

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Fall 2011

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi.php

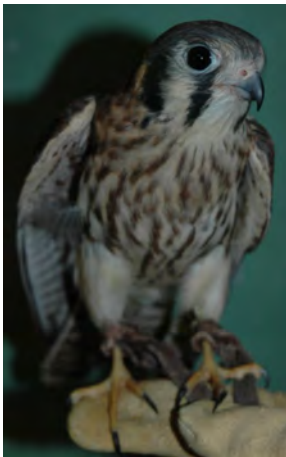
The Wapsi River Center is owned, managed and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board with programming and development assistance from the Clinton County Conservation Board.

Wapsi Center Happenings & Scott County News

by Dave Murcia, Director

New Bird of Prey!

The Center is proud to announce the arrival of a new educational bird, a *female American kestrel*. This bird was granted permission as an educational bird by the



USFWS through the *Macbride Raptor Project* of the University of Iowa at Kirkwood College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The kestrel was brought to Macbride following a fierce summer windstorm. After a couple months of rehabilitation, it was decided that a wing injury would not allow the kestrel to be released back into the wild. We hope the new bird adds many more years of programming life to

the Center. Live animal programs allow visitors to make a connection with our natural world, and become better stewards of our place here on earth.

Pond Restoration Phase Complete

Thanks to many partners, the restoration of the old scout pond is now complete! The dam has been restored with new structures. The surrounding areas will serve to support native plantings for wildlife and help maintain water quality.

The approximately 10-acre site will eventually support educational structures including an open outdoor platform (waterside), a closed outdoor platform with roof and storage, as well as docks for aquatic education with low-impact paddle sports and wildlife-dependant

learning. This restoration will provide another safe, on-site location for the many educational and recreational programs we conduct.

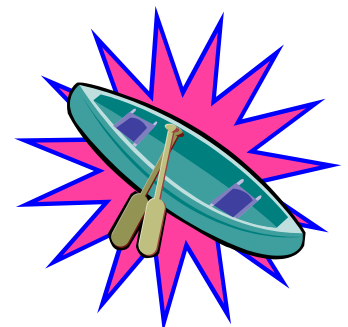
Many thanks to our supporters including: Berbeck-Meyer Consulting Engineers, McCleary Excavating Company, our faithful caretaker LeRoy, West Lake Park (seen in photo) and Scott County Park maintenance staff, headquarters and Wapsi Center staff "photographers". Let it rain!



Watershed Fest 2011

This past July, Wapsi Center staff and volunteers from the *Friends of the Wapsi Center* hosted an educational tent in support of the 3rd annual Watershed Festival sponsored by the city of Davenport.

The event educates the community about our watersheds and the resources involved within our community. New this year was a Birds of Prey presentation with live birds – a great horned owl, eastern screech owl and American kestrel. At the Wapsi tent



participants were able to learn about low-impact recreational opportunities related to our aquatic resources including boating (paddle sports) and native animals including live snakes and other reptiles! Wapsi staff and volunteers reached about 386 people during the Fest, so please look forward to 2012!

Wapsi Center Deer Hunt – New 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 to State of Iowa qualified residents only.

New this year at the Wapsi River Center will be a mentored, youth deer hunt that will allow 4 youth hunters during the regular archery season from October 1 - December 2 and December 19 - January 10. *The Wapsi River Center will be open to the public during the hunt and will observe “No Hunt Zones” throughout the site.*

These hunts are planned to maintain a deer population that is in balance with plant and animal communities for these areas while promoting hunter education and ethics. Applications will be available until Friday, September 30, 2011 for the *Scott County Park hunt* (December 3 & 4) and information is also available at www.scottcountyia.com/conservation.

new Eco Center direction signs (supplied by Clinton County Conservation Board), pruning, trimming, and weeding landscape plantings at both the Owl’s Nest Dorm and Redtail Lodge, as well as giving all the newly planted pine trees at the Pine Ring a long “fall” drink. In all, a total of *28 hours were completed* during the morning and we thank all who participated!



Bald Eagle Viewing

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

other wintering songbirds, so come out and enjoy our *national symbol* “up close”!

Conservation is on Facebook!

