

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

Winter 2018

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi

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

WAPSI HAPPENINGS

By: Director, Dave Murcia

FALL EVENTS 2017

This year's **Ecology Day** theme was "**Prairie Palooza**" and included a special guest- Smokey the Bear©! The program day included prairie plant ID, pollinators, making seed bombs, a prairie potluck hosted by our **Friends of the Wapsi Center**, and learning to throw atlatls for the Great Atlatl Bison Hunt.



Smokey the Bear© with Friends
The **Fall Wild Edible Workshop** and the **Halloween "Zombie" Archery Shoot** were popular

again with a full attendance, while the **Halloween Hike** was another "spooktacular" event with a full program registration of ghostly hikers!



Zombie shoot by Becky Horton

The **Natural Wreath** program shared the same love of nature in a different art form as the **Crafting for Conservation** program seen below.



Dr. Mark Kalarovich, from wheatland, Iowa at the Natural Wreath Program



Calendars & magazines made into gift bags and bows by Naturalist Becky Horton



Lastly, our animal programs continue to connect people with nature including our **Birds of Prey** program.

Thanks to all who supported the annual events including the Friends of the Wapsi Center!



FIELD EXPERIENCES

An **emphasis on supporting the Iowa Care and Next Generation Science Standards** will enhance future programming for school programming. If you are an educator and would like to schedule a winter or spring field trip, we recommend that you call well in advance if possible. **To set up a field trip**, you may download a **Field Trip Planner** from our website: www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi/education/field-trip-planner or contact us at (563) 328-3286.

WINTER EQUIPMENT LOAN PROGRAM

The Wapsi River Center invites you to get outdoors this winter and get active by snowshoe or ski. Our cross-country ski and snowshoe loan program requires just a few steps to enjoy these healthy, low-impact, outdoor recreational opportunities.

We require a minimum of 4" of base and reserve the right to any loan, depending on conditions.

You will be required to render your license to hold any equipment while on loan.

You must remain on Wapsi River Center property.

Equipment is available during business hours M-F 9 - 4 PM and Saturdays 1 - 4 pm: dependent on program needs and site conditions.

Cross-country skis and boots fit a variety of sizes, while snowshoes are sized for both adult and children, with weight ranges up to 200 pounds. Waterproof boots are suggested for snowshoes.

Adventurers **must call the office ahead of time** to plan an outing at (563) 328-3286.



SPONSOR AN ANIMAL

If you are interested in sponsoring an animal, please contact us at (563) 328 -3286 for details or visit our website at:

www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi

PLEASE CALL!



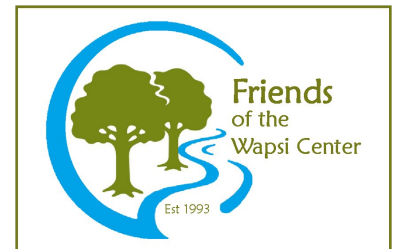
“BECOME A WAPSI RIVER CENTER FRIENDS MEMBER TODAY!”

www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/Wapsi-friends

The Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. organized in 1993, is a citizens’ support group dedicated to encouraging the public use and enjoyment of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and to the preservation of the Center’s natural resources for present and future generations. Please contact the Wapsi River Center for more information (563) 328-3286.

YES! I want to join the Friends’ Group.

Enclosed is my contribution to the Friends of the Wapsi Center.



