



The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

SUMMER 2022

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

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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



**Bald Eagle Rescue,
Eagle's Landing Park**

This spring alone our staff has had the honor of rescuing not only a mature bald eagle (photo above), but an immature bald eagle (photo below) as well! Both symbolic birds had high levels of lead, the mature also had an injury, and the immature was starving. After care each bird was released successfully. We *prize* our partners in nature!

Immature Bald Eagle Rescue, Belmont Road

Liberties (in Nature) We Prize...

Our human journey is ever evolving especially in today's environment. We have *liberties* to reconnect with nature in multiple ways, in support of our own health, but also in support of nature. As our communities are stressed and challenged, we continue to see challenges in mind, body, spirit, and nature!



THANK YOU to *The R.A.R.E. Group* in Iowa City that is our eastern Iowa raptor rehabilitation center. <https://www.therearegroup.org/>



Please consider visiting their website and supporting the mission in whatever way you feel. The following link is a video and story by Danny Whiskeyman of KWQC TV 6 of the latest release at **Eagle's Landing Park** in Bettendorf (the very site where the eagle was rescued)! <https://www.kwqc.com/2022/06/28/bald-eagle-makes-full-flight-again-after-making-full-recovery/>

In the NRPA's July 2022 Park Pulse edition, "Being in nature has been proven to help the **mind and body**. Local parks and recreation provide the opportunity for such benefits. Six in seven U.S. adults agree it is helpful that they and their families have access to the outdoors and nature during stressful times. Whether it is sitting on a park bench over a lunch break or hiking through a forest, take an opportunity to slow down and reap the benefits of being outdoors."

- 86% of U.S. adults think it is helpful that they and their families have access to the outdoors and nature during stressful times, including more than 3 in 5 who find this very or extremely helpful.
- The vast majority of Gen Z (79%), Millennials (85%), Gen X (87%) and Boomers (89%) find it helpful to have access to the outdoors during stressful times.
- Both parents (88%) and non-parents (85%) feel

that having access to the outdoor is a helpful way to deal with stress, including more than 3 in 5 (65% and 61%, respectively) who find it very or extremely helpful.

Get outside, visit our natural areas, learn to wild forage or grow food, learn to fish or raise chickens, build a rain barrel, but most of all, keep yourself grounded! Take time for yourself to explore source, through meaningful discovery, for truth in our natural world. Only then may we maintain our rights to a healthy, innate inheritance of self, family, and community. Take the Wapsi challenge and sign up for an experience!

Falcon Nest Success!

The American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) is the smallest of Iowa's native falcons, the most common, yet it's population is declining! These beautiful raptors are secondary cavity dwellers (do not make their own cavity nests), share adult rearing duties, and eat insects, small mammals, and even small reptiles. Despite abundance of food in the area, one link to decline includes humans! Scientists are researching their population decline and suspect the bio-magnification of chemicals being used in and around habitats, is a cause.

The Wapsi River Center of Scott County is proud to announce an

American Kestrel nest has produced offspring this 2022 season. The successful nest box was surveyed along with two others by Naturalist Becky and Caretaker Christine this past month and was verified by the photo seen here. This true conservation story involves a nest



American Kestrel Offspring

box that was an Eagle Scout project for Henry Rieck of local Troop 203 of Long Grove! Good work and thank you Henry and Troop 203! More American Kestrel information can be found at: <https://kestrel.peregrinefund.org/home>



Henry Rieck of Troop 203 and Kestrel nest box



Volunteer of the Year Susan McPeters Annual Friends Meeting

Our annual meeting recognized outstanding skills, knowledge, and abilities that members brought to the Center and the wide variety of programs they support.

