

# The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

SPRING 2024

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

[www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi](http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi)

 [www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation](https://www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation)

 <https://www.instagram.com/scottcountyconservation>

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

## Wapsi Happenings

By: Director, Dave Murcia

### Keep Well, Stay Wild, Leave No Trace

*“One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise” Aldo Leopold*

**Keeping well** in today's world can be challenging. As human population increases, there is a direct correlation from chemical use, pharmaceutical use, technology use, and natural resource impacts to human and wildlife health and wellness. Keeping well in today's society not only benefits our well-being, but directly benefits the very natural resources we depend on. Consider reconnecting to our planet through a more natural way of life.

**Staying wild** in today's world is easier that you think. Reducing and better yet, eliminating your chemical use not only saves money, but it lessens toxicity of human and wildlife health. The University of Iowa released a 2023 study on the effects of a widely used herbicide, glyphosate, with alarming implication to human health through food. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/>

[pii/S1382668923000911](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1382668923000911) . Right here in Iowa, Iowa City has initiated a best practice of excluding pesticide and herbicide chemicals from public lands and school grounds. Iowa City along with the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center of Scott County Conservation are both recognized by the **University of Northern Iowa's Good Neighbor program** (<https://goodneighborIowa.org/>).



Photo; Wapsi River Center

Plant medicine has been used since the beginning of time and remains present in many cultures instead of the pharmaceutical alternative. Eating natural, clean sourced, non-gmo and organic foods supports better health. <https://sustainablepulse.com/2023/12/18/american-academy-of-pediatrics-advises-avoiding-gmo-foods-due-to-glyphosate-residues/> . Our food and farming systems can be much more sustainable by taking a soil/ecosystem conservation and rehabilitation approach using regenerative farming

practices. *Grateful Graze* <https://gratefulgraze.com/>, and *Shire Regenerative Farm* <https://shireregenerative.farm/> are local examples of such farming. You can be healthier and well, by knowing what you eat. Try growing your own garden. Attend a **wild edibles program** right here at the Wapsi River Center! These practices not only sustain, but go beyond, to improve food quality, climate conditions, soil quality, and water quality.



*Leaving no trace* has a ethical set of principles that can be applied to every outdoor activity in an effort to not only improve our wellbeing, but the wellbeing of this sacred earth. When we lead healthy lifestyles, our natural world benefits. After all, Mother Earth does not need humans, yet humans are in need of her. Keep these seven principles in mind when being active: Be prepared & plan ahead, Travel & camp on durable surfaces, Dispose if waste properly, Leave what you find, Minimize campfire impacts, Respect wildlife, and Be considerate of others. Attend a **Leave No Trace program** this season.

I hope you too, want to breath clean air, drink clean water, and eat clean food. Look to our websites for upcoming programs in support of a healthier environment through healthier lifestyles. **Keep well, stay wild, and leave no trace- Dave Murcia**

Partners of Scott County  
Watersheds



## Water is Life

We as humans use freshwater. Considering three-quarters of this planet is covered by water, and less than 3% is freshwater, it makes sense that as intelligent species, we should live a life that honors such precious life giving resources. Do you know where your drinking water actually comes from? My drinking water is sourced by the **Mississippi River** as it is for many. In fact, the **Mississippi River** covers about 40% of the continental U.S.! Our namesake, the **Wapsipicon River**, is a sub-watershed that feeds into the Mississippi River. Attend a **kayak experience** right here in a Scott County park this season or volunteer at the **Fall Snapshot Volunteer Water Quality** event (<https://partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org/2023/07/2023-fall-snapshot/>). Consider supporting these local partners in water quality and take action in your daily efforts to Leave No Trace! **Remember, everyone lives downstream.**

<https://partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org/>  
<https://www.riveraction.org/>  
<https://www.livinglandswaters.org/>  
<https://qccaweb.wixsite.com/qcca>



Photo: Fourth Wall Films

A recent film by *Fourth Wall Films* (<https://fourthwallfilms.com/>), **Moved by Waters**, has been showcased in the region. Local partners in water quality are featured in this moving film that “focuses on the important work of individuals, organizations and coalitions to improve the water quality of the

watersheds in our Quad Cities region”. Look to future showings including at the Wapsi River Center! Please consider supporting filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle and their QC award-winning film company. **Remember, water is life.**

## Center Update

As we rise with Spring, the last phase of the old **Owl’s Nest Dormitory** building renovations continue including main exhibit display planning/install. The project continues to be a team and community partner effort and includes community craftsmen of all trades. Stay tuned to our websites for more. Please watch for the opening this year.

