

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Summer 2016

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi.php

The Wapsi River Center is owned, managed and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board

Wapsi Happenings

By: Director, Dave Murcia



Pollinator Habitat Grant Awarded

The Wapsi Center was selected as one of the 2016 ***Trees Forever's Pollinator Habitat Conservation Initiative*** projects, including a \$1,000 cost-share incentive grant and assistance by a field coordinator. The Center qualified as a pollinator habitat by using native trees, shrubs, and flowers to provide a wide range of functional landscape habitats for many species of pollinators. The grant offers to reimburse expenses to install or improve pollinator habitat while requiring any plant species to be native, seed mix/plants are to be 75% forbs, 3 seasonal blooming species, and must include a legume.

The Center affords many pollinators, including new hives of 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. Thanks to ***Trees Forever***, the Wapsi Center will serve as a demonstration site for future educational events with this partner.



Earth Week Stewardship Workday

Spring workday this year was a success due to 13 ***volunteers*** including our own ***Friends of the Wapsi Center*** members! The day was spent landscaping the facilities including pruning and mulching and garlic mustard removal, for a total of 37 hours! A big thank you to our Friends group for hosting refreshments for the volunteers!



Citizen Water Monitoring Workshop

The Wapsi Center hosted a successful ***IOWATER Workshop*** in cooperation with the IA DNR this spring. The training consisted of classroom and outdoor training including basics of monitoring streams and lakes and how to submit data to the DNR. In an effort to get more "citizen scientists"

involved with water monitoring, 18 participants learned simple techniques to measure the chemical, physical and habitat quality of their local water resources. For more information, visit: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Water-Monitoring/IOWATER>

Raptors Along the River

Thanks to local partner **River Action**, Director Dave Murcia began this season of the Channel Cat River Talks sharing his knowledge about raptors. There were two talks given on the Channel Cat Taxi as it toured the Mississippi River, while the audience learned about raptor ecology, habitat needs, and human impacts to these birds of prey. Along one tour, the audience observed our national symbol; an immature bald eagle!

Aquaponic Gardening 101

Aquaponic systems are all about sustainability. It is the combination of aquaculture (raising fish) and hydroponics (the soil-less growing of plants) that grows fish and plants together in one integrated and closed system. The fish waste provides an organic food source for the growing plants and the plants provide a natural filter for the water the fish live in. The third participants are the microbes (nitrifying bacteria), that thrive in the growing media. They do the job of converting the ammonia from the fish waste first into nitrites, then into nitrates and the

solids into vermicompost that are food for the plants. Christian LaCarte is in the process of engineering one of these systems for the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center.

HELLO Christian LaCarte!

Hello! My name is Christian LaCarte. I am a senior at Western Illinois University QC finishing my last semester with an internship here at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. I have a passion for the outdoors, sustainability, and recreation. My major is in parks and recreation and my minor is in environmental studies. Some of my hobbies include: golfing, hiking, traveling, and kayaking.



SUMMER EVENTS

JULY

9th ~ Menke Star Party ~ Dusk

~ Monsignor Menke

Observatory ~ Join Dr.

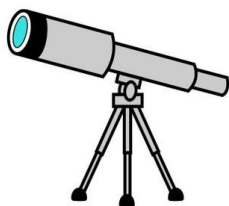
Mitchell, Director of the

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.



13th ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~

West Lake Park (Lake of the Hills) ~ Join us for a kayak outing at West Lake Park. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour the lake. 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.

16th ~ Paint by Nature: Trees & Leaves ~ 10:00

A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ In this kid-friendly

class that blends nature and art,

discover what kinds of trees we

have in the forest at Wapsi and

why they're here! Then, learn

to paint a themed picture on

canvas in a guided step-by-step

experience. Cost is \$5/painting. Pre-registration is

required by calling (563) 328-3286. 20 painters max.



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21st ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join us to learn about the latest news and happenings at the Wapsi River Center.

27th ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park (Pride Lake) ~ Join us for a kayak outing at Pride Lake. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour the lake. 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.

30th ~ Composting 101 ~ 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Seasonal Naturalist Kyle Moeller to learn about materials, cost, methods and the science behind composting! This fun and all-natural mixture can be made of waste product from around your lawn & garden and kitchen and applied to your garden in a matter of months. Fun for the whole family! Call (563) 328-3286 to register.



31st ~ National Tree Day ~ Take some time to appreciate trees, in your “Neck of the woods”!

AUGUST

10th ~ Kayak Experience ~1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Lake of the Hills) ~ Join us for a kayak outing at West Lake Park. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour the lake. 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.

13th ~ Paint by Nature: Reptiles ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ In this kid-friendly class that blends nature and art, learn about the amazing world of reptiles and the adaptations that help them survive. Then, learn to paint a themed picture on canvas in a guided step-by-step experience. Cost is \$5/painting. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286. 20 painters max.

