

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Fall 2007

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

www.scottcountyiowa.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 Dave Murcia, Director

Fiscal Year Attendance

Attendance for the 2007 fiscal year (July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007) was approximately 29,775. A healthy jump from last year's numbers! Many schools came out and public programs included three summer campground programs at West Lake Park, Scott County Park and Buffalo Shores Recreation Area.

Fall School Field Trips

If you would like to schedule a field trip, we encourage educators to schedule as far in advance as possible and take an active role. School programs are not scheduled for Mondays so that staff may work on administration and resource management. We would like to see more schools take fall and winter field trips. This would allow more schools to visit the Wapsi River Center. **You may now download our field trip planner from our website to better plan a trip!**

New Hours!

The Eagle View Eco Center will now be open only on Saturdays from 12:30 - 4:30 P.M. starting Saturday, October 6.

Don't forget that the Wapsi Center will be closed during the deer hunt, December 1-5.



Bald Eagle Viewing

Our national symbol will start arriving in November, along with migrant waterfowl. The stretch of the Wapsipicon River below the Wapsi River Center supports dozens of eagles in the night roost. The best viewing will be from December through early March, one to two hours before dusk. During nature center hours, scopes are available to view the birds, along with other wintering songbirds.

Wapsi Center December Deer Hunt

Scott County Park and the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center are once again designated as a Special Deer Management Zone by the IA DNR, and **special deer licenses** will be issued for antlerless deer only. These hunts are proving to be effective management techniques to help control the deer population, promote hunter education and ethics, and high-quality hunting opportunities.

The Wapsi River Center hunt will allow 12 hunters during the first shotgun season from December 1-5. **The Wapsi River Center will be closed to the public during the hunt.**

Wapsi River Center Projects Completed

Many projects have been completed this summer including resource and facility management projects. Our biggest project involved the new resident caretaker house. With the assistance and expertise of the maintenance staff from West Lake and Scott County Parks, the new residence is now being used by Mark Cox and his wife, Janet.

The teams course and trails have been cleared and dressed with fresh mulch, while the butterfly garden was cleared of invasive species by the Moline Service Unit Girl Scouts! The fire pits have been rebuilt and new wiring has allowed better use of the pond at the Osprey Aquatic Lab.

With the initiative of the Clinton County Conservation Board, a new low-impact water trail access will be constructed on the river trail for canoes and kayaks.

More trail work will be done this year, while a big effort will be placed on invasive species clearing on the prairie, as well as along many trails. The outdoor amphitheater is also being improved for better access and use. We are also planning for construction of a backyard landscape pond behind the Eagle View Eco Center.

Scout Opportunities

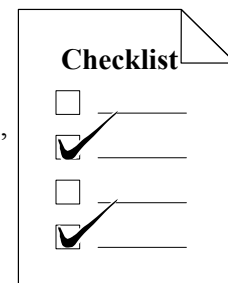
The Wapsi River Center continues to support the Scouts of America by providing limited camp space to local troops. Scouts may use Elm and Vincent camp sites in return for service projects ranging from habitat/wildlife management to trail maintenance. Please call in advance to reserve sites and register through the Illowa Council for official tour permits.

Eagle Scout project available! Due to our very wet spring and summer season, runoff has eroded the stairs at the beginning portion of the woodland trail. This trail is used

quite regularly and its repair would be greatly appreciated. Contact Dave Murcia, Director of the Wapsi River E. E. Center, for more information.

Wish List

A few items we are currently seeking are roasting forks, 5-gallon buckets, various kitchen utensils and appliances, etc. If you would like to donate items to the Wapsi Center, please call us (563) 328-3286 for a detailed list.



Hellos & Goodbyes

Hello, W.R.E.N. readers! My name is **Amber Barr** and I've recently joined the Wapsi River Center staff as an AmeriCorps naturalist. I am currently in my fourth year at St. Ambrose University (SAU) in Davenport. I am double majoring in journalism and biology with a minor in environmental studies.

I have a few years' experience working with school-age children and putting on recreational programs for the public. I also have experience organizing programs and events for the SAU environmental club – *GreenLife*. Now, I am so excited to put those skills to good use here at the Wapsi Center.

