

# The W.R.E.N.

*Wapsi River Environmental News*

*Summer 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.*

## Wapsi Center Happenings

By Dave Murcia, Naturalist/Director



### Take It Outside!

Spring time is here, and with it comes the many opportunities to "Take It Outside". In cooperation with the Iowa DNR's "Take It Outside" campaign, the Wapsi River Center is again offering low-impact, outdoor recreational opportunities that sustain both a healthy environment and a healthy body. Following the Iowa Core Conservation Concepts, the natural resource-based activities aim to connect people with nature in a responsible and enjoyable way (not to mention, at low or no cost!). Please visit our parks for a hike, try your hand at fishing, ride your bike on the trails at Scott County Park, enjoy the equestrian trails at Scott County Park, swim at the beach or pool, or even learn to kayak or canoe! Whether you are a beginner or have more experience, you are welcome to learn about these low-impact activities and enjoy the fun!

### EDIWILD 2013

*Ghosts of the Grasslands*

**June 24-27, 2013**

This year's EDILWILD workshop (educators in the wild) will emphasize our native prairie ecosystem. Participants will learn about: prairie insects, small mammal studies, goat management on the prairies, plants and pioneers and more!

This interdisciplinary workshop allows educators to learn about how we as naturalists, teach about our natural resources. Both graduate credit as well as relicensure is available. **Please contact the office at 563-328-3286 for registration process info now!**

### Programs of the Wapsi River Center

This past spring, program participants learned about: **maple syruping**, how to make **natural charcoal** for art, learned about **birds of prey**, tried their chance at **catching trout** at West lake Park, made and flied **kites**, visited the **QC Earth Week Fair** booth to see turtles and snakes, volunteered at the **stewardship workday**, and learned to **kayak!**

Please look to the calendar of events for the next season of events including healthy outdoor opportunities in our parks including **paddle programs** throughout the season!

If you would like to schedule a field trip, please schedule as far in advance as possible and visit our website to view/download our **Field Trip Planner**. School programs are not scheduled for Mondays so that staff may work on administration and resource

management. And don't forget-----**The Wapsi River Center is a place for all seasons.** We would like to see more schools take fall and winter field trips. This would allow more schools to visit the Wapsi River Center.



nature lovers (and Scouts). The old building was the original First Aid Cabin that served Scout Camp Minneyata and is now being "retired" to better meet modern standards including energy efficiency and the ADA to name just a few improvements.

As seen below, the renovated pond has been filling thanks to the record rain events and will be the site for upcoming events and activities this year as well.



## Wapsi Center Improvements

This season the Wapsi River Center will be replacing the original Kestrel Cabin that has served many

### **Gnats, Mosquitos and Flies ..... Oh My!!!!**

#### **By Casey Becker**

Pestering bugs got you down? You may have notice the number of gnats, flies, and mosquitoes this year has been astronomically high. Due to elevated amounts of rain water during our spring months this has caused more stagnant pools to occur. Mosquitoes, as well as several species of gnats, need stagnant water to lay their eggs so the young can develop in a safe environment from predators. This has caused a number explosion of these nuisance bugs that seem to have taken over our yards, lawns and even here at the Wapsi River Center. There are plenty of commercial products to help keep the annoying bugs at bay. Even though mosquitoes and gnats are both in the fly family many products only help repel mosquitoes and not gnats. Also, most bug sprays do contain the hazardous chemical DEET which has been linked to migraines and even respiratory and nervous system damage. A great alternative to buying chemically filled bug repellent is to make your own! Natural remedies are relatively easy to make and many of the ingredients can be found in your home. So don't let the insects and commercial bug spray woes get you down this summer, make your own natural bug repellent and enjoy what the season has to offer!



#### **Natural Mosquito Repellent**

- 1/3 Cup Witch Hazel
- 1/2 teaspoon Lemongrass Oil
- 1/2 Eucalyptus Oil
- 1/2 teaspoon Citronella Oil
- 5 oz. spray bottle

Most essential oils can be found at a local health store, craft or health section in a major grocery store.  
Combine all ingredients and place in 5 oz. spray bottle.  
Before each use shake bottle to remix witch hazel and other oils.

#### **Natural Gnat Repellent**

Personally, I have used quite a few different concoctions and the best one that I have used is vanilla extract and water. All you need are equal parts vanilla extract and water.

- 1 part vanilla extract
- 1 part water

Combine in your choice of spray bottle and shake before each use to remix witch hazel and vanilla extract.

# SUMMER EVENTS

## June

**10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> ~ Quad City Triathlon Practice Times ~ West Lake Park** ~ West lake park's swimming beach will be available from 6:30-7:45 pm. for practice swims. Participants pay full admission which is \$4.00. One length of the swimming area is 400' or 133 yards long (10 tubes @ 40'each). Five laps would be a tad more than 600 yards. We do not permit "open water" swimming at West Lake. All swimming must be done at the Beach area and when the facility is open.