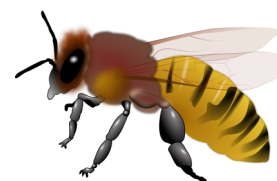


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13th Menke Star party ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Dr. Mitchell, Director of the Monsignor Menke Observatory for a tour of the night sky. Please call (563) 333-6141 on the day of this event to find out if weather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

18th ~ 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.

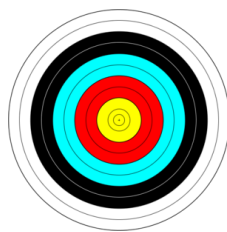
22nd ~ National Honey Bee Day ~ Take some time to appreciate our pollinators!



24th ~ Kayak Experience ~1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park (Pride lake) ~ Join us for a kayak outing at Pride Lake. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour the lake. 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.

27th ~ Archery Basics ~ 10:00 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 4th grade and above to participate. Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.



27th ~ The Amazing Cattail ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Learn about the amazing cattail which was used by the Native American Indians for making mats, decoys and dolls for their children. Make your own cattail doll and mat to take home. Fun for all ages. Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.



SEPTEMBER

4th & 5th ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village Weekend Festival ~ 11:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. (Each Day) ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village ~ Bring your family out for an afternoon at the Village! 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) 328-3283 for more details.

7th ~ Kayak Experience ~ 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Lake of the Hills) ~ Join us for a kayak outing at West Lake Park. The program will cover basics including all equipment, techniques, planning, and time to tour the lake. 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.

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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.

10th ~ Citizen Science: Monarch Watch ~ 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.

15th ~ 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.

17th ~ Paint by Nature: Butterflies ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ In this kid-friendly class that blends nature and art, come learn about the many different butterflies that call Iowa home- at least for part of the year! Join naturalist Emily to catch, test, tag & release migrating Monarchs. Then, learn to paint a themed picture on canvas in a guided step-by-step experience. Cost is \$5/ painting. Pre-registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286. 20 painters max.



18th ~ World Water Monitoring Day ~ Take some time and think of water quality and how it affects you every day of your life.

24th ~ World Rivers Day Float ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Syracuse Landing to Sherman Park ~ Come celebrate World Rivers Day which is August 25th, 2016. Join the Wapsi River Team to explore the Wapsi River by Kayak. Meet at Sherman Park. All equipment is supplied. Kayaks are limited so call to register (563) 328-3286.

POP CAN Fishin!

Here is some primitive fishing gear you can make. Kids really catch on quickly, and will have hours of entertainment. Here is what you need:

Pop Can
Fishing line
Sinkers
Fishing hook
Bobber

Simply tie the fishing line onto the pop can tab. Wind several yards of line around the pop can and then tie on the rock and then the hook. The pop can fishing reel is used by holding down the fishing line with your thumb. The line is then swung around in a circle to build momentum. With a quick underhand pitching motion the line is swung forward, and the thumb is released, sending the fishing rig out into the water. If a fish is hooked the line is simply wound back onto the pop can.



THANK YOU

Wapsi River Center,
Friends Group

IOWATER; Volunteer Water
Quality Monitoring; Mary Skopec

IOWA DNR Fish Iowa;
Holly Schulte

Royal Neighbors

ISU Scott County Extension

RARE; Raptor Advocacy,
Rehabilitation & Education

Nahant Marsh

ATEEC; Heather Ballou

Girl Scouts of America;
Marie Bauer

River Action

C.R. Hanna Elementary, Orion IL

WIU-RPTA intern,
Christian LaCaste

WHBF Channel 4

US Fish & Wildlife Service

Volunteers from Royal Neighbors pulled
Garlic Mustard at West Lake Park this
Spring ~ Thank you !



ANIMAL PROFILE: ORCHARD ORIOLE

by Naturalist Emily Santiago

Earlier this spring, while I was watching the frenzy of activity at my bird feeders, a new and different bird appeared. He flew in and perched atop



Orchard Oriole Male
Kelly Colgan Azar, 2012.

the feeder pole, cocked his head to one side as if trying to get a better look at the cornucopia before him and I cocked my head the other way, trying to think of the name of this curious bird. Just as quickly as he had appeared, he flitted away

to sit among the safety of the budding leaves of a nearby Chestnut Tree.

He resembled a Northern Oriole, one of the birds of which I am most fond for their bright orange and strikingly black plumage, but he was darker- a burnt orange color. I grabbed my Birds of the Midwest pocket guide that I always have sitting nearby, and started thumbing through. Sure enough, right below the Northern Oriole in the book, I recognized the newest bird on my list, the Orchard Oriole. I love seeing new birds for the first time!



Northern Oriole & Nest
celebrateurbanbirds.com

That morning I called Carol Rogers, longtime treasurer of the Friends of the Wapsi Center and avid birder, and asked if she had ever before seen one at Wapsi. She said she has seen them elsewhere, just not at the Wapsi site. So, I was excited to say the least. To top it off, the next day, I saw another new bird which turned out to be a first year male Orchard Oriole. They are bright yellow with a similar black face/chin to a male Cardinal.