A total of **614.5 hours** were volunteered this year, including **544.5 hours** by the *Friends of the Wapsi Center* at a value of **\$18,404.28** of support! Current membership includes 39 members with seven new members this year! The following *members* were recognized: Susan McPeters as Volunteer of the Year, Lucia Dryanski for most support of programs and projects, and Julie Ross for most meetings supported. On behalf of the Wapsi River Center Director and staff, the Scott County Conservation Board, and Scott County, we are grateful and appreciate your continued support! **Go Team Wapsi!**



Most Programs Supported, Lucia Dryanski



Most Meetings Attended, Julie Ross



**Volunteer Stewards & Wapsi Staff
Earth Day Stewardship Workday**

Ten stewards braved the Spring workday this year including our own *Friends of the Wapsi Center* members! The day included: invasive species removal at the Eagle View Eco Center and office, and spring butterfly garden preparation, for a total of 30 volunteer hours!



QC Women’s Outdoor Club Earth Day Tree Planting

Spring Events 2022

It was another busy spring season with over 91 public presentations including: **Channel Cat Talks on Raptors, Archery, Kayaking, Earth Day Volunteer Stewardship Day, Wildflower Hike, Frog Chorus Hike, Wild Edibles, Turtles of Iowa, Creek Stomping, Bluebird House Workshop, Pollinator Workshop,** and **Leave No Trace Training,** and our **Annual *Friends of the Wapsi Center* meeting!** We also conducted 165 presentations for schools including Pre-K, elementary, and high school! As a regional environmental education center, we have presented to schools from Scott, Clinton, and Cedar counties of Iowa, as well as, Rock Island and Henry counties of Illinois.

Iowa Governor STEM Extern Arrives

Scott County Conservation at the Wapsi River Center has once again been awarded the Iowa Governors STEM Externship for the summer season. “During the summer, STEM educators work side-by-side with knowledgeable and skilled industry employees who help bring the classroom curriculum to life. Iowa STEM Teacher Externships provide educators with the exposure to answer questions about real-world application, prepare students for careers they may have in the future and improve educational experiences.”, <https://www.iowastem.org/externships>.

This summer season, West High School biology teacher, Blaine Parketon, will be experiencing the wild of the Wapsi!



THANK YOU!

- Friends of the Wapsi Center**
- West Lake Park Maintenance Staff**
- Iowa 4H AmeriCorps**
- Joe Springer**
- Linda Puls**
- Mike & Ann Held**
- Sandra Shannon**
- Michael and Hedy Hustedde**
- Jim & Julie Ross**
- Susan McPeters**
- Tim Garner**
- Caroline Kimple**

- Lyondell Basell**
- Samantha Mussack & Girl Scout Troop 2412**
- Zacery Mussack & Cub Scout Pack 203**
- Rockridge School District**
- River Valley District Library**
- “Little Lights Homeschool”**
- KWQC - Danny Whiskeyman**
- Partners of Scott County Watersheds**
- Quad Cities Women’s Outdoor Club**
- The Putnam Museum**
- River Action**

SUMMER EVENTS

JULY

5th ~ Critter Encounter ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Buffalo Branch ~ A Wapsi Center Naturalist will bring live animals to every SCLS branch this summer! All ages are welcome to attend this free program. Call the Eldridge branch with questions (563) 285-4794.

6th ~ Yoga in Nature (Part 2) ~ 9:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Fun for the whole family! Join Allyson Knanishu from Yoga for Peace, LLC for some outdoor yoga and relaxation. One-time payment of \$10/family. Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

9th ~ Summer Wild Edible Workshop ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Naturalist Becky to learn about the many wild edibles in your own neck of the woods. We will focus on foraging basics, foraging safety, identifying plants, and preparing wild edibles. We will take a hike outdoors to identify some of the summer wild edibles available during this time. At the end of the program, you will get to sample some wild flavors! Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

9th ~ Quad Cities Astronomical Society Public Night ~ Dusk ~ Menke Observatory ~Join members from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society for a lesson on the night Sky. Please check the QCAS – Quad Cities Astronomical Society Facebook page on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing.

12th ~ Kayak Experience ~ 10:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park, Pride Lake ~ Join the Wapsi River staff for an adventure with kayaks. Program includes all equipment use, covers safety, techniques, and taking a tour of Pride Lake. You may bring your own vessel/PFD, though it must comply with IADNR regulations. Reminder- this program is determined by weather and site conditions, weight capacity loads for kayaks are 250-300 lbs./solo and 425-475 lbs./tandem. Dress appropriately, bring water, and call to register for a limited seat at (563)328-3286.