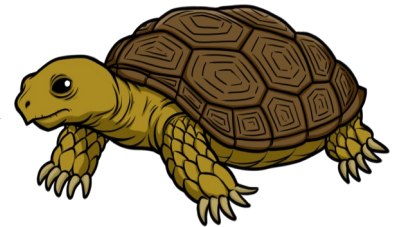


## Field Experiences

An *emphasis on supporting the Iowa Care and Next Generation Science Standards* will enhance programming for school and public both. If you are an educator and would like to schedule a winter or spring field experience, we recommend that you call well in advance if possible and contact us at (563) 328-3286.

## Sponsor an Animal

If you are interested in sponsoring an educational ambassador animal, please contact us at (563) 328-3286 for details.



**“BECOME A WAPSI RIVER CENTER FRIENDS MEMBER TODAY!”**

**[www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/Wapsi-friends](http://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.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION LEVELS (PLEASE CHECK ONE):

- \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ **KESTREL ~ Receive a Friend’s Newsletter**
- \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ **RED-TAIL HAWK ~ Receive Newsletter and Wapsi River Center Magnet**
- \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ **GREAT HORNED OWL ~ Receive Newsletter, Magnet and Wapsi T-Shirt at discounted price.**
- \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ **BALD EAGLE ~ Receive Newsletter, Magnet, T-Shirt at discounted price, and 10 % Discount off of Gift Shop Purchases.**

### PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP FORM TO:

FRIENDS OF THE WAPSI CENTER - 31555 52nd AVENUE, DIXON, IOWA 52745  
Contributions to the Friends are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

# SPRING CALENDAR

Attention visitors: . **Unless otherwise noted**, registration for our programs can be completed by visiting: <https://web2.myvscloud.com/wbwsc/iascottcitywt.wsc/splash.html> and clicking on **Public Programs**. If you have any questions during the registration process, please call the Wapsi River Center at (563)328-3286.

## APRIL

**1<sup>st</sup> ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village Opens** ~ The Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village opens for the 2024 Season. Visitors may tour the site from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. through October 31<sup>st</sup>. Call (563)328-3283 for more information.

**1<sup>st</sup> ~ Buffalo Bill Cody Homestead Opens** ~ The Buffalo Bill Cody Homestead opens for the 2024 season. Visitors may tour the site from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. through October 31<sup>st</sup>. Call (563)225-2981 for more information.

**6<sup>th</sup> ~ Menke Open House ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory** ~ Join astronomers from the QCAS and St. Ambrose University for a lesson on the night sky. Please call Dr. Mitchell (St. Ambrose University) for current sky conditions, the day of the event (563)333-6141.



**10<sup>th</sup> ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate # 3)** The Scott County Conservation Board normally meets the second Wednesday of every month at the West Lake Park Headquarters office, 14910 110th Ave, Davenport, Iowa 52804. The public and press are encouraged to participate. Please call (563)328-3281 for more information.

**17<sup>th</sup> ~ Homeschool Days ~ 10:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Once a month the Wapsi River EE Center will be hosting a day just for homeschoolers! Join us for themed programming led by our Naturalists! The goal of this series is to immerse children in the natural world and help them experience seasonal phenomena in a hands-on way. Most appropriate for K-6th grades, though all ages

welcome. Program fee of \$3/person payable at registration. Please come prepared for the weather because much of the planned programming will take place outdoors. Please bring a lunch. Online registration is required. Registration opens the first of each month.

**18<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center & Virtually** ~ Learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. This meeting will be virtual and in-person. Please call for more information (563)328-3286.

**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Spring Volunteer Stewardship Workday ~ 9:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come celebrate Earth Day at the Wapsi River Center. Join the *Friends of the Wapsi Center* and Wapsi River Center Staff for a celebration of Earth Day! The workday will focus on invasive species removal, habitat clean-up, trail work and campus beautification. There will be work for people of all ages and abilities. Please bring a water bottle, appropriate clothing, and work gloves. Afterwards, enjoy light refreshments provided by the *Friends of the Wapsi Center*. Please CALL to register at (563)328-3286.