Join the social movement and be green at the same time! Visit us on Facebook to view current and past activities, share program ideas, or just keep us in mind for your next outdoor adventure! Please “friend us” at: www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation. Don’t forget, visit our webcams too: www.scottcountyia.com/conservation/webcams.php.

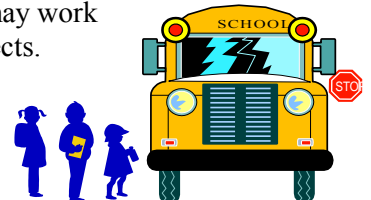
Summer Programming

This summer’s youth education days totaled 30 with 938 in attendance. Several of the days were hosted at the Wapsi River Center with many at various satellite areas within the county.

Fall and Winter School Field Trips

If you would like to *schedule a field trip*, we encourage educators to schedule as far in advance as possible and taking an active role. School programs are not scheduled for Mondays so that staff may work on administration and projects.

You may download our field trip planner from our website to better plan a trip!



Wapsi Center volunteer Lucia, helped to complete a variety of tasks including: installing

Volunteer Stewardship Workday Shines

With the *support of 22 volunteers*, the volunteer workday was another success in beautifying the Center grounds. Volunteers from a youth group, the public and our own Friends of the



In Appreciation of Your Support of the Wapsi River Center

K.J. Rebarcak	Brian Ritter
Ingrid Bogdanowicz	Karri Folks
Bill Robbins	Jessica Steines
Carol Rogers	Bob Schafer
Erma Wiszmann	Jessica Hepker
Lucia Dryanski	Harley Couff
Steve Duray	Jean Morgan
Mary Johnson	Pathfinders

Hellos & Goodbyes

Jamey Meyer: I am very excited to be the new seasonal assistant naturalist at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. I recently graduated from Luther College with degrees in Environmental Studies and Business Management. While attending Luther College, I had an internship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that sparked my interest to do something in the conservation field. During college, I was also a member of the Luther men's basketball team and PALS – Big Brother Big Sister Mentoring Program. I am really excited about this position because it will allow me to combine my interests with the environment and working with children.

I currently live on my family farm just south of Dixon, Iowa. Away from work, my hobbies include hunting, fishing and playing sports. One thing many people don't know about me is that I am also a chicken farmer. This past summer, I raised nearly one thousand free-



range chickens, and sold them at farmers' markets and to local

neighbors. I am trying to promote a sustainable business that is humane to the animals and does not use any hormones or antibiotics. This is more of a hobby than anything, but I feel it has potential to expand in the future.

The Wapsi Center staff has been very welcoming and I am eager to learn from our other partner naturalists. We've got a full schedule of programs happening in the upcoming months and I can't wait to be a part of them!

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 6

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

Saturday, 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
5:00 - 7:00 P.M.	1 person

Sunday, January 8

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

An Avian Gathering

by Lisa Gerwulf, Assistant Naturalist

Bevy, bouquet, brood, cast, charm, colony, company, congregation, covey, exaltation, flock, gaggle, host, kettle, murder, paddling, parliament, party, peep, raft, siege, tiding, watch, wisp...

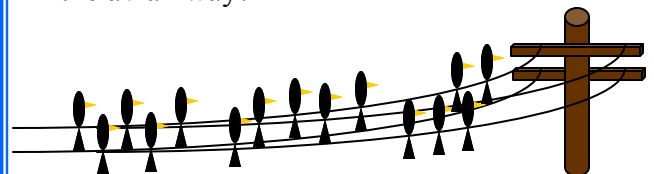
The English language possesses a myriad of words, to help describe a group of birds.

Have you seen the swooping dots of black, dipping and gliding in a synchronized pack?

All lined up along the overhead wire, one facing south is the "guide for hire".

Getting ready to follow the compass down yonder, to warmer weather and time to ponder.

Where the best places are to folic and play – the avian way?