13th ~ Critter Encounter ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Blue Grass Branch
A Wapsi Center Naturalist will bring live animals to

every SCLS branch this summer! All ages are welcome to attend this free program. Call the Eldridge branch with questions (563)285-4794.

13th ~ Robin Creek Cleanups ~ 5:00 – 7:00 P.M. ~ Robin Creek Park (Davenport, Iowa) ~ Join Partners of Scott County Watersheds and the City of Davenport Public Works this summer for a series of invasive species removal events at the Robin Creek Park! Volunteers are needed to help cut, pull and treat invasive species, which will aid in the site's habitat restoration and overall improvement of the watershed. Learn more and register for events at www.partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org, or call (563)336-3378.

16th ~ Partners of Scott County Watersheds; Summer Snapshot ~ 8:00 A.M. – Noon ~ Eldridge Fire Department ~ Join us for the Summer Snapshot Water Quality Monitoring Event! Volunteers are needed to conduct water quality tests and collect data at streams and ponds around Scott County. Volunteers will start the day off at the **Eldridge Fire Department** for a brief overview about water quality and quick training on how to collect the data. During this time, you'll be able to meet your data collection group while enjoying some coffee and donuts! After training, you and your group of 3-4 people will take off to collect data from 5-7 sites around Scott County. This data will include pH, nitrogen, chloride, and phosphorus levels, along with the presence of water bugs! After collecting this information from each site, groups will meet back at the Eldridge Fire Department for free pizza and t-shirts. The data collected from our Snapshot goes to one of the largest water quality databases in Iowa. This data is then analyzed for patterns and trends to identify any areas of impairment. With this information, PSCW can take the next steps to continue to protect and improve the county's water quality. Register today at www.xstreamcleanup.org.

19th ~ Critter Encounter ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Walcott Branch
A Wapsi Center Naturalist will bring live animals to every SCLS branch this summer! All ages are welcome to attend this free program. Call the Eldridge branch with questions (563)285-4794.

20th ~ Critter Encounter ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Durant Branch
A Wapsi Center Naturalist will bring live animals to every SCLS branch this summer! All ages are welcome to attend this free program. Call the Eldridge branch with questions (563)285-4794.

21st ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center & Virtually ~ Come learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. Please call if you are interested in attending (563)328-3286.

22nd ~ Kayak Experience ~ 10:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park, Pride Lake ~ Join the Wapsi River staff for an adventure with kayaks. Program includes all equipment use, covers safety, techniques, and taking a tour of Pride Lake. You may bring your own vessel/PFD, though it must comply with IADNR regulations. Reminder- this program is determined by weather and site conditions, weight capacity loads for kayaks are 250-300 lbs./solo and 425-475 lbs./tandem. Dress appropriately, bring water, and call to register for a limited seat at (563)328-3286.

23rd ~ Menke Open House ~ 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.

27th ~ Beyond the Beaten Path with *Wild Raptors of Iowa* ~ 4:30 P.M. ~ LeClaire Public Library ~ Participants will learn about native raptors of Iowa, habitats, ecology, and human impacts to these carnivorous creatures.

27th ~ Survival Skills and S'mores ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Eldridge Branch ~Join a Wapsi Center Naturalist for a fun and free program about survival. S'mores ingredients will be provided by the library. Leave No Trace Principles will be discussed. Call the library with questions (563) 285-4794.

27th ~ Robin Creek Cleanups ~ 5:00 – 7:00 P.M. ~ Robin Creek Park (Davenport, Iowa) ~ Join Partners of Scott County Watersheds and the City of Davenport Public Works this summer for a series of invasive species removal events at the Robin Creek Par! Volunteers are needed to help cut, pull and treat invasive species, which will aid in the site's habitat restoration and overall improvement of the watershed. Learn more and register for events at www.partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org, or call (563)336-3378.

28th ~ Critter Encounter ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Eldridge Branch
A Wapsi Center Naturalist will bring live animals to

every SCLS branch this summer! All ages are welcome to attend this free program. Call the library with questions (563)285-4794.

