

The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

FALL 2019

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi

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

WAPSI HAPPENINGS

By: Director, Dave Murcia

Annual Monarch Festival Takes Flight



Monarchs ready for tagging and release.

The 1st Annual Monarch Festival was a great success thanks to many partners. The event netted over 260 children and adults throughout the sunny migration day and offered a variety of programming options. The Monarch presentation focused on natural history, life cycles, and migration of these endemic species. The prairie hike and butterfly catching led to the Monarch tagging and testing (for parasites) programs, while activities



Hands on Fun!

included face painting, photo booth, story time, butterfly crafts, and Ms. Mariposa's Monarch Butterfly Bus! The *Friends of the Wapsi Center* sponsored the taco bar in honor of the Monarch migration to winter grounds in Mexico. Please look forward to next year's kaleidoscope of activities and migrate to the next festival!



Glynns Creek Golf Course Recognized

By Cathy Konrad of the Quad City Audubon Society: For the third year, Quad City Audubon participated in the bird census portion of a BioBlitz at Glynns Creek Golf Course at Scott County Park. The purpose of the BioBlitz is to identify valuable wildlife resources associated with the course and help maintain their certification by Audubon international. Cathy Konrad and Don Robinson conducted the survey May 13. It was a rare sunny day! Forty-six bird species were identified. High- lights included a northern Waterthrush and an Orchard Oriole.



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. Our programs are focused on supporting the **Iowa core** curriculum, including **NGSS** and **STEM** elements for Iowa schools. *You may download our field trip planner from our website to better plan a trip!*

Center Improvements-Renovations

Scott County continues to make improvements at the Center and this summer, renovations on the old Owl's Nest Dormitory began. Thanks to our own **Scott County Conservation Board, Headquarters, West Lake Park staff, and Wapsi staff**, the decision was made to repurpose the building for educational programming needs.



Renovations under way!

Fall Leaves Along the Wapsi

Come check out our fall colors at the Wapsi River Center. Our woods have a variety of showy broadleaf trees including maples, hickories, oaks and walnuts. With our cooling temperatures, and shorter days the colors should be turning soon. Come out and tour our trails soon, to get you in the mood for the season!



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. Binoculars may be checked out at the host desk. Don't forget to visit the program raptors housed in the Eagle View Eco Center too!



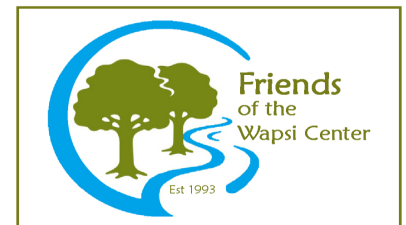
“BECOME A WAPSI RIVER CENTER FRIENDS MEMBER TODAY!”

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.

# FALL EVENTS

## October

**12th ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate #3).**

**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Paint By Nature ~ 4:00 – 5:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ This fun class blends nature and art! This season the theme will be squirrels! Participants will get to take a short nature hike (weather-dependent) and get to enjoy some lemonade while creating your own painting with step-by-step instructions. This program is suitable for all ages, geared toward grades 1-5. Great for after school fun or even for homeschoolers! \$5/canvas (pay at program). Space is limited, so please call to register (563)328-3286.



**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate #3).**

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

**19<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Star Party ~ Menke Observatory Star Party ~ Dusk ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Dr. Mitchell, Director of the Monsignor Menke Observatory for a tour of the night sky. Call (563)333-6141 on the day of the event for a recorded message confirming whether the star party will take place or must be cancelled due to stormy weather. If the weather is merely cloudy, *the star party will still take place* with a tour of the observatory and an opportunity for questions and answers with local astronomers.



**26<sup>th</sup> ~ Zombie Archery ~ 1:00 – 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 and accompanied by an adult. Your target will be Zombies! This program is free and weather permitting. Registration is required. Please call (563)328-3286 to register for this program.

**26<sup>th</sup> ~ The Great Atlatl Pumpkin Hunt ~ 3:00 – 5:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist

Michael J. Granger for a chance to hunt with an atlatl, a primitive hunting weapon originally used to hunt mastodon and bison. Large target pumpkins and real pumpkins will be set out as targets. Fun for the whole family and outdoor enthusiasts alike!!! Please call to pre-register (563)328-3286.

