

# The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

SUMMER 2015

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

## Wapsi Happenings

By: Director, Dave Murcia

### Bee Happy at the Wapsi

The Wapsi Center is now home to a **observational bee hive** to bring awareness and educate our community about the importance of pollinator health. The hive was brought to the Center in May and has been successful in acclimating to the site very well. The Center affords many pollinators, including the bees, many opportunities to thrive considering the surrounding habitats found in the area.



Native flora including wildflowers, shrubs, and even trees, offer the necessary pollen and nectar that many of our native pollinators rely on to survive. Particular to bees, the gooseberry, raspberries, clover, and basswood trees are favorites found along our areas.

Take the Wapsi challenge and visit the Eagle View Eco Center to see whether you can spot our queen bee!

### EDIWILD Pollinates Local Educators

A successful 2015 EDIWILD (educators in the wild) was hosted by the **Wapsi River Center and Nahant Marsh**, and completed as part of the **Quad**

**Cities Pollinator Conference (QCPC)** held this spring. The QCPC was held in an effort to bring awareness, share information regarding pollinator health, and engage stakeholders in a dialogue to improve the environment. The annual workshop hosted 11 educators as part of the 250+ participants attending the QCPC. Through EDIWILD, many educators sought professional development by attending a wide variety of sessions. Concurrent sessions included topics such as: "Initiatives, Research, and Ag Practices", "Keeping Our Bees (Research and Status)", and "Urban Restoration and Conservation Practices".



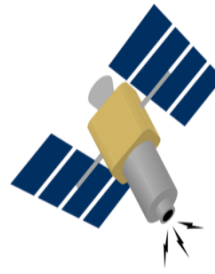
EDIWILD evolved this year in cooperation with the **Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency (AEA)** from a 4-day, 2 graduate credit workshop, to a 2-day 1 credit workshop. The effort was made to better suit costs to educators as well as their seasonal schedules. **A big thank you to Nahant Marsh staff, the Friends of the Wapsi Center, and all staff** involved to make this year another success. Look for next year's EDIWILD announcements in spring.

### Earth Week Stewardship Workday

Spring workday this year was a reminder of Earth Day, and was a success due to 15 **volunteers** including our own **Friends of the Wapsi Center members and Sherrard Scouts!** The day was spent landscaping the facilities including pruning and mulching for a total of 45 hours! A big thank you to our Friends group for hosting refreshments for the volunteers!

## Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Workshop

The Wapsi Center hosted a successful **Frog and Toad Call Survey Workshop** in cooperation with the IA DNR this spring. The evening consisted of identifying, surveying techniques, and reporting procedures in an effort to get more “citizen scientists” involved with wildlife monitoring. For more information, visit: [www.iowadnr.com/volunteerwildlifemonitoring/](http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteerwildlifemonitoring/)



coordinate associated with that location. In case of an emergency along our trails, a person can call “911” and give the information off the marker and a responder can locate the site using the United States National Grid (USNG) by way of the Global

Positioning System (GPS) or the Global Informational System (GIS).

Thank you to **Christina McDonough**, the Community Transformation Consultant for the Scott County Health Department. Through her efforts, we acquired funding for the TEAS markers through the Iowa Community Transformation Grant, made possible from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



## Trail System Gets Safer

In cooperation with the **Scott County Health Department**, the trail system at our major parks including the Wapsi River Center, have implemented the Trail Emergency Access System (TEAS). The trails now have emergency markers installed along trails that have both a marker number as well as a

# Rare Ducks Spotted At Wapsi River Center!

On Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 while leading a small prairie hike with our friends from the Davenport Goodwill Center, we spotted some unusual ducks on a small pond here at the Wapsi Center. They were very unusual in color with bright orange-red beaks. Upon further observation they were identified as Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks, and after a Facebook post about the find, we realized how lucky we were to spot them. Historically, their range has been in the southern United States, down into Central and South America. These birds seem to be increasing their range due



**Black-Bellied Whistling Duck Range map**

to their increasing population. Males and females of this species look alike and mate for life. They nest in tree cavities. They also feed at night, mostly on aquatic vegetation. With the unusual find we knew that birders may be “flocking” by to see and photograph them. To ensure minimal disturbance, metal stakes and flagging have been placed along the trails accessing the wetland. Please be respectful of the these boundaries and enjoy this “once in a lifetime experience!”



**Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks at the Wapsi Center on Wednesday, June 17th, 2015. Photo: Brandon Caswell (Marion, Iowa).**



# Poison Hemlock

By Naturalist  
Michael J. Granger

Let me introduce to you a plant which is quite abundant this year in our fields and road ways, Poison Hemlock, *Conium Maculatum*. For some reason this plant this year is very prevalent and I have gotten several questions about it. The plant is one that you should be able to identify to avoid it



19th Century Illustration

or in some cases control it. It belongs to a group of plants in the Apiaceae (umbelliferae) family. The family is commonly referred to as the celery, carrot or parsley family. Most plants in this group have hollow stems. Many people are familiar with Queen Anne's lace, the wild carrot, *Daucus carota*, which is also a common field and wayside plant. While Queen Anne's lace has a flat shaped round umbel of white flowers and hairy green stems, poison hemlock has small white flowers which grow in umbrella-like umbels, which branch out on long stems.



STEM

Blooming occurs June – August. Poison hemlock leaves are parsley or fern-like, and colored dark green. The stem of the plant will be smooth and have obvious reddish spotting. The reddish spotting along the plant stem is the “smoking gun” when identifying this plant. Plants may grow 2 – 9 feet tall and may grow in large patches. One plant may produce 40,000 seeds making the plant a prolific invader. Seeds may be viable for 6 years.

I have known for several years about poison hemlock and am quick to point it out when encountering it while hiking. My favorite book “Reader’s Guide to North American Wildlife”, (the Reader’s Digest Association, ©1982) tells of the well-known fact that Socrates’ an Athenian philosopher drank a cup of

poison hemlock, to complete a death sentence, after being tried and found guilty of “refusing to recognize the gods, recognized by the state” at that time.

The primary danger with poison hemlock is ingestion or eating the plant, making cases fairly rare in humans. Symptoms appear in with 20 minutes to three hours. The typical symptoms for humans include dilation of the pupils, dizziness, and trembling followed by slowing of the heartbeat, paralysis of the central nervous system, muscle paralysis, and death due to respiratory failure. For animals, ingestion normally occurs early in the spring when the plant is low growing and livestock unknowingly eat its leaves. Symptoms in animals include nervous trembling, salivation, lack of coordination, pupil dilation, rapid weak pulse, respiratory paralysis, coma, and sometimes death. If poisoning from this plant is suspect it is important to contact the Iowa Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222.



This plant is a biennial (blooming and seed production occurs the second year of growth) and control is done during blooming, in essence you are destroying the plant before seeding occurs. Several methods are used in control including mowing and spading. Be sure to wear gloves, pants and light weight long sleeved shirt. A painter's face mask is also recommended when mowing the plant as well. The easiest and safest method of control is spading. You can use a round shovel and just chop the plant off at the base. Plants may be carefully removed and burned when dry. Cut plants can be maneuvered with a hay or silage fork.

Once again, poison hemlock, a plant that is important to identify and in some cases avoid or control. Always remember to look for the reddish spotted smooth green stems, and have a safe and enjoyable summer.



FLOWER UMBELS

# The Eastern Meadowlark

By Naturalist  
Emily Santiago

An Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) has been catching our attention lately with his “flute-like” song in the prairie. As you look up to watch him sing his territorial song from an exposed perch, usually the top branch of a nearby Eastern Red Cedar, you first notice the bright yellow breast and contrasting black chevron bib. The male is striking when seen out in the open, normally singing and protecting his territory from rival males. A singing male Eastern Meadowlark is quite an “entertainer” pointing his beak skyward while singing and proclaiming his rights. The female Eastern Meadowlark is also built for a grassland existence, and with her light brown and black mottled stripping she remains undetected most of the time. She can easily slip away from danger and rarely flushes.



Photo Credit: [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Eastern meadowlarks reside in our area during spring and summer to breed. They prefer native grasslands, but have well adapted to restored grasslands and overgrown fields. These birds are considered resident in most of its range but many of the northern birds will migrate from the northern United States to the lower states during harsher winters.