29th ~ Beyond the Beaten Path with *Wild Turtles of Iowa* ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Davenport Public Library, Fairmount Branch ~ Participants will learn about native reptiles of Iowa, habitats, ecology, and preventing human impacts to these cold blooded creatures using *Leave No Trace Principles*.

30th ~ Adult Paint Class ~ 4:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join local (Eldridge) artist Julie Wall from the Artist's Vault for a fun painting lesson at the Wapsi Center. This is an adults-only program. ALL skill levels welcome! Admission is \$35/ person, payable by cash or check at the program. Fee covers all supplies, setup/cleanup, and painting lesson. Registration is limited and required by calling (563) 328-3286.

30th ~ Herping Experience ~ 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come out and learn about some of the Reptiles and Amphibians that call the Wapsi River Center their home! Explore what makes a good habitat and look for wild herps first hand! This event will include a hike, please dress accordingly, bring water and bug spray, and be ready for a great time! Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

AUGUST

1st ~ Critter Encounter ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Library System, Princeton Branch

A Wapsi Center Naturalist will bring live animals to every SCLS branch this summer! All ages are welcome to attend this free program. Call the Eldridge branch with questions (563)285-4794.

2nd ~ Kayak Experience ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Lost Grove Lake, ramp at 250th Street & 230th Avenue ~ Join the Wapsi River staff for an adventure with kayaks. Program includes all equipment use, covers safety, techniques, and taking a tour of Lost Grove Lake. You may bring your own vessel/PFD, though it must comply with IADNR regulations. Reminder- this program is determined by weather and site conditions, weight capacity loads for kayaks are 250-300 lbs./solo and 425-475 lbs./tandem. Dress appropriately, bring water, and call to register for a limited seat at (563) 328-3286.

6th ~ Princeton Paddle Cleanup ~ 8:30 – 11:30 A.M. ~ Princeton Wildlife Management Area ~ Come

clean up the backwaters of the Mississippi River at the Princeton Wildlife Management Area! Bring your own kayak or canoe to help remove trash from the slough. Learn more and register for these events at www.partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org, or call (563)336-3378.

6th ~ Paint By Nature ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Enjoy nature in a creative way at this Family- friendly program! Join Naturalist Paige on our beautiful prairie to learn about some local Iowa butterflies, then create a fun painting with guided step-by-step instructions. All supplies provided. \$5/canvas (payable by cash or check at the program). Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

10th ~ Yoga in Nature (Part 3) ~ 9:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Fun for the whole family! Join Allyson Knanishu from Yoga for Peace, LLC for some outdoor yoga and relaxation. One-time payment of \$10/ family. Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

10th ~ Kayak Experience ~ 10:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park, Pride Lake ~ Join the Wapsi River staff for an adventure with kayaks. Program includes all equipment use, covers safety, techniques, and taking a tour of Pride Lake. You may bring your own vessel/PFD, though it must comply with IADNR regulations. Reminder- this program is determined by weather and site conditions, weight capacity loads for kayaks are 250-300 lbs./solo and 425-475 lbs./tandem. Dress appropriately, bring water, and call to register for a limited seat at (563)328-3286.

13th ~ Turtles and Tie-Dye ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Eagle View Eco Center ~ What are two things that start with a T, and are fun, colorful, and creative? Turtles and tie-dye! Come meet and learn about different Wapsi River Center turtles, and have fun creating your own tie-dye creation! Please bring your own material to tie-dye (can be a t-shirt, a bandana, socks, or anything else you would like to dye), and we will provide the dye for you. We will also learn about easy ways to make your own natural dye at home! Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

18th ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center & Virtually ~ Come learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. Please call if you are interested in attending (563)328-3286.

20th ~ Wapsi Survivor Camp ~ 10:00 A.M. – 3:00 ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Come learn some outdoor survival skills including orienteering, plant identification, fire building and more. Please bring your own lunch (a roasting fire will be available) Fun for the whole family. Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

20th ~ Quad Cities Astronomical Society Public Night ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ Join members from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society for a lesson on the night Sky. Please check the QCAS – Quad Cities Astronomical Society Facebook page on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing.