I am eagerly looking forward to educating others, while at the same time gaining knowledge about my true passion: the environment.

Hi! I am **Cassie Druhl**, a new AmeriCorps naturalist for the 2007-2008 term. In May, I graduated from Central

College with a degree in communication studies, but I have always had a special interest in the environment.

Two years ago, I took an environmental communication class and wrote a research paper on the sway of opinion the media has on environmental issues. Last year, I lived in Iowa's first "Eco-dorm" and had a wonderful living experience. In my school paper, I wrote many articles informing students about Central's goal to become a "green campus," along with making a video about recycling on campus. I also created a dorm energy-saving contest in the building where I lived, which turned out to be more successful than I would have ever imagined.

I hope to use the skills I've acquired in school at the Wapsi River Center by getting the word out to the public about how great this nature center is. I'm also hoping to gain some new skills that I maybe would have never thought I would have. I am looking forward to this term with great enthusiasm!

The W.R.E.N. will soon be Going Green!

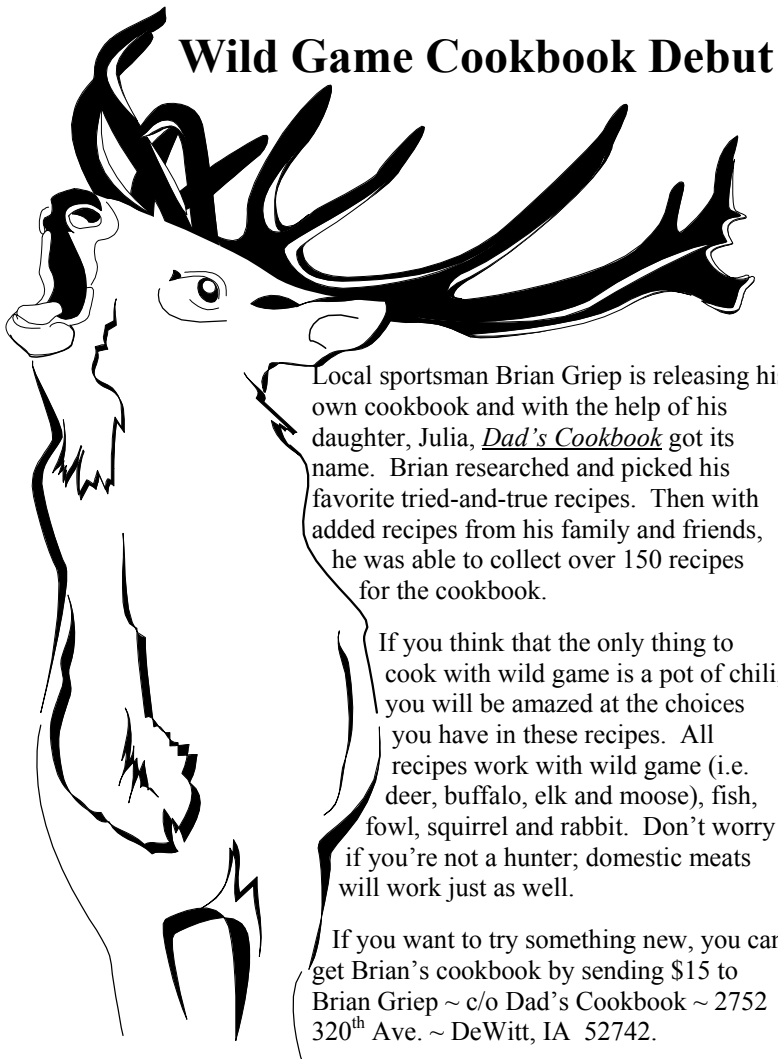
As stewards of our natural resources, the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center invites you to join them along a greener path. In an effort to conserve our resources, our quarterly newsletter, *The W.R.E.N.*, will now be offered electronically to our subscribers. The savings in costs will be directed back to the very resources that we all value – our next generation and the environment.



Please visit our website at www.scottcountyia.com/convervation/

wapsi.php to download *The W.R.E.N.* If you do not have access to a computer or the Internet, a copy can be found at libraries and museums in the Scott County area, or you may request a newsletter by sending your mailing information to the Wapsi River E. E. Center ~ 31555 52nd Ave. ~ Dixon, IA 52745.