Friends' Profile

Vital Statistics

Name: Lucia Dryanski

Friends Member Since: 2005-ish

Favorite Plant: Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Favorite Bird: Tufted Titmouse

Favorite Waterfowl: Great Blue Heron

Favorite Animal: Red Fox

Favorite Tree: Sugar Maple

Favorite Book: The Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley



Favorite Nature Book: Sisters of the Earth: Women's Prose and Poetry About Nature by Lorraine Anderson

Favorite Movie: Fried Green Tomatoes

Having grown up in Chicago, Lucia's early experiences in nature were limited. As a girl scout, she went to summer camp in Wisconsin, and visited her relatives' cabin on Wonder Lake; swimming and hanging around with her grandfather while he fished. Eventually, as part of a high school group, she attended a program called "Underway" at Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois. For the first time she went backpacking, wilderness camping, spelunking, rock climbing and rappelling. She was hooked, and the experience served her well in her 26-year relationship with her husband Bill, a former national park ranger. In the years since, she has enjoyed hiking, a little backpacking, nature study, camping, canoeing, snowshoeing and, most recently, kayaking. She progressively moved farther and farther from the big city life, eventually landing with Bill and their rescue pets on 40 acres in rural Donahue, IA – only a few miles from the Wapsi Center. She's employed in Davenport as a nurse.

Lucia was encouraged to join the Friends of the Wapsi Center by Dottie Wala (then Friends president). Her first meeting was the Friends' annual meeting/potluck...great folks and great food...not a bad first impression! As a Friends member, she has participated in hosting the Center on weekends, workdays, Winter Fun Day, Bald Eagle Days, as well as attending the IOWATER workshop and a paddling workshop. Her favorite volunteer activity at the Center is doing trail maintenance during workdays.

"We need to reach a balance...spending time in nature, because it's important to our humanity, and spending time in political activism, because it's essential that we advocate for the earth before it's too late."

Besides being a Friends member, Lucia loves to read, is involved in a local natural foods coop and performs Slavic music with the *Zloti Village Chorus*.

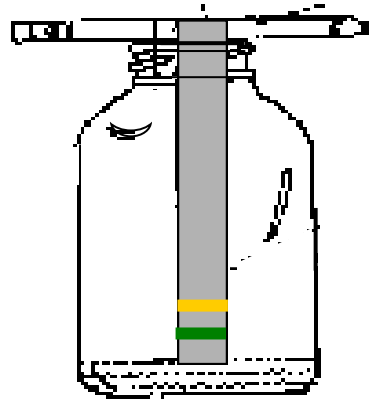
The Friends of the Wapsi Center meet monthly every third Thursday at 7:00 P.M. The Eagle View Eco Center is the site for meetings during the months of March thru October, and Gander Mountain is the site for meetings during the months of November thru February. Drop-ins are welcome!

Kids' Column - Fall Foliage Uncovered

One of the joys of autumn is watching leaves change color. Did you know that these flaming reds, radiant yellows, rich oranges and jewel-tone purples are present in leaves all the time? Chlorophyll (green pigment) masks the other colors during spring and summer. In the fall, when chlorophyll breaks down, the hidden colors become visible. Below is an experiment to extract leaf pigments.

Materials Needed:

1. green leaves
2. nail polish remover (Safety Note: Acetone separates the leaf pigments in this experiment. Be sure to conduct the experiment in a well-ventilated area. Avoid contact with skin or eyes. Wipe up any spills immediately to prevent damage to the finish on furniture or floors.)
3. small glass jars
4. coffee filter paper
5. pencil
6. tape
7. scissors
8. metal spoons
9. ruler
10. paper plates



How to:

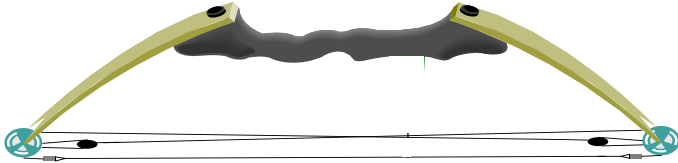
1. Tear the green leaves into small pieces and put them into the jar.
2. Add enough nail polish remover to each jar to cover the leaves.
3. Mash the leaves into a soupy mixture with a spoon and let the mixture stand for five minutes.
4. Cut a $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inch strip from the coffee filter.
5. Tape the filter strip to the pencil. Lay the pencil across the top of the jar. Adjust the strip so the end just touches the liquid.
6. When the liquid has gone about halfway up the strip, remove the strip and lay on paper plate.
7. When the strips are dry, look at the green and yellow bands of color on them.

