

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Winter 2009

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

The WREN is *Green!*

Please remember that you may now visit our website and sign up to get the WREN in an effort to *protect, conserve, and preserve our vital resources*. Please contact us if you require a mailed version.

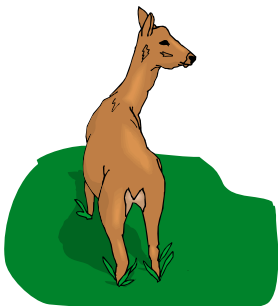
Fall Field Trip Attendance

Approximately 2,070 students, teachers, and parents participated in 15 field trips this fall. An emphasis on **water education and recreation** will enhance future programming so keep your eyes and ears open!

If you are an educator 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**, you may download a **Field Trip Planner** from our website: http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi_education.php and contact us at (563) 328-3286.

Wapsi Center Deer Hunt

The Wapsi Center deer hunt, held during the 1st regular shotgun season, Dec. 6-10, offered 30 permits to 12 hunters who ended up harvesting 13 deer. The deer hunt at the Wapsi Center along with the Scott County Park deer hunt was designated as a Special Deer Management Zone by the DNR. Successful applicants who passed the shooter's proficiency test and



attended the hunter safety session were offered 30 licenses for the Wapsi hunt and 100 licenses for the Scott County Park hunt. The Scott County Conservation Board is managing the population in order to balance plant and animal communities, and the special deer licenses were for antlerless deer only.

Wapsi River Ecology Day- Native American Art in Nature

Participants started out with a **Native American Pottery** program including techniques, animal figures, and "firing" pots. Late morning and afternoon programs included: **Cattails and Living Structures and Crafts, Atlatl Throwing and Games** with guest Naturalist Bill Collett, and **black iron cooking demonstration** with Gene Buss. The day ended with a celestial celebration and the **Eastern Iowa Star Party**. Look for more native programs as the Center will be emphasizing getting back to the basics of nature in a variety of ways. If you still need to pick up your clay pot, please do so by the end of January.

Fire and Water Courses

The Wapsi River staff is excited to bring new programs to the area, including upcoming courses related to prescribed (Rx) fire and water safety. In cooperation with the Iowa DNR and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), trained Wapsi Center naturalists will assist in conducting the **8 Hr. Prescribed (Rx) Fire Course** (<http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/fire.html>) and a **Boater Education Course** (<http://www.iowadnr.com/law/boating/index.html>). Please see Calendar of Events or announcement in this issue for details.

Hello

I am Leroy Haeffner, new **Wapsi Caretaker**, and I have a degree in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University, served as Marine Sgt. during Vietnam, raised on the farm, love the outdoors and look forward in promoting environmental awareness to any and all who will listen. I have been married to the same lovely woman, Georgann, for 34 years and have 7 lovely grandkids that live within 27 miles of the Center.



Leroy retired from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) after serving **27 years in promoting restoration of wetlands and native prairie**, in an effort to improve soil and attract wildlife (<http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/successstories/showcase07.html>). Scott County Conservation is proud to have Leroy as a team member!

Eagles Are Back

The first bald eagles have been at the Wapsi River Center along the river banks! Best times to view eagles are December through March. On most occasions, the eagles return to the night roost from 3:30 P.M. to dusk. As many as 50 eagles have been observed at one time on the roost. It is located within 250 ft. of the Eagle View Eco

Center where spotting scopes are available for indoor public viewing when the Center is open. Please be quiet when approaching the Eco Center!! **Winter hours for the Eco Center and its displays are Saturdays, 12:30 - 4:30 P.M. Admission is free.**



Volunteers Needed at Bald Eagle Days!!

The Quad City Bald Eagle Days at the Q.C.C.A. Expo Center has become a popular event. So popular, that they have added a Friday night timeslot! This is the official call for volunteers to help run the Wapsi River Center booth. Below is a list of times, how many individuals and what day your assistance is needed. Call (563) 328-3286 to volunteer.