The Wapsi River Environmental Education Center would like to **thank you** for your continued support and interest in promoting the preservation of historical, educational, environmental, recreational and natural resources of Scott County.



Wild Game Cookbook Debut

Local sportsman Brian Griep is releasing his own cookbook and with the help of his daughter, Julia, *Dad's Cookbook* got its name. Brian researched and picked his favorite tried-and-true recipes. Then with added recipes from his family and friends, he was able to collect over 150 recipes for the cookbook.

If you think that the only thing to cook with wild game is a pot of chili, you will be amazed at the choices you have in these recipes. All recipes work with wild game (i.e. deer, buffalo, elk and moose), fish, fowl, squirrel and rabbit. Don't worry if you're not a hunter; domestic meats will work just as well.

If you want to try something new, you can get Brian's cookbook by sending \$15 to Brian Griep ~ c/o Dad's Cookbook ~ 2752 320th Ave. ~ DeWitt, IA 52742.

In Appreciation of Your Support of the Wapsi River Center



- Bill Robbins**
- Carol Rogers**
- Connie Huber**
- Jeanne Bryant**
- Lucia Dryanski**
- Ingrid Bogdanowicz**
- Jay Graham & Troop 43**
- Andrea DeWaele & Unit 68**

- Diane Croft**
- Carol Hinkle**
- Bonnie Greiner**
- Deanne Swartzendruber**

In memoriam:
Mitchell Ertz



Kids' Corner ~ Autumn Word Search



Below is a list of autumn-themed words that can be found in the word search grid at the right. Grab a pencil and see how many you can find.

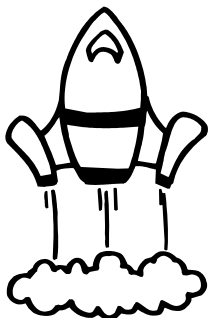
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|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Acorn | 15. November |
| 2. Apple | 16. October |
| 3. Autumn | 17. Orange |
| 4. Beautiful | 18. Pumpkin |
| 5. Bonfire | 19. Rake |
| 6. Brown | 20. Ripe |
| 7. Cornucopia | 21. Scarecrow |
| 8. Crisp | 22. Scenic |
| 9. Foliage | 23. Season |
| 10. Football | 24. September |
| 11. Harvest | 25. Squirrel |
| 12. Hayride | 26. Sunflower |
| 13. Leaves | 27. Sunshine |
| 14. Migration | 28. Yellow |

Y	M	V	R	A	L	N	S	E	Z	A	Y	N	H	Q
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B	R	I	A	R	H	O	O	V	C	K	A	C	R	L
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E	L	P	P	A	S	C	E	N	I	C	O	R	F	Z

October

4th ~ **Fall Color Eco Cruise ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground** ~ Call (563) 259-1876 to reserve a spot. Cost is \$6/adult & \$4/child under 16.

5th - 7th ~ **Escape from Mars - Return to Venus ~ 6:00 P.M. (Fri) - Noon (Sun) ~ Eden Valley Refuge** ~ This is a weekend get-away for women only! Explore the ins and outs of one of Iowa's jewels, Eden Valley Refuge.



This is a high-adventure weekend that includes a hayrack ride, stargazing, rock climbing, spelunking, stream stomping, geocaching and nature photography. Activities will depend on weather. To be amongst the limestone bluffs, you can stay in the bunkhouse or bring your own tent. Cost is \$15 per woman to include all meals. To pre-register, call (563) 847-7202.

6th ~ **Sixteenth Annual Ecology Day ~ 1:30 - 9:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Bring the whole family, invite a friend and plan to attend all the day's events.

1:30 - 2:30 P.M. ~ Little Green Monsters ~

Join Dave Murcia, Director of the Wapsi River E. E. Center, for a discussion on the emerald ash borer and its devastating affects on regional ash trees. Participants will learn how to identify the insect, what are the signs of infestation and what can be done to prevent its spread to local populations.

2:30 - 3:30 P.M. ~ Lessons on Lepidopterans ~

Join Mike Granger, Wapsi River Center naturalist, on a discovery of the wonderful world of butterflies and moths. Learn about



their amazing life cycle, the national tagging program – *MonarchWatch*, nocturnal navigators of the group and a make-and-take craft the whole family will enjoy.