**26<sup>th</sup> ~ Halloween Hike ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Michael J. Granger for an educational adventure to learn about mysterious and misunderstood animals. At 5:00 P.M. there will be an open fire for grilling. Please bring your own food items and we will provide the fire and roasting sticks! The hike will begin at 6:30 P.M. with a spooky scavenger hunt afterwards. Please bring a flashlight! Family fun for everyone. Please call to pre-register (563)328-3286.



## November

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Holiday ~ Scott County offices will be closed in observance of the Holiday.**

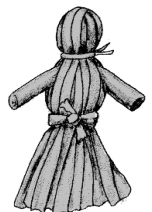
**13<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate #3).**

**16<sup>th</sup> ~ Fall Wild Edible Workshop ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Becky Baugh to learn about the many wild edibles in your own neck of the woods. We will focus on identifying plants, foraging basics and preparing wild edibles. We will take a hike outdoors to identify and harvest some of the fall wild edibles available during this time. At the end of the program, you will get to sample some wild flavors! Registration is required. Please call (563)328-3286 to register for this free program.



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

**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Cattail Dolls and Baskets ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come discover the biology, history and uses of Cattails. Learn how to make a cattail doll and/or a basket to add to your fall décor. Space is limited (12 participants), please call if you are interested in attending (563)328-3286.





28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> ~ Holiday ~ Scott County offices will be closed in observance of the Holiday.

## December

7<sup>th</sup> ~ Natural Health & Home Products ~ 9:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come join Wapsi River Center staff and Iowa 4-H AmeriCorps Environmental Educator, and learn to become more sustainable by creating your own health and home products made with natural ingredients. Creating your own home and health care products is cost effective, customizable, and a sustainable solution to buying products with harsh chemicals...plus it is fun! AND these products would make a great gift! We will be making lip balm, wood revitalizer, cold cream, and disinfecting wipes. This program costs \$15/person. The fee covers ingredients for all products. Please provide your own mason jars with lids (1 should be 5 oz. or less, 1 should be 16 oz. or more and have a larger mouth) and your own white t-shirt. Space is limited, so please call to register (563)328-3286.



Conservation series. During this series, we will be making arts and crafts out of either natural or recyclable items. During this session, we will be making gift bags out of old calendars and gift bows out of old magazines just in time for the holiday season! A few calendars and magazines will be available, but participants are encouraged to bring their own. Registration is required. Please call (563)328-3286 to register for this program.



11<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate #3).

14<sup>th</sup> ~ Natural Wreath Class ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Naturalist Michael J. Granger for a lesson on wreath making. Participants will be able to fashion a wreath out of grapevine and then decorate it with natural items. Visitors may bring evergreen tree trimmings, seeds, nuts or other natural items to make their wreath a "one of a kind". Please call to pre-register (563)328-3286



7<sup>th</sup> ~ Crafting for Conservation: Upcycled Gift Bags and Bows ~ 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. ~ Join Naturalist Becky Baugh for our Crafting for

24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> ~ Holiday ~ Scott County offices will be closed in observance of the Holiday.