Eastern Meadowlark  
Range Map

The Eastern Meadowlark is a member of the blackbird family, which includes orioles and cowbirds. They are insectivores, consuming a wide range of grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars and grubs. During colder months they will consume wild fruits, weed seeds and pick spilt corn from harvesting.

During breeding season it is typical for males to have two mates each season, rarely three. In courtship, the male will face the female and puff out his chest to show off his black “V”, spread his tail feathers and flick his wings. After mating the neutral colored female makes the dome shaped nest out of

grasses on the ground, in the safety of a depression like a hoof print. The nest is made from grasses, strips of bark, or weedy stems. The opening of the nest is on the side. Some nests even have elaborate roofs and woven tunnel entrances to ensure concealment. The female will produce between 3 to 5 eggs that are white and covered with purple and brown spots. While they both tend to the young, the female does most of the parenting. After 11-12 days, the young leave the nest, still unable to fly, and are tended to by the parents for another two weeks. Eastern Meadowlarks usually produce two broods per year.



Image: Nests and Eggs - Birds of Ohio

Current data is showing that the Eastern Meadowlark is a species in decline. This is likely due to the diminishing amount of preferred grassland habitat. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a program that pays farmers a yearly rental payment in exchange for their participation in removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting native grassland species that will create higher quality habitat. Iowa has a large number of acres enrolled in CRP, but with higher demand on ethanol production, more farmers are not renewing their CRP contracts and are going back to farming that land instead. Taking away this habitat puts a strain on many species including the Eastern Meadowlark.

There are several practices one can learn to avoid if conservation of these birds is a priority. First of all, early mowing and haying of fields can kill the young and adults on the nest, so it's best to save the mowing until August. Also, females have been known to abandon their eggs if flushed from the nest, so take care to not disturb them.

Next time you are out in the country see if you can spot this “regal” member of the blackbird family. Take some time to enjoy the male's bright yellow coloration and loud vocalizations, knowing that with preservation and conservation this species has a “BRIGHT” future.



# KIDS KORNER: The "BUZZ" on Pollinators

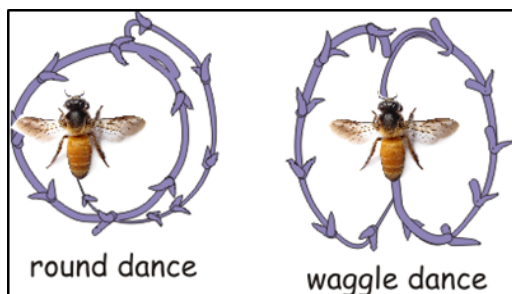


By Seasonal Naturalist  
Becky Horton

Do you ever wonder what goes on inside a bee hive? If so, come to the Eco Center at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and check out our very own observation bee hive!

## Doing The "Waggle" Dance

Honey bees communicate to each other through dance! The "waggle dance" is used to communicate the location of the food sources more than 35 yards away. The "round dance" is used when the food source is less than 35 yards away.



Source: [www.healthywithhoney.com](http://www.healthywithhoney.com)

## Breakfast would be a lot different without honeybees!

Did you know 1/3 of all fruits and vegetables are produced by pollinators? To help illustrate this fact, this is what a normal everyday breakfast could look like with and without honey bee pollination

WITH HONEYBEES

WITHOUT HONEYBEES



Source: Scientific American

## How do you help the honeybees and other pollinators?



Be kind to our pollinator friends! You can look, but don't touch. They won't bother you if you don't bother them.