3:30 - 4:30 P.M. ~ **Insect Zoo** ~ The Iowa State University's Insect Zoo is an outreach program developed to foster an appreciation of insects found in Iowa and throughout the world. Through hands-on, minds-on programs involving live insects and other arthropods, participants will learn about the connections between

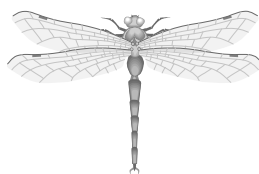


Autumn

these diverse groups and their important role to life on Earth.

5:00 - 6:30 P.M. ~ Supper ~ No insects were harmed in the creating of this outdoor cooking experience – except a mosquito or two. Learn about various volunteer opportunities available in the area, as well as the Wapsi River E. E. Center itself.

6:30 - 7:30 P.M. ~ Aquatic Insects ~ Join Mike



Granger and the AmeriCorps naturalists as they discuss the various 6-legged inhabitants of the Center's Osprey Aquatic Lab. This catch-and-release activity will be great for all ages.

7:30 - 9:00 P.M. ~ Eastern Iowa Star Party ~

The Quad City Astronomical Society hosts this annual event at the Monsignor Menke Astronomical Observatory. They invite the public to join them for this celestial celebration.

6th ~ Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever Banquet ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Millennium Ballroom ~

Pheasants Forever's Clinton County Chapter is holding its annual fund-raiser at the Millennium Ballroom in Goose Lake, IA. The group provides funds to local landowners and agencies for the establishment of wildlife habitat. Call Mark Roberts at (563) 659-2422 for tickets.

11th ~ Fall Color Eco Cruise ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~ Call (563) 259-1876 to reserve a spot. Cost is \$6/adult & \$4/child under 16.



13th ~ 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 25th 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) 343-7002.

Events

18th ~ Fall Color Eco Cruise ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~ Call (563) 259-1876 to reserve a spot. Cost is \$6/adult & \$4/child under 16. This is our finale for the year.

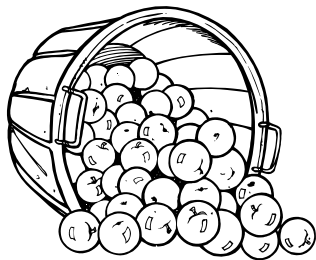
20th ~ Wapsipinicon Watershed Sampling ~ 8:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join area environmentalists and volunteers in surveying the region's water quality by sampling the Wapsipinicon River watershed. Field



kits will be used to measure pH, nitrite/nitrate, chloride, dissolved oxygen, phosphate, water temperature and transparency. Call Jeff West (563) 320-3893, if you are interested in participating.

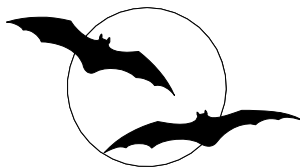
20th ~ Everything Cattail ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come learn about the amazing cattail with this hands-on workshop. Learn how they grow and make an awesome cattail craft to take home. Call to reserve a spot (563) 328-3286.

20th ~ Fest-Apple ~ 11:00 A.M. ~ Rock Creek Marina & Campground ~ Be a part of *Fest-Apple*, the festival of apples! Activities include: creative games, yummy



treats, and crafts all using apples. Participants may come and go at their leisure over the course of the festival, but make sure you're there at noon for some piñata fun. All we ask is for you to bring some apples to share.

27th ~ Creatures of the 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, and reminded to dress according to the weather conditions.



28th ~ Fall Fest & Hocus-Pocus Hike ~ 3:00 - 8:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ Pumpkin

carving, a weenie roast, campfire music and hayrack ride makes this annual event fun for the whole family. A monetary donation will be collected at the door. At 6:00 and 7:00 P.M., folks are invited to enjoy a "spooktacular" night hike, exploring the origins, legends and myths of Halloween. Discover the truths about several misunderstood nocturnal creatures.

30th ~ Creepy Cave Creep & Campfire ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Eden Valley Refuge ~ Meet at the nature center and carpool to Werden's Cave for a naturalist-lead creepy-crawl-about. This will mark the end of our cave-tour season. Afterwards, bake the cave clay into your jeans around a warm campfire and enjoy hot dogs, chips, marshmallows and s'mores. Call (563) 847-7202 to sign up.



