

The Warbler

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

Events

- Stewardship Days
2nd Saturday each month.
- War Bluff Valley
Christmas Bird
Count--Dec. 22
- Blue Bird Nest Box
Workshop - TBA

In This Issue

War Bluff Nature Calendar	1
Nest Box Trail	1
Acknowl- edgements	3
Stewardship	3

War Bluff Nature Calendar

by Terri Treacy

The “first” spring of 2007 had come and gone in flash. Four consecutive nights with freezing temperatures had killed all of the new growth in the forest. The forest was suddenly brown again--it was anybody’s guess how it would all turn out for the plants and all the critters that depend on them.

The native red honeysuckle vine didn’t seem to be affected by the freeze. Its crimson blooms drew in the hummingbirds and orchard orioles—both of which quickly discovered the nectar feeders.

Two green herons broke fast at Lily Pond on April 20, and the next day, the sweet voices of prairie warblers, blue-winged warblers, and blue-gray gnatcatchers brought cheer to

For the first time (that we are aware of anyway) tree swallows nested at War Bluff Valley Sanctuary.

Five little ones successfully fledged the this nest.

Read all about the nest box trail below.



the dreary, brown spring. At least two more hummingbirds had arrived and took turns with the orchard orioles at the feeders. Next to arrive were rose-breasted grosbeaks and indigo buntings on the 24th and 25th. Three days later, common yellow-throats,

ovenbirds, and kingbirds arrived.

The migrant action really picked up during the first week of May. The juncos and white-throated sparrows departed, making way for all the spring arrivals, which included lots of

continued page 2

Bluebird Trail Results

by Andrea Douglas

What can be more precious than watching a tiny egg hatch into a curled up, baldy, bug-eyed baby bird the size of a quarter grow into a punk hairdoed, wide-mouthed, begging nestling, and then develop the symmetry and grace of its parent; all in about two weeks time? That’s the pleasure we had this spring and summer as we watched our nest boxes at the sanctuary.

Bluebirds successfully raised 18 fledglings, and Carolina chickadees raised 11. This year, we also had tree swallows raising three young out by Cedar Pond,

and in nest box #1, Carolina wrens set up house keeping for the first time in one of our



Peterson-style nest box.

boxes; they raised three young. We added 35 fledglings to the general population compared to the previous year’s 58.

We monitored 14 nest boxes, ten on the east side of the sanctuary and four on the west.

Four were Peterson-style boxes and the rest were rectangular models. All of the Peterson boxes had successful nests; 2 chickadees, 1 bluebird, and 1 tree swallow. One rectangle nest box had two consecutive bluebird nestings. Four had no attempts. The Carolina wren used a rectangular box, but they

continued page 2



Baltimore oriole checking out the nectar feeder.

Nature Calendar continued from page 1

warblers—Nashville, Tennessee, cerulean, palm, magnolia, bay breasted, chestnut sided, black and white, and blackpoll. Also appearing were wood thrush, catbird, chipping sparrow, blue grosbeak, house wren, and a solitary sandpiper.

The grosbeak population continued to increase—at the peak there were easily 15 pair enjoying the sunflower seed buffet. By May 5 there were at least 8 Baltimore orioles sharing the nectar feeder with the orchard orioles, indigo buntings, red-belled woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, chickadees, goldfinch, and, oh yeah, hummingbirds!

By mid-May fledgling house finch had joined the nectar-fest, and a male downy woodpecker brought his youngster to the nectar every day. He also tried to teach the little one how to retrieve seeds from the feeder, but Junior seemed quite content to wait on the fence rail for Dad to return with the goodies.

There was great excitement at the discovery of tree swallows nesting in a bluebird box by Cedar Pond. Shortly thereafter, a pair of barn swallows began nesting in the barn. Unfortunately, the purple martins didn't return this year.

The woods were filled with the sound of gobbling turkey, and the ponds were filled with the sound of frogs—bullfrogs, cricket frogs, gray tree frogs, and leopard frogs.

It was a thrill to see an adult, male blackburnian warbler on the 27th. The next day I spotted two timber rattlers by the barn—my early warning sign that it was time to really watch where I was stepping.

June, July, and August were pretty routine. Mama deer brought their wobbly-legged babies around, bird youngsters followed their folks around begging for food, butterflies nect-



Carolina satyr butterfly.

ared on wildflowers and garden flowers, chantrelle mushrooms grew abundantly, screech owls trilled at night, and timber rattlers, or their skins, were encountered on several occasions.

Towards the end of August, wood ducks arrived and roosted at night on Dragonfly Pond. On the 21st, a young robin enjoyed the day bathing, and feasting on scrumptious polk berries. Hummingbirds were swarming the feeders; at the peak I was filling the feeders twice a day—almost two gallons!

On August 29, among a pack of gemmed satyr butterflies, I spotted a Carolina satyr. Having never seen one of those before, I had to get the field guide out to identify it. When I discovered that only one sighting had ever been made in Pope County—at the Sanctuary!—I knew I had to try to document it with a photo.

During the first half of September, the hummers and butterflies were absolutely magnificent to watch. The prevalent butterflies on the list included hackberry, tawny emperor, red-spotted purple, painted lady, cloudless sulphur, and silver-spotted skipper. Hopefully, next year I'll be able to identify more of the numerous other species of skipper that visit—Jean gave me a copy of the new [Field Guide to the Skipper Butterflies of Illinois!](#)

Peewee flycatchers were fat-

tening up on insects at the Sanctuary as they headed on their way south. One even attempted to take a hummingbird, but he quickly decided that wasn't going to work out very well!

