

# **The W.R.E.N.**

## **Wapsi River Environmental News**

### **Spring 2013**

**Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter**

**[www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi.php](http://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.*

### **School and Public Programs**

From September-March of this school year, 3834 students, teachers, and parents participated in 31 field trip days at the Wapsi Center. Public programs included a total of 1619 participants on-site while 1383 participants attended programs off-site.

Another successful calendar of events included: **Bald Eagle Days** with about 805 students visiting the Wapsi Center booth on the school day, and **Winter Fun Day** with 47 participants enjoying hiking, winter bird feeders, and fabulous furs of Iowa. A big thank you to our Friends group who supported and sponsored the event including the **6th Annual "Chili Challenge Cook-off"!** All entries were winners as all were equally warm and tasty!

Director Dave Murcia conducted **science fairs** over the winter for Bettendorf Community School District as well as Garfield Elementary in Davenport, reaching 201 participants while presenting the **Birds of Prey** program. The **Snake Symposium** and **Winter Hike** gave nature lovers a cabin fever break, and just last week guest naturalist Tom Greene shared the history and basics of tapping trees for **Maple Syruping**.



The Wapsi Center takes an interdisciplinary approach to environmental education and maintained **100% satisfaction ratings** through comments cards. The Center also met at least one **Iowa Core** requirement for all Iowa school programs surveyed. The Center's staff can help plan your field trip to meet educator needs. Visit our website and view/download our **Field Trip Planner**. If you are an educator who wants to schedule a field trip or take advantage of our dormitory and schedule an overnight field trip, give us a call at (563) 328-3286.

### **Sponsor an Animal**

Please consider sponsoring an educational animal at the Center! Our animals are the highlight of many of our programs and visitors as well as students are fortunate that such specimens are available to support programming. Please call 563-328-3286 for details.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

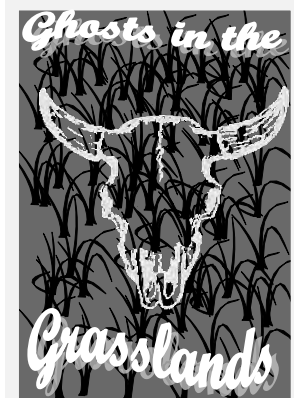
**Ediwild 2013**

**Ghosts of the Grasslands**

**June 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

EDIWILD (Educators in the Wild) is a 4-day educators' workshop (including evening activities) to facilitate the incorporation of environmental education into the school curriculum. The workshop will use an interdisciplinary approach of teaching and will emphasize environmental stewardship.

**This year's activities, tours and topics include:** Goats on the Prairie, Prairie Insects, Small Mammal studies, Plants and the Pioneers, and more. Tours will be taken to view local prairie sites.



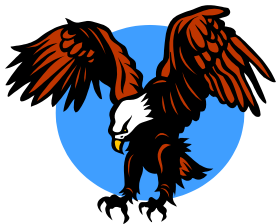
## MARCH

**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Natural Charcoal Art ~ 11:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Have you ever wanted to make your own drawing charcoal? Well, now you can! Join Aaron Askelson to learn how to create your own charcoal and put it to the test by drawing your own still life or winter outdoor scene. Please bring paper and BYOM – Bring Your Own Mug. Please call (563) 328-3286 to register.



**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Birds of Prey & Bald Eagle Conference ~ 5:00 P.M. ~ Bettendorf Middle School, Auditorium** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director, Dave Murcia for a presentation on birds of prey. The Birds of Prey program offers a glimpse into the lives of raptors including ID, biology, habitat needs, adaptations, and live birds! There will be time within the program for questions. After the Birds of Prey program, please visit the BCSD ELP Bald Eagle Conference and the many student presentations on display about bald eagles from 5:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Birds of Prey ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Moline Public Library, Bronze Room** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director, Dave Murcia with host Eagle View Group Sierra Club for a presentation on birds of prey. The Birds of Prey program offers a glimpse into the lives of raptors including ID, biology, habitat needs, adaptations, and live birds! (American kestrel, eastern screech owl & great horned owl). There will be time within the program for questions.