November

6th ~ Sharks & Rays of Monterey Bay ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Soaring Eagles Nature Center ~ Mark Roberts participated in a study of sharks and rays with the Earthwatch Institute this past July in Monterey Bay, California. He will share pictures of his experience through a PowerPoint presentation, and will also discuss their health and why we should care.

8th ~ Deadly Waters ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Cassie Druhl, AmeriCorps naturalist, for a lesson on water quality. Participants will learn about the water cycle, water pollutants, water quality and how we can make a difference in influencing our water resources.



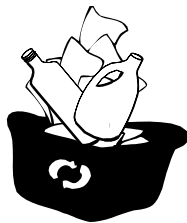
10th ~ Good Old-Fashioned Toys ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Soaring Eagle Nature Center ~ At this workshop, we will take a tour of the historic Flannery schoolhouse located on-site, experience some of the various toys and then construct an old-fashioned toy of your very own to take home.

10th ~ Natural Dye Program ~ 1:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Long ago, people looked to nature to color the fabrics they used in making garments. Join Lisa Gerwulf, Wapsi Center naturalist, and see what natural items were used and how they can be used today.

17th ~ Homemade Bird Feeders ~ 10:00 A.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. Participants are asked to bring clean milk jugs (paper or plastic) or 20 oz. – 2-liter pop bottles, and reserve your spot by November 14 by calling (563) 328-3286.



25th ~ 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, holiday music, demonstrations and a visit with Santa. Admission is free!

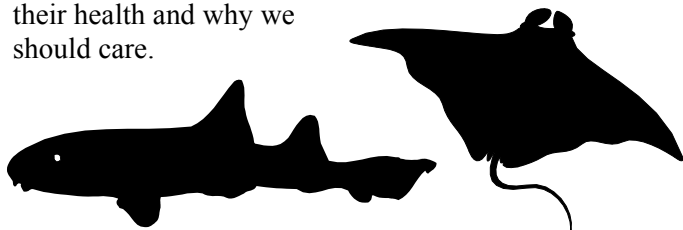


December

1st - 3rd ~ Park Closed ~ All Day ~ Scott County Park ~ Scott County Park will be closed for a controlled deer hunt.

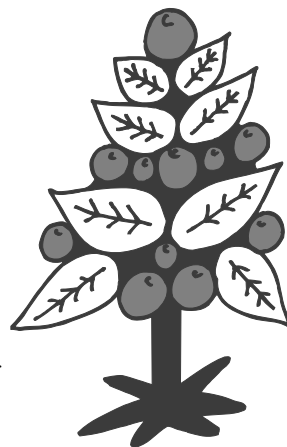
1st - 5th ~ Park Closed ~ All Day ~ Wapsi River Center ~ The Wapsi River Environmental Education Center will be closed for a controlled deer hunt.

2nd ~ Sharks & Rays of Monterey Bay ~ 1:30 PM ~ Hurstville Interpretive Center, Maquoketa ~ Mark Roberts participated in a study of sharks and rays with the Earthwatch Institute this past July in Monterey Bay, California. He will share pictures of his experience through a PowerPoint presentation, and will also discuss their health and why we should care.



8th ~ Cross-country Ski Clinic ~ 9:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come learn about the basics of cross-country skiing. Learn about proper ski technique, safety and what to look for when purchasing equipment. This clinic will take place with or without snow. If conditions permit, beginners can go on a “ski-tour” of the Wapsi River Center.

15th ~ Natural Ornaments ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Decorate your home this year with ornaments made from natural materials. Participants will collect a variety of natural items and learn how to create some festive decorations for your home. Fun for the whole family! Pre-register by December 12; (563) 328-3286.