Explanation: The acetone in the nail polish remover separated the leaf pigments from the mashed leaf material. When the filter paper soaked up the liquid in the jar it also soaked up the leaf's green and yellow pigments, which traveled different distances up the paper. The green band is chlorophyll. The yellow band comes from a type of pigment called a carotenoid.

You may be wondering about leaves that turn red or purple in the fall. Would they show bands of orange, red and purple? No, they'd only have green and yellow bands. One reason for this is that many pigments are made after chlorophyll has broken down. An example would be the red leaf-color of maples. The red pigment is actually due to the high sugar content of the leaf. Another reason is that some pigments are not separated by acetone.

October

Special Notice: The Wapsi River Center is conducting a mentored, youth deer hunt at the Center. Participants have passed a proficiency test and hunter safety course. The Wapsi Center will remain open for visitors while "No Hunt Zones" will be observed. Dates of the mentored hunts are October 1 through December 2 and December 19 through January 10.



1st ~ Twentieth Annual Wapsi River Ecology Day ~ 9:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Bring the whole family, invite a friend and plan to attend this nature oriented event. This year's theme is *Outdoor Adventures* and will include a Wapsi River float, conditions permitting. See more details in our special ad following the calendar of events.

1st ~ Eastern Iowa Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come join representatives from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society and astronomy clubs from all over the Midwest to view the heavens above. For more information go to www.qcas.org.

7th ~ Leafy Story Time Program ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Library System (Eldridge Branch) ~ Join us for a seasonal lesson brought to you by our local trees. Learn what leaves do to help a tree grow and make an awesome leafy craft. This presentation is designed for younger students (6 years old and younger).

8th ~ Pioneer Village Reunion ~ 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~ Did you grow up

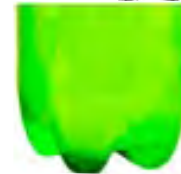


AUTUMN

in the vicinity of the Walnut Grove Pioneer Village or attend the Butler #2 one-room schoolhouse? Do you have pictures or stories to tell about the schoolhouse or the village area? We want to meet you and hope you can join us for a walk down memory lane. If you know of someone that would be interested in attending or would like more information please contact Jo Noon at (563) 328-3283.

15th ~ A Tisket, A Tasket, A Recycled Trinket Basket ~ 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~

This hands-on, recycling project utilizes a plastic pop bottle bottom as the base for the basket. Then uses "plarn" (plastic yarn) and pop can tabs to create a decorative edge around the top. Basic sewing skills are needed to complete project. A great project for scout



groups! Participants are asked to pre-register by Thursday, October 13 at (563) 328-3286.

20th ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join us at the Eagle View Eco Center to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Wapsi River Center.

22nd ~ Fall Trout Release ~ 10:30 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park ~ Please join the members of Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Scott County Conservation Board, the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, and volunteers to release trout at Lake of The Hills, (Gate #1).

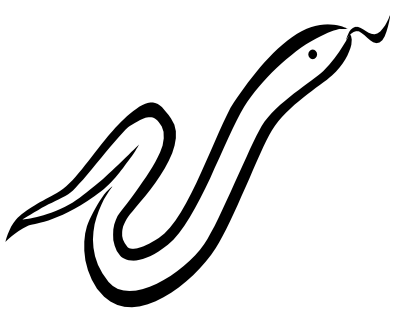
Participants may stop by from 9:30 - 10:30 A.M. and visit Wapsi River staff to learn about fish habitat, identification and explore the



EVENTS

ice hut! Up to 2,000 fish will be placed into the lake. Participants may fish, if properly licensed and have appropriate gear, for tagged fish to win many excellent prizes!!! Please call Chad Dolan or Vance Polton at (319) 694-2430 for more information.

27th ~ Bump in the Night ~ 4:30 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System (Eldridge Branch) ~ Join Mike Granger, Wapsi River Center Naturalist, for a



look into the world of misunderstood animals. Owls, bats and snakes represent some of our often feared local creatures. Come and shed some light on these beneficial creatures.

November

5th ~ Fall Leaf Hike ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Enjoy a fall stroll at the Wapsi River Center to explore our local trees. Learn how to identify trees by their leaves, bark, seeds, nuts and fruits. Bring the family for this informative jaunt through the woods. Call (563) 328-3286 to register. BYOM (Bring Your Own Mug) for hot beverages will be offered at the end of the hike.