**12<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park ~ Pride Lake (South Entrance)** ~ Come learn kayaking basics and tour around the Pride Lake. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.



**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Thirteenth Annual Triathlon ~ West Lake Park ~ Beach Parking Lot, Gate 1** ~ Participants begin the day by swimming Lake of the Hills, then bike a 15-mile trek and return to West Lake Park to finish with a run. This is a spectator event only, as the 2013 registration is closed. For further details, visit [www.qctriathlon.com](http://www.qctriathlon.com).

**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Open House ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Dr. Mitchell, Director of the Monsignor Menke Observatory for a tour of the night sky. Please call (563) 333-6141 on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing. information.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Worms 101 ~ 1:00 P.M ~ Scott County Library (Eldridge Branch)** ~ Come discover amazing worms. Learn about worm anatomy, how they live, and how they help us in right in our own backyards. Family fun for everyone! Please call the Eldridge Library at 563-285-4794 to register.



**17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> ~ Young Pioneers Day Camp ~ “Wild West Week” ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village** ~ Spend a week doing what the cowboys and cowgirls did. Hike in the Maquoketa Caves, see buffalo, be an actor or design the set for an outdoor play about an old cowboy and pan for gold! This day camp is geared for children 6-11 years of age. Call (563) 328-3283 for more information.



**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Annual Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center. This is our annual meeting: Cookout begins at 6:00 P.M. (main dish and drinks will be provided – please bring a side dish to share and tableware). The meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M.

**21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Hunter Safety Camp ~ 7:00 P.M. (Fri.) - 5:00 P.M. (Sun.) ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Standard hunter safety courses are 10 hours long. In this event, we will go far beyond the basics. In addition to all of the hunter education standards, we will be teaching advanced shooting techniques, bowhunter safety, trapping, waterfowl, turkey & raccoon hunting, dog training, caring for game in the field, first aid, wildlife ID, calling and a whole lot more! All these activities will allow students to actually participate, not just listen to speakers or watch films. The course is open to kids, age 11-16. They don't need to have received the Hunter Education Certificates already. Cost per student is \$20 for dorm stay, meals, ammo and targets thanks to donations from Clinton County Pheasants Forever, Scott County Pheasants Forever, Mississippi Valley Sportsmen Chapter of Waterfowl USA and Clinton Area Whitetails Unlimited; plus donations from Clinton CCB and Grand Mound Sportsmen's Club. Overnight chaperones will be provided by participants' parents. Space is limited to 50 kids, so sign up early by calling (563) 847-7202.



**22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Rag Rug ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Scott County Library (Eldridge Branch) ~ Too many t-shirts?**



Join Caitlin for this easy, no-sew rug project. Bring scissors and at least 6 t-shirts of adult medium or larger size that you would like to upcycle. Alternatively, bring 4 pairs of adult jeans or 2 bed sheets. Registration is required, so please call ahead (563-328-3286).

**24<sup>th</sup>—27<sup>th</sup> ~ Ediwild, Educator's Workshop ~** Please call the Wapsi River Center for registration and signup information (563-328-3286)

**24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> ~ Young Pioneers Day Camp ~ “Native American Week” ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~** Play Native American games, make costumes and be in a play. Visit the Hauberg Museum and learn about Native Americans in the area. Canoe (life-jackets provided) on Pride Lake. This day camp is geared for children 6-11 years of age. Call (563) 328-3283 for more information.

## July

**3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park ~ Lake of the Hills (Gate # 1) ~** Come learn kayaking basics and tour around the Lake of the Hills at West Lake Park. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.

**13<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Open House ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ Wapsi River Center ~** Join Dr. Mitchell, Director of the Monsignor Menke Observatory for a tour of the night sky. Please call (563) 333-6141 on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing.

**15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> ~ Young Pioneers Day Camp ~ “Ecology Week “ ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~** Visit Nahant Marsh to learn about saving the wetlands and the ATEEC Lab. Make Tie-dye recycled T-shirts and a solar oven to make your own solar heated s'mores. This day camp is geared for children 6-11 years of age. Call (563) 328-3283 for more information.

**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Terrific Terrariums ~ 1:00 P.M ~ Scott County Library (Eldridge Branch) ~** Come learn about the history of terrariums, and how they were



used to help keep plants alive. Create your own miniature garden with stones, charcoal and soil. Please call the Eldridge Library at 563-285-4794 to register.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park ~ Pride Lake (South Entrance) ~** Come learn kayaking basics and tour around the Pride Lake. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~** Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center.