**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center MEMBERS ONLY event: Meet our Reptiles & Amphibians! ~ 12:30 P.M. – 1:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Welcome to our second *Friends of the Wapsi Center* MEMBERS ONLY event! During this event, you will get to meet our educational ambassadors and learn their natural history, ecology, habitats, and human impacts along with the natural history and behaviors of other Iowa reptiles and amphibians. Since this is a members' only event, registration is required by CALLING (563)328-3286.



**22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Earth Day ~ Find a way to celebrate Earth Day!**

**23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Sustainable Living with the 3 R's; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, + Composting ~ 2:00 P.M. ~ Davenport Public Library - Fairmount Branch** ~ Naturalist Becky will talk about ways that we can

practice sustainable living. There will be a craft at the end of the program. Please bring an old t-shirt. This program is intended for adults. Registration is required by calling the library. For more information and to register, please call (563)326-7832.

**27<sup>th</sup> ~ Toddler Tales ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Bring your littles out to the Wapsi River Center for some fun FREE stories and nature play! The Scott County Library System's **Bookmobile\*** will be there with lots of stories and the Wapsi River Center has plenty of places to explore! Ages 3 and under welcome to attend with their adults. Registration not required. Call (563)328-3286 with questions. \*You do NOT have to be a Scott County resident to enjoy the Bookmobile!

## MAY

**4<sup>th</sup> ~ Spring Wildflower Hike ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Mike for a lesson on spring woodland wildflowers at the Wapsi River Center. May apple, bloodroot, and hepatica are just some of the wildflowers to discover. Please wear sturdy waterproof shoes for this woodland adventure. Online registration is required.

**4<sup>th</sup> ~ Frog Chorus Hike ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come learn about the frogs and toads of Iowa and experience the sounds of the season, in search of the frogs and toads which inhabit the Wapsi River Center. Please bring a flashlight and waterproof footwear. Online registration is required.

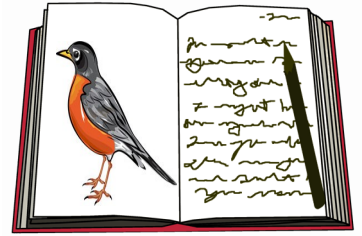


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**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Forage to Fork: Spring Wild Edibles and Cooking ~ 9:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come learn about the many wild edibles in your own neck of the woods. We will focus on foraging basics, foraging safety, identifying plants, and preparing wild edibles. We will take a hike outdoors to identify and forage some of the spring wild edibles available during this time. After the hike, put your cast iron cooking skills to the test and make

an egg bake out of our foraged ingredients over a campfire! Online registration is required.

**11<sup>th</sup> ~ Nature Journaling ~ 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Do you enjoy observing and relaxing in nature? Join Naturalist Clarah for guided Nature Journaling/ Drawing. Learn new techniques to notice small details in nature and reflect on your findings. You can bring your own journal and writing tools if you wish, or some will be provided. Online registration is required.



**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Homeschool Days ~ 10:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Once a month the Wapsi River EE Center will be hosting a day just for homeschoolers! Join us for themed programming led by our Naturalists! The goal of this series is to immerse children in the natural world and help them experience seasonal phenomena in a hands-on way. Most appropriate for K-6th grades, though all ages welcome. Program fee of \$3/person payable at registration. Please come prepared for the weather because much of the planned programming will take place outdoors. Please bring a lunch. Online registration is required. Registration opens the first of each month.

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**26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> ~ Heritage Days ~ 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. (Daily) ~ Dan Nagle Walnut Grove Pioneer Village** ~ Enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of yesteryear! The past will come to life at the Village as interpreters and actors recreate pioneer life. There will be pioneer craft demonstrations, live music and performances by the Wapsi Wranglers. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Please call (563)328-3283 for more information.

27<sup>th</sup> ~ **HOLIDAY** ~ County offices will be closed in observance of Memorial Day.

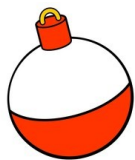
## JUNE

1<sup>st</sup> ~ **Bats 101 ~ 7:00 P.M. - 9:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come out to the Wapsi Center to dispel the myths and legends of bats! We will have several learning opportunities and activities throughout the evening! Join us at 7 pm for a bat house building workshop (\$10/ kit, limit one per household) then stick around for the presentation at 8:00 pm. Don't want to build? Join us at 8:00 pm for a presentation on bats of Iowa and a (weather-dependent) hike. Online registration is required. Please note, separate registration is required for making the house and attending the other activities. Call (563)328-3286 with questions.