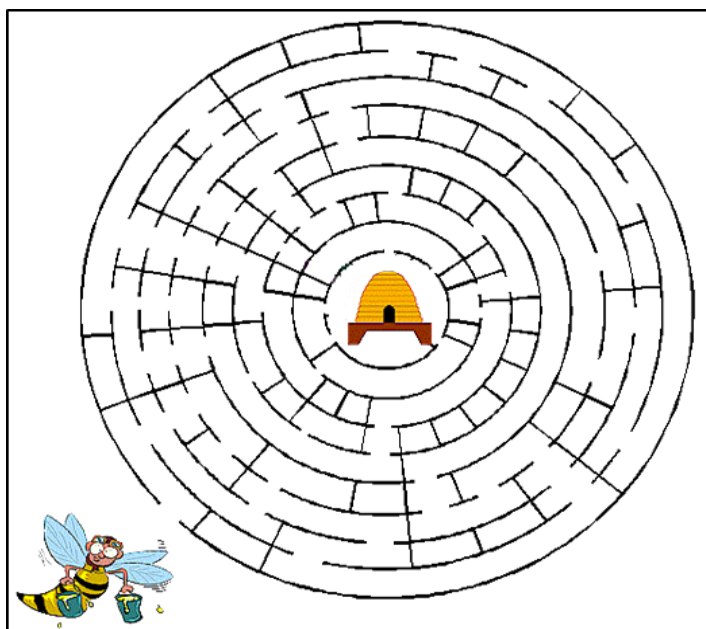


To help our declining population of pollinators, convince your parents, schools, or local parks to plant flowering gardens.



Participate in online citizen science projects related to pollination such as: The Great Sunflower Project, Monarch Watch, Monarch Larva Monitoring Project, and Bumble Bee Watch.

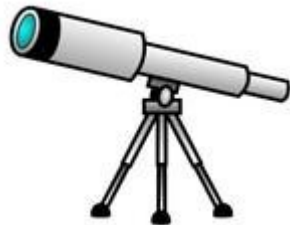
Help the worker bee bring her collection of nectar and pollen back to her hive!



# SUMMER EVENTS

## JULY

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~**  
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> ~ Birds of Prey ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park, Lakeview Shelter (enter Gate # 1) ~**  
Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a summer raptor program including live birds of prey. The presentation will include biology, ecology, human impacts, and live birds including owls and falcons.



**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Basics ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park, Lake of the Hills boat ramp (enter Gate # 1) ~**  
Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a cool summer kayak paddle. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour Lake of the Hills. Participants may bring their own vessels and PFDs as long as they are US Coast Guard approved. Seats are limited and this event is weather dependent so please call to register at 563-328-3286.

**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center, Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ( Menke Observatory) ~**  
Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center.

**20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> ~ Pioneer Village Day Camp (Ecology Week) ~ 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~**  
Visit Army Corp Rock Island District on Arsenal Island to learn about

environmental practices then travel to Green Valley in Moline for a hike with River Action representatives on Wednesday, July 22. Please call (563) 328-3283 for more information.

**25<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Scavenger Hunt ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate # 1) ~ Kayak Scavenger Hunt ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Lake of the Hills, Gate #1) ~**  
Join us for a fun day on the water, for kayak beginners and experts alike. We discuss boater safety before heading onto the water. We will practice paddling exercises before beginning a leisurely scavenger hunt contest. Limited seating and pre-registration is required. Please call (563) 328-3286.



**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Birds of Prey ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park, Buffalo Bill Shelter ~**  
Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a summer raptor program including live birds of prey. The presentation will include biology, ecology, human impacts, and live birds including owls and falcons.

**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Basics ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park, Pride Lake ~**  
Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a cool summer kayak paddle. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour Lake of the Hills. Participants may bring their own vessels and PFDs as long as they are US Coast Guard approved. Seats are limited and this event is weather dependent so please call to register at 563-328-3286.



## AUGUST

**19<sup>th</sup> ~ Birds of Prey ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park, Buffalo Bill Shelter ~**  
Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a summer raptor program including live birds of prey. The presentation will include biology, ecology, human impacts, and live owls and falcons.

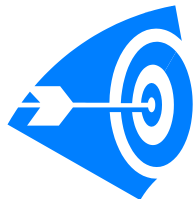
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**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center.

**22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Menke Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory** ~ 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.

**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Archery Basics ~ 10:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Learn how to use a bow and arrow in this informative and fun hands-on class. You'll learn



safety and proper archery techniques according to National Archery in the Schools (NASP) guidelines. Children must be in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and above to participate. Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.

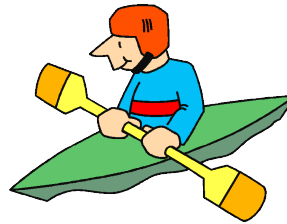
**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Evening Kayak Float ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park, Lake of the Hills boat ramp (enter Gate # 1)** ~ Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a summer kayak paddle. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour Lake of the Hills. Participants may bring their own vessels and PFDs as long as they are US Coast Guard approved. Seats are limited and this event is weather dependent so please call to register at 563-328-3286.