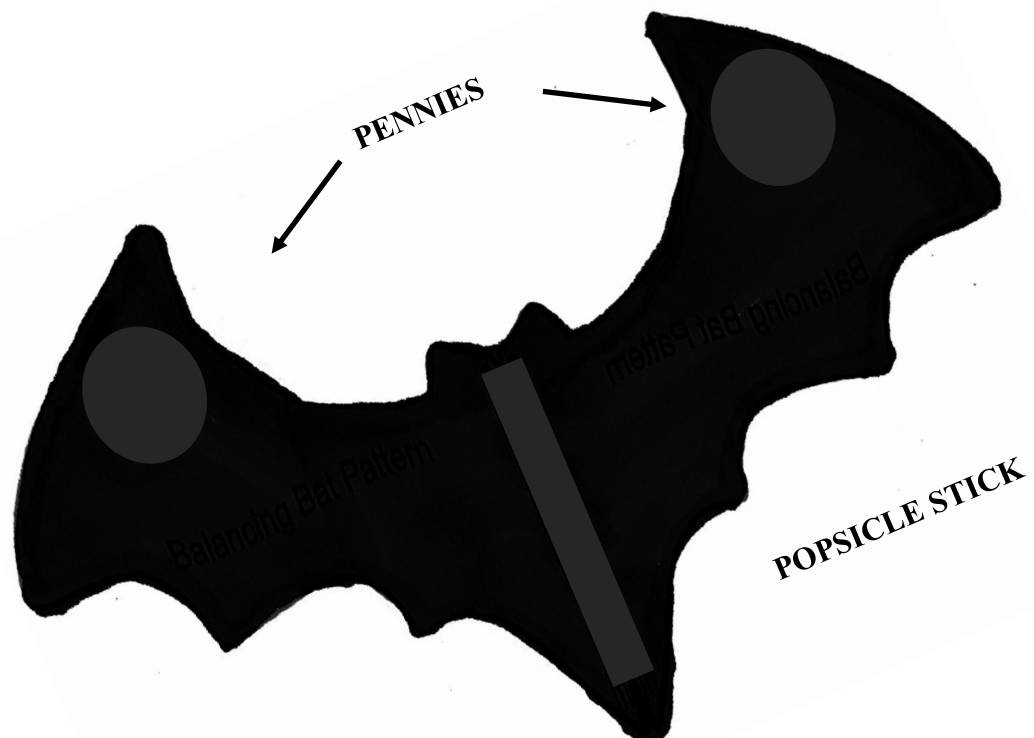
## KID'S KORNER: THE BALANCING BAT

There are nine species of bats in the state of Iowa, and all of them are beneficial insectivores. Here is a quick "Spooky" craft to help appreciate our furry flying friends.

### Materials:

Bat pattern  
Crayons  
Scissors  
2 Pennies  
A popsicle stick

First cut out the bat pattern. Next tape a popsicle stick on the bat's body from head to toe. Tape two pennies or the forewings of the pattern. Finally tape a popsicle stick on the body of the bat running from head to tail. To balance the butterfly place its head on the tip of your finger.



# HALLOWEEN EVENTS AT THE WAPSI

Saturday, October 26th, 2019 ~1:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center

**26<sup>th</sup> ~ Zombie Archery ~ 1:00 – 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 and accompanied by an adult. Your target will be Zombies! This program is free and weather permitting. Registration is required. Please call (563)328-3286 to register for this program.



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**26<sup>th</sup> ~ The Great Atlatl Pumpkin Hunt ~ 3:00 – 5:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist

**Please call (563)328-3286 to register and reserve your spots.**

## THANK YOU!

The Friends of the Wapsi Center

Bob Bryant  
Joy Sheeley  
Lucia Dryanski  
Bill Robbins  
Julie Ross  
Jim Ross  
Carol Rogers  
Jolinda Burr  
Jerry Wala  
Penny Borgan  
Jodee & Lizzie Murcia

Eliza Ross

Ms. Mariposa, Rhonda Brady

Tami Finley

Tiffany Collins

Monarch Research Station, Marion, IA

Wallace's Garden Center

Scott County Park maintenance

Alexis Azure

Green Iowa AmeriCorps

Allyson Knanishu from Yoga for Peace, LLC

Heart of Mary Homeschoolers

IADNR- Chad Dolan, Adam Todd, Cade Lisk, Curt Kemmerer

Scott County Secondary Roads- Brian Burkholder

Camp Liberty

River Action- Channel Cat

Scott County Library System

University of Northern Iowa - 360\* Trail Project

Davenport Comm. Schools - Ann Gaydosh

The Renwick Mansion - Dane & Sarah Moulton

QC Audubon Society

Quad Cities Community Foundation-Carol Kimple Charitable Endowment



# ANIMAL PROFILE: MILKWEED BUG

By Naturalist Michael J. Granger

Let me introduce to you another fascinating insect that can be found relatively easy in the fall, the Large Milkweed bug, *Oncopeltus fasciatus*. As you



A Milkweed Bug:

guessed, it can be found in the fall primarily on Common Milkweed plants, *Asclepias syriaca*. Our first step to finding the Large Milkweed bug is to find milkweed plants. Common Milkweed is easy to identify with its light green oval shaped leaves, thick stem and the white milky fluid that oozes from a broken stem or leaf. After producing pink flower clusters, milkweed seed pods will form. Look for groups of orange and black bugs which tend to cluster on the milkweeds leaves and green seed pods.