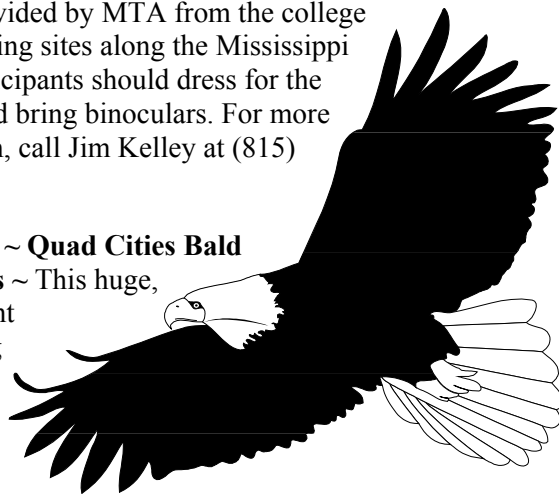
January

Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing ~ As weather conditions allow, check the local media for cross-country skiing and snowshoe outings throughout the winter.

5th ~ Twenty-fourth 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.

12th & 13th ~ Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days ~ This huge, annual event showcasing our national symbol – the

American bald eagle, also involves a wildlife art show, information booths, and various live animal presentations. 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 12, and 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 13. Come see us at the Wapsi River Center display.



wapsipinicon



The second annual Lower Wapsipinicon River Cleanup Project, a canoeing- and camping-based river cleanup event, took place August 24-26, 2007. Forty-three volunteers removed four tons of trash from approximately ten waterway miles. Much of that tonnage was recycled. The odd part is that they never got on the waters of the Lower Wapsipinicon River.

“Mother Nature was flexing her muscles for weeks prior to our cleanup,” said coordinator Melisa Petersen. “We watched helplessly as the Wapsipinicon continued to swell from the long stint of rain that accumulated in the area of its massive watershed. The ironic thing is that we do this cleanup in late August because water levels are low and garbage visibility is high.”

Because the Wapsi was flooded, Petersen worked closely with Clinton County Conservation Board naturalists Mark Roberts and Chuck Jacobsen on a new plan focusing on a water area that is rarely accessible. “The high water kept us out of the Wapsi, but afforded us an opportunity to get into the beautiful backwaters maze of the Mississippi where much refuse gets trapped in the early spring floods. I knew the volunteers we had signed up would be happy to clean any watershed they could get their canoes onto, and the last thing we wanted to do was cancel the whole event.”

Happy they were – despite a questionable forecast, losing their targeted river to flooding, their base camp at Rock

Creek Marina and Campground slowly being encroached upon by the swollen backwaters, and working conditions that included waist-deep mud and standing in waters chock full of hidden poison ivy and stinging nettles (both of which still function well underwater).

The program provided free canoes, free camping, low-cost catered meals including a fish boil on Saturday night, an evening GPS class by Jacobsen, and a complimentary Blue Heron Eco Cruise on the Mississippi led by Roberts. Sponsors for this event included: Clinton County Conservation Board, Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc., Clinton County Pheasants Forever, G. Baker Distributing, Allied Waste Services, Clinton County Area Solid Waste Agency, Clinton Salvage, The Outhouse, Custom-Pak, Hy-Vee, MidAmerican Energy Company, Kimberly Crest Veterinary Hospital, P.C., Target and IPSCO Tubulars Inc.

The Lower Wapsipinicon River Cleanup Project is a grassroots organization with a two-fold purpose: to remove trash from the river and dispose of it in an environmentally responsible manner, and to educate the public about the environment and the importance of caring for natural resources. They will be cleaning up a different section of the Lower Wapsipinicon each year in late August.

Next year (August 22-24, 2008), they will be targeting the stretch they had to leave behind this year: Allen’s Grove (near Donahue, IA) to McCausland, IA. For further information, or to get on a mailing list for next year, please write to LWRCP ~ P.O. Box 333 ~ Long Grove, IA 52756, or visit <http://www.lowerwapsicleanup.org>.