6<sup>th</sup> ~ **"Nature's Mysteries" Summer Reading Program ~ 10:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Library System - Eldridge Branch** ~ Join staff from the Wapsi River Center at the Eldridge Branch for some fun summer reading programming! Bring your detective skills to help you "get a clue" who or what was here! Registration not required. Call the library at (563)285-4794 for more information.

7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> ~ **Free Fishing Weekend** ~ Iowa residents do not need a fishing license on the Iowa DNR free fishing weekend. (June 7,8,9, 2024) This program is for kid's ages 3-14 years of age, but adults can fish with their kids.



8<sup>th</sup> ~ **Menke Open House ~ Dusk ~ Monsignor Menke Observatory** ~ Join astronomers from the QCAS and St. Ambrose University for a lesson on the night sky. Please call Dr. Mitchell (St. Ambrose University) for current sky conditions, the day of the event (563)333-6141.

10<sup>th</sup> ~ **Backyard Birds ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Library System - Eldridge** ~ Come learn about common backyard feeder birds and how to attract them to your yard. Make your own pinecone feeder to take home. Please call the library for more information (563)285-4794.

12<sup>th</sup> ~ **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. Online registration is required. Call (563)328-3286 with questions. Online registration is required.

11<sup>th</sup> ~ **Raptors Along the River, Channel Cat Talks ~ 9:00 A.M. to 10:45 A.M. ~ Riverbend Commons, 2951 E. River Drive, Moline, IL** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director Dave Murcia to learn about birds of prey in our area. We will discuss habitats, ecology, and human impacts to these awesome predators. Be sure to bring your kids and see a live Wapsi River Center raptor up close! Call River Action at (563)322-2969 for more information.



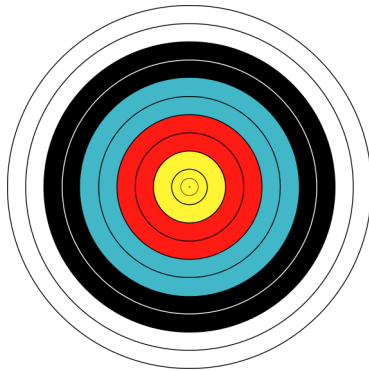
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**13<sup>th</sup> ~ Raptors Along the River, Channel Cat Talks ~ 9:00 A.M. to 10:45 A.M. ~ Riverbend Commons, 2951 E. River Drive, Moline, IL** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director Dave Murcia to learn about birds of prey in our area. We will discuss habitats, ecology, and human impacts to these awesome predators. Be sure to bring your kids and see a live raptor up close! Call River Action at (563)322-2969 for more information.

**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Archery Basics ~ 10:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Learn how to use a bow and arrow in this fun, informative, and free 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 4<sup>th</sup> grade and above and accompanied by an adult to participate. Adults are welcome to participate as well! Park in Parking Lot A and meet at the observatory. Online registration is required.



**15<sup>th</sup> ~ Pollinator Workshop ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Learn about the cause and effect of the decline in pollinator populations through The Great Sunflower Project. You will also learn about native bee species and what you can do to support their populations. Then, participate in a pollinator count and make insect hotels that you can take home and install in your own garden using recyclable items. Please bring empty 1- or 2-liter bottles or empty soup or pasta cans for the insect hotels, and other materials provided. Online registration is required.



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items. Please bring empty 1- or 2-liter bottles or empty soup or pasta cans for the insect hotels, and other materials provided. Online registration is required.

**20<sup>th</sup> ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Annual Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join us for a recognition dinner honoring the wonderful volunteers of the *Friends of the Wapsi Center* group. Learn about the *Friends of the Wapsi Center*, current events, and upcoming volunteer opportunities at the Wapsi River Center. A main dish, drinks, and dinnerware will be provided. Afterwards, tour the new nature center renovations. Registration is required by calling (563) 328-3286.

**24<sup>th</sup> ~ Summer Reading Program ~ 11:00 A.M. to Noon ~ Bettendorf Public Library** ~ Join staff from the Wapsi River Center at the Bettendorf Public Library for some fun summer reading programming centered on Iowa's wildlife and conservation success stories. Registration not required. Call (563)344-4194 with questions.