Name _____ \$10.00 newsletter

Address _____ \$20.00 contributing member

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ \$30.00 supporting member

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP FORM TO:

~~~Friends of the Wapsi “Treasurer”~~~

31555 52nd AVENUE, DIXON, IOWA 52745

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

# THE FUTURE REMAINS “BRIGHT” AT THE WAPSI RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER!

By Director Dave Murcia

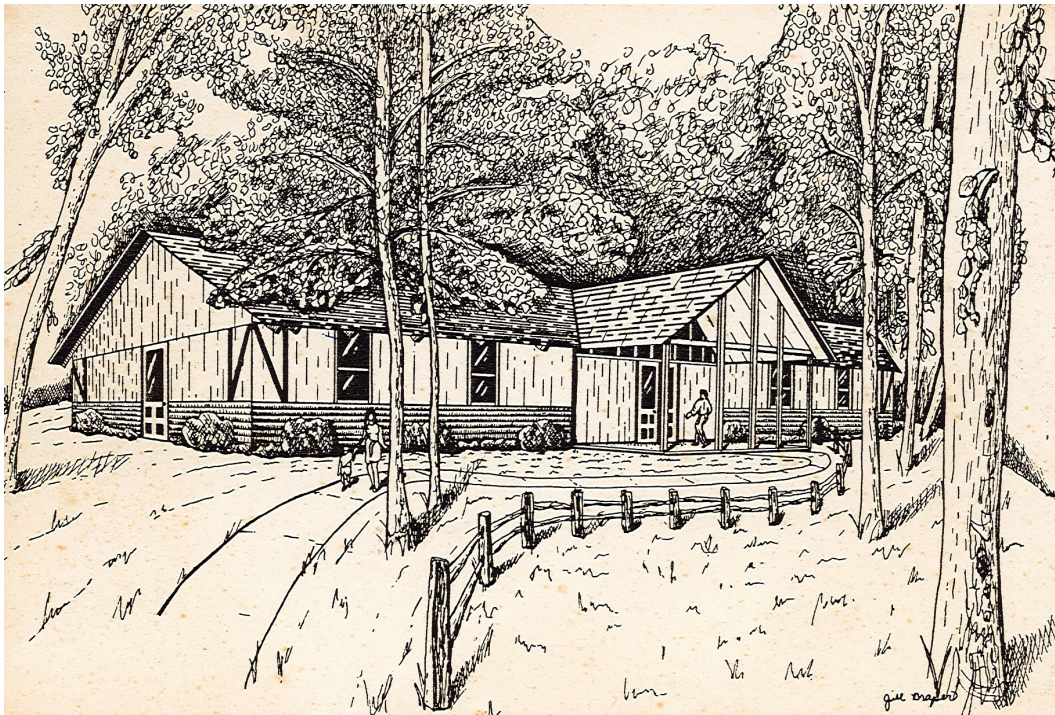
*The care of rivers is not a question of rivers,  
but of the human heart” – Tanaka Shozo.*

The Wapsi River Environmental Education Center of Scott County Conservation lies along “happy waters” of the wild yet beautiful Wapsipinicon River and is approaching a “fork in its continuing development”, as described in the latest findings from an assessment by E Resources. The findings are practical, and suggest recommendations, “to increase its reach and effectiveness in the community”. Conclusions regarding facilities, staffing, programming, finances, and marketing, focus on reaching the community by increasing programming off-site, as well as, on-site. This is an exciting time, and staff has been planning for the future in a variety of ways regarding the opportunity to serve more people throughout our community. The following recommendations focus

strategies on efficiency, visibility, sustainability, and “peak experiences” through education that showcases natural features unique to Scott County and the Wapsi River Center.

## FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Rework goals/vision to showcase unique natural features & theme(s)
- Continue to develop programs/exhibits to reflect unique features & theme (on/offsite)
- Manage facilities to serve unique features & theme (on/offsite)
- Remodel/repurpose outdated/underutilized facilities
- Add facilities near Wapsi River to enhance programming including sustainability
- Consider adapting off-site park facilities to enhance programming
- Monitor staffing levels, consider non-program staffing
- Comprehensive management planning reflecting unique features & theme
- Continue program alignment with Iowa school standards
- Continue program innovation & remain current
- Continue tracking program demographics
- Update/improve marketing strategy
- Diversify financing



An early conceptual line drawing of the Eagle View Eco Center at the Wapsi River Center from the 90's.

While future decisions may be complex, our staff, department, and Board, are committed to creating stewards of our environment. It is through the **awareness, education, and lifestyle changes**, by which we hope to nurture our fellow man. It is through these peak experiences along the wild Wapsipinicon River that a seed will be planted, and a steward will grow.... your challenge, if you choose to accept it, is to....***get wild on the Wapsi!***

# WINTER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## JANUARY

**1<sup>st</sup> ~ Holiday** ~ County offices will be closed for the holiday.

**5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> ~ Quad Cities Bald Eagle**

**Days ~ Quad Cities**

**Expo Center ~ The**

**Quad Cities**

**Conservation**

**Alliance, Illinois**

**Department of**

**Natural Resources**

**and Army Corps of**

**Engineers are sponsoring this annual event.**

This event features live birds of prey, a 20 foot climbing tower over 100 display booths, and of

course, viewing of our national bird, the

American bald eagle. This year's demonstrator

is "Jim Nesci's Cold Blooded Creatures". The

event is held at the QCCA Expo Center at

2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, from 4:00 to

8:00 P.M. on Friday, 10:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

on Saturday, and 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on

Sunday. Come see us at the Wapsi River

Center display. Please call (309) 788-5912 for

more details.