Friday, January 9

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.	2 people
6:00 - 8:00 P.M.	2 people

Saturday, January 10

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 11

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

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 12:30 - 4:30 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!



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.

Activities include:

Cross-country skiing

Snowshoeing

Winter crafts

Winter scavenger hunt

Family snowman building contest

A limited number of skis and snowshoes are available, so please call to reserve equipment (563) 328-3286. The fun begins at 9:00 A.M. and will run until 2:00 P.M. with lunch provided. BYOM ~ Bring your own mug for hot cocoa!

February 21, 2009

For this day only, get special clearance prices on all gift shop items!

"A Place for All Seasons" Photo Contest

In 2007, the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center held its first annual photo contest. The goal of the contest was to create a calendar that represented Scott and Clinton County conservation sites, as well as support the Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. 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. Three winning photos were selected to represent each season of the calendar year. One of the 12 winning photos was also selected for the cover of the calendar. Each winning photographer received a complimentary calendar, with a first place prize of a free stay at the Kestrel Cabin. The photo contest was a success, and now we are looking to create a 2010 calendar.

Photos will need to be submitted by **October 31, 2009** in order to be eligible.

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, Attention: Photo Contest, 31555 52nd Ave., Dixon, IA 52745

Contest Rules:

1. All photos entered will become the property of the Wapsi River Center and will 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.

Contest ends October 31, 2009. Photos may be submitted anytime before this date.

Thank you for participating, and happy photo hunting!

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 email addresses, write clintonccb@yahoo.com and place yourself on our handy **new** adventurers list (last year's list was lost due to e-mail fraud). Adventurers will receive a short message whenever snow events are planned.

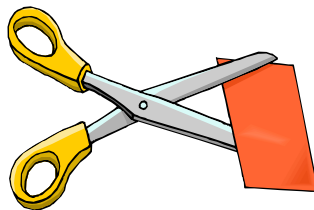
9th - 11th ~ Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days ~

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 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. on Friday, January 9th, 10:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. on Saturday, January 10, and 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 11th. Come see us at the Wapsi River Center display.



17th ~ 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.**



20th ~ Protecting Your Indoor Environment: Tips on indoor air quality ~ 6:30 – 8:00 P.M. ~ Nahant Marsh Education Center

~ Come and learn about the causes of indoor air pollution and relationship to disease. Learn how to limit the risk and make your home a healthier place. \$3.00 per person. Please call for more details (563) 323 -5196.

WINTER

31st ~ Snowshoe Tracking ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi

River Center ~ Join Mike Granger, Wapsi River Center naturalist, as he takes participants on a stroll through the Wapsi woods. While making tracks of their own, via snowshoes, participants will have the opportunity to search for animal tracks and other signs of animal activity in this winter wonderland. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286. **BYOM ~Bring your own mug.**



31st ~ Snow Day for Grown-ups ~ 2:00 P.M. ~

Wapsi Center ~ This is taking the place of our annual Winter Camp for Adults. We are keeping the best parts of the old camp and cutting back to a free one day event. We will cross country ski, snowshoe hike, have a potluck supper and our music and social around the fireplace in the evening. To pre-register call (563)847-7202.

31st ~ Folk Concert ~ 7:00 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 simple percussion instruments, bringing your own, singing along, slapping your knee, tapping your foot or just being a quiet listener. **BYOM.**



February

7th ~ Winter Outdoor Sports Day ~ 10:00 A.M. -


2:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park ~ Join us at the Whispering Pine shelter for family fun including snow shoeing, skiing, and sledding. Please call 562-328 -3286 to pre-register your family!

21st ~ 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


EVENTS

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 and tour the Wapsi Center trails. Participants may bring their own equipment.




 **10:00 A.M. ~ Twiggy Deer~** Make these delightful miniature deer displays. Fun for the whole family! Preregistration required. (563) 328-3286


 **11:00 A.M. ~ Family Snowman Contest ~** work up your appetite for lunch by letting your creativity loose and building the most unique snowman.



 **11:30 A.M. ~ Winter Scavenger Hunt ~** Participate in a wintery trek through the wilderness in search of natural treasures and signs of life.