27th ~ LeClaire Silver Creek Cleanup ~ 8:30 – 11:30 A.M. ~ LeClaire, Iowa ~ Get Down and dirty in Silver Creek! Join Partners of Scott County Watersheds and the City of LeClaire as we remove trash from in and around the stream. Learn more and register for these events at www.partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org, or call (563)336-3378.

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 will learn safety and proper archery techniques according to National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) guidelines. Children must be in the 4th grade and above and accompanied by an adult to participate. Adults are welcome to participate as well! This program is free and weather permitting. Park in Parking Lot A and meet at the observatory. Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

27th ~ Health & Home: All About Bees ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join Wapsi River Center staff for a fun program about Iowa's bees and the many benefits they provide us! This program will specifically focus on products that bees make. We will make three trial products for participants to take home! Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

27th ~ Terrific Terrariums ~ 2:00 – 3:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Do you want to learn how to observe an ecosystem from inside your own home? Come to the Wapsi Center and build your very own terrestrial terrarium! This is a wonderful program for people of all ages to learn how ecosystems function on a smaller scale. Please bring a container (i.e. pickle jar, cheeseball container, etc.) that you want to build

your terrarium in. Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

27th ~ 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.

SEPTEMBER

3rd ~ Quad Cities Astronomical Society Public Night ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ Join members from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society for a lesson on the night Sky. Please check the QCAS – Quad Cities Astronomical Society Facebook page on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing.

5th ~ Holiday ~ All county offices will be closed in observance of the holiday.

10th ~ Second Annual Monarch Migration Fun Run ~ 9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ The 2nd Annual Monarch Migration Fun Run will benefit the *Friends of the Wapsi Center*. This **self-timed 5k trail run** will take you through the upland and bottomland forests and the prairies of the Wapsi River Center. There will be one wave starting at 9:00 A.M. This run goes till 11:00 A.M. giving you plenty of time to walk or run the trails! Check-in for the run starts at 8:00 A.M. The check-in table and run start/finish will be on our main prairie near the observatory. Registration costs **\$25 per person**. Adults and children are welcome! Registration includes a t-shirt and refreshments. Registration closes at 7:30 A.M. on September 10th. Registration must be done by **August 21, 2022** to be guaranteed a t-shirt. If trail conditions are not favorable, the run will be moved to September 17, 2022. Registration must be done online, stay tuned for registration information. Call (563)328-3286 for more details or questions.

10th ~ Fourth Annual Monarch Festival ~ 12:00 P.M. – 2:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Join the Wapsi River Center staff and the *Friends of the Wapsi Center* as we celebrate Monarch Butterflies during this festival. Throughout the day, we will have family-friendly activities such as butterfly crafts, seed ball making, photo booths, and education stations. There will also be a monarch presentation and monarch catching, tagging, and releasing on the prairie. This event is FREE and fun for the entire family. (Rain Date: September 17th) Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

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

17th ~ 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.

24th ~ Creek Stomping ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Park (Glynn's Creek) ~ Come get your feet wet and learn about the vast world of critters that live in our ponds and streams! Perfect for family fun, this event will allow you to learn more about aquatic life, and how important water quality is. Please plan to bring rain boots or other waterproof gear. Please meet at the parking lot north of Pride Lake. Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

24th ~ Wartburg Iponics™ Workshop ~ 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~ Do you wish that you could have home grown fresh produce year round? Come out and learn about the wonderful world of Iowa Aquaponics! This is a perfect family project that can be both large and small! This workshop will focus on the small scale version but also cover how to build a larger version. Please bring an empty 1-3 gallon container and any of your favorite plant clippings that you want to grow! Registration is limited and required by calling (563)328-3286.

OCTOBER “Save the Date”

1st ~ Fall Ecology Day ~ Join us at the Wapsi River Center for a day of Family Friendly Activities.

1st ~ Quad Cities Astronomical Society Public Night ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory ~ Join members from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society for a lesson on the night Sky. Please check the QCAS – Quad Cities Astronomical Society Facebook page on the day of this event to find out if weather conditions will permit viewing.

