

# The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

FALL 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

### SCCB Awarded AmeriCorps Crew

The Wapsi Center was awarded an AmeriCorps NCCC crew this season that will be serving from September 22-November 6. The **AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)** and its FEMA Corps units engage 2,800 young Americans in a full-time, 10-month commitment to service each year. AmeriCorps NCCC members address critical needs related to natural and other disasters, infrastructure improvement, environmental stewardship and conservation, and urban and rural development; FEMA Corps members are solely dedicated to disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery work. The programs are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS is the federal agency that engages more than five million



Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. For more information, visit [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov).

Current plans for service projects include enhancing and maintaining the natural resources and facilities at the Wapsi River Center. Specific projects include invasive species removal, trail maintenance including erosion control, native seed harvests, and assisting with education programming to name a few. Over the next six weeks visitors may see the enhancements made by the hard working **Maple 5** team so come on out and visit the Wapsi!



## Center Improvements

The Center is currently working on a **new water system including a new energy efficient well house** that will improve service for staff and public. Thanks to the dedicated maintenance staff at Headquarters and West Lake Park, the building includes ENERGY STAR SCS Certified insulation, a sustainable metal roof, natural door lighting, a drinking fountain, and storage space.



Also new to the site is a **new pollinator garden**. Thanks to our *Friends of the Wapsi Center*, the *Singh Family donation*, and **Wapsi staff**, there has been a new planting of pollinator friendly plants in an effort to support and maintain pollinator health. Come out and see what all the **buzz** is about!

## 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. Don't forget to visit the other program raptors housed in the Eagle View Eco Center too!

## 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 Naturalist SOAR Training

Naturalists Emily Santiago and Becky Horton each completed the **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Raptor Management and Falconry Seminar** series through *S.O.A.R. Illinois (Save Our American Raptors, Inc.)*. "The Seminar offers an in-depth study of the basics of raptor husbandry, medical management in rehabilitation, handling and training birds for falconry and/or public education. Modern and traditional falconry techniques are taught." Santiago and Horton worked with state and federally licensed master falconers, raptor banders, breeders, rehabilitators, educators, and the founders of SOAR. As a result of the 5 seminar series, the naturalist will enhance the health and lives of the educational raptors the Wapsi Center has the privilege to work with in the name of conservation.



# FALL EVENTS



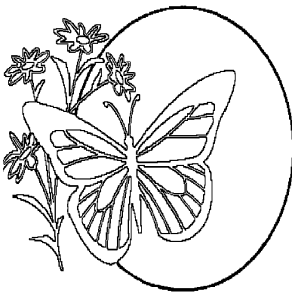
## OCTOBER

**3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Fall Volunteer Workday ~ 9:00 A.M. – Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come join the Friends of the Wapsi Center for a fall workday. Many activities are available for all ages and abilities. Work gloves, tools and light snacks will be provided to participants. Please call to register your group today! (563) 328-3286.



**15<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.

**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Twenty Fourth Annual Wapsi Fall Ecology Day ~ 10:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come join us for a hands on insect learning experience for young and old alike. Bring your whole family for an exploration of the Wapsi Center and learn about our resident 6 legged friends! Please call to reserve a space for your family and to pre-order your bug kits (563)328-3286.



**10:00 – 11:00 A.M. ~ Pollinator Truffles** - Learn how to make your own “Seed Truffles” to help our local pollinators.

**11:00 – 12:00 P.M. ~ Insect Discovery Hike** - Come learn about some of the amazing creatures inhabiting our prairie or pond ecosystem.

**12:00 – 1:00 P.M. ~ LUNCH (Pine Ring)** Bring a picnic lunch . . . we provide a

hot fire and roasting sticks for our grilling needs!

**1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ Build your own Bug Cage or Insect Hotel** ~ Make and decorate your own bug cage (for kids) or bug hotel to encourage insects to visit your yard.

**3:00 – 4:30 P.M. ~ Iowa State University, Insect ZOO** ~ Join us for an up close and personal glimpse at insect life. The Insect Zoo features live insects up close and personal. Learn how insects are important to the environment and how they benefit us as well.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ The Amazing Cattail ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Michael Granger for a lesson on cattails. Learn how the cattail is an important plant and make cattail dolls and mats. Please call ahead to reserve your spot today (563)328-3286.