 **12:00 Noon ~ Chili and Soup Lunch ~** Chili and soup will be provided by the friends of the Wapsi Center for their annual "Chili Cook-Off". Come and sample all recipes and then vote for the winner!!! (First come, first served)



 **1:00 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.

28th ~ Winter Tree I.D. ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~Come to the Wapsi River Center to be a winter tree detective. Learn how to identify trees by looking at the bark, buds and needles. Please call to register (563) 328-3286.

28th ~ 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 to register (563) 328-3286.

March

Please check the local media for rainbow trout release at West Lake Park after ice out.



7th ~ Maple-Syruping Demonstration ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Once again, join Tom Greene as he discusses the history and procedure of tapping trees for syrup. Please call to register (563) 328-3286.

14th ~ Recycled Stitches ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come join naturalist Lisa Gerwulf as she shows you how to create a uniquely versatile yarn from recycled plastic bags. "Plarn" (plastic yarn) is not a new fad, but rather a frugal technique reminiscent of the Depression Era. Participants will learn about the plastic industry, plastic's waste-to-energy potential, as well as how to create two versions of "yarn" out of recycled shopping/grocery bags. Knitted, crocheted, woven, braided and corded items will also be on display. Those interested need not be fancywork experts to enjoy this program. Each participant needs to bring 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-18th ~ 8 hr Prescribed (RX) Fire Course ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Hosted by **Scott County Conservation, the Iowa DNR-Forestry Fire Program** has designed this course as an introduction to the process of burning. There is no cost for this course as participants will learn the basics of how, who, what, when, and where about prescribed burning. Landowners, neighbors, students, and anyone interested in using prescribed fire as a management tool should attend. This course will not make you a burn boss, but it will give you a better understanding about the mechanics of a



burn. The classroom session on the 17th will be held at the Eagle View Eco Center while the outdoor session (field exercise burn) on the 18th will be held on-site in the prairie (weather dependant, please come prepared). Meals and dormitory lodging will be provided for a minimal cost. Contact the Wapsi River Center at wapsicenter@scottcountyiowa.com or call 563-328-3286 for info.

26th & 27th ~ Boat Iowa: Safety Certification Course ~ 5:00 - 8:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park ~
See special add below.

26th ~ Birdhouse Workshop ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi Center ~ You can build your own bluebird, wren, bat, robin, kestrel or wood duck 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 wood duck and kestrel boxes. You must call (563) 847-7202 before March 17th to order your kits.

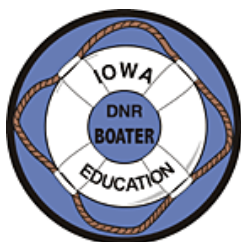
BOAT IOWA!

Safety Certification Course



Hosted and presented by Scott County Conservation
and assisted by the Iowa Department of
Natural Resources

Thursday, March 26, and Friday, March 27
5:00 PM to 8:00 PM



West Lake Park
14910-110th Avenue
Davenport, Iowa 52804



TAKE ME FISHING

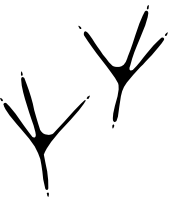
The Wapsi Center Staff will teach you about navigating the water safely, properly maintaining your boating equipment, keeping up to date with Iowa boating laws, handling boating emergencies, and more! Please call (563) 328-3286 or email at wapsicenter@scottcountyiowa.com to register by March 19. Space is limited, so don't hesitate to take part in this opportunity!

www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi.php

Kids' Corner

ANIMAL TRACKS

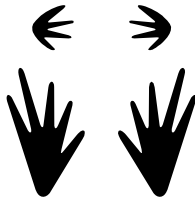
Can you match the animal tracks to the animals that made them?



A.



B.



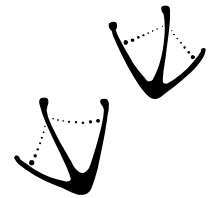
C.



D.



E.



F.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.