5th ~ Black Hawk Hiking Club's Wapsi Night Hike ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join members and representatives of the Black Hawk Hiking Club for a stroll

through the Wapsi River Center's wild places. Learn more about this highly active hiking club and how to join. Light refreshments will be served after the hike. For more information about the hike, club or future events, please call Jeff Beard at (563) 370-6449.



12th ~ Birds of Prey ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System (Fairmount Library) ~ Come learn

about our local raptors during this educational experience. Dave Murcia, Director of the Wapsi River Center, will discuss raptor biology, identification and habitat needs while showcasing the Center's live raptors.

17th ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Gander Mountain ~ Join us at the Gander Mountain store in Davenport to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Wapsi River Center.

19th ~ Winter Bird Feeding ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come learn how you can attract and feed our common feathered friends on any budget. Simple supplies and preparation can get you started right in your own backyard. Call to register, (563) 328-3286.



20th - 26th ~ Pioneer Village Open! ~ 9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~ The Village will be open during the Thanksgiving week decorating and preparing for its annual Christmas walk.

27th ~ **Christmas Walk ~ 1:00 - 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

3rd & 4th ~ **Park Closed ~ All Day ~ Scott County Park** ~ Scott County Park will be closed for a controlled deer hunt.

3rd ~ **Cross Country Ski Clinic ~ 9:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Director Dave Murcia in learning the basics of this heart-healthy, low-impact winter recreation. Basics will include instruction, equipment (you may bring your own) and time on the trails. BYOM (Bring Your Own Mug) as hot drinks will be provided in the Eagle View Eco Center. Please keep in mind this clinic is weather dependent. Also, call (563) 328-3286 to register, as a limited number of equipment is available.



and berries can add a touch of the outdoors to anyone's decorating needs this season. Please call to register, as space is

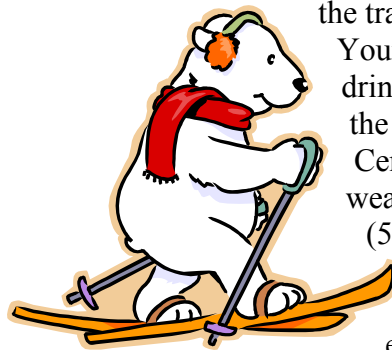


10th ~ **Natural Wreaths ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come learn how to use natural items to make beautiful seasonal wreaths. Grapevines, pinecones, evergreen cuttings, seeds, nuts

limited to 12 participants ~ (563) 328-3286.

15th ~ **Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Gander Mountain** ~ Join us at the Gander Mountain store in Davenport to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Wapsi River Center.

17th ~ **Cross Country Ski Clinic ~ 9:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Aaron Askelson in learning the basics of this heart-healthy, low-impact winter recreation. Basics will include instruction, equipment (you may bring your own) and time on the trails. BYOM (Bring Your Own Mug) as hot drinks will be provided in the Eagle View Eco Center. This clinic is weather dependent. Call (563) 328-3286 to register, as a limited number of equipment is available.



January

Winter Sneak Peek! More events to come in our winter newsletter.

6th - 8th ~ **Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days** ~ This huge, annual event showcasing our national symbol – the American bald eagle, also involves various wildlife artist, informational booths and live animal presentations.



The event is held at the QCCA Expo Center at 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, from 4:00 - 8:00 P.M. on Friday, January 6, 10:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M. on Saturday, January 7 and 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 8. Come see us at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center's booth.

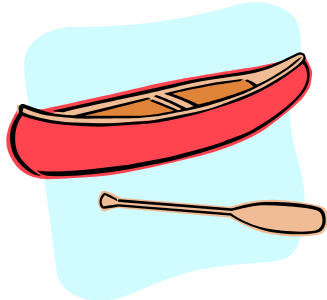
Twentieth Annual Wapsi River Ecology Day

Where: Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

When: Saturday, October 1, 2011 from 9:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M.

Why: This year's theme is *Outdoor Adventures!*

9:00 A.M. - 1:30 P.M. ~ Canoeing the Wapsipinicon River ~ Come join us for a float from the Syracuse Landing to Sherman Park. Please call (563) 328-3286 to register, as space is limited to our number of canoes.