**26<sup>th</sup> ~ Kayak Experience ~ 10:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Lake of the Hills, Gate #1)** ~ Join the Wapsi River staff for an adventure with kayaks. Program includes all equipment use, covers safety, techniques, and taking a tour of West 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. Online registration is required. Call (563) 328-3286 with questions. Online registration is required.



**29<sup>th</sup> ~ Homemade Health and Home ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come join Wapsi River Center staff and learn to become more sustainable by creating your own health and home products made with natural ingredients. Making your own natural products is more sustainable, customizable, and it's FUN! We will make dandelion lotion bars and more. We will also learn about upcycling and reducing your footprint on the planet! Participants must be 7 years and older. The program costs \$8/person for supplies. Online registration is required.

## **JULY: SAVE THE DATES!**

**1<sup>st</sup> ~ "Nature's Mysteries" Summer Reading Program ~ 10:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. ~ Scott County Library System - Eldridge** ~ Join staff from the Wapsi River Center at the Eldridge Branch for some fun summer reading programming! Bring your detective skills to help you "get a clue" who or what was here! Registration not required. Call the library at (563)285-4794 for more information.

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**4<sup>th</sup> ~ HOLIDAY ~ County offices are closed in observance of the Holiday.**

# ANIMAL PROFILE: QUESTION MARK BUTTERFLY

By; Naturalist Michael J. Granger

Early in the spring, as temperatures and the length of day increase, you might get a chance to see a common woodland butterfly found throughout Iowa's woodlands, the

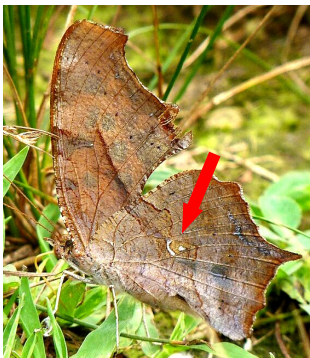
question mark butterfly, *Polygonia interrogatoris*. This butterfly may come out and be flying before all of the snow has melted away. On a bright sunny day, this butterfly can be seen warming up in the early morning sunshine getting warm with their wings open to capture the heat. If threatened they will



quickly fly and land on a nearby tree with their wings folded shut, using camouflage to remain unnoticed, waiting for danger to disappear.

The question mark butterfly belongs to a group of butterflies known as angle wings. The genus name, *Polygonia*, is derived from the Greek word for "many angles" and refers to the outlines of the wings. This ragged wing edge helps the butterfly blend into its surroundings.

The question mark is found throughout most of the eastern U.S. and southern Canada, south to north central Florida and the northern Gulf states, and west to Arizona, eastern Wyoming, and Colorado.



**The Question Mark Underside with "?"shape: Wikipedia**

The question mark is a medium-sized butterfly preferring woodlands and forest areas. Their wingspan measures 2 – 2.5 inches. The edges of their wings are powdery white. The upper wing surfaces are orange with dark spotting. The lower wing

surfaces are colored in gray, brown, iridescent light purples with black spotting. How did the question mark get its interesting name? On the rear underwing they have a small silvery-colored mark that is in the shape of a "Question Mark". Sometimes the dot of the question mark may be small or absent.

The question mark has an interesting life cycle with two broods. Late-season adult butterflies seek out suitable hiding or hibernating areas to overwinter. This may be a hollow tree, log, or even a woodpile. The following spring they emerge. Males perch in the sun on foliage or tree trunks and fly out to defend territories and meet females. Occasionally they chase other insects or even birds.

After mating eggs are laid on the undersides of tree leaves.

Elms, hackberry and stinging nettles are their preferred host plant. Larvae are about 1 ½ inches in



**Question Mark Caterpillar: Butterflies and Moths of North America**

length. They have orange heads and black bodies with orange striping. The larvae are covered with many orange to yellow branched spines to protect them from predators. Caterpillars create a chrysalis and the second brood emerges in mid-summer.

The question mark butterfly feeds on fermenting fruit, dung, carrion, and rarely flowers. It is fairly easy to attract and feed them with a butterfly feeder with overripe fruit, such as bananas, apples, or grapes. Adults sometimes appear intoxicated after feeding and will not fly even when touched.

The question mark butterfly uses bright coloration to attract mates, as well as, excellent camouflage to remain unnoticed by predators. This spring keep your eyes open while on a forest walk and you just might see this beautiful butterfly!