After doing some light reading, I learned that the Orchard Oriole has a wide summer range that basically stretches to everywhere east of the Rockies. Due to



Orchard Oriole, 1st Year Male
Audubon.org

their short breeding season, Orchard Orioles migrate northward in late spring and are sometimes already back down south in Central America by mid-July. They like open woodlands and areas with scattered trees along rivers, pastures, parks, and- you guessed it- orchards! They have quite the varied diet. They forage for insects in the tree tops and in the fall, they dine on berries and other fruit cuisine. Don't be surprised to see one visiting your hummingbird feeder, too! They are important pollinators for some tropical flowers, collecting pollen on their heads as they drink nectar. Interestingly, these birds will sometimes rip a small hole in the base of a flower, like on black locust trees, to suck out the nectar without getting the pollen dust on them, bypassing the whole pollinator arrangement.

They are the smallest of North America's orioles and like true orioles do, build hanging bag nests in groups, often in a single tree near the river's edge. The female does most of the nest building work. In less desirable habitat, they will nest in solitude. Despite being fairly common, they can be inconspicuous and hard to find. Look to the tree tops to catch a glimpse of them hunting insects. Your best bet to see one this year will be at the height of summer, when they are preparing to migrate down south again. To attract Northern and Orchard Orioles as well as other bright birds like finches to your backyard, try creating a feeding station outside just for them. Place some orange slices and a couple spoonfuls of your favorite flavor of jelly on the feeding surface, and wait patiently. Be sure to clean it often with soap and warm water to keep mold and bacteria away. Or you can always just come and visit the Wapsi River Center trails. Bring your binoculars you never know what you'll find!



PLANT PROFILE: VENUS' LOOKING GLASS

by Naturalist Michael J. Granger

Let me introduce you to a new plant I discovered at the Wapsi River Center, the Venus' Looking Glass, *Triodanus perfoliata*. I have never seen this plant until I found it up by one of our



www.illinoiswildflowers.info

buildings recently growing by some stacked limestone blocks. I recognized the small purple flowers on a spike with small light green leaves surrounding the stem, and guessed the plant's name. When I looked up the plant I discovered it belongs to the Bellflower family, *Campanulaceae*. These annual plants are characterized by having unbranched stems with flowers and leaves originating from them. I am more familiar with Tall Bellflower, *Campanula americana*, which grows along the wooded trails here at the Wapsi River Center.

The Venus' Looking Glass grows 4 to 12 inches tall. The plant's central stem is light green and grooved. Leaves are oriented alternately along the stem and strongly clasp the stem. Leaves are somewhat small, being only 1 inch wide, and oval in shape. The leaves are slightly toothed. The plant has a milky sap when broken. Small lavender flowers are



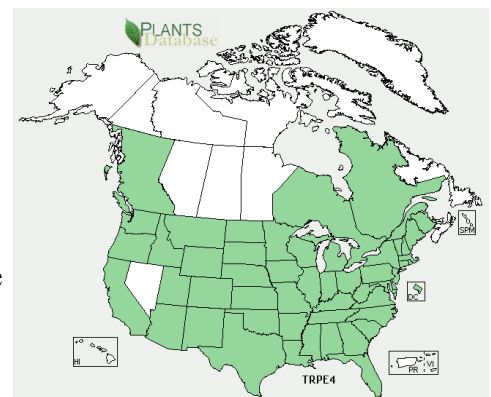
Venus' Looking Glass, Wapsi River Center (Photo: Michael Granger)

born from the leaf bases, and are ½ inches across. Each flower has five petals which may have darker purple lines running to the center. Each flower has a white pistil and several stamens. Blooming begins in early summer and lasts for a month. Venus' Looking Glass attracts many pollinators including, several small bees, small butterflies, skippers, and flies. This plant is unique in that the lowest flowers along the stem are self-pollinating, and these flowers never really open, ensuring a seed source for propagation, and survival. Seeds are minute, brown, shiny and small enough to not be desired by birds. Seeds are wind dispersed. The name Venus' Looking Glass refers to a European species which has seeds that are shiny and mirror-like.

The Meskwaki Native American Indians used this plant as an emetic, which is taken to induce vomiting and purge the body of poisons before they are completely absorbed. It was also smoked at ceremonies. Small mammals are known to forage on the plant, but not enough to be a large portion of their diets.

This plant prefers poorer, sandy or gravelly, well drained soils. It is low in height and will not tolerate competition from taller plants. It can be found throughout its range in fields, waste places and in sandy. Thus, I have some idea how this plant came to the Wapsi Center. We occasionally put new gravel up in our parking lot around our maintenance buildings.

Possibly seed was with the new gravel. At any rate, this plant is a new one that I haven't seen before and the thrill is the same with any new plant discovery. This summer see if you can locate this amazing plant near you!!



**Venus' Looking Glass:
USDA = Range map**

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