**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Halloween “Zombie” Archery ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Learn how to use a bow and arrow in this Halloween themed informative and fun hands-on class. You’ll learn safety and proper archery techniques according to National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) guidelines. Children must be in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and above to participate. Your target will be Zombies! Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Halloween Hike ~ 5:00 – 10:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come to the Wapsi Center for an educational hike to learn about nocturnal creatures. Learn about the human eye, and how nighttime animals can see much better than humans, and then take a stroll through the woods to discover some of these amazing nocturnal creatures!!! At 5:00 P.M. we will provide a fire for roasting (please bring your own meal to cook). After the hike we will be serving hot chocolate and snacks. BYOM “Bring your own Mug” Please call to pre-register (563)328-3286.



# NOVEMBER

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Veteran's Day** ~ Conservation Board Park offices in Scott County will be closed in observance of Veteran's Day.

**14<sup>th</sup> ~ Cocoa Picasso: Migratory Mayhem ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Discover what it's like for migrating animals on their journeys south. See if you can make it all the way to your destination in the Wapsi original board game: Migratory Mayhem! Then, paint your own acrylic art on canvas in a guided step-by-step painting experience. Enjoy complimentary hot cocoa. Cost is \$5/ painting. Please call the Wapsi River Center at 563-328-3286 to pre-register.



**19<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center, Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park Headquarters (Gate #3)** ~ Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center.

**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Bird of Prey – Owls ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Director/ Naturalist Dave Murcia for a raptor program including live birds of prey. The presentation will include biology, ecology, human impacts, and live owls!

**26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> ~ Thanksgiving** ~ Conservation Board Park offices in Scott County will be closed in observance of Thanksgiving.

**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Christmas at the Village ~ Noon - 4:00 P.M. ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village** ~ Begin your holidays early with a historic walk through the beautifully decorated Village; complete with Friends of

the Village in period costume. While there, enjoy craft demonstrations and sales, letters to Santa in the General Store, refreshments at the soda fountain, holiday music, and a visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Admission is free with a donation of nonperishable goods for the North Scott Food Pantry.

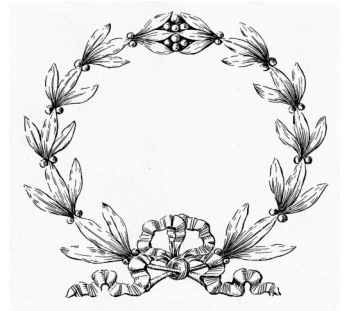


# DECEMBER

no Friends Meeting)

**5<sup>th</sup> ~ Bird of Prey – Owls ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Director/ Naturalist Dave Murcia for a raptor program including live birds of prey. The presentation will include biology, ecology, human impacts, and live owls!

**19<sup>th</sup> ~ Natural Wreath Workshop ~ 9:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come make your own natural wreath using grapevines. Visitors are invited to bring items to adorn their own wreath (seeds, nuts, berries, dried flowers or grasses). Please call to reserve your spot as supplies may be limited. (563)328-3286.



**19<sup>th</sup> ~ Cocoa Picasso: Snow Science ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Have you ever wondered what else there is to know about snow? Here's your chance to do fun

## Calendar of events, continued:

experiments and learn all about snowflakes. Then, warm up with some hot cocoa by the fire and paint your own wintery themed art on canvas in a guided step-by-step painting experience! Cost is \$5/painting. Please call the Wapsi River Center at 563-328-3286 to pre-register.

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Christmas Eve** ~ Conservation Board Park offices in Scott County will be closed in observance of Holiday.



**25<sup>th</sup> ~ Christmas Day** ~ Conservation Board Park offices in Scott County will be closed in observance of Holiday.

**31<sup>st</sup> ~ New Year's Eve** ~ Conservation Board Park offices in Scott County will be closed in observance of Holiday.



## JANUARY

**1<sup>st</sup> ~ New Year's Day** ~ Conservation Board Park offices in Scott County will be closed in observance of Holiday.