**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Bettendorf Library** ~ Join us at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Center.

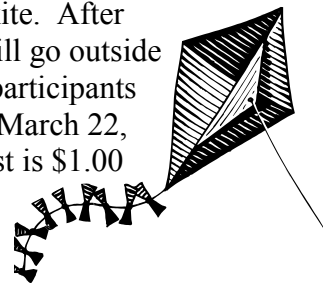
**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Home Town Harvest: Wild Edibles ~ 7:30 P.M. ~ Bettendorf Library** ~ Come join Naturalists from the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center to learn about Wild Edible Plants. Plants that

# SPRING

can be found in your area can be utilized separately or as a supplement for the dinner table. Learn how Native American Indians gathered and processed several important plants, seeds and nuts.

**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Trout Release ~ West Lake Park ~ 10:30 A.M.** ~ Please join the members of Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Scott County Conservation Board to release 2,000 rainbow trout at Lake of the Hills, Gate #1. Participants may fish, if properly licensed and have appropriate gear, for tagged fish to win many excellent prizes!!!

**30<sup>th</sup> ~ Kite Flying 101 ~ 1 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ “Up, up and away!” Nothing can make your spirits soar like building and flying your very own kite. Using sticks, string, paper and glue, create a traditional diamond bow kite. After construction, participants will go outside for a test flight. Interested participants are asked to pre-register by March 22, (563) 328-3286. Supply cost is \$1.00 per kite.



## APRIL

**16<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Earth Week ~ Earth Week 2013** is a time to promote awareness and appreciation for the Earth’s environment, sustainable living and earth awareness. Environmentalists all over the world will recycle and conserve energy this earth week! Earth Day is April 22.

**18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> ~ 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Quad Cities Earth Week Fair ~ 8:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. ~ Quad Cities Expo Center (Rock Island, IL)** ~ This year’s Earth Week Fair will be open to school groups only due to a recent decline in public attendance. Teachers may bring classes to the event to view environmentally based booths and displays. The featured speaker is Tom Kessenich, a herpetologist from “Snakes Alive”! Please register your class at [www.qcearthweek.org](http://www.qcearthweek.org).

# EVENTS

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Plant Some Shade ~ 4:00 - 6:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park** ~ The Scott County Conservation Board is pleased to announce that we are hosting the Plant Some Shade Program. MidAmerican Energy company customers in Iowa are eligible to purchase trees for \$30 each. Tree purchase is initially limited to 2 trees per household and advanced purchase is recommended as quantities are limited. (Credit card orders are not accepted). If you have questions regarding this, call (563) 328-3280.



**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join us at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Center.

**26<sup>th</sup> ~ Arbor Day** ~ Did you know that Arbor Day is the only federal holiday that looks to the future? Planting a tree shows faith in that future! It's also a great way to commemorate a birth, death, anniversary or other special event.

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Spring Work Day ~ 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join the Friends of the Wapsi River Center and Staff for some spring cleaning and tidying. There will be jobs to suit all ability levels. Enjoy light snacks and refreshments compliments of the Friends of the Wapsi Center. Please call to register your family (563) 328-3286.



**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Birds of Prey ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Eagle View Eco-Center**, ~ Join Wapsi River Center Naturalist Aaron Askelson for a presentation on birds of prey. This Birds of Prey program is exciting for all ages and offers a glimpse into the lives of raptors including ID, biology, habitat needs, adaptations, and live

birds! (Male and female American kestrel, eastern screech owl & great horned owl). So come on out and see some live raptors up close. It will be a hoot.

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Moonlight Frog Chorus ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Experience the sounds of the season, in search of the frogs and toads which inhabit the Wapsi River Center. Please bring a flashlight and waterproof footwear. Please call to register (563) 328-3286.



