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug.**



10th ~ Recycled Stitches ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come join naturalist Lisa Gerwulf as she shows you how to create a versatile "shopping" bag with recycled shopping bags.

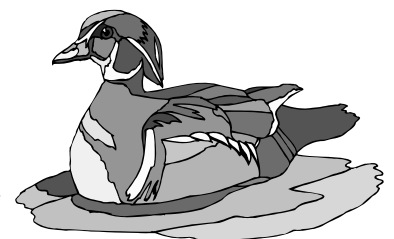


Participants will spend an afternoon in the relaxing atmosphere of Redtail Lodge creating plastic "yarn" out of recycled shopping/grocery bags. Then you'll see how to create a lightweight, durable bag using simple knitting and crocheting techniques. You don't have to be a knitting or crocheting expert to enjoy this program.

Each participant needs to bring the following items: 5 plastic shopping/grocery bags and a pair of sharp scissors.

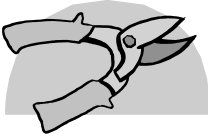
If you have access to a quilting tool called a rotary cutter and mat, consider bringing these. Pre-registration is required, by calling (563) 328-3286 to reserve your spot.

17th ~ Birdhouse Workshop ~ 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ You can build your own bluebird, wren, bat, robin, kestrel or woodduck nest box from a kit. 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 for a wren, robin or bluebird, \$7 for a bat house and \$20 for woodduck and kestrel boxes. You must call (563) 847-7202 before March 15 to order your kits. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug.**



17th ~ Spring Pheasant Festival ~ 5:00 PM ~ Wheatland Community Center ~ The Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever is planning a family night of fun at the Wheatland Community Center. They will have lots of games, door prizes, an auction and a pork dinner. Cost is \$10, people need not be members to attend. Call Mark at (563) 659-2422 for tickets.

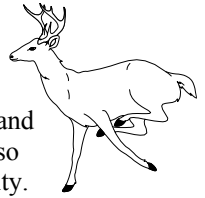
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collection of simple percussion instruments, bringing your own, singing along, slapping your knee, tapping your foot or just being a quiet listener. **BYOM ~ Bring your own mug, refreshments will be served.**

31st ~ Whitetails Unlimited Banquet ~ 5:30 PM ~ Millennium Ballroom, Goose Lake ~ Help provide public hunting, wildlife habitat and support the future of the hunting tradition. Also see the largest trophy deer display in the county.



Children are encouraged to attend and each will receive a special prize. Tickets are \$40. Spouses and kids are \$20. Call Mark at (563) 659-2422 for tickets. Come join the fun!

Bob Bryant's Retirement Party

Come join us as we bid farewell to Bob Bryant as he rides off into the future of retirement fun. He is retiring on December 29, 2006 after 14 years as Director. We are having a reception for him at the Eagle View Eco Center (located at the Wapsi River E. E. Center) on Friday, January 12 from 2:00 - 4:00 P.M. The Wapsi River Center is located at 31555 52nd Ave. ~ Dixon, IA 52745.

“A Place for All Seasons” Photo Contest ~ Calling All Shutterbugs!!!

To celebrate the beauty of our local wild places, the Wapsi River Center will be holding a photo contest. We are looking to create a 2008 calendar featuring current photos taken at Scott or Clinton County conservation/recreation areas. Three photos will be selected by volunteer judges to represent each season of the calendar year.

Concluding the contest, those participants whose photos have been selected will receive a complimentary calendar. One photo will be selected for the cover of the calendar. This winner, in addition to the calendar, will receive a free two-night stay at the rustic Kestrel Cabin located at the Wapsi River Center.

Contest Requirements:

1. Photos must be from the current season and taken from either Scott or Clinton County conservation areas.
2. A brief description, date taken and name of conservation area must be submitted along with an 8 by 10 color photo. Submitted prints will be used for judging purposes.
3. Save the negative or electronic (JPEG) file of your submitted photo. Providing your photo is selected, these will be needed to complete the calendar. **Please note:** for printing purposes, photos may be edited by our staff.
4. Please include your name, address and contact number.

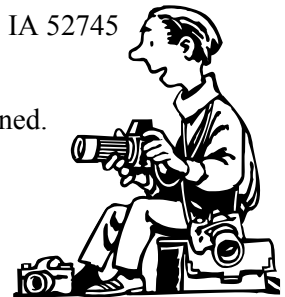
Send photos to: Wapsi River Center ~ Attn: Photo Contest ~ 31555 52nd Ave. ~ Dixon, IA 52745

Contest Rules:

1. All photos entered will become the property of the Wapsi River Center and not be returned.
2. Each contestant is allowed to submit up to 4 photos.
3. Judges will not select more than 2 photos from any contestant.
4. **Contest ends October 31, 2007.** Photos may be submitted anytime before this date.

All calendar proceeds go toward the *Friends of the Wapsi Center*. The *Friends* are a citizens' support group who provide assistance to the Wapsi River E. E. Center in the form of volunteers for programs, technical assistance, curriculum planning, financial support and guidance in fulfilling the Center's goals.

For questions, call the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center at (563) 328-3286.