**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board**

**Meeting ~ 3:00 to 4:30 P.M. ~ West Lake**

**Park**

**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Holiday** ~ County offices will be closed for the holiday.

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting**

**~ 6:30 P.M. ~ 350 Grill, Eldridge Iowa ~**

Come learn about the current happenings at the

Wapsi River Center. Please call if you are

interested in attending (563) 328-3286.



**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Winter Carnival "Beating Cabin**

**Fever" ~ 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. ~**

**Bettendorf Public Library ~ Join Naturalist**

Becky Horton for an introduction on Winter

Bird Feeding at 1:00 p.m. at the Bettendorf

Public Library. The Carnival includes outdoor

and indoor activities at various Bettendorf

locations. All activities are

free and open to all ages.

For more information

about the Winter Carnival,

please call (563) 344-

4106.



**27<sup>th</sup> ~ 12<sup>th</sup> Annual STEM**

**Expo ~ 11:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. ~ Bettendorf**

**Middle School ~ Join Director Dave Murcia**

and learn about the lives of these native raptors

including where they live, how they hunt, and

what you can do to support these beautiful

predators. Live owls and a falcon will be on

display!

## FEBRUARY

**3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Winter Fun Day ~ 10:00 A.M to 3:00**

**P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join us for a fun**

-filled day of winter activities.

This is an event the whole family

can enjoy, so plan to come out

and discover winter at its best. A

limited number of skis and

snowshoes are available, so

please call to reserve equipment,

(563) 328-3286. Hot drinks will be provided so

please BYOM ~ Bring your own mug. Please

see our special add for more details.

**10:00 A.M. to Noon:** X country skiing and snowshoeing

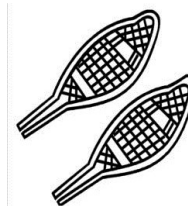
**Noon to 1:00 P.M.:** Chili Cook-off

(Eagle View Eco Center)

**1:00 to 3:00 P.M.:** Wild Edibles (Eagle

View Eco Center) and Fire-starting 101

(Redtail Lodge)



**14<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 to 4:30 P.M. ~ West Lake Park**

**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Scott County Library (Eldridge Branch)** ~ Come learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. Please call if you are interested in attending (563) 328-3286.

**15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> ~ Annual Quad Cities Outdoor Show ~ Quad Cities Expo Center (Rock Island, Ill)** ~ The event is held at the QCCA Expo Center at 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, from 4:00-8:00 P.M. on Thursday / Noon to 8:00 P.M. on Friday / 9:00 A.M.-8:00 P.M. on Saturday / and 10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M. on Sunday. **Come visit the SCCB staff booth to pick up the latest info or visit with other vendors and get outdoors!** Please call (309) 788-5912 for more details.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Great Backyard Bird Count ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon** ~ Join Wapsi naturalist, Becky Horton, and learn about a global Citizen Science Project called the Great Backyard Bird Count. This annual event is hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society and occurs from February 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. During this program, you will learn about this research project and how you can conduct your own backyard bird count at home on February 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. You will also make take home bird feeders to attract birds to your own backyard. Bird watchers of all ages can participate in this project to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are located. Please call in advance to register at (563) 328-3286.



**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Maple Syruping ~ Wapsi River Center ~ 1:00 P.M.** ~ Come join a Wapsi River Center Naturalist to discuss the history of syruping, tree identification, and then make maple candy! Fun for the whole family. Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.



## **MARCH**

**3<sup>rd</sup> ~ Maple Syruping ~ Wapsi River Center ~ 1:00 P.M.** ~ Come join a Wapsi River Center Naturalist for a lesson on maple syruping. Please call to pre-register (563) 328-3286.

**14<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 to 4:30 P.M. ~ West Lake Park**

**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi River Center Meeting ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. Please call if you are interested in attending (563) 328-3286.

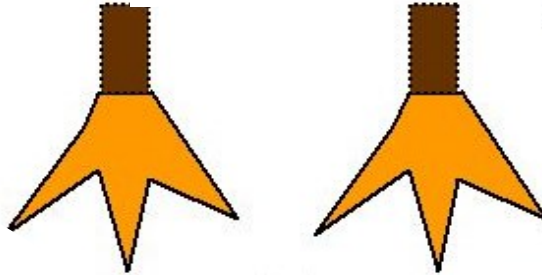