## MAY

**4<sup>th</sup> ~ The Great Garlic Mustard Challenge 2013 ~ 9:00 A.M. -11:30 A.M. ~ Quad Cities** ~ Garlic mustard is an invasive, noxious plant that threatens our native woodlands, natural areas and wildlife habitat. Help us control it in our community by participating in The Challenge! Your team could win the coveted Garlic Mustard Trophy for your efforts. Call to register at one of five locations: Black Hawk State Park - Rock Island, IL ~ at (309) 788-9536, Bettendorf, IA sites, ~ Patty at (563) 344-4084, Nahant Marsh - Davenport, IA ~ Brian at (563) 323-5196, Sunderbruch Park - Davenport, IA ~ Greg at (563) 328-7275, Fairmount Wetlands Davenport ~ Karen (563) 391-1403 X 3 and West Lake Park - Davenport, IA ~ Dave at (563) 328-3286.

**4<sup>th</sup> ~ Wildflower Hike ~ Wapsi River Center ~ 1:00 P.M.** ~ Join us for a hike to identify some spring woodland wildflowers like rue anemone, hepatica, Dutchman's breeches, Jacob's ladder, spring beauty, dog tooth violet and many more. Please call to register (563) 328-3286.

**4<sup>th</sup> ~ Monsignor Menke Open House ~ Dusk ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Dr. Mitchell, Director of the Monsignor Menke Observatory, for a celestial tour of the spring sky. Please call (563) 333-6141 on the day of the event to find out if the weather conditions will permit viewing. Monthly star parties are being planned for the summer and dates will be announced in early spring. Monitor St. Ambrose's website at [web.sau.edu/astronomy/menke/default.htm](http://web.sau.edu/astronomy/menke/default.htm) for upcoming dates.



**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Mud Creek Kayak Exploration ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Allen's Grove Park** ~ Join Wapsi River Center naturalists Aaron and Mike to explore Mud Creek a backwater of the Wapsipinicon River. Participants must be 12 years of age (accompanied by an adult) or older. Space is limited to 12 individuals. Allen's Grove is located 4 miles north of Donahue, Iowa on County Road Y52. Float is dependent on water levels. Please call (563) 328-3286 to reserve your spot by May 9.

**14<sup>th</sup> ~ 2013 Scott County Snapshot Water Quality Monitoring Event ~ 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ Davenport Public Works (1200 East 46<sup>th</sup> Street, Davenport, Iowa)** ~ Join volunteers for a morning of water quality monitoring in Scott County. Orientation will begin at 9:00 A.M. Volunteers will learn how to sample water and sites will be assigned to teams. After sampling, return to the fire station for a FREE lunch. Call at (563) 391-1403 x3 to register.

**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Wapsi Center Friends Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join us at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center to learn about current events, happenings and volunteer opportunities at the Center.

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park** ~ Come learn about kayaking and tour Lake of the Hills (Gate 1). This program is weather dependent and a limited amount



of equipment including vessels, PFD's, paddles, are offered (you may bring your own vessel if properly registered). Please call (563) 328-3286 to register.

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Full Moon Float ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Naturalist Aaron Askelson for a kayak float under the "Flower" moon. We will meet at the Wapsi Center and travel to Syracuse landing where we will put in and begin our float down to Sherman Park. Head lamps will be required for this night float. Participants must be 12 years of age (accompanied by an adult) or older. Space is limited to 12 individuals. Pre-registration is required by May 22<sup>nd</sup> (563) 328-3286.



**26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> ~ Heritage Days ~ 11:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village** ~ Enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of yesteryear! The past will come to life at the Village as interpreters and actors recreate pioneer life. There will be pioneer craft demonstrations, folk music and performances by the Wapsi Wranglers and a Kickapoo Indian Dancer. Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village is located on the north end of Scott County Park. Admission is \$2/adult and \$1/children.