Animal Profile ~ Rough-legged Hawk

by Paula Mullin, AmeriCorps Naturalist

It was apparent after my first day at the Wapsi River Center that I did not share the passion for birds of prey with my new co-workers. They would stop everything to watch the wing-beats of a raptor, holding contests over who could spot the most. I wondered initially why it was such a big deal to see each and every red-tailed hawk, as they are relatively common. It has taken nearly a year, but I have finally realized that you can not see other species of hawks if you disregard each raptor as one you have already seen. Admittedly, there is a greater diversity of hawks than I once realized. Fortunately, this is a great time to turn eyes skyward as several raptors have migrated to the area, making it their winter home. One that evokes a lot of enthusiasm is commonly known as the rough-legged hawk.

Rough-legged hawks move from breeding grounds in the arctic tundra/sub-arctic taiga to warmer climates for wintering. Only one of the three known sub-species, *Buteo lagopus sancti-johannis*, occurs in North America, with a winter range extending from southern Canada south throughout the United States except for southeast states and northern Mexico. The migrant prefers open areas and is often seen in Iowa from mid-October to late March. Their populations are higher in areas of high prey population, which consists primarily of small mammals. Voles, in particular, make up an estimated 80 to 90 percent of their winter diet.

The name “rough-legged” refers to the feathers that cover the legs completely to the feet. The scientific name (*Buteo lagopus*) was derived from the Latin word *buteo*, referring to an early name for hawks and vultures, and *lagopus*, a word of both Greek and Latin origins, meaning harefoot. Other adaptations of arctic life include a small beak and small feet. Of course, these are not the best means of identifying the hawk as they are soaring high above us.



One recognizable trait of the rough-legged hawk is the ability to hover. The only other raptor known to hover over its prey, also referred to as kiting, is the much smaller American kestrel. In other words, if you see a relatively large bird that appears to be suspended in the air, take a closer look as it may be a rough-legged hawk.

Not all rough-legged hawks look exactly alike, due to variation in color and tail pattern. There are light and dark morphs, both having an immature and two adult plumage types. Some hawking guides describe differences in male and female color variations, but advise that color can not always be used to distinguish sex. The light phase, seen from below, has a black belly and black patch at the wrist. Dark morphs, however, are frequent. There is variation in tail patterns between adult males and females. From left to right, the illustration below shows the tail pattern of a juvenile, adult male and adult female rough-legged hawk.



Tail Pattern Sketches by Donald Heintzelman


The rough-legged hawk is one species that makes winter an especially great time to turn eyes skyward. I am actually excited to join those of you who participate in hawk watching, and not simply to win contests.

Plant Profile ~ American Bladdernut

by Renae Hanson, AmeriCorps Naturalist

I've spent some time thinking about a plant I could write about in the winter issue of *The W.R.E.N.* Winter plant articles are difficult because most everything's gone dormant or died off due to the cold.

One afternoon, mid-November of this year, two other naturalists and I went on a hike to one of my favorite places to visit at the Wapsi Center. Generally, we do not take many school groups to this spot because it's off the trails and quite a walk. Poison ivy, stinging nettles, and time constraints become an issue.



Fall and winter are the best time of year to visit this place because the flora is low and most of the leaves have fallen from the trees. It's a beautiful place near the Wapsipinicon River where there's a limestone bluff. The limestone bluff is the attraction for me because it secludes the area and gives you the sense of true peacefulness with yourself and nature.

A large dead oak tree that is completely hollow stands there. Two adults can fit inside this tree with room to spare. It becomes very evident that many animals spend time here. We've found animal tracks, animal skulls, cracked nuts and dens within the limestone bluffs where animals have obviously taken shelter.

That afternoon, as we decided to head back, we noticed a tree close to the limestone that still had a lot of green on it. The leaves had all fallen from the tree; however, the pale green seedpods had not. It was an American bladdernut, *Staphylea trifolia*.

This small shrub-like tree is found mostly in rich bottomland forests along streams and rivers. It can grow to heights of 10-15 feet tall. The leaflets are three-parted, toothed and grow opposite. Its bark is smooth with salt and pepper stripes. During spring, April-May, it produces attractive dangling clusters of greenish-white, bell-shaped flowers with panicles longer than the flower itself. The Greek word

Staphylea means "clusters of grapes" which references the dangling clusters of flowers on the bladdernut; *trifolia* refers to the 3 leaflets.

After flowering, the clusters begin forming a pale green, papery air-filled seedpod which will slightly change to a brownish color through fall and winter. Each pod contains 1-4 seeds. The small round somewhat flattened seeds are about ¼ inch long, hard and shiny. The seeds range in color from yellow to grayish brown.



There are no records of any medicinal or nutritional value for the American bladdernut; however, the seeds from the European species of bladdernut, *Staphylea pinnata*, are used as a pistachio substitute. Although I have yet to try the seeds of either species, the flavor of the American bladdernut is supposed to be quite similar to that of the European, except the seeds are considered to be much harder and more difficult to crack open.

Knowing that I enjoy pistachio nuts so much, I've become even more curious about tasting seeds from the American bladdernut. I was happy to find out that the pods remain on the tree through winter. I'm hoping, on my next hike, the animals will have left a few seeds behind for me and my fellow naturalists.

If you find this tree attractive, it would make an excellent ornamental addition to your landscape. Along with being native to Iowa, this shade-tolerant, shrub-like tree produces delicate and beautiful flowers while in bloom. In addition, the seedpods may strike up conservation through fall and winter.



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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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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.

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