When looking at the world of insects, it is important to remember that “all bugs are insects but not all insects are bugs”. True bugs is the name describing the insect order **Hemiptera** which contains some 50,000 to 80,000 species of groups such as the cicadas, aphids, planthoppers, leafhoppers, and shield bugs. Hemiptera comes from the Greek words *hemi*, meaning half, and *pteron*, meaning wing. The name refers to the true bug's forewings, which are hardened near the base and membranous near the ends. This gives them the appearance of being a half wing. All true bugs have a triangle shaped mark on their dorsal surface and single pair of wings. You might be familiar with boxelder bugs, especially in the fall when they try to enter your house on cooler days.

The Milkweed bug is colored orange and black, which are warning colors which are reminiscent of the Monarch Butterfly. The monarch butterfly uses colors to advertise its distastefulness, due to its larva feeding on milkweeds. Milkweeds contain fluids that and chemicals that remain in the adult butterflies body. So, just like the monarch butterfly, which feeds on milkweed plant the Large Milkweed Bug advertises its distastefulness with its bright orange and black colors. When handed, the milkweed bug produces a bitter smell, which will deter would be predators. These insects also tend to hang out in colonies, or large clusters which include adults and younger nymphs. In on cluster you can observe all the stages of growth.

The Milkweed bug will only be found on milkweeds (*Asclepias*). The insect may be found in

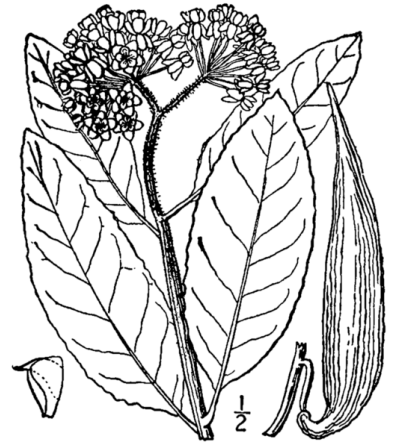
colonies including adults and younger nymphs. These insects undergo incomplete metamorphosis, which begins with an egg, then several “nymph” stages and finally the adult.

The life cycle of the a milkweed bug begins by the adults laying minute eggs on milkweed plants.

These eggs can easily be found because they are bright orange in color. Eggs will hatch into nymphs which are small and red in color with black antenna. The nymphs use their straw-like mouthpart, known as a rostrum, to feed on the milkweed plant's juices. As the nymph grows its color will fade into orange. Eventually the young nymph will molt four times, finally become an adult. Males and females can be told by looking at the adults underside. Simply put the males have a black band and the females will have two black spots. Adults can be seen flying from one milkweed stand to another in search of new milkweed patches to begin new colonies.

Studies have shown northern species of the Large Milkweed Bug, will migrate south in the fall with lowering temperatures in the fall and in correlation with late season flowering milkweed plants. The Large Milkweed bug is fairly easy to raise in captivity. Its main requirements are fresh milkweed plants with green seed pods, and adequate moisture.

Next time you are out exploring or come upon some milkweed plants, see if you can observe a colony of Milkweed bugs. See if you can find all of the stages from the minute orange eggs, red nymphs and larger adult bugs.