In Appreciation of Your
Support of the Wapsi
River Center

Nick Johnson
Erma Wiszman

K.J. Rebarcak
Carol Rogers
Lucia Dryanski
Bill Robbins
Jeanne Bryant
Mark Cleve

Reynold's 5th Grade
Gander Mountain
Black Hawk Hiking Club



**Come visit the
Wapsi Center's
live animals!**

The Wapsi River Center is home to many wild animals, but did you know that the Eagle View Eco Center also displays many live animals that can be found in Iowa and Illinois? Come experience these creatures for yourself!

Red-eared slider
Western painted turtle
Eastern painted turtle
2 Smooth softshell turtles
2 Common snapping turtles
Alligator snapping turtle
2 Three-toed box turtles
Ornate box turtle
American kestrel

Eastern screech owl
2 Tiger salamanders
Bull snake
Fox snake
Black rat snake
Garter snake
Corn snake
American Toad
Bullfrog
Leopard frog

Answers: 1.D 2.F 3.B 4.E 5.A 6.C

Animal Profile ~ Ringneck Pheasant; *Phasianus colchicus*

by Brad Rubino, Bettendorf High School Intern

Now that the fall harvest is over, you may see plenty of pheasants flying around or running through ditches on the side of the road. The ring-necked pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* also known as the common pheasant.

There are more than 40 species of pheasants that originated in China. The ring-necked pheasant is from the genus *Phasianus* and perhaps better known than any of the other 15 groups of pheasants in the world.



The ring-necked pheasant was imported to America from China. Pheasants were brought across the Pacific in 1881 by Judge Owen Nickerson Denny in an initial batch of 30 (with 28 surviving the journey), and were released in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. In James Dinsmore's A Country So Full of Game, he describes the introduction process of the ring-necked pheasant. With a successful release in Willamette Valley, the birds were thriving within a few years, which sparked a big excitement in many parts of North America. Pheasants soon became one of the world's most hunted birds. The pheasant was introduced for that purpose to many regions. It is also common on game farms where it is commercially farmed for hunting, including one farm run by William Benton at Cedar Falls. In 1900, 2,000 pheasants escaped the from confines of a farm when a windstorm blew down the fences that were containing them. This windstorm event seemed to be the first introduction of pheasants into Iowa. Keokuk County made a private release in 1904, along with other counties such as Kossuth County in 1907 and O'Brien County in 1908. Today, the ring-necked pheasant is the state bird of South Dakota, one of only three US state birds that is not a species native to the United States.

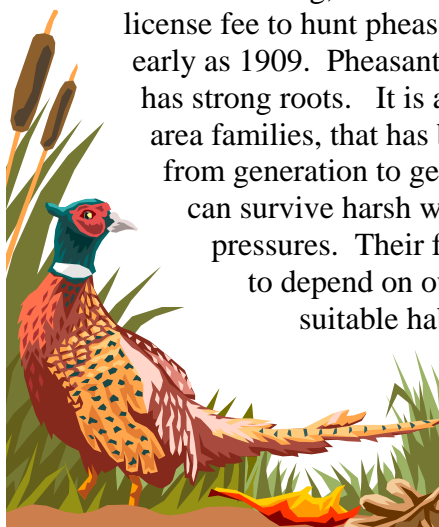
Male pheasants are called 'roosters' or 'cocks,' and females are called 'hens'. Roosters range in weight from 3.5 to 4 lbs (1.6 to 1.8 kg). Roosters are full of

colors ranging from white, green, red, black and brown. Hens range in weight from 2 to 2.5 lbs (0.9 to 1.1 kg). Hens' feathers are mostly grey, white and tan. Roosters have such elaborate colors to attract the hens, while hens have duller colors which help them blend into the grassy fields when their sitting on their nest.

A typical rooster can obtain a harem of three to seven hens. During the spring nesting season, hens will make from one to four attempts at nesting. Insects and weed seeds are considerably more of the chicks' diet than of the adults' diet. Shortly after hatching, pheasant chicks immediately begin growing flight feathers and are capable of short flights at about two weeks. When a hen is getting ready to lay eggs, she seeks out calcium and protein. Her diet will contain approximately ten times more calcium than a rooster's diet.