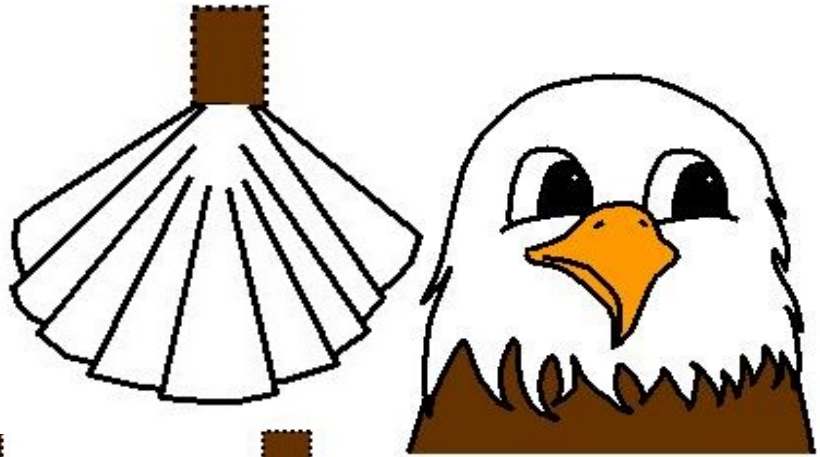
**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Fourth Annual WQPT-PBS Imagination Station ~ 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. ~ Western Illinois University - Moline, IL Campus** ~ Director Dave Murcia will present "*Wild Kratts*" sessions on local, native animals including live educational animals. The talk will include habitats, needs, and how you may be able to support them where you live. This is a free family event and you may register at: <http://www.wqpt.org/imaginationstation/>

**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Spring Trout Release ~ 10:30 A.M. ~ West Lake Park ~ Gate 1** ~ Trout will be released by representatives from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at West Lake Park. This year there will be 2,000 rainbow trout released at Lake of the Hills. Please call more details (563) 328-3281.

# KID'S CORNER :

## BALD EAGLE

The American Bald Eagle is our national symbol! Gather some toilet paper tubes and glue for this easy hands on craft. First color your tube with a brown marker then cut out the pattern, and then glue the different parts onto your tube.



# THANK YOU!

*Friends of the Wapsi Center*

**James & Jane Varcho**

**Joann Denklau**

**Iowa Association of Naturalists**

**I-80 Walcott Truck Stop**

**Heather Ballou, EICCD-ATEEC**

**ST. Ambrose University**

**Western IL University**

**Happy Joes - Eldridge**

**Sarah Van De Walle**

**USFWS**

**Donna M. Dubberke, NWS**

**Scott Co Secondary Roads**

**Living Lands & Waters**

**Nahant Marsh Education Center**

**GSA Troup 8504 - Walcott, Iowa**

**Dr. Mark Kalarovich - Wheatland,  
Iowa**

**Dr. Manwiller - Abel Keppy Animal  
Hospital**

# WINTER FUN DAY: FEBRUARY 3, 2018

10:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.

## WAPSI RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Join us for a fun-filled day of winter activities. This is an event the whole family can enjoy, so plan to come out and discover winter at its best. A limited number of skis and snowshoes are available, so please call to reserve equipment (563) 328-3286. Hot drinks will be provided so please BYOM "Bring your own mug".

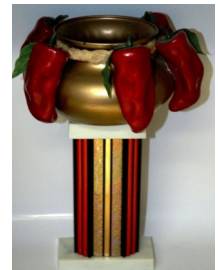


### 10:00A.M. to Noon: Snow shoeing and X Country Skiing

Explore the wilderness via Snow shoes or X country skis. Participants will learn about equipment, proper techniques, and safety. Participants may bring their own equipment to participate. Please call to reserve equipment, first come first served.

### 12:00 to 1:00 P.M.: Chili Cook-off

The Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. will be hosting this annual competition. Please bring your best chili creation to share, and possibly win the coveted chili cup!!! We will provide the dinnerware.



### 1:00 to 3:00 P.M.: Wild Edible Workshop and Fire Starting

Join Wapsi naturalists to learn about wild edibles which can be gathered in the area, or learn about primitive fire making and make your own "fire buddies" to take home.



## MAKING A

### "FIRE BUDDIE"

You can make these simple fire starters at home to help start your campfire. Gather cardboard egg cartons, sawdust, cotton twine, and several candles. To make a "BUDDIE" fill each compartment with sawdust or dry pine needles, put a small piece of cotton string in each compartment for a wick. Next drizzle candle wax onto the in each compartment to hold the materials in place. Next separate each compartment buy cutting each section. To light the fire buddy just light the "wick"!