Milkweed Bug Colony:  
Photo, Michael J. Granger



# PLANT PROFILE: WHITE SNAKEROOT

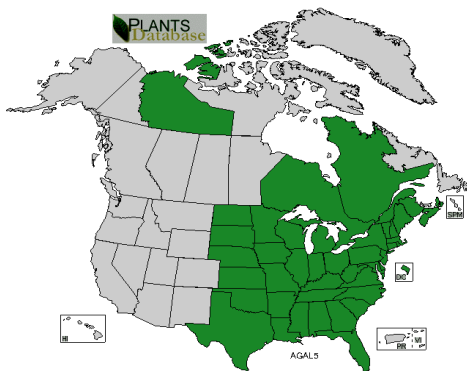
By Iowa 4-H AmeriCorps Environmental Educator, Faith Henrichs

Let me introduce to you a plant that can be commonly found on a hike through the woods during the fall. This is a plant that has thought to change the course of American history. White snake root, *Ageratina altissima*, is native to Iowa and is commonly found on woodland edges and trails, open meadows and pastures where cattle often graze. Cows and other grazing animals do not prefer to ingest white snake root due to its bitter foliage but in times of desperation they may. Its native range is eastern and central North America. White snake root is an herbaceous perennial plant that can grow to be 4 feet tall. It can be identified by its tight buttons of small snowy-white flowers that grow upwards in loose open flat-topped clusters. Flower clusters are 2 to 3 inches across which gives it a distinctive look among other flowers that bloom during late summer and fall months. The stem of white snake root is largely hairless. The leaves of white snake root are 6 to 3 inches wide, heart-shaped appearance with a sharply pointed tip. It is also a close relative of another summer to fall blooming plant, Joe Pye weed, *Eutrochium purpureum*.



**White Snakeroot,  
Wapsi River Center**

It can be argued that white snake root caused more deaths than any other disease during the frontier settlement. This was due to snake root's toxic ingredient, tremetol, which causes severe trembling,



**White Snakeroot Range Map  
USDA, Plant Database**

vomiting, and intestinal pain for those who ingest tainted milk or meat from grazing animals. In fact, white snake root is believed to have changed the course of American history forever after Nancy Hanks Lincoln,

mother of Abraham Lincoln, succumbed to “milk sickness” in 1818 at the age of 34. In 1834, Doctor Anna Pierce Hobbs Bixby realized that the sickness was seasonal and made the correlation that the culprit would be a plant. She then started feeding a calf different seasonal plants and discovered that white snake root was causing the sickness. Doctor Bixby then ran a campaign to eradicate white snake root from her community and almost eliminated milk sickness in that area. It wasn't until the 1920's that white snake root was widely recognized as the cause for milk sickness. Today, milk sickness is rare due to industrial milk processing procedures.

While white snake root can be poisonous if ingested by mammals, it does provide some medicinal benefits when used properly. Native Americans would use white snake root as a treatment for diarrhea and urinary diseases. The root of white snake root was sometimes chewed and held in the mouth as a form of toothache relief. While mammals usually avoid this plant, some insects are attracted to snake root's

vibrant colors and the food that it provides. Pollinators such as bumble bees, monarchs, and fiery skipper are among some of the frequent visitors to the showy blooms of white snake root. A fly species, *Schizomyia eupatoriiflorae*, also uses white snake root blossoms as its host, in



**Fiery Skipper, Clipart**

which the midge encourages the plant to produce galls that will provide food and shelter until its ready to emerge. Here at the Wapsi we've noticed that leaf mining flies also enjoy the leaves of white snake root. This season while you are out enjoying a nice fall hike, look around the woodland trails and I am sure that you will see white snake root!

Runkel, S. T., Bull, A. F., (1979) *Wild Flowers of Iowa Woodlands*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press  
White Snakeroot, and a Bit of a Paradox. (2017, October 17). Retrieved from <https://the-natural-web.org/2017/10/17/white-snakeroot-and-a-bit-of-a-paradox>.

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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. The Scott County Conservation Board in the provision of services and facilities to the public does not discriminate against

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Director:

Roger Kean

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Scott County Conservation Board  
(563) 328-3280

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

Dave Murcia, Director/Naturalist  
Mike Granger, Naturalist  
Becky Baugh, Naturalist  
Paige Ehrecke, Assistant Seasonal Naturalist  
Brandi Turner, Resident Caretaker  
Faith Henrichs, Iowa 4-H AmeriCorps

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