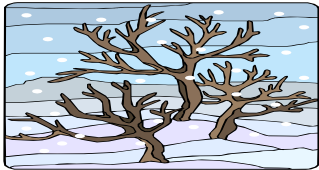
Pheasants like to eat berries, seeds, young vegetative shoots, and insects. Throughout most of the growing season, pheasants can survive solely on the moisture they consume from insects and the morning dew on vegetation. Pheasants do not migrate south; they stay relatively local all year long. On flat ground, a ring-neck pheasant can run at speeds of 8-10mph and can fly up to 48 mph. Whoa, that's fast.

Pheasants are an amazing species; no other game species introduced to this continent has been as successful at flourishing, and hunters began paying a license fee to hunt pheasants in Iowa as early as 1909. Pheasant hunting in Iowa has strong roots. It is a tradition for many area families, that has been passed down from generation to generation. Pheasants can survive harsh weather and hunting pressures. Their future will continue to depend on our ability to provide suitable habitats in our area.



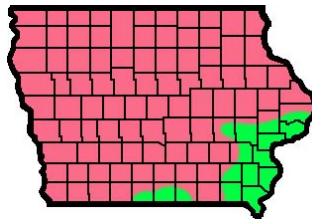
Plant Profile ~ Shellbark Hickory; *Carya laciniosa*

by Mike Granger, Naturalist



If you visit the beautiful shores of the Wapsipinicon River, now an icy, cold border between the Wapsi River Center and Sherman Park, one

can see several amazing images: a flying eagle, majestic silver maples touching the sky, animal tracks of all shapes and sizes, and, if you look hard enough, shellbark hickory trees. The shellbark hickory, *Carya laciniosa* (sometimes referred to as the kingnut or riverbank hickory) is the largest hickory species of the 21 species which occur in the United States. Iowa's hickory species also include the pignut, shagbark, mockernut and bitternut. Recently while exploring the northern edge of the Wapsi Center, very large hickory seeds were found along a sand bar. The seeds were so numerous that a five-gallon bucket was filled in less than ½ an hour. These large seeds led to some further investigation, and several trees were identified as shellbark hickories. Below is a range map for the shellbark hickory. In Iowa, the shellbark is found in the lower southeast ¼ of the state. It is a bottomland species, preferring to grow along the floodplain regions along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. It will be found growing alongside silver maples, American elm, cottonwoods and swamp white oaks.



Plant surveys done along the Wapsi Corridor in 2003 did not record the occurrence of the shellbark here at the Wapsi River Center. This is probably due to the fact that the trees are very similar to the shagbark hickory, *Carya ovata*, and could easily be overlooked. Many people are familiar with the shagbark hickory, while not with the shellbark.

Hickory trees are readily identifiable by their bark which sloughs off as a tree matures. Long, thin vertical plates of bark often peel away from the trunk, giving the tree a rough or shaggy appearance. In the winter, a hickory tree's buds are very distinguishable. The terminal bud may be an inch long and looks like an unopened rose blossom. In



the springtime, the bud will open out, revealing several young compound leaves. Hickory trees have compound leaves bearing a number of leaflets; shagbark trees have leaves with 5 leaflets, and the shellbark has 7-9 leaflets, which is very helpful in distinguishing between the two.

Hickories have seeds covered by a shell or husk which divide into 4 sections as they dry. Shellbark hickory seeds are the largest of any hickory, measuring 2½ inches long with the husk on. Below is a picture showing “un-husked” shellbark seeds compared to the more common shagbark. It is easy to see why a common name for the shellbark is the

“kingnut hickory”. Shellbark hickories may reach 100 feet tall, compared to shagbarks which can reach 80 feet in height.