## **JUNE: SNEAK PEAK**

**7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> ~ Overnight Canoe Adventure ~ 4:30 P.M. (Fri) - 2:00 P.M. (Sat) ~ Syracuse Landing to Allen's Grove** ~ Join Wapsi River Center naturalists to explore the Wapsipinicon River via canoe. Individuals will meet at the Wapsi River Center on Friday, float Syracuse to Sherman, stay overnight at the Owl's Nest Dormitory (\$7 per person), and then canoe from Sherman Park to Allen's Grove on Saturday morning. Participants must be at least 12 years of age and accompanied by an adult. Please call for more details and to reserve your space by the 5<sup>th</sup>.(563) 328-3286.

# THANKYOU!

**North Scott Foods Farm and Fleet of Davenport  
Clinton County Conservation Board**

**Dave and Connie Huber Debbie Wallace Bill Robbins Lucia Dryanski  
Ingrid Bogdanowicz James Varcho Cassie and Mona Druhl Vivian Norton  
Jim and Julie Ross Cecilia Braam Jo Noon Matt Hogan Christine Garrow  
Carol Rogers Erma Wiszmann Clare Murcia**

# WELCOME CASEY BECKER

Hello, I am the new Seasonal Assistant Naturalist here at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. I grew up in Davenport where I attended St. Paul the Apostle grade school and Assumption High School. I recently graduated from Simpson College with a B.S. in Environmental Science. My interests include anything that involves the great outdoors; from camping and hiking to backpacking the Rockies and my new love gardening. I love to travel seeing far off lands and natural wonders. My biggest accomplishments are visiting the Amazon Rainforest and Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. Visiting these places was extremely exciting and rewarding but the good ol' Midwest still has just as much amazement and beauty. I am very excited to work here at the Wapsi Center to learn and grow as a new member of an already outstanding team! So please, come on out to the center I would love to meet everyone.



# ST. AMBROSE INTERNS AT WRC!

Two new interns will be working at the Wapsi River Environmental Educational Center. Animal care and cleaning, programming and general duties will help each student complete over ninety hours to meet their class requirements at St. Ambrose. Welcome Matt and Dan !

Hello my name is Matt Haun. I attend St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa. I am majoring in Biology, concentrating on environmental science. I am from a small town in Illinois, called Granville. I like spending time outdoors, especially fishing. I have had the privilege of meeting the other naturalists at the Wapsi Center and know I'm in for a great experience. After graduation I hope to work for the DNR or Fish and Wildlife Services. Eventually I would like to make my way up to Alaska to see the beauty and wildlife, which you cannot find in other places. I know I have lots to learn and experience in my studies and the Wapsi River Center is just the place to do it!

Hello my name is Dan Lange, and I am excited to be starting an internship here at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. I am currently a student at St. Ambrose and I'll be graduating in the spring of 2014. I am a Biology major with a concentration on Environmental Biology. Also, I am

pursuing environmental Studies as an interdisciplinary minor. My Hobbies include biking, hiking, rock climbing, and canoeing. All of which have shaped me into someone who enjoys the benefits of working outside and with others. The naturalists here at the Wapsi Center are very knowledgeable and I look forward to learning from them!



# PLANT PROFILE: HOP-HORNBEAM, *OSTRYA VIRGINIANA*

BY MICHAEL J. GRANGER, NATURALIST

Let me introduce to you a tree found on a few slopes at the Wapsi River Center, the **Hornbeam Tree**, *Ostrya virginiana*. Here at the Wapsi River Center a couple dozen or more of these trees are found between the Eagle View Eco Center and the Wapsipinicon River. It is easy



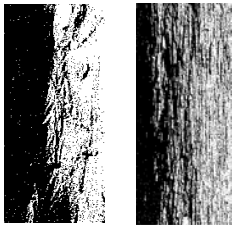
*Ostrya virginiana*

to find these amazing trees in the springtime for they commonly hold onto all of their dead leaves through the winter. The name of this tree comes from related European trees which were used to create yokes for oxen, called yoke elms or "hornbeams".