**8<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> ~ Bald Eagle Days** ~ This huge, annual event showcasing our national symbol – the American bald eagle, also 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 8, 10:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M. on Saturday, January 9 and 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 10. Come see us at the Wapsi



River Environmental Education Center's booth. Call to sign up to volunteer at our booth (563-328-3286).

## SNOW SHOE & CROSS COUNTRY SKI EQUIPMENT !!!!

Come explore the Wapsi River Center this winter, via snowshoes or Cross country skis. The Wapsi River Center has aluminum snowshoes, and X country ski equipment which may be checked out on Saturdays from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. The equipment is available on a "first come first served" basis. Please provide a picture ID, to check the equipment out.



The equipment must remain on site and used in designated areas. If there is not enough snow or the conditions are not ideal, and safety may be an issue, the equipment will not be available. If there is a question please call to check current conditions and availability (563) 328-3286.



# Plant Profile: American Groundnut

By Naturalist Michael J. Granger

Let me introduce to you a vine that can be found in many wild spaces, blooming in late summer throughout fall, American Groundnut, *Apios americana*. The plant may be referred to other names regionally (potato bean, hopniss, Indian potato, hodoimo, America-hodoimo, or groundnut). The plant belongs to the pea or bean family, *leguminaceae* or also referred to as *fabaceae*.

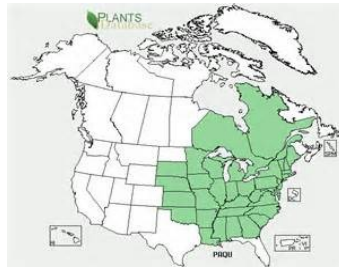
Its natural range is from Southern Canada (including Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick) down through Florida and West as far as the border of Colorado. It can be found in field and waste places, and does well in moist conditions. This climbing vine will grow and sometimes establish itself, and be somewhat aggressive to other vegetation.

I have found this perineal vine in several locations, in the fall, by looking for the very distinctive flowers. Groundnut blooms from July through September. The flower is pink on the outside, reddish brown on the flower's inner folds. The flower is about a half inch in diameter. The flower is a typical pea flower, having symmetrical sides. The lower lip on the flower reminds me of an "elephant's trunk". I have seen single flowers on these vines but in ideal moist conditions the flowers occur in dense clusters. Groundnut has compound leaves, with green lance shaped leaflets. After pollination the plant produces edible bean pods which are about 1 ½ inches long, which have a strong raw bean taste to them.

In one of my favorite nature guides, "The Reader's Digest Guide to North American Wildlife" © 1982, there is a great reference to Groundnut. It is widely known that the tubers of the plant are edible, and the book points out that when Henry David Thoreau's



**Groundnut Blossoms:**  
<http://perennialpleasures.net>



**USDA Range Map**



**Groundnut tubers:**  
[www.sherckseeds.com](http://www.sherckseeds.com)

enzymes. Roughly 36 % of dry tuber contains carbohydrate (starch). The tubers also are an excellent source of calcium and iron.

Native American Indians regularly collected the tubers as a bread substitute throughout the plant's range. The Native Americans called the plant Hopniss, and many early explorers documented the consumption of this plant. When tubers were gathered in large quantities they were peeled, dried and stored for winter use. The American groundnut was also historically important to European settlers when they arrived in the New World, who learned how to use it, cultivate it and eventually took it back to Europe. Historical records document the plant as grown and consumed locally in Europe, but full-fledge crop production did not transpire due to the fact that American ground nut takes two years to produce sizable tubers.

American groundnut is now grown commercially in Japan and is known as hodoimo. The main question is how did American groundnut get to Japan? One theory is that the species may have arrived with shipments of apple trees from America. Another thought is that the plant was brought to Japan as an ornamental flower. With a flurry of publications on the health benefits of American groundnut the tuber is gaining in popularity, and has been eaten in Japan for at least 100 years.