HELLO BLAINE!

Hello my name is Blaine Parketon and I am serving as an Iowa STEM Teacher extern at the Wapsi River Environmental Education center. Through my six week externship, I hope to learn about the historical, educational, environmental, recreational, and natural resources of Scott County. As a Biology teacher at West Davenport High School, I plan to use what I learn this summer to create STEM lessons that are interactive and hands-on.

My love for nature and the environment grew out of my exploration of my home state of Florida. As a child I spent countless hours hiking through the woods and exploring the many waterways of my hometown. After graduating high school, I attended Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa. While there I was a two sport athlete (football and track) and majored in Physical Education, Health, and Athletic training. Although a lot of my time was dedicated to classes and practices, I always made time to explore the outdoors as a means to reduce stress and connect with nature. Through this exploration I fell in love with Iowa and it became my second home. Upon graduation I moved back to Florida, but would make frequent visits back to Iowa to further explore the state and reconnect with friends.

While in Florida I worked as a physical education teacher in north central Florida (Ocala) and also worked part time at the Silver River state park.

These experiences allowed me to combine my knowledge of physical education with the knowledge of the local ecology to create programs for outdoor recreation for 6-12 students.

During this time I also was working on my Masters Degree in Kinesiology which allowed me to become certified as a Biology teacher. Transitioning into Biology allowed me to really explore ecology with students and expose them to the importance of conservation.

Although I loved being in Florida, I missed the seasons and people of Iowa. So in January of this year, my family and I relocated to DeWitt, Iowa and I began teaching at Davenport West High School to finish my 20th year of teaching. While serving as an extern this summer, I will get an opportunity to be on a guided adventure of all the natural resources available in Scott county and bring that back to my classroom for year 21!



HELLO EMMA!

Hey there everyone! My name is Emma Jacobs and I am the new AmeriCorps Environmental Educator at the Wapsi River EE Center. I grew up right on the mighty Mississippi in Fulton, Illinois. Growing up I loved being outdoors and spending time with my family hunting and fishing. If you ask anyone in my life, they will tell you that I have always had a love



for animals, especially the scaly, cold-blooded ones! This love was easily seen during my time at Wartburg where I was able to care for all 7 of the Blue-Tongue

Skinks and several snake species in the biology department, as well as conduct research on natural resources. I also spent my time at Wartburg competing as a thrower on the Track & Field Team.

After graduating with my bachelors in biology I worked with the Iowa DNR for the summer conducting aquatic vegetation surveys on Pool 13 of the Mississippi River, and then began an internship as a naturalist in Cerro Gordo County. At Cerro Gordo County I was able to help develop new school environmental education programs and plan public programs of my own! I am excited to bring my passion and knowledge here to Scott County, where I also hope to learn and grow under an outstanding staff and an even better community.



FRIEND'S BIO: JIM ROSS

Name Jim Ross

Friend Since: 2010

Favorite Plant: Common Milkweed

Favorite Bird: Black-capped Chickadee

Favorite Animal: All Bats

Favorite Tree: Shagbark Hickory

Favorite Book: The Poisonwood Bible

Favorite Nature Book: On the Origin of Species

Favorite Movie: The Matrix series

Jim grew up a long way from Iowa in southern Texas not far from where the Rio Grande River empties into the Gulf of Mexico. His dad was a rural doctor and his granddad was the local mechanic. Payment for their services often took the form of fresh vegetables and access to great places to hunt and fish. Jim learned a lot about coastal ecology from his granddad including how to catch what was biting and how to eat what they caught. Jim, however, was better at finding selenite crystals, beach glass, and sand dollars. More to come on that.

Jim's brother and father took him hunting for white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, white-winged doves, and bobwhite quail. He wasn't a great hunter but Jim did learn a lot about hill country and piney woods habitats and where to look for fossils, petrified wood, and artifacts. Do you see a pattern? His mother shared his enthusiasm for rocks and used to take him searching for agates along the many railroad tracks in southern Texas. Jim's dad thought this was a safety concern and, since he doctored many of the local quarry owners, he got the family an invitation to hunt at the railroad quarries when they were closed. A family of rockhounds was born.