**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Black light for bugs ~ Dusk ~ Wapsi River Center ~** Some of Iowa's most interesting critters only come out at night! Join Casey for a night adventure to catch and learn some of Iowa's fascinating nocturnal insects. Please meet and discuss in the parking lot around dusk. Register by calling (563) 328-3286, and remember to bring bug spray to keep pestering bugs away to enjoy the interesting ones!



**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Animal Homes ~ 1:00 P.M ~ Scott County Library (Eldridge Branch) ~** Come learn about the animals that live under your feet. Many creatures dig, burrow and live quit comfortably underground. Please call the Eldridge Library at 563 -285-4794 to register.

**28<sup>th</sup> ~ Village Alive ~ 1:00 – 5:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~** See the Pioneer Historical Village come alive as the "Friends" of the Village re-enact life on the 1890's prairie. Enjoy the many demonstrations throughout the day. Admission is free!



**29<sup>th</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Young Pioneers Day Camp ~ “Mark Twain Week “ ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~** Imagine yourself as Huck Finn on an island where you go on a treasure hunt. Visit the

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center and ride on a 25 person pontoon in the back waters of the Mississippi. This day camp is geared for children 6-11 years of age. Call (563) 328-3283 for more information.

**31<sup>st</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park ~ Lake of the Hills (Gate # 1) ~** Come learn kayaking basics and tour around the Lake of the Hills at West Lake Park. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.

## **August**

**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Open House ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~Wapsi River Center ~** Join Dr. Mitchell, Director of the Monsignor Menke Observatory for a tour of the night sky. Please call (563) 333-6141 on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing.

**14<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park ~ Pride Lake (South Entrance) ~** Come learn kayaking basics and tour around the Pride Lake. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.

**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. Meeting ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~** Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Sun Catchers and Nature Hike ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center ~** Fun for the entire family! Come to the Wapsi River Center August 17<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-12:00 to join Casey for a nature hike to learn about some of Iowa's natives. Sun catchers will be made from items we pick from the hike. Kids will truly enjoy being able to take home part of the Wapsi by creating a beautiful sun catcher. Registration is required, so please call ahead (563-328-3286).

## **GOODBYE AARON**

To all the wonderful people at Scott County Conservation,

I cannot thank everybody enough, my time here at Scott County has been so wonderful. I have enjoyed working with all of you so much. As many of you know I have accepted a full time position as a naturalist for Benton County. I have learned so much in my time at Scott County and it truly is a great place to work. Hopefully our paths will cross again in the future.

Thanks for all the great memories and experiences,

Aaron Askelson



## **THANKYOUS**

**The Friends  
of the Wapsi Center Inc.**

**Clinton County  
Conservation Board**

**Nahant Marsh  
Educational Center**

**Iowa DNR**

**Lizzy and Maya Murcia**

**Luke O'Tool**

**Orion Elementary School**

**Camanche Middle School**

**Cub Scouts of America**

**SAU Interns**

**Matt Haun and Dan Lange**

**SCCB Maintenance Crews**

**SCCB Rangers**

**Rick Rouse & Josh Nelson**

# WJDLJFE PROFJLE: Massasaqua Rattlesnake

By: Caitlin Roeder, Seasonal Naturalist

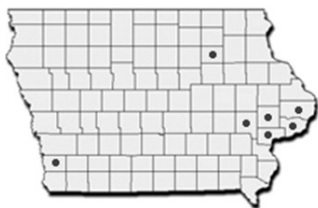
*The Earth does not belong to man; Man belongs to the Earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.* – Chief Seattle

The eastern massasauga is an elusive rattlesnake, living in the few remaining pockets of wilderness in the northern Midwest. The scientific name is *Sistrurus catenatus catenatus* (the second *catenatus* denoting the eastern subspecies). Massasauga comes from the Ojibwa language, meaning “great river mouth,” a descriptor of the woody, bottom-lands surrounding rivers that this snake inhabits. It is also known as the swamp rattler and the black snapper in some parts of the country.



The eastern massasauga is found throughout the upper Midwest, east of the Mississippi River, and in parts of lower Ontario. A few sightings of the

massasauga have occurred in Scott, Clinton, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, and Bremer counties. Two other subspecies of massasauga exist



throughout the lower Midwest and into the northern Southwest. The western massasauga, *S. c. tergeminus* is believed to have been spotted in Mills County.

The eastern massasauga is brown colored with dark-brown or black blotches down the center of its back, which turn into rings around the end of the tail. The tail ends in a characteristic rattle. Smaller blotches may be present on the sides of the snake, with the color fading to light brown or white toward the belly scales. The head of the eastern massasauga is triangular shaped, though not as

prominently as other rattlesnakes. The eyes have a vertical pupil, similar to a cat’s eye, and are lined with a thick dark stripe that extends to the back of the jaw. A full grown massasauga is between 18 and 40 inches in length, while babies can be small enough to wrap around a quarter.