<p>GRAND TOTAL: 7,973 lbs. or 3.99 tons!</p>	<p>EXTREMELY large metal boat dock Parts of two large wooden docks Dock float, Buoy Abandoned 16-18 foot fiberglass flatboat Large rubber raft Parts of metal duck blind - 3 VERY large wooden duck blind Duck decoys - 4 300-gallon oil tank Plastic 5-gallon buckets - 10 Metal bucket, Bucket of tar, Paint can Metal barrels - 7, Plastic barrels - 6 Pallets - 3 Railroad crossing bar/arm, Large road sign Plastic swimming pool Water heater, Refrigerator Car, Big trucks - 2, Tires - 23, Tire rim Implement Aluminum siding - 2, Garage panels - 3 Fence posts - 3, Wooden fence pieces - 2 Hog wire fence - 30 feet Kerosene bottle, Small propane bottles - 4 Large-diameter ropes - 2</p>	<p>Baseball bats - 2, Baseballs - 2 Nerf footballs - 3, Basketball Small inflatable balls - 3 Plastic toy wagon, Toy wheelbarrow Gym mats - 2 Stuffed animal, Care Bears figurine, Legos Part of a blowgun, Squirt gun Large level, Jigsaw, Pliers, Saber saw blade Nails for a nail gun Key, Brass nameplate Frog- & Mouse-shaped fishing lures Fishing bobbers - 37 Styrofoam minnow bucket Blades for an ice auger - 2 Swivel office chairs - 2 Plastic chair, Folding chair, Lawn chairs - 4 Picnic table, Cooler Metal frames of folding tables - 5 Garden hose Part of a wooden ladder Wooden recipe card holder 300- to 400-lb. white blob of melted plastic Carpet remnant</p>
<p><u>Recyclables</u> ~ 3,058 lbs. or 38% of cleanup:</p>		
<p>24 lbs. aluminum 71 lbs. glass 96 lbs. plastic 855 lbs. tires & rims 2,120 lbs. scrap metal</p>		
<p><u>Hazardous waste</u> ~ 70 lbs.</p>		
<p><u>Dump material</u> ~ 4,845 lbs.</p>		
<p>It should be noted that the dump material contained a considerable amount of large pieces of treated and untreated wood from old docks. The wood pieces were removed from the water because they had nails, screws and other hardware, as well as styrofoam, attached to them.</p>		



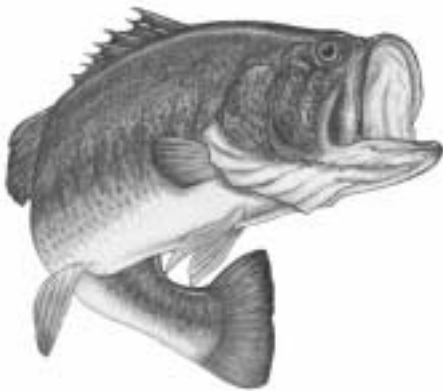
Wildlife Profile ~ Largemouth Bass



by Amber Barr, AmeriCorps Naturalist

The largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides*, is one of the most sought-after game fish in Iowa. The seekers of this well-known fish range from those who are just out for a little R & R on the weekends to seriously competitive anglers. Bass fishing competitions take place at the local level all the way to the pros. A growing number of colleges and universities are even developing teams that compete in intercollegiate tournaments up to the national level.

Bass are part of the sunfish family. The largemouth's most significant characteristic is just that, its large mouth. The lower jaw extends beyond the back edge of its golden-brown eyes, except when the fish is in its younger years. The general coloring is green-shaded. The top half is silver to brassy green with a large, dark stripe, often broken into a series of blotches, down the middle of each side. There are scattered black specks on the lower side and the belly is white to yellowish. There are two dorsal fins; the first one has sharp spines that will prick the hand of careless handlers. In Iowa, the largemouth bass averages 4-6 inches during its first year. They may reach 8-12 inches in the second year, and by the third, the fish can grow up to 16 inches!



Bass are predators, but they don't necessarily hunt for their prey. They like to lay waiting for unsuspecting victims. When active, these fish are often found just outside of cover, feeding within schools of prey fish. They also go for the easy meals of injured prey. They eat many things including other fish, frogs, salamanders, snakes, crawfish, insects and even birds resting on top of the water.

Bass find their habitats in lakes, ponds, reservoirs and quiet rivers. They avoid areas with strong currents. Largemouth bass especially prefer cover as it provides

protection from predators and makes them feel secure. Some predators include large birds such as bald eagles and great blue herons, common snapping turtles and fish larger than the bass. Stumps, brush and logs are examples of wood cover. Rocks may also provide cover and a food source; prey fish feed on the decaying material caught between the cracks of a pile of rocks. Green foliage provides the optimal cover because of the oxygen production.