Julie and Jim met in graduate school in the Anthropology program at Southern Illinois University

in Carbondale. They went rock hunting on their first date and Jim's mom was pleased. They married, started a family, and earned their Masters of Arts degrees over the next four years.

They moved to the Quad Cities when Jim got a job as an archeologist with the Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District.

They added to their family and raised their two daughters in Davenport, Iowa where they spent a lot of time participating in community events and school-related activities. They went fishing, rock

hunting, and hiking at many of the local parks, including the Wapsi. They always brought field guides and binoculars to help identify the birds and plants they found. Jim always identified the rocks.

Jim and Julie found out about the Wapsi Friends Group from their friends Bill Robbins, Lucia Dryanski, and Jerry and Dottie Wala. They soon realized that this was a perfect fit. Jim loves the winter activities, the Monarch Fun Run, hosting the Center, and tending the bird feeder. Jim retired as Supervisory Archeologist and Chief of the Environmental Compliance Section in April 2022 and looks forward to many more years of rock hunting, tending monarchs with Julie, and volunteering at the Wapsi.



MONARCH VS. VICEROY

The monarch butterfly is well known and loved by many. It is known for its great migration across North America from Mexico to Canada and back. It is also known for its love of Milkweed, its host plant. The monarch caterpillar eats the milkweed's toxic leaves and acquires the plant's juices making the monarch taste bad to predators.

The viceroy is a butterfly that mimics the bad tasting monarch butterfly to gaining protection by fool-

ing its enemies. Viceroy butterflies feed on willow trees and are often found near wetlands with willows. Below are the two butterflies. The viceroy has a dark line across each hind wing making it identifiable. See if you can find these two butterflies this summer!



MONARCH



VICEROY

PLANT PROFILE: GOLDEN ALEXANDERS

By Naturalist Michael J. Granger

Summer brings a show of color throughout the tallgrass prairie habitat. One particular plant to look for is Golden Alexanders, *Zizia aurea*. This plant belongs to a large group known as the *Apiaceae* or *Umbelliferae* family, also known as the carrot family, which includes mostly aromatic flowering plants. It is the 16th-largest family of flowering plants, with more than 3,700 species! There are many common plants in the group that might be in your garden or spice cabinet including Queen Anne's lace, dill, carrot, celery, fennel, cumin, coriander, and anise. Some plants in the group are phototoxic and can cause severe skin reactions with skin contact and sunlight exposure.

Plants in the *Umbeliferae* family are characterized by their flower arrangement known as umbels. This is a circular

arrangement of flat topped flowers at the end of a stalk. Each flower cluster arises on its own stem radiating from a central stalk. Umbel flowers remind one of fireworks on the fourth of July.



Golden Alexanders at the Waspi River Center
Photo: Michael J. Granger

Golden Alexanders is a native plant to the United States and Canada that blooms May through June. It prefers moist, wet open meadows or prairies habitats but can tolerate the dry summer heat. It also likes open sun and is shade intolerant. It can be found in black soil prairies, moist woodlands, and along limestone bluffs. It grows from New Brunswick to Saskatchewan, south to Florida and Texas, and west to Montana.

Golden Alexanders grow one to three feet tall. The lower leaves are divided three times and upper leaves are divided twice. Golden Alexanders has bright yellow umbels measuring from 3 to 4 inches wide. Each flower has 5 petals, 5 sepals, and 5 stamens. The minute yellow flowers of Golden Alexanders secrete

nectar, attracting pollinators like flies, mosquitoes, gnats, beetles, moths, and bees. The plant provides pollen and nectar to insects with small mouth parts.

The black swallowtail caterpillar also feeds on the plant. Each flower produces a single 3 to 4 mm long, oblong fruit, known as a "schizocarp", containing two seeds. The seed capsules can be gathered and planted in the fall to spread the plant to new areas. In the fall both the leaves and the fruit turn purple!