## SEPTEMBER

**2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Birds of Prey ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park, Lakeview Shelter (enter Gate # 1)** ~ Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a summer raptor program including live birds of prey. The presentation will include biology, ecology, human impacts, and live owls and falcons.



**2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Kayak Basics ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park, Lake of the Hills boat ramp (enter Gate 1)** ~ Join



Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a cool summer kayak paddle. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour Lake of the Hills. Participants may

bring their own vessels and PFDs as long as they are US Coast Guard approved. Seats are limited and this event is weather dependent so please call to register at 563-328-3286.

**6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> ~ Pioneer Village Labor Day Celebration ~ 11:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village** ~ Bring your family out for an afternoon at the Village! Period dressed “Friends” demonstrate crafts & sell their wares. Enjoy great food, children’s games, and make and take crafts. Enjoy old time music in the Saloon and Gazebo. (Admission: \$2 adults, \$1 children). Please call (563) 328-3286 for more details.

**12<sup>th</sup> ~ Evening Kayak Float ~ 7:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park, Lake of the Hills boat ramp (enter Gate # 1)** ~ Join Director/Naturalist Dave Murcia for a kayak paddle. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour Lake of the Hills. Participants may bring their own vessels and PFDs as long as they are US Coast Guard approved. Seats are limited and this event is weather dependent so please call to register at 563-328-3286.

**12<sup>th</sup> ~ Monarch Butterfly Workshop ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Seasonal Naturalist, Becky Horton, for a workshop on monarch butterflies and other pollinators! During this program, participants will take a hike to the prairie to catch monarch butterflies and collect data for Project Monarch Health and Monarch Watch. You will also get a chance to see our indoor observation bee hive and learn about the hardships monarchs and other pollinators are facing and what you can do to help our pollinator friends! It will be family fun for everyone! Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.



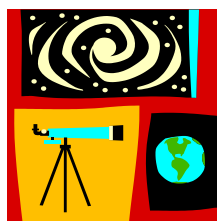


## Calendar of Events: Continued

### SEPTEMBER

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19<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ 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.

27<sup>th</sup> ~ Village Harvest Moon Song & Dance Fest ~ Noon – 5:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~

Experience 100 years of rural American music and dance demonstrations! Admission: \$6 adults, \$3 children. Check



our Facebook page throughout the year for entertainment schedule updates:

<http://www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation>.



Friends of the Wapsi Center

Sherrard BSA

Holly Schulte (IADNR)

Dick & Ellen Baugh

Mark Cleve Family

Nahant Marsh Staff

Heather Ballou (ATEEC)

Kyle Moeller (WIU)

# THANK YOU!

Ivy Swank (U of IL)

Ariel Hyde (SAU)

Thomas & Lynn Pilcher (The Printing Store)

Green Thumber's, Davenport

Wild Birds Unlimited

Wallace's Garden Center

Brad Whitesell

Blain's Farm & Fleet of Davenport

Davenport Compost Facility



# HELLO KYLE

Hello, Wapsi friends! I'm Kyle Moeller, one of the Wapsi Center's interns for the summer of 2015! Some of you may remember me from my previous internship the summer of 2013 - I'm back! I am a senior Recreation/Parks/Tourism Administration student at Western Illinois University - Quad Cities

with a minor in environmental studies. I will be at the Wapsi through August 21st assisting staff with programs, animal care, and maintenance and so on as well as simply absorbing the wealth of knowledge the staff has! A big THANK YOU to Dave, Mike, Leroy, Emily and Becky for having me this summer! Please come out to the Wapsi to say hi and explore nature with us!

-Kyle



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**Fax: (563) 843-2845**

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“The W.R.E.N.” is published quarterly by the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and the Scott County Conservation Board.”

**Mailing List:** To receive a copy of the WREN free of charge, please send a postcard to the address above.

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Beth McAleer

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Roger Kean

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Scott County Conservation Board

(563) 328-3280

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Dave Murcia, Director/Naturalist  
Mike Granger, Naturalist  
Emily Santiago, Naturalist  
Becky Horton, Seasonal Assistant Naturalist  
Leroy Haeffner, Resident Caretaker

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