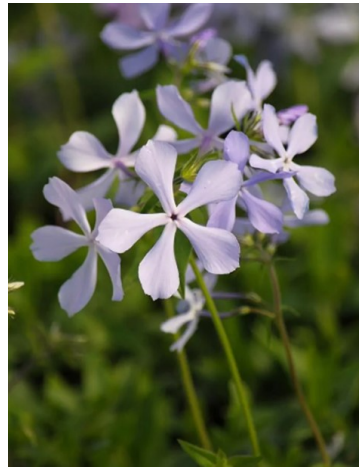


# PLANT PROFILE: BLUE PHLOX

By: Naturalist Paige Owings

It's that time of year—plants and grasses are beginning to green up, tree buds are swelling and preparing to leaf out, and the temperatures are starting to warm. Ahhhh, spring is here!!! And what a marvelous season of renewal and new life!

Personally, one of my favorite things about the spring time is that there are so many beautiful wildflowers appearing. I am partial to pink and purple flowers, so I love to see the Wild Blue Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) appear in the forests. Their name is misleading as they are actually a pastel lilac color, not truly blue.



**Blue Phlox:**  
**Prairie Moon Nursery**

These are perennial plants, meaning they will come back year after year. Their range is from Minnesota to Louisiana, east to parts of Pennsylvania and Georgia. They have a long flowering season, generally from about April to June, though it can certainly vary based on conditions. This year with our unseasonably warm temperatures, I expect the growing season at the Wapsi River Center to be a little different than normal. I would not be surprised to see phlox bloom as early as late March this year.

Wild Blue Phlox grow in partial to full shade, which includes the forest understory. Since they like this habitat, they do very well surviving winter in leaf litter, so it's OK to leave the leaves! Other things benefit from this simple action, too! Caterpillars, insects, and other plants all depend on leaf cover to help them overwinter.

Stems are mildly hairy with opposite leafing. Leaves are narrow and elongated football shapes. Stems generally grow around 1 foot tall with a few pairs of leaves on the stem and a cluster of buds/flowers at the top. Bud are elongated and appear spiraled like a closed umbrella. When they open, flowers are small (~3/4 – 1 inch across) tubular, and have 5 skinny petals arranged in a starburst shape. They are fragrant, too! I would describe the fragrance as subtly sweet, similar to a lilac bush but not as strong.

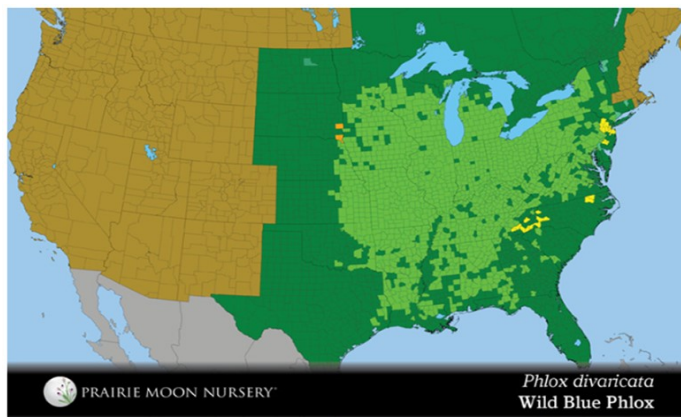
Another name some people use for this plant is Sweet William, possibly due to the lovely scent. The blossoms attract several types of butterflies and moths and even hummingbirds!



**Blue Phlox Closeup:**  
**R. W. Smith; (Michigan)**

The root system for phlox is rhizomes, so the plant travels underground to help it spread. It spreads slowly and will not likely overtake other plants. Rhizomes also help this plant survive in dry to drought conditions. The roots are edible for voles, rabbits, and moles! There is also some evidence that roots and leaves of some species of phlox may have been used in early medicine such as in a tea to help sooth eczema.

I like blue phlox so much that I have tried to clip stems to bring the blooms indoors, but I found that they did not do well, so this plant is best enjoyed outside in its natural habitat. I would encourage everyone to take a wild woodland walk this spring to see if you can see phlox or any other magical spring wildflowers. Happy hiking!



- PRESENT IN STATE**
- PRESENT: COMMON**
- PRESENT: RARE**
- PREVIOUS RANGE: EXTERPATED**



# Sponsor an Animal

## Sponsorships make great gifts!

A very important part of environmental education at the Wapsi River Center revolves around the live animal ambassadors. Each year, thousands of individuals come to learn about the wild animals that are found in the region and our animal ambassadors. In cooperation with our *Friends of the Wapsi Center* volunteer group, a sponsorship program was designed to meet the special needs required to maintain the animals at the Wapsi Center. The job of our animal ambassadors is to promote a better understanding of wildlife, conservation, and impacts humans have on wildlife. Each animal has a different background and reason why it resides with us. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact us.