# FUNGUS PROFILE : THE WINTER MUSHROOM

By Naturalist Michael J. Granger

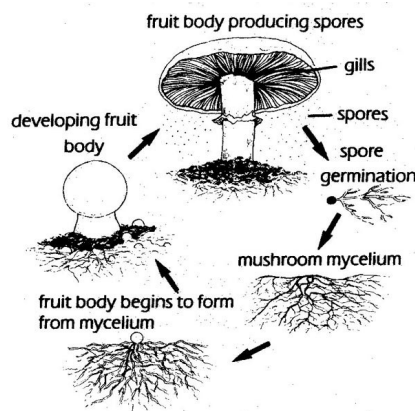
Recently on a cold stroll through the woods several mushrooms were growing on the side of a tree. They were in clusters on a dead elm tree. They appeared to have glistening orange to brownish caps, and black stems. The caps were about 2 inches in diameter. After checking some field guides we determined that



Readers Guide to North American Wildlife, ©1982

they were winter mushrooms. The winter mushroom, *Flammulina velutipes* has the distinction of fruiting during colder weather and temperatures. Usually it appears after the first winter freeze, followed by warmer weather. It can be found in late fall, into early winter and early spring. Some other common names for the winter mushroom are “velvet foot” or “velvet stem”. This is due to the fuzzy appearance of its stem before turning black in color.

Mushrooms are saprophytic, meaning they obtain nutrients from dead or decaying material. Most of a mushroom’s existence is in the form of mycelium or fine white threads which could be compared to the roots of plants. During the right conditions a fruiting body, or what we would call the mushroom emerges from the mycelium. Substrate, moisture levels, and temperature are the key factors for fruiting body development. After a mushroom emerges it produces spores which drift through the air and eventually land on a substrate. When the right conditions occur the spore will germinate and mycelium will grow and seek out nutrients. The life cycle of a mushroom is fascinating and



occurs unnoticed until conditions are suitable for fruiting bodies to emerge.

Another interesting fact about the winter mushroom is that they are edible. Word of caution however, it can take an expert to identify edible wild mushrooms. In Japan there is a species of winter mushroom which is widely cultivated and consumed. It is known enoki-take (ee-no-key tah-key) or just “enoki”. It is believed that its consumption can prevent tumor formation and growth. The cultivated variety has more of an off white or cream colored cap with longer stems. Enoki may be found in grocery stores and can be cultivated from mushroom suppliers, such as *fungi.com*.



“Enoki “

If you were to harvest some winter mushrooms to consume you have to check a few things to be sure they are winter mushrooms. First of all they prefer to be on dead elm trees. Secondly you need to do a spore print. Simply place a cap on a dark piece of paper with a cup over the top. Winter mushrooms have a distinctive white spore print. The next thing to check is if the mushroom has a fleshy ring known as the “annulus”. Do not eat any mushroom that has an annulus which are found in certain mushroom groups, which are highly poisonous. In summary the winter mushroom will have a white spore print and will not have an annulus. Winter mushrooms can be cooked into other dishes but be sure to check out a mushroom guide and consult your local mushroom expert for advice.

Another interesting fact about the winter mushroom is that cultures of *Flammulina velutipes* were taken aboard the space shuttle Columbia in 1993 to see how mushrooms would react to zero gravity. Normally their stems grow vertically from the side of a dead elm allowing the release of spores from below the cap. The mushrooms grew in every direction in zero gravity!! I am not sure what significance this experiment meant and what ground breaking data was obtained, but I found it interesting, none the less.

Next time you are out in the woods braving the cold, check dead elms or stumps to see if you can find a cluster of winter mushrooms which, can be considered one of the mushroom kingdom’s oddities.



# ANIMAL PROFILE: NORTHERN LONG-EARED OWL

By Naturalist Becky Horton