Shellbark



Shagbark

The nuts of hickory trees are used by a variety of animals and usually do not last very long on the ground. Squirrels, chipmunks, deer, foxes, raccoons and rodents utilize the seeds for food. Long ago, Native Americans collected hickory nuts as a ready and easy to gather source of protein. Hickory wood is very hard and dense. The wood is used in furniture-making, tool handles, sporting goods, and for smoking meats. The shellbark hickory trees are a unique find at the Wapsi River Center and are worth the adventuresome hike to see them.



“Hickory seeds are YUMMMMMMMMMMMY!!!”

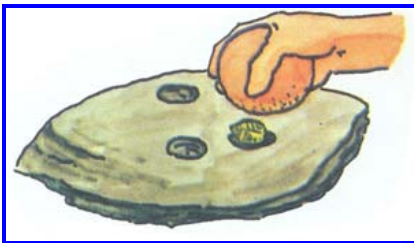
Wapsi River Treasures

By Mike Granger, Naturalist

On some recent outings along the Wapsi River, I found some amazing discoveries which provide a glimpse to Iowa's past. The first amazing object was found on a gravel/sand bar down river from the Wapsi River Center. The object was simply a very round stone roughly 3 ½ x 3 x 2 inches. On the top and bottom were dimples in the very center of the stone. The stone was basalt, a volcanic rock by origin. What was it doing on a sand bar in the Wapsi River? Why did it fit exactly in the palm of my hand? As soon as I saw the stone, I had a pretty good idea what it was. All along that stretch of river were large walnut and hickory trees. The stone was a "nutting stone", used long ago to harvest meat from hickory nuts or walnuts. Upon checking with a local archeologist and sending photos to



3 1/2 inches



the Office of the State Archeologist, the find was confirmed. In our area, nutting stones are fairly common and were used in the Archaic time period, 8,500 to 600 B.C. These were purposely made by shaping and rounding by tapping the stone with a piece of chert or other stone. Telltale pockmarks show where the stone was shaped. Nutting stones can also be described as "Native American food processors," which makes me realize what useful tools they were.

On another outing, a second discovery was made which points to Iowa's past. On a very low sand bar, I found some bone exposed in the sand. I reached into the sand and pulled up a large horn. Doing some research on the internet showed the horn to be from a bison or buffalo. In James Dinsmore's [A Country So Full of Game](#), he describes the vast bison herds in North America. It is estimated that at least 50 -70 million bison roamed vast stretches of the continent, including large prairie provinces in Canada and the northern regions of Mexico, during the mid-1700s. In Iowa, great herds were most common in northwestern and north-central portions of the



state. The explorers Marquette and Joliet reported seeing herds along the Mississippi containing no less than 400 animals in 1673. One later report said a convoy traveling just north of Clinton County was halted for 2 days due to a passing herd of bison, which may have contained 5,000 individual animals. Just to look at the bison horn brings these stories to life and sheds some light on North America's greatest animal spectacle in history.

Finally, a few weeks ago, I set out to find more treasures and found a projectile point, once again on a Wapsi River sandbar. Many people I know have found small arrowheads and larger spear points throughout the area. Many a farmer will tell you stories of walking freshly plowed fields in search of such artifacts. To find one is to take a trip back in time when your next meal depended on your agility and aim. This particular point is thought to be in the Archaic time period, 10,000 - 3,500 years ago. The base of the piece is broken, so it may have measured 3 inches long. The color is a



2 1/2 inches

light pink, which means the point has been heat treated by fire to harden it. The piece was probably used on a spear, maybe thrown by an atlatl (Native American spear thrower). Once again, the Wapsi River provides a glimpse of Iowa's amazing past.



Living Green: Green Landscapes

By Mary Johnson, AmeriCorps Naturalist

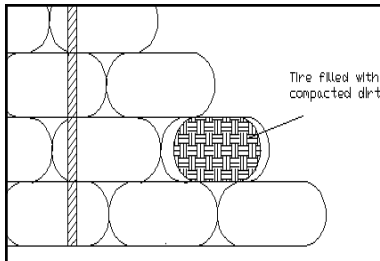
During the bleak, cold, snowy days of winter, it's never too early to start dreaming of warmer days. Planning a springtime garden is the perfect activity for those days when you're stuck inside. My hope is that this article will help you to start thinking green in more ways than one.