These fish tend to move around their body of water as the seasons and water conditions change. In early spring, when the water temperature starts to rise, the bass will start to move up from the deeper water. When the water temperature is between 55 and 65 degrees Fahrenheit, bass will seek out a shallow, protected area for spawning. The male chooses a site that is easy to defend, and he will not build a nest that is within 30 feet of another nest unless there is an obstruction blocking the view to another nest. The male swims around the area waiting for a female. The male protects the eggs and they will hatch in two to seven days.

Because a fish's body temperature is the same as the water, its metabolism and body chemistry changes as the water temperature changes. An abrupt change can cause chemical imbalances in the body of the fish. As the temperature rises in the summer, largemouths become less active, therefore, conserving their metabolic energy. In the fall, when the water cools back down, the fish become more active and prey on faster-moving food. However, come winter, their metabolism slows again, this time to the extent that they feed less often and take smaller bites when they do.

Fishing caters to a wide variety of people. Whether you are pursuing a recreational pastime or are out participating in a competition, you will probably agree with Henry David Thoreau when he wrote, "Every person should have an interest in life – I think I'll go fishing."



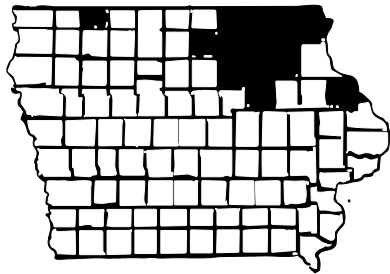
Plant Profile ~ Prairie Smoke



by Cassie Druhl, AmeriCorps Naturalist

When the words “prairie smoke” are mentioned, some people might be slightly concerned as the thought of a raging, quickly spreading grass fire races through their heads. But don’t worry; this type of smoke won’t pollute the air or your lungs. In fact, the plant prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*) has been used in the past for medicinal purposes.

Prairie smoke is one of the most distinctive and recognizable plants on the Iowa prairies. Other names that prairie smoke is known by are old man’s whiskers, Johnny smokers and purple avens. It is a wildflower that is part of the rose family and can be found in many parts of North America, including Midwest prairies, some parts of the east such as New York and the shores of Lake Huron, as well as the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Alberta.



Specifically to Iowa residents, this plant is mostly found in the northeastern part of the state. It grows in sun to partial shade and tends to grow in drier areas as opposed to moist areas by

creeks or streams. In some areas of the United States, such as Michigan, this plant is a threatened species.

A perennial plant that usually begins flowering in April or May and continues through June, the prairie smoke grows to be between 6 to 18 inches tall, with soft, hairy stems branching into as many as eight, but usually three, flower stalks at the top of the plant. These drooping flower stalks are vase-shaped and vary in color from reddish-brown, pinkish, yellowish, and to sometimes a fleshy color. The leaves of the prairie smoke are also very hairy and somewhat spiny with jagged teeth along their edges.

The flower stalks remain slightly open and hang until they are pollinated; then the flower no longer droops and instead stands up on end. They produce “fruits” or seeds that have plume-like gray tails that are about two inches long and resemble a feather duster or a

little smoke cloud. These “fruits” are dispersed rather quickly by using little hooks located on the flower stalks that easily stick to clothing or animal fur, and also by the wind blowing the bloom somewhere else. Even with these blooms missing, the plants with the bare leaves are very attractive, especially to butterflies and some birds. The prairie smoke is not edible to humans.

Early settlers and Native Americans used the prairie smoke for many medicinal purposes. They boiled the roots in water to make a tea that resembled a weak sassafras tea, which they drank to treat colic, ailments of the digestive tract and uterine hemorrhage. When applied to wounds such as chapped lips, sore gums, chicken pox, or sore and inflamed eyes, this tea was very soothing and relieved some irritation. It was also used as a fever reducer, as well as a powerful astringent, a styptic and a cough suppressant. Aside from medicine, the prairie smoke’s ripe seeds were crushed and used as a sweet-smelling perfume, and the roots were mixed with tobacco and smoked.

So, as you are walking through the prairie, be on the lookout for a strange, hairy little plant that tickles your legs and blows in the wind. Otherwise, you are likely to find some sticking to your shorts!



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