Next time you are hiking in the fall see if you can find some American groundnut, with its beautiful flowers, edible tubers and think of its history. Cultivation seems fairly easy by planting the potato-like tubers in the spring. Seeds can also be gathered and planted indoors. I also know of a location that I hope to gather and try some of the tubers this fall!

nuts in the woods and roasted them. "He found them nourishing and relished their nutty flavor". Groundnut tuber has three times the dry weight protein of regular potatoes and is softer in texture. Lab studies with rats have shown that tubers should be cooked prior to consumption to break down harmful

potato crop failed one year, he dug up ground

# Animal Profile: Iowa Mussels

By Emily Santiago, Naturalist

Freshwater mussels are fascinating creatures that I hadn't really thought much about until recently. The staff at the Wapsi River EE Center had several opportunities in the latter half of this summer to help out with mussel surveys throughout central and eastern Iowa. With the help of our new friend, Jen Kurth from the Iowa DNR, we gained so much knowledge about Iowa's mussels including identification, life cycles, and habitat.

If you're unfamiliar, mussels are bivalves, like clams and oysters. They have two shells attached by a hinge. The first thing you should know about mussels is that they are sensitive to environmental changes and therefore are great indicators of water quality and changes in habitat. They play an important role in a healthy ecosystem. As they filter feed, they convert the nutrients they get from plankton and bacteria into a source of protein used by many fish and invertebrates. Their shells also provide spawning and hiding habitat for fish and invertebrates.

Their life cycles are quite complex. The male mussels release their sperm into the water and the female draws it in through her siphon, fertilizing the eggs she has inside of her. The larvae, or glochidia, develop inside the female's

"marsupia" and resemble miniature mussels. After they develop, they are expelled from the female through her excurrent siphon and require a fish host. They attach to the fish's gills and are somewhat parasitic, where they continue to develop their internal organs. The juveniles release from the fish and drop off onto the streambed when they are ready. It takes anywhere from one to eight years for the mussel to mature.

The first experience we had musseling was when we paddled the Winnebago River and stopped several times along the way to see what we could find. That day we found eight live species with crazy names like: Plain

Pocketbook,  
Fat Mucket,

White Heelsplitter, Monkeyface, Black Sandshell, Elk Toe, Fluted Shell (somewhat rare) and Creeper, which is listed as threatened in the state of Iowa.

We also spent some time at the 2015 Iowa Mussel Blitz in the Mississippi River. We made our way through knee high mud along the shore, trying not to lose our shoes, to get to the survey site. Once we got there, we got on our hands and knees in the water to feel our way through the muck. There were so many mussels there that we were picking up two, sometimes three, at a time each time we put our hands in! We sampled two times, each time we spent a half hour in the water. Our group found 13 species the first round, and 14 species the second. Overall, 23 species were found that day by all the groups.

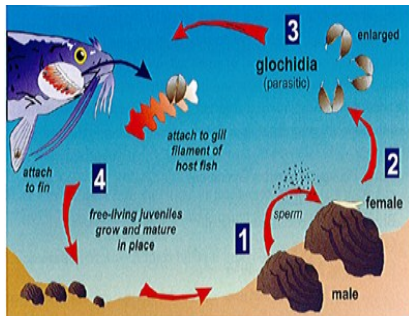
We were elated when Jen invited us to help her survey the lower Wapsi River for mussels just a couple weeks later. We

surveyed right off our property near Sherman Park, at Allen's Grove, in McCausland. Unfortunately, we did not have much success that day. We searched and searched, but only found 3 live fragile papershells all day. We were told that this species is known to persist where the habitat may not be the greatest.

Freshwater mussel populations have been declining across North America for decades. Historically, there were 54 freshwater mussel species throughout Iowa, now there are 42, and 9 of those are endangered. At the turn of the 20th century, mussel shells were harvested to make buttons. The button industry has since started to use plastic, but there are still other threats including pollution. Iowa's rivers are among the most polluted in the nation. Invaders like the zebra mussel, originally from Europe, are hurting the freshwater mussel population, too. Zebra mussels attach to the outside of the freshwater mussels' shell and make it difficult for them to move around and eat. The construction of dams is also a perilous activity for mussels as it changes the current flow of a water body. Some mussels get trapped in the slow moving water behind the dam and cannot survive. The river ecosystem requires the good health of all species, big and small, to thrive. It is our job as naturalists and conservationists to protect our natural resources and educate about these problems, because if we don't, they could vanish before we have a chance to save them.