On the 4th, as I sat on the front porch steps enjoying the hummingbird/butterfly show, a tiny fence lizard scooted out from her hiding place underneath the porch to bask in the sun. Just inches from me, I was able to closely admire her scaly little body and her clear, sharp eyes darting about. Lizzy continued to come out to visit every day for the next few weeks. I even got to watch her go through her first skin shed.

On the 20th, a baby bobcat, no bigger than a large house cat, shot out from the fencerow into the middle of the road. It stared at my truck for at least 15 to 20 seconds before it decided it was best to jump back into the weeds to hide.

I didn't spot anymore hummers after October 6, although a phoebe was still around on the 8th. White-throated sparrows arrived on the 10th, and juncos arrived a few days later. On the 17th a bald eagle soared back and forth over Barn Pond. A lone, male rusty blackbird was hunting bugs and other treats along a log laying in Cedar Pond on the 28th.

Various members of a woodchuck family made appearances on and off throughout the month and into November. It appeared they had taken up residence in burrows under the



Buckeye butterfly.

barn.

As I close out this edition of the Nature Calendar, we are enjoying a late (by about a month), but truly gorgeous fall. The red-shouldered hawks are already staking out their territory, the deer are finding mates, and the woodpeckers are really pleased that I finally started serving up suet cakes again. Until next spring.....have a delightful winter. 🦋

Bluebird Trail continued from page 1

will nest in anything, including a plastic bag of rags kept in the tractor shed.

Our biggest mystery was on the west side. On two occasions, bluebirds laid non-viable eggs in two nest boxes for a total of 18 eggs (two consecutive times in one box, and once in the other). This could have been one bird, because the first two attempts were in the spring and the other was in July. The extended heat could have been a factor since these were the least protected boxes, meaning they were in an open field; however the box with two consecutive successful nests was also in an open field. These boxes have produced viable young in previous years. Only one nest was predated this year and that was in a rectangular box.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology will sort all this information out, and with the data from thousands of other citizen science participants may be able to draw conclusions and see trends.

Anyone with nest boxes can join the Birdhouse Network. It's inexpensive and easy, but does require a little time for consistent monitoring. Not only do you contribute to scientific data, you help cavity-nesting birds. www.birds.cornell.edu 🦋

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.

Sally Agnew
Kathy, Curt & Emily Carter
Andrea & Dave Douglas
Karen Frailey
Jean Graber
Fred & Ruth Hoak
Deb Hogg
Kevin Nagele
Frank Rustin
Frank & Harriet Schneidinger
John Wallace
Jim Wiker

Friends

Thanks to everyone who has become a *Friend* or renewed their membership since May 2007.

Hummingbird

Vern Kleen

Warbler

Jim Rodemaker
Jack White
Paul Saindon

Woodpecker

Donald Funk
Rober & Janet Keisker
Neil & Vivian McDermott
Linda B. Sullivan

Heron

Don & Elaine Goerne
John & Cindy McKee
Virginia Moore
Karen Frailey & John Wallace

Eagle

Edward H. Hegarty
John Siebert

Other donations

Jackson Purchase Audubon Society

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 Day
is the 2nd Saturday
of every month!!

Stewardship

Many, many thanks to our volunteers who give their time and talents to the Sanctuary.

Special mention needs to go to Andrea Douglas who has made some terrific new trail signs as part of a longterm sign project. Andrea has also been the driving force behind the Bluebird Trail.

Kevin Nagele and Frank Rustin are my right-hand chain saw guys -- they are always ready and willing to clear a fallen log or remove a leaning tree.

Frank Schneidinger is my trustworthy tractor maintenance coach and assistant.

Thanks go to everyone who comes out before a big event to help clean up Kestrel Hall and stays after to clean up the aftermath! That's no small feat for an event like Insect Awareness and Appreciation Day.

And, of course, no mention

would be complete without including Jean Graber. Jean continues to come out every month to work on labeling her amazing slide collection. Her presence here is always valued--she continues to be an inspiration to everyone who knows and meets her.

Some of the tasks that got accomplished over the summer and fall included getting the Bluebird Trail nest boxes cleaned, replaced, relocated, and repaired as necessary, and of course, checking them twice a week during the season.

New wooden trail signs were routed and installed at various locations, and a list of additional signs that are needed was started.

Trails were kept mowed and groomed, including removing deadfall and cutting back areas that get encroached upon by blackberries, cedar trees, low

hanging branches, etc.

Flower gardens to attract hummingbirds and butterflies were planted and maintained.

Some of the non-native phragmites growing around Dragonfly Pond was cut to prevent it from going to seed.

While the volunteers were working on the phragmites project, they discovered that there were dozens of places in the field behind Kestrel Hall where metal posts and wire cages had been placed around seedling trees to protect them from critters. Many of the trees never made it, and those that did were being deformed or strangled by all the wire, so a day was spent finding and removing all the wire from the field.

Thanks everyone! The Sanctuary appreciates your devotion!

**Events**

December 22:
War Bluff Valley
Christmas Bird
Count. Contact
count compiler,
Andrea Douglas, if
you would like to
help out. We need
feeder watchers, too!
Call Andrea at 618-
564-2079.

To be
announced:
We are planning
on having a
bluebird nest box
workshop at the
Sanctuary sometime
during January or
February. Please
let us me know if
this something you
would be interested
in participating in.
Give me a call at
618-683-2222.

Become a Friend. . . or Renew your membership

Name _____

Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Email: _____ YES, I prefer to receive my Warbler via 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 good shoes, 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.