Some clarification of this species is necessary, because of its similarity to the **Ironwood tree**, *Carpinus caroliniana*,

which is commonly referred to as Blue Beech. Both trees occur in the same geographical location, and the names Ironwood, American Hornbeam, Hop Hornbeam are used to describe both species. To clarify some of the nomenclature one has to look at each tree's physical characteristics.

The Ironwood Tree (pictured left: A), has light grey to bluish colored, smooth bark, and strongly angled buds. The name Ironwood refers to *Carpinus caroliniana*'s very distinctive muscular looking bark. The Hop Hornbeam (pictured left: B) has a lighter brown scaly bark, with straight terminal buds.



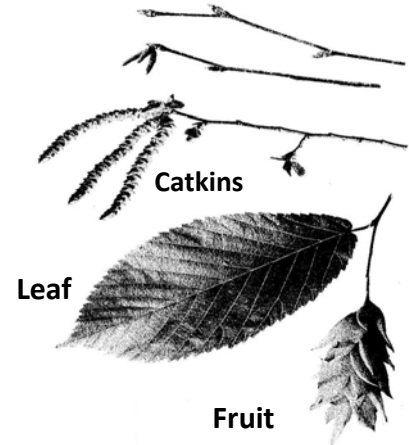
A

B

The Hornbeam is a mid-canopy tree, growing only 20 - 40 feet tall. A tree's diameter reaches 6 to 12 inches. Bark on a mature tree will start to shed, peeling into long strips. The bark will be light brown, scaly and have lenticels (pores). The buds are pointed with 6-8 scales, and are yellowish green in color. The leaves of this tree are simple and alternate, measuring 1- 5 inches long. The leaf margins are doubly toothed, which is similar to an elm leaf. (The base of an Elm leaf is asymmetrical and a Hornbeam leaf base is symmetrical).

The tree will flower from April to May. A single tree will have both male and female flowers. The flowers appear in long caterpillar-like catkins. Flying insects such as flies

and bees may visit the flowers to ensure pollination. The fruit looks similar to the fruit of Hops (*Humulus lupulus*). Seeds are contained in papery sacks that are in clusters at the ends of the branches. The tree is also known as Hop - Hornbeam for this reason.



Catkins

Leaf

Fruit

A variety of animals feed on Hop - Hornbeam buds and fruits. Wild turkeys, northern bobwhite, wood ducks and ruffed grouse feed on the fruits in the winter. Butterflies such as the red-spotted purple, eastern tiger swallowtail caterpillars feed on the leaves. It is also a food source for the Polyphemus moth. Mammals such as beaver, eastern cottontail, eastern chipmunk, and gray squirrels also use the tree for as a food source.

Hop hornbeam wood is hard and durable. It is used chiefly in the manufacture of tool handles, but also for fence posts and fuel. Also known for its density and resistance to compression it is used for making long bows. Hop hornbeam serves well as a landscape tree owing to its tolerance for very dry soils and shade. Native Americans used hop hornbeam to treat a variety of ailments including toothache, sore muscles and coughs.

The range of the Hop Hornbeam covers most of the eastern United States, stretching from Minnesota south to Texas, east to Florida and north to Main. It can grow in a variety of habitats from streams to rocky slopes and upland woods. Here at the Wapsi River Center they are found on upland slopes overlooking the Wapsipinicon River.

When you are at the Wapsi River Center, I invite you for a stroll to find these amazing trees, by looking for their distinctive leaves and bark, and remember to look for their seed clusters in the fall. Happy exploring!



*Ostrya virginiana*

Range

# ANIMAL PROFILE: THE AMERICAN ROBIN, *TURDUS MIGRATORIUS*

## BY AARON ASKELSON, SEASONAL NATURALIST

As the days get progressively longer and the sun blesses us with more and more of its life giving energy we look to signs that spring is right around the corner. When people think of one of the first signs of spring they invariably think of the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). Turdus refers to thrush which is their genus name while migratorius is the species name referring to their migratory pattern. Robins tend to migrate based mostly on food rather than temperature if food is still around they will stick out the cold weather, once food becomes scarce they will move south in their search for more food. This map shows the seasonal migrating ranges of the American Robin.