Let me introduce you to an owl species that the most avid bird watchers are excited to spot. The northern long-eared owl, *Asio otus*, is one of the few migrating owl species that are only here during the winter months and it has been spotted recently right here in Scott County! They typically live in the northern and western states of the U.S. and Canada and migrate as far south as Texas during the winter months.



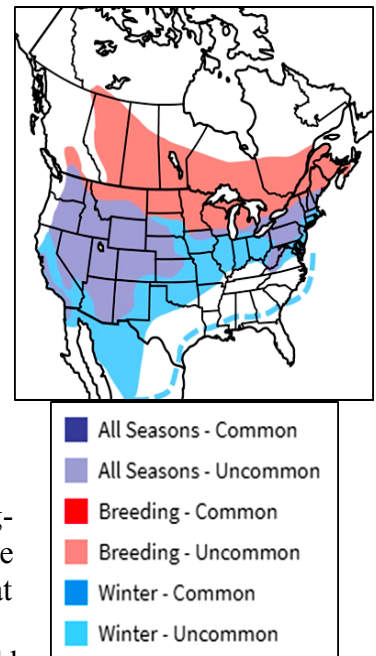
The northern long-eared owl is a medium-sized, slender owl with long ear tufts. The head is almost square shaped with long and narrow facial disks. The facial disks are orange in color with a fine black line outlining the disk. There are two vertical white lines between the eyes that make an “X” on the face of the owl. The eyes are yellow and the ear tufts are black and orange. The plumage looks similar to the great horned owl with a mixture of black, brown, gray, buff and white on the upper parts and whitish-gray and buff with dark brown streaking and barring on the underside. When perched, the owl sits in an upright position and often wears a surprised expression because of the long ear tufts that point straight up.

Just like most other owls, northern long-eared owls are nocturnal. They rarely hunt before true dark. They are silent, nimble fliers with excellent night eyesight and acute hearing. This makes them a deadly predator in complete darkness for small mammals and sometimes small birds. When hunting, they fly a few feet above the ground back and forth over open fields, prairies, and open woods. Like other owls, they gain incredible hearing from their asymmetrically placed ear openings and large facial disk. This helps them hear the distance, direction, and height of their prey. Their habitat includes a combination of grassland or open country for hunting and dense tall shrubs or trees

for nesting and roosting. Pine stands and windbreaks are a favored winter roost habitat for the long-eared owl.

During the summer months, the long-eared owls are not that social, and are usually a monogamous breeding pair. They typically use the stick nests abandoned by other bird species. During the winter months, they become more social and will roost in groups of up to 100 birds in groves of conifers, willows, mesquites, and other trees. Because they are nocturnal, secretive, and excellently camouflaged, finding them may be difficult. The best way to locate a northern long-eared owl is to find their roosting spots. Look around pine stands near grasslands or pastures for a large number of 2-3” long owl pellets and whitewash (bird droppings) on lower branches.

The overall population of the northern long-eared owl is stable, with trends showing a decline. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has them listed as a state threatened species. They were also placed on the 2016 State of North America’s Birds’ Watch List, which lists bird species that are most at risk of extinction without significant conservation actions to reduce their threats. The northern long-eared owl’s threats include climate change and habitat loss. To help change the population trend, it would be beneficial to preserve grassland areas and plant coniferous trees near open habitats. Also, provide artificial baskets and open-fronted nest boxes for the owls. The northern long-eared owl has been spotted near the Wapsi River Center and around Lost Grove Lake near Scott County Park. There is a slight chance of seeing this owl during the dusk hours. Get outside around dusk during the winter and maybe you will get to see one of these beautiful birds!



**WAPSI RIVER E. E. CENTER**  
**31555 52ND AVENUE**  
**DIXON, IA 52745**  
**Tel: (563) 328-3286**

**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  
Carol Fennelly

Doug Grenier  
Beth McAleer

Director:

Roger Kean

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Scott County Conservation Board

(563) 328-3280

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

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Dave Murcia, Director/Naturalist  
Mike Granger, Naturalist  
Becky Horton, Naturalist  
Christian LeCarte, Seasonal Naturalist  
Brandi Turner, Resident Caretaker

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