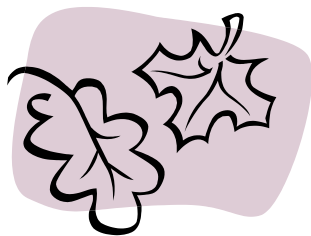
2:00 - 2:45 P.M. ~ Orienteering 101 ~ Come learn how to use a compass to find your way in the wild.

2:00 - 2:45 P.M. ~ Wapsi Wildlife ~ Join us for a tour of the Eagle View Eco Center and learn about our local wildlife and view our live animals.



2:45 - 3:30 P.M. ~ Aquatic Investigation ~ Come learn about aquatic habitats and the amazing organisms that live there. Participants will use nets and microscopes to discover the inhabitants of our Osprey Aquatic Lab.

2:45 - 3:30 P.M. ~ Woodland Hike ~ Trees, seeds and a variety of fungi can be found at the Wapsi River Center. Join our naturalists for an informative



educational hike through our woodlands.

3:30 - 4:00 P.M. ~ Pioneer Vittles ~ Join members of the "NAGS", Natural Area Guardians, to learn about Dutch oven cooking. Visitors will create their own dishes to be enjoyed during supper at 5:00 P.M.



4:00 - 5:00 P.M. ~ Atlatl Demonstration ~ Learn how early hunters used atlatls to bring down large prey such as the mastodon or woolly mammoth.



5:00 - 7:00 P.M. ~ Supper Around the Campfire ~ Enjoy a meat or vegetarian dish and a dessert prepared by the Natural Area Guardians. Please bring your own place setting.

Dusk ~ Eastern Iowa Star Party ~ Come join representatives from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society and astronomy clubs from all over the Midwest to view the heavens above. On Saturday night only, the star party is open to the general public for an unforgettable nighttime show, weather permitting. For more information go to www.qcas.org.



Fungi Profile: Two-Colored Bolete

by Michael Granger, Naturalist

Of the five kingdoms of living things, I find fungi as one of the most interesting. Mushrooms form a large group of the fungi and can be a variety of colors including green, purple, red or white. They can also be a variety of shapes including some that look like bird nests. One species of mushroom even glows in the dark! A variety of fungi inhabit the woods of the Wapsi River Center. One that is commonly seen is the two-colored bolete, *Boletus bicolor*. While not very tall, the scarlet-red cap and brilliant yellow underside readily give this mushroom away.



Photo by Jessica Steines
CCCB Naturalist

The study of mushrooms and their relatives is known as mycology. I plan to give you a quick lesson on mushroom types, but a further in-depth study requires the use of a microscope, dichotomous keys and years of experience (many people have dedicated their lives to studying fungi).

Mushrooms are grouped according to the location and nature of spore producing structures. This diagram shows the difference between a gilled mushroom and a tube mushroom.



Gilled



Tubed

The most familiar group of mushrooms are the gilled mushrooms; which have gill-like, spore-bearing structures. Tube mushrooms have tubes underneath of their caps which give the mushroom a sponge-like appearance. Under a magnifying glass or dissecting scope these pores look amazing! The two-colored bolete is a variety of tubed mushroom.



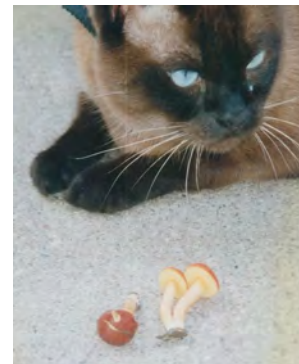
Pore structure of a bolete

Some mushrooms are saprophytes, meaning they survive by absorbing food from dead or decaying matter. Other mushrooms are parasites and gain nutrients from living plants or animals.

Most mushrooms are mycorrhizal meaning they are involved in a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship with the tiny rootlets of plants – usually trees. The cells of the mushroom's mycelium surround the tree rootlets with a sheath, and the mushroom helps the tree absorb water and nutrients while the tree provides sugars and amino acids to the mushroom.

The two-colored bolete grows closely to deciduous trees and usually is found under oaks and other hardwoods. Sometimes they may grow alone or can grow in groups. These mushrooms are most prevalent between the months of July - October.