## Sponsorship Levels:

### Gold

(Amphibian)

**\$20**

### Platinum

(Snake, turtle, or fish aquarium)

**\$30**

### Diamond

(Raptor or wild bird feeders)

**\$50**

Schools, classrooms, youth organizations, families, and individuals are encouraged to join and sponsor an animal.

Upon sponsoring an animal, you will receive a packet of information containing:

- A fact sheet of the animal with photographs of the animal
- A certificate of appreciation
- Recognition of sponsorship on the animal's enclosure at the Center

If you are interested in an annual sponsorship of one or more of our animals, you may send cash or a check payable to the *Friends of the Wapsi Center* to the address below. If you would like sponsor an animal for an amount that is different than listed, any and all donations are accepted and appreciated. If you are interested in donating items appropriate to the care of our animals, please contact a naturalist at the Wapsi River Center.

### Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

#### Scott County Conservation

31555 52nd Avenue

Dixon, Iowa 52745

Phone: (563) 328-3286

Email: [wapsicenter@scottcountyiowa.gov](mailto:wapsicenter@scottcountyiowa.gov)

Website: <https://www.scottcountyiowa.gov/conservation/wapsi>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/scottcountyconservation/>



# FRIENDS MEMBERS PROFILE: THE SAXBYS

Hello from Chris, Trish, and Jo! We are a newlywed family trio who started our adventures with Wapsi at a Homeschool Day event in Spring of 2022. A shout-out to our friends for the invite! You know who you are! A little about us: Chris (Navy Veteran) is a Maintenance Tech who also has a passion for Aviation and thoroughly enjoys tinkering, fixing, and building things, to include model airplanes in his spare time. Trish-Director of Operations (AKA- MOM ) actively serves as the Friends of the Wapsi current Vice President, homeschools, attends college, and is embracing her crafty inner pioneer woman! Josiah is an energetic 12 yr old, respectable young man who loves everything outdoors and currently pursuing his new favorite sport, hockey. It was Josiah's interest in the duties of a DNR Officer/Park Ranger, wildlife, shadowing the Wapsi Naturalists, participating as a Junior Naturalist, that fueled our desire to become actively involved with our Wapsi Friends. We love the fact that we can learn at our own pace and participate in as many events as we

can possibly fit into our schedule! Our family has so much fun learning about wildlife, wild-edibles, venturing out in search of new adventures, camping & fishing, kayaking, visiting state parks, and being at our favorite place volunteering and hosting! We look forward to seeing you on your next adventure at the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center!



## THANKYOU!!!

### *Friends of the Wapsi Center:*

**Trish and Chris Saxby & Family**  
(Membership renewal, docent, program support)

**Susan McPeters** (membership renewal, docent, program support)

**Tim Garner** (membership renewal & animal sponsorships)

**Heather Sanders** (membership renewal)

**Mark Theisen** (membership renewal)

**Dave & Connie Huber** (membership renewal)

**PJ Slobojan** (membership renewal)

**Tim & Sylvia Gunderson** (new membership)

**Lucia Dryanski** (docent, program support)

**Bill Robbins** (docent, program support)

**Jim & Julie Ross** (docent, program support)

**Linda Puls** (docent)

**Iowa Association of Naturalists**  
**National Association for Interpretation**

**USFWS – Illinois-Iowa Field Office**

**Quad Cities Women's Outdoor Club**

**Pleasant Valley School District**

**Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat**

**U of I School of the Wild**

**WLP Rangers: Josh Sabin & Brandon Rogalla**

**National Recreation & Park Association**

**HNI Corporation – Justin Baugh, Leslie Eichelberger, & Bobby Lively**

**Mrs. Abby Hill & the Pleasant View Elementary 2<sup>nd</sup> Graders**

**Kelly & Tammy Rundle, *Fourth Wall Films***

**Leave No Trace**

**Becky Buhman**

**Anjali Summers**

**BCSD Steam Expo**



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

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*For All Seasons*

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**Mailing List:** Receive a copy of the WREN free of charge by sending a postcard to the address above.

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Michael Wagner, Wapsi Caretaker



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