Many harmless snakes use mimicry as a defense. The western and eastern hognose and fox snake have similar pattern and coloration to the massasauga. This provides them with the protection of “mistaken identity” from predators. These snakes can also vibrate their tails in dry leaves or grass which produces a sound similar to the massasauga’s rattle.

The eastern massasauga is a vital part of the Midwest’s food chain. Snakes do humans a great service by eating pests, such as mice and voles. They also become food for many species of birds including hawks and herons, and even for other snakes, like the bull snake. Scientists monitor the massasauga because it is an indicator species. This means a drop in the massasauga population could denote the verge of a greater environmental catastrophe. Until the late 1970’s many states had a bounty on the massasauga and gave out rewards for hunting them. Now the eastern massasauga is considered an endangered species in many states, including Iowa. This means it is illegal to capture or kill a massasauga. The species is under consideration for federal protection.



# PLANT PROFILE: Smooth Carrion Flower

By: Michael Granger, Naturalist

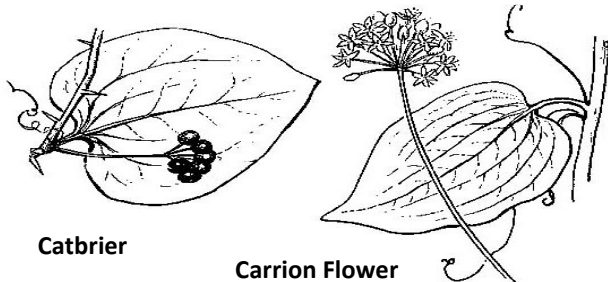
Let me introduce to you an amazing vine found along the trails here at the Wapsi River Center, the Smooth Carrion Flower, *Smilax herbacea*. I have seen this amazing plant on several occasions, and this year I was able to view it during flowering, which is the reason the plant has its name.

When you hear the name Carrion Flower you may think of the tropical plant known as *rafflesia*. Well known for being the world's largest flower, it can grow to be 3 feet across and weigh up to 15 pounds. This odor attracts the flies that pollinate the plant. This rare flower is found in the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra. While the Smooth Carrion Flower is not related to *rafflesia* scientifically, its same common name refers to the similar odor its tiny blossoms produce.

Smooth Carrion Flower's range is roughly the eastern half of North America. It does not extend its range west into the Rocky Mountains. It prefers moist woodlands and I have seen it along riverine bluffs. It is striking to look at and its flower is how it got its name.



This vine belongs to the Greenbrier family *Smilax* which includes the familiar Catbrier, *Smilax rotundifolia*. Catbrier is fairly common at the Wapsi River Center and may grow along several of the woodland trails. Catbrier has a green fleshy stem with narrow, long, sharp black spines surrounding the lower portions of the vine. The leaves of Carrion Flower are very similar in shape and size to Catbrier but its vine does not have these spines making it easy to distinguish the two.



Catbrier

Carrion Flower

The Carrion flower's vine may grow to 8 foot in length and may have some branching. The stems are light pink to purple in color, and have a waxy appearance. Leaves are arranged alternately along the vine. Leaves may measure 3 ½ inches long and 2 ½ inches across. The leaves have parallel venation, and are glabrous (appearing wet or sticky). At the base of each leaf there are two tendrils to provide climbing support.

Tendrils are common on many climbing plants including the peas that are growing right now in your garden. Tendrils are amazing plant adaptations which grow outward from vines. When they come into contact with an object, growth on the contact spot ceases and the opposite side of the vine continues to grow, wrapping the tendril around the object creating a holdfast to help lift the rest of the plant upward.

Individual flowers occur in umbels (flower clusters) born on stalks 4 to 10 inches long. An umbel may contain 20 -120 flowers. An individual flower is ¼ inch across, with 6 yellow – green petals. Flowering lasts about 3 weeks from early spring to summer. The odor of the blossom could be described as a musky sour smell. Henry David Thoreau quoted "It smells exactly like a dead rat in the wall and apparently attracts flies like carrion", 1854.

The Smooth Carrion Flower is dioecious (some vines producing male flowers; staminate, while others produce female flowers; pistillate). This means that some vines will produce dark blue, fleshy berries, each containing 3 -5 seeds. At the end of each season the vine withers and dies, emerging from the ground the next season. Seeds may germinate and start new individuals, as well.

This summer when you are out on the trail keep an eye out for this beautiful vine found along the slopes of the Wapsi River Center's trails. See you soon... out on the trail!



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~~~~~ EAGLE VIEW ECO CENTER HOURS ~ Saturdays ~12:30 - 4:30 P.M. ~~~~~

**“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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**Mailing List**

If you would like to receive “The W.R.E.N.” free of charge, please send a post card to the Wapsi River E. E. Center at the address above.

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