While researching the robin I came across this cool citizen scientist website that is tracking the migration patterns of robins. <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/robin/>.



American Robins are rather large song birds they measure about 25cm in length and weigh about 77 grams that is about 13.5 quarters. These birds command your attention as they hop around your yard with their red orange chest



stuck out looking for those unlucky worms moving around after those spring showers. These popular birds are always fun to watch but don't try to attract them to your bird feeder unless you are willing to put out a buffet of mealworms because these guys do not eat seed. Berries are their true love. Elderberries,

cranberries, blackberries, gooseberries, mulberries, and serviceberries are just a few of that are sought after. Of course they will also eat the fruit of the Virginia creeper, grape, bittersweet, crabapples, plums, hawthorn, and sumac. With robins eating so many berries they do occasionally get a little tipsy. This comes from them eating fermented berries late in the season. People have observed "drunken" robins in late fall or early winter falling over while walking. In the spring and summer their diet changes to more insects and worms. Big tasty grasshoppers, skittering spiders, burrowing cutworms, flies, juicy caterpillars, slimy snails or slugs, and crunchy beetles all help to round out the robin's diet. They have also been known to eat pastry dough, so they do have a bit of a sweet tooth.

Robins begin their mating in the spring starting in April and continue through July. Male and female robins are

hard to distinguish but references say that the females tend to be a little duller in color. Female robins can have as many as two or three broods a season. These broods usually have between three and five eggs. The female is the primary incubator and it typically takes about two weeks. The female builds a cup-shaped nest with twigs, grass and feathers. She spreads mud with her breast on the inside of the nest. She will then line that nest with softer materials like grass and feathers. The male will sometimes participate in the nest building but will mostly help collect the various materials needed to build the nest. They typically build their nest between five and fifteen feet off of the ground. Most of these nests are built in trees or shrubs, but as many of us know a robin will build a nest just about anywhere and manmade structures sometimes provide ideal habitat. Just last summer a robin built its nest outside my parent's house right next to the garage above a light fixture. The nest was successful and my one year old son would ask to be picked up so he could look into and see the eggs and then the baby birds.



The American Robin is the state bird of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Connecticut. In the past, Robins were killed for their meat however; they are now protected in the U.S., thanks to the Migratory Bird Act of 1918. The robin does overwinter in Iowa and can be seen year round. In fact, when we participated in the last Winter Bird Count on December 18<sup>th</sup> our group alone saw over two hundred robins. Did you know that a group of robins is known as a "worm" of robins? The male sings a most beautiful tune; it will often be the last bird you will hear as the sun sets. Here is a great website that has many of the robin's different vocalizations. <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/robin/Vocalizations.html> It won't be long till we are hearing the sweet songs of the American Robin this spring and My son and I will be looking forward seeing the nesting, brooding and fledging of young robins in our yard.

### Here is an easy to build Robin nest box.

Measurements

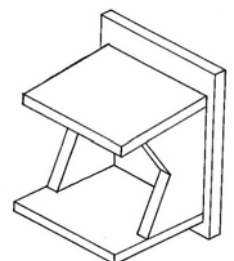
Back: 13 X 9 1/4 inches

Top: 8 1/2 X 8 inches

Floor: 7 x 8 inches

Sides: 6 x 6 - notched 3 inches to center.

( Hang with screws on top and bottom).



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

*The W.R.E.N.* (Wapsi River Environmental News) is published quarterly by the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and the Scott County Conservation Board.

**Scott County Conservation Board**

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**Mailing List**

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.

The Scott County Conservation Board in the provision of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes they have been subject to discrimination, they may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Scott County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington D.C. 20240.