Mike & Becky musseling in the Wapsi



Some of the mussels from the Winnebago

## KIDS KORNER

### MIGRATION MAYHEM

By BECKY HORTON, SEASONAL NATURALIST

- In Iowa, a lot of different animals migrate in the fall. Some of these animals include: monarch butterflies, hawks, geese, eagles, warbler species, and hummingbirds.
- Migrating birds and insects face many threats during their journeys, including window collisions, colliding with cars on busy highways, confusing lights that disrupt navigation, hunting, habitat loss and predation.
- Hawks, swifts, swallows, waterfowl, and butterflies migrate primarily during the day, while many songbirds migrate at night. This is in part to avoid migrating predators.
- Migrating animals use the stars or the sun for navigation, as well as wind patterns, landforms, and the earth's magnetic field.
- To help animals on their long journeys, make sure to provide food and water in your yard in case the animals need to make a pit stop!

Help all 3 monarch butterflies find their way down to their over-wintering location in the Transvolcanic Mountains in Mexico! Make sure to avoid predation by the bird and getting hit by the car!



**Thankyou!!!**

Friends of the Wapsi Center

Teskes (Bettendorf)

Jeff Harrison,  
(IADNR)

Matt Hogan

Joe Scherer  
(Wildlife Forever Taxidermy)

John Glenn Elementary

Nahant Marsh

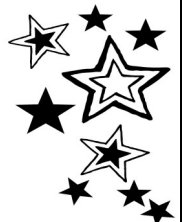
ATEEC

Western IL University, RTPA

Kyle Moeller, intern WIU

Ivy Swank, intern U of IL

AmeriCorps, NCCC Team Maple 5





# HELLO KYLE MOELLER

Hello once again, Wapsi friends! It has been a very quick, yet fun and successful summer at the Wapsi River EE Center and, I am happy to announce to you all that I have 'graduated' from Intern to Assistant Seasonal Naturalist! Upon completion of my 2015 internship I earned my B.S. in Recreation/Parks/Tourism Administration with a minor in Environmental Studies from Western Illinois – Quad Cities. I had a great time learning with the staff and I am

happy to officially be a member of the team! A huge thank you to Dave, Mike, Leroy, Emily and Becky for everything you have done for me as in intern; I look forward to seeing what the future holds for our team! The colors should be beautiful this fall so please come and join us!

Kyle

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## THE FRIENDS OF THE WAPSI RIVER CENTER

*The Friends are a small but enthusiastic group of citizens, and are seeking new members. Will you join us? You are invited to attend our monthly meeting usually on the third Thursday at 6:00 P.M. The Eagle View Eco Center is the site for meetings during the months of March – October, and alternative locations in the Quad Cities are the site for meetings November – February. Drop-ins are welcome! Call the Wapsi River Center for more information, (563) 328-3286. You may join by sending the form below to: Carol Rogers, Treasurer ~ 1103 E. Garfield ~ Davenport, IA 52803*

*The purpose of the Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc., is to support the ongoing activities of the Wapsi River Center. We do this by volunteering to help with school groups, interpretive activities throughout the year, donating maintenance skills and in hosting the Eagle View Eco Center on weekends. We operate a gift shop housed at the Eco Center which offers a wide variety of items ranging from books and other educational materials to home decorating items. As a tax-exempt organization, we can raise funds which the Wapsi River Center uses for special projects and environmental education material purchases. The Friends Group also pitches in to help with special events like the Spring and Fall Volunteer Workdays, Ecology Day, Bald Eagle Days and various workshops.*



YES! I want to join the Friends' Group. \_\_\_\_\_  
Enclosed is my contribution \* to the Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 newsletter

Address \_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 contributing member

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 supporting member

\* Contributions to the Friends are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.



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**31555 52ND AVENUE**  
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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



“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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John “Skip” O’Donnell	Beth McAleer
Carol Fennelly	

Director:

Roger Kean

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(563) 328-3286

Scott County Conservation Board  
(563) 328-3280

## **Wapsi River Environmental Education Center Staff**

Scott County:

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

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