The two-colored bolete has a scarlet-red cap and ranges in size from about 2 to 6 inches wide. The undersides are brilliant yellow. The stem is between 2 to 4 inches long. The underside of this mushroom exhibits a reaction of bruising blue when touched. The cap's surface has slow or no bruising at all. This is a key characteristic essential for proper identification; since, the two-colored bolete is said to be a choice delicious morsel. One reference pointed out they can be sautéed, fried, grilled and even micro-waved with excellent results. I personally don't recommend eating any wild mushrooms unless you are an expert at identification or know someone who is.



One thing is for sure, fall is an excellent time to search for mushrooms and other fungi. When on an outing, be sure to take a camera, notepad, assorted pens and colored pencils to make quick sketches for future reference. There are several great books available to aid in the study and identification of fungi. Happy hunting and enjoy this beautiful fall weather!

Wildlife Profile: American Kestrel

by Aaron Askelson, Seasonal Assistant Naturalist



After all the rains we had earlier in the year, I was catching up on my mowing – I confess I had gotten a bit behind. As I circled my barn, I noticed a bird perching high on a lighting rod on the roof. After some close observation and watching the bird fly back and forth from the barn to my

corncrib, I surmised that it was an American kestrel. I was happy to see this because they are fun birds to watch, do a good job of keeping small rodent populations down, and certainly enjoy eating a few big juicy grasshoppers this time of year. I did not get to watch these birds as closely as I would have liked this summer due to a newborn baby at home, but I have caught the occasional glimpses into their lives. The male often greets me on my way home; perching on the telephone line in front of my house. I disturb him as I drive by and he flies to sit on my dying Lombardy poplar where he watches me pull up my lane. It amazes me how frequently this happens during the week. It's almost like he knows my schedule better than I do. They seem to have taken up residence under the overhang of my barn. It's an ideal nesting spot for them because they are protected from the elements and have a good view of the fields surrounding our property.

Getting to work with the male kestrel we have here at the Wapsi Center has been a real treat. That is why I was very excited to find out that we would be getting a new bird from the Macbride Raptor Project. If you haven't heard of the Macbride Raptor Project, they are a great organization located on the campus of Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids. They specialize in rehabilitating birds of prey. Injured raptors can be brought to the facility where a vet will treat the animal and try to return it to full health. If the bird cannot be fully rehabilitated and would not survive in the wild, they place the bird in an educational environment such as

the Wapsi Center so it can be used to educate the public about raptors.

This new addition to our staff is a female American kestrel. The kestrel is being housed in the same enclosure as our male and they seem to be getting along well with each other. Its Latin scientific name, *Falco sparverius*, means "falcon of the sparrows". Even though they were often referred to as sparrow hawks, these beautiful birds are in the falcon family.

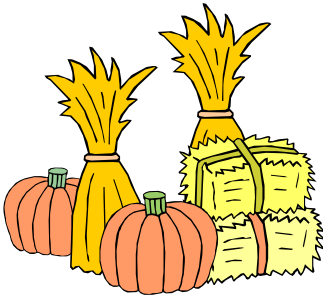
The kestrel is certainly one of the most vividly colored raptors we have in the Midwest. This is unique in that they are sexually dimorphic (the males and females can easily be distinguished from each other by the color of their plumage) at such an early age. Many birds don't begin to show their sex in their plumage until after their first year or even later. Most raptors are not even sexually dimorphic. The male is very distinct in that its head and shoulders are colored a beautiful grey-blue. The female is predominantly copper brown. Both males and females have black markings under their eyes that continue around their necks. The black marks on the back of their necks are believed to be false eyes that might make a potential predator think twice about an attack.



The kestrel is an amazing little bird; approximately the size of a robin. One of the most common raptors in the Midwest, it is commonly seen on fence posts and telephone wires scanning fields and ditches for prey. They also have the ability to hover in one spot and possess a technique called "kiting" where they sail on the wind much like a kite. These types of flight make it easier for the kestrel to locate their prey with their keen eyesight. Their range is pretty much everywhere in North America, so the next time you are driving down a gravel road check out those powerlines for this great little bird.

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For All Seasons

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ **Eagle View Eco Center Hours ~ Saturdays ~ 12:30 - 4:30 P.M.** ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

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." and do not have internet access, please send a post card to the Wapsi River E. E. Center at the address above.

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