Every couple of years (or sometimes sooner if nails, rocks and bad luck seem to follow you around) people need to buy new tires for their cars. Most people choose to take their cars to a repair shop where they install new ones and "dispose" of the old ones, but have you ever wondered what happens to those old tires?

Americans will toss out over 250 million scrap tires this year alone. If taken to a landfill, these bulky, non-biodegradable items take up a lot of space. Tires also tend to float, which create empty pockets in the landfill interior. Sometimes, tires are found abandoned in remote areas. There, they sit or are washed into waterways and other wildlife habitats. Sometimes old tires are even burned. That process introduces a lot of toxins into the air that cannot be recaptured.

Tire recycling is not a new concept, but by thinking outside of the box, people have been creating some interesting things out of old tires. Crumbled tires can be mixed with asphalt and used to repave highways or to repave running tracks and playgrounds. Strips of old tires woven together make unique doormats, and some really crafty people have even transformed parts of old tires into backpacks and other bags. The possibilities are endless.

In the early 1980s, my family went on a vacation to Washington State. We visited our friends Dave and Dot who lived near the ocean. Their yard had a long, steep drop off toward the water, and erosion was a major problem for them. Their solution: thousands of tires, stacked strategically together to form a stepped design. Even though I was young, it made a lasting impression on me.



In 2006, my husband and I bought our own house in LeClaire, Iowa. Since we moved in, we've been battling a major erosion problem in our own backyard. Our area of town has no drainage ditches or roadside curbs, thus water from our whole block rushes through our yard on days when it pours. In the two years that we've lived there, at least five major washouts threatened our garden and our yard. One day while staring at my dilapidated

landscape, my mind wandered back to memories of my family vacation in Washington. Inspiration hit me...build a tire retaining wall!

Ok, you may be thinking that some of those other ideas were neat, but come on, tires stacked around in my yard, no way. U-G-L-Y! Wait, hear me out! Tires can make excellent vessels for planting beds of flowers and vegetables. Creeping ground cover plants can easily camouflage the tires exterior. The outer portion of the tire can even be painted to match its surroundings or to act as a focal point. Tires will not rot away like other materials. Freezing and thawing does not affect their sturdiness either.



To get started you are going to need - a lot of tires! Many times auto repair shops, waste management facilities, or even family and friends will gladly give you old tires for FREE. Sometimes you'll find tires in unusual ways; you just have to keep our eyes peeled. A while back, the Wapsi staff actually found four tires that had been dumped in a nearby road ditch. We loaded them up, and they will now will make an excellent addition to my tire collection! It may take you awhile to accumulate the tires needed, but it will be worth it in the end. Other tools that you may need include: work gloves, wheel barrow (to help carry loads of dirt or tires), shovel, rubber mallet or sledge hammer, rebar of various lengths, sand/gravel (for backfilling tires), power screwdriver with drywall screws, and most of all FRIENDS (to help you get done faster).

To the left is a picture of the basic tire retaining wall design. Tires should be staggered between layers as if laying bricks. Screwing the tires together and using rebar to align the layers will add solidity.



Each tire gets backfilled with dirt, gravel and/or sand. Use a sledge hammer or mallet to compact the substrate and add stability. Many tires can be layered to create walls of staggering heights, but make sure you check with your city's guidelines for the allowed height of retaining walls in your area.

For more information try searching the web or call the Wapsi Center. To see pictures of other tire projects, check out the links below!

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~ccat/wastereduction/recycling/desideria.FA2000/>

<http://www.laughinggoddess.org/photo2.html>

<http://www.environmental-expert.com/resultEachArticle.aspx?cid=6042&codi=745&idproducttype=6>

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The Wapsi River Environmental Education Center is a cooperative project, managed and operated by Scott County Conservation with programming assistance from Clinton County Conservation. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and Quad City Conservation Alliance assisted with the original purchase of the property and fund raising.

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