

The Warbler

Newsletter of the Friends of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary — Illinois Audubon Society

Events

Stewardship Days
2nd Saturday each
month.

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War Bluff Nature Calendar

by Terri Treacy

The tiny fawn that appeared with her mama at the close of the last Nature Calendar turned out to be one of four fawns and two does that made predictable daily rounds through the yard throughout the summer. As the does followed their established browsing route, the youngsters romped and played with one another, stopping only long enough for a quick suckle of mom's milk.

I learned that another familiar critter, the Carolina wren, is all about routine as well. For the previous five summers a wren has built her nest in a large potted begonia under the shade of the sugar maples outside the living room windows. This summer I was nearly a month late getting the



plants outside—but rather than find another location to build her nest the wren waited for the familiar begonia. I've never seen such fast nest building and egg laying in my life!

The other notable nesting story of the summer was the successful fledging of at least one turkey vulture. Through the course of the summer, each time

I would mow the trails I would notice a congregation of several turkey vultures in the vicinity of, or on top, of Flicker House. I was excited to see that they had adopted the old house as a roosting place, but didn't give it much thought beyond that. Then on August 30, sitting atop

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Ice Storm 2009

A twenty-four hour winter storm dropped two inches of sleet, followed by freezing rain that coated everything with over an inch of ice, topped off by four inches of snow! Massive tree limbs and whole trees, now weighed down and bent beyond their limits, came crashing down one after another--it sounded like opening morning of shotgun deer season for two days and nights.

The power was out for five days, the phone for two days--a cell phone with limited battery was my only connection to the outside world. The ice-covered road was completely blocked by fallen trees. Two neighbors, one on an ATV, the other on a horse, came by to check on me on the first day. The following day two other neighbors chain-sawed a path along the road wide enough to get my truck out. I can't thank Bud, Brad, Bruce and Gene enough--it feels really good to know I have such thoughtful, caring and generous neighbors.



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Nature Calendar continued from page 1

the old Flicker House chimney, surrounded by several attentive adults, I spotted a beautiful juvenile—so, the old house served as a nursery, too!

September brought the normal end-of-summer showcase of rich, warm-colored wildflowers, the last of the migrant hummingbirds dropping by to tank up on nectar, the green darner dragonflies swarming over the fields and ponds, and the eastern wood peewees gobbling as many insects as possible before their long journeys south. We had literally just finished clearing the last of the February ice-storm damage from the trails, when the remnants of Hurricane Ike brought near-hurricane force winds to southern Illinois. We were still cutting fallen trees and branches from the trails into the fall!

Normally by mid-October the fall colors are peaking in southern Illinois—but, 2008 was an exception. A few plants such as sumac and dogwood turned at the “normal” time, but maples and oaks hung on to their summer hues well into November. In the end, it turned out to be one of the most colorful and beautiful autumns I’ve witnessed here. I’ve never before seen all of the rich and varied shades of red and reddish-orange that the different species of oak turn—it was truly magnificent.

I noted the arrival of the first white-throated sparrows and juncos on October 22. That was my signal to resume feeding bird seed again. With the price of sunflower seed skyrocketing over the summer and the fact that so much of the seed here was being consumed by squirrels and raccoons that keep outsmarting me, for the first time ever I stopped feeding seed during the summer. It was an interesting



experiment – but the jury is still out regarding whether or not I will repeat it next summer – it does change the dynamics of “backyard” bird watching.

On November 12 I witnessed a very unusual backyard birdwatching scene -- a pair of bluebirds mating in the bird bath! November also brought flocks of blue jays, cedar waxwings, American robins, and yellow-rumped Myrtle warblers to feed on the juniper berries, wild cherries, ~~deciduous holly berries, polk~~ berries, maple buds, and other delicacies of the bird world. Of course, the birds themselves are also delicacies, to which the resident Cooper’s hawk avails himself at every opportunity. On November 20 I was privileged to witness such an event. Like a bolt of lightning, the Cooper’s swooped in and nabbed an unsuspecting blue jay right off his perch—the brief

but piercing cry of the dying jay and a small pile of feathers were the only remaining clues of what had just transpired.

Later that same day, I got to see a red-tailed hawk gliding ahead of me just above the ground along a trail. Seeing his wingspan relative to the six-foot-wide mowed path really brought the size of the bird into perspective.

A few clear nights in December were perfect for viewing the conjunction of the crescent moon with Jupiter and Venus. Some cold and blustery weather brought the fox sparrows and hermit thrush close to the house to feed alongside the rest of the winter residents. The most exciting bird seen on the sanctuary for the War Bluff Dec. 21 CBC was a bald eagle in flight.

When I returned from a two-week trip to Ecuador in early January the hermit

thrush and fox sparrows were still among the daily visitors scratching in the leaf litter.

Instead of the intermittent warm January days where one might be lucky enough to spot a mourning cloak butterfly, January 2009 seemed to be consistently cold -- at times extremely cold -- getting as low as 8 degrees F. one night. Then on January 27 the ice storm of 2009 hit (see pg. 1).

Keeping the birds fed was practically a full-time job. With everything now coated in ice and snow, there wasn’t one speck of natural food available for the little guys.

A week later, just as the last of the ice and snow had melted, the woodcocks returned to carry out their ritual mating dance over our old, shrubby fields. Rain on February 10 brought out the chorus frogs along with a few peepers.