Black Swallowtail Larva: Google Images

Historically Golden Alexanders have been used as a medicinal plant. The Meskwaki Native American Indians used the plant's dried and powdered roots to cure fevers, and also ate the plant's stems like celery. Both the flowers and stalk are edible, the flowers can be prepared like broccoli. It must also be mentioned that many members in this plant family are fairly toxic so great caution must be used when foraging for wild edibles!

Golden Alexanders resembles a smaller version of wild parsnip, *Pastinaca sativa*, which is common throughout Iowa. Wild parsnip is known for its phototoxic properties, the oils of this plant cause blisters upon contact and exposure to sunlight, making it one to avoid. So when out looking for Golden Alexanders be careful to not to mistake it for wild parsnip!



Wild Parsnip at the Waspi River Center
Photo: Michael J. Granger

ANIMAL PROFILE: EASTERN MOLE

By Naturalist Paige Owings

The Eastern mole is an elusive creature, but most likely you are familiar with their trails! They are the culprit behind the raised and cracked-looking ridges you may see in grassy areas. Moles are fossorial mammals, meaning they spend the majority of their lives underground, rarely surfacing. Instead, they get around through their own series of underground tunnels. Moles have a wide geographic range so their tunnels can be seen nearly anywhere from city parks to backyards to forests.

They prefer to tunnel through slightly moist and loamy soils. They can tunnel 15 feet/hour under ideal conditions! Not bad considering they are usually less than 8 inches long! Moles are solitary animals, so each animal has its own set of tunnels.

Moles make two types of tunnels: those they dig tunnels while foraging and then more permanent tunnels they live in and breed in. Foraging tunnels are approx. 3 cm beneath the Earth's surface, so as the mole tunnels it leaves raised trails of cracked dirt that many people find obnoxious and

Eastern Mole surface tunnels; Google Images unappealing. While people often view mole tunnels with dismay because of damage to their lawn or other important plants, they are providing an important service of soil aeration as well as pest control!

Moles are PROFESSIONAL insect eaters! Some sources say they can eat nearly 100% of their body weight in insects, worms, and grubs, each day. One of their favorite foods is white grubs, which are probably more damaging than moles! They will also eat root/seed materials. Their more permanent tunnels are generally dug below the frost line and include nesting chambers. These tunnels don't show on the surface, however the mole does excavate excess dirt to create mole hills at the entrances/exits to the burrow.

Moles have specialized anatomy that enables their subterranean lifestyle. Their bodies are long and thin like a cylinder. Their fur is very short and velvet-like so it doesn't inhibit their ability to move through

their tunnels. They have a large pectoral girdle, so the bones in their chest and arms are extra large to allow for larger muscle attachments. They have HUGE paddle-like "hands" for digging tunnels and even larger claws, which contributes to their tunneling speed.

Their feet are webbed to help them move dirt. In fact, their Latin name refers to their feet. It loosely translates as follows: *Scalopus* for "digging foot" *aquaticus* for "found near water" which is misleading, but the webbing was the clue that gave it this name. Moles have tiny, almost non-visible eyes that are covered over by fused eyelids. Because of this, sight is limited to just light or dark. They have very strong hearing and tactile senses though, so they have no trouble navigating their burrows.

On the rare occasion when they do surface, moles can be preyed upon by other animals. PLEASE do not poison them or any other small animals!!! Poisons are quite easily biomagnified and make their way through the ecosystem very quickly. This means you never know what unintended consequences you may cause to the greater ecosystem by poisoning one mole. Please make responsible choices with pesticides, poisons, and other chemicals. Most likely predators of moles are humans, followed by owls and hawks. If mammals capture them, they often discard them rather than eating them because they have a distinct musky scent that deters mammals.

I hope you learned something about moles and their interesting lifestyles!! There are many many fun facts about these unusual creatures. I'd wager that the mole even inspired the Pixar Villain the Under Miner! (Not confirmed) However the similarities are striking! Large feet and snout, no visible eyes, emerging from underground... ;)



The Eastern Mole; Google Images



Eastern Mole surface tunnels; Google Images



Surfacing Eastern Mole; Google Images

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