As this Nature Calendar comes to a close, the red-shouldered hawks, especially on clear, sunny days, circle above the treetops calling back and forth to one another--perhaps choosing where to build their nest? The chickadees and titmice are starting to get quite vocal, but cardinals are holding back. Barred owls can be heard in the late afternoon and on and off throughout the night. Coyotes are also quite vocal, and one morning I heard what I’m sure was bobcat “meowing” very loudly!



Ice Storm continued from page 1

And, I learned a lesson in preparedness after the 2008 ice storm--this time I had plenty of drinking water, flashlight batteries and fuel for the oil lamps. There was ample snow and ice to keep perishables cold in a thermal cooler. And of course, with propane for heat and cooking I was warm and snug. The only thing I lacked was an adequate supply of wine!



Volunteers

The success of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary is a direct result of fantastic volunteers -- many of whom come on a regular basis every month and even in between our regularly scheduled Stewardship Days.

Many thanks go to the following people who have volunteered since the last issue of the Warbler.

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| Kathryn Carter | Georgia Norman |
| Andrea Douglas | Hank Mulder |
| Karen Frailey | Frank Rustin |
| Jean Graber | Frank & Harriet Schneidinger |
| Brad Hill | Bruce Slimp & Gene |
| Ruth Hoak | Dan Underwood |
| Deg Hogg | John Wallace |
| Kevin Nagele | |

Stewardship Day
is the 2nd Saturday
of every month!!

Friends

Thanks to everyone who has become a *Friend* or renewed their membership since May 2008.

Hummingbird

- Ruth Meyer
- John P. Nagel

Woodpecker

- Neil & Vivian McDermott
- John & Cindy McKee
- Steve Turner & Donna Moss

Heron

- George Amlott, Jr.
- F. Arnold Bock
- Aura Duke
- Bowie Verna Hannah
- Ronald Moesta
- Virginia Moore

To become a Friend of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary please fill out the form on the other side of this page.

For donations such as tools, equipment, benches, memorials, etc. please contact Terri Treacy, Sanctuary Chair, at 618-683-2222.

Stewardship

Volunteers happily pitched in as always to get the grounds and Kestrel Hall ready for the Shawnee Audubon annual meeting in June and again for the annual Insect Awareness & Appreciation Day in August. Getting everything set up for IAAD--tents, posters, decorations, raffle items, registration, food, etc. is an all-day activity for a small army of people--clean up the day after is just about as labor intensive. Thanks to our committed volunteers we have managed to

host fourteen IAADs. Next year is the big number 15!! If you haven't been to one yet, this is sure to be a really memorable one.

Our volunteers continued to clear debris off trails from the February ice storm throughout the summer. We no sooner had completed that task when, on September 14, Hurricane Ike blew through southern Illinois with 75 mile per hour sustained winds. In Ike's wake we found another slew of downed trees and branches strewn across

trails. Then came the power company to clear under the power lines--unfortunately, their idea of clearing included a couple sections of fencing! So, autumn stewardship days had no lack of chain saw and fence repair projects.

Another casualty of the ice storm was the barn gutter that feeds an important cistern. When the house cistern runs low during droughty times, water is pumped from the barn cistern into the house cistern. It took a while to locate the

correct gutter hangers, but once we did Dan had the gutter bent back into its original shape and rehung good as new!

Things were starting to get back to normal when the 2009 ice storm toppled more trees than in 2008 and this time took the entire barn gutter down! The February stewardship day was buzzing with chainsaws--we managed to get most of the downed trees and limbs along Bushwack Road and around the buildings cleared away. We also repaired a nasty washout in the road.



Dan Underwood



Ann Douglas



Kevin Nagele



Frank Scheindinger

Become a Friend. . . or Renew your membership

Name _____

Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Email: _____

- _____ \$5 Hummingbird
- _____ \$15 Warbler
- _____ \$25 Woodpecker
- _____ \$50 Heron
- _____ \$100 Owl
- _____ over \$100 Eagle

We invite you to be a ***Friend of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary***. Your membership helps fund the many special projects and equipment needs of the Sanctuary. Membership runs for one year from the date you join and is tax deductible. You will receive two newsletters per year, and good feelings the whole year through. Complete this form and mail it with your check payable to: I.A.S./War Bluff Valley Sanctuary
RR 1 Box 216A
Golconda, IL 62938

Visiting War Bluff Valley Sanctuary

The Sanctuary is open from dawn to dusk every day. Bring drinking water, wear study shoes or boots, and don't forget your binoculars!

For out-of-town visitors, there are many great choices for lodging or camping in the area. With advance notice it's possible to arrange camping or staying in the guest cabin at the Sanctuary. Call Terri for more information -- 618-683-2222.

Directions: From Golconda, IL take Rte 146 north out of town 3.5 miles to Bushwhack Road (look for brown Wildlife Viewing Area sign) -- turn left -- go another 2.2 miles to Sanctuary entrance on right (IAS sign on left across from drive).

Plan now to come visit your Sanctuary.

Illinois Audubon Society
Friends of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary
 RR 1 Box 216A
 Golconda, IL 62938



Save Stamps for Wildlife.
 Return with your renewal, or
 send to IAS office.