

(January 08--June 08)

# The Warbler

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

## Events

Stewardship Days  
2nd Saturday each  
month.

Insect Awareness &  
Appreciation Day—  
August 23--go to  
shawneeaudubon.  
org for details.

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## War Bluff Nature Calendar

by Terri Treacy

January was fairly typical at War Bluff Valley Sanctuary—the usual suspects visited the bird feeders, barred owls could be heard calling quite frequently, and a couple light snowfalls brightened otherwise predominantly gray days. The most unusual thing was the brown thrasher that hung around all winter. The first time I noticed him, I could hear some very faint singing near the barn. If you've ever heard how loud and raucous brown thrashers normally are, you can imagine my surprise when I discovered the identity of the mystery songster.

Spring-like temperatures in the 60s ushered in the month of February. Spring peepers peeped, titmice cried out peter

peter, and red-shouldered hawks soared overhead as they called the loud, familiar keeyar, keryar, keeyar calls to one another. Within a few days the spring-like tease came to an abrupt end.

On February 11, freezing rain began falling around noon

and continued all night. The power went out at the sanctuary around midnight—it would be five days before it was restored. For two days the eerie sound of trees cracking and crashing under the weight of the ice echoed through the valley.

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*Eurycea lucifuga*. Tony Frazier took this photo of a cave salamander during his herpatofauna inventory at War Bluff Valley Sanctuary.

## Sanctuary featured in The Illinois Steward magazine

War Bluff Valley Sanctuary is honored to be featured in the Spring, 2008 issue of *The Illinois Steward* magazine. Susan L. Post, staff writer for the magazine, describes the Sanctuary as a place where one can “look for or listen to 45 species of reptiles and amphibians...participate in an annual, fun-filled, but factual Insect Awareness and Appreciation Day...and hike a biological reserve maintained strictly for its creatures.”

The magazine also includes an in-depth look at lives and work of Drs. Richard and Jean Graber in an article titled “Life’s Journey--From a Quest for Knowledge to a Passion for Preservation” by Marilyn Campbell. Mike Ward, Jeff Walk, Steve Bailey, and Jeffrey Brown explain some of the current findings in their article “The New Illinois Statewide Bird Survey.”

The latter two articles are significant to *Friends of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary* for a couple reasons. First, Drs. Richard and Jean Graber (or Dick and Jean as we fondly refer to them) donated War Bluff Valley Sanctuary to the Illinois Audubon Society in 1990. Second, Dick and Jean, when they worked for the Illinois Natural History Survey in the 1950s, had the foresight to repeat a statewide bird census that had been done 50 years before by Stephen A. Forbes. Having made this precedent-setting decision fifty years ago to follow bird population trends in Illinois, the state is now conducting the next 50-year census.

To obtain a copy of the Spring issue or to subscribe to *The Illinois Steward* go to [ilsteward.extension.uiuc.edu](http://ilsteward.extension.uiuc.edu) or write to: *The Illinois Steward*, 214 Mumford Hall, 1301 W. Gregory Dr., Urbana, IL 61801.



Snowberry clearwing (*Hemaris diffinis*). Adults of this clearwing sphinx moth resemble large bumblebees.



Nature Calendar continued from page 1

Woodcocks and wood ducks arrived on the 15th, most likely oblivious to the ice storm that had so recently caused major turmoil. Just a few days later we were hit with more ice—fortunately not enough to cause more tree damage or power outages. It was enough however to cause tree sparrows and the brown thrasher to come eat with the rest of the gang.

Chorus frogs began singing in early March and the first phoebe arrived on the 11th. The brown thrasher, having made it through the tough winter weather, began singing his crazy song, at normal volume, on the 12th. A few days later we were inundated by rain. The beavers went into overtime mode—expanding dams on all of the ponds.

The fox sparrows, which spent the winter scratching through the leaf litter under the bird feeders began singing on the 23rd—a few days later they departed for their summer home. On the 26th I noticed the crayfish frogs and American toads were vocalizing.

Wildlife action and other surprises really picked up in April. On the heels of a four-inch rain, the first blue-gray gnatcatchers arrived on the 4th and early spring wildflowers were blooming in the woods. Louisiana waterthrush and northern parula warblers were the next to arrive on the 9th. Orange falcate and painted lady butterflies were seen on the 14th. The next day, blue-winged warblers and white-eyed vireos were heard singing and kingbirds were seen by Cedar Pond. On the 16th I spotted the red-shouldered hawk sitting on their nest—the same nest used last year.



*The February 2008 ice storm left the sanctuary without power for five days. No running water was the most inconvenient aspect—fortunately, heating and cooking are both propane. I had five gallons of drinking water available and I was able to chip and melt ice for wash water. The most unnerving part of the entire experience was getting the bird feeders filled as tree limbs continuously crashed down around the yard and the forest—it sounded like a war zone. By day three, our neighbor at the end of the road, Brad Hill, starting chain sawing our way out to the highway—he finished the job the following day.*

Since the first hummingbird arrived on April 17 last year, I decided to put out a feeder early in the morning of April 17 this year. At 10:00 a.m. a beautiful little male flew in and went right to it! It wasn't long before he was joined by other hummingbird companions as well as by downy and red-bellied woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, and house finch.

The next morning, a 5.2 earthquake caused quite a commotion among the human population of the area. Fortunately, there was no damage to the house or outbuildings. The prairie warblers, chipping sparrows, and whip-poor-wills all arrived that day also.

Three days later the orchard orioles, common yellowthroat warblers, and rose-breasted grosbeaks showed up. The next day, on the 21st, the first indigo bunting of the season joined the

rest of the nectar-sipping club at the hummingbird feeders. Warm evenings during the last week of the month brought out the fireflies.

The spring bird count on May 10 produced 73 species for the sanctuary. I have no doubt more species were present, but with only one of me to cover almost 500 acres I'm sure a few were missed. Nineteen different species of warbler were counted. In fact the top two high-count birds for the day were both warblers—48 common yellowthroat and 43 prairie warblers. A wonderful surprise awaited me at the red-shouldered hawk nest—instead of the predictable two little, white fuzz-ball heads protruding from the top of the nest, this year the nest held triplets! Another treat was running into a mother wood duck and her six little ducklings as she was in the process of shepherding

them from the creek to one of our ponds. Unfortunately, momma duck flew off at the sight of me, leaving her little babies stranded with the big monster. The little ones made quite a noisy fuss as they waddled at break-neck speed in the direction their mother had flown.

Arriving two and three days late for the bird count were a white-crowned sparrow and a yellow-throated warbler. By the end of the month, the white-throated sparrows had departed, the rose-breasted grosbeaks had moved on, and the first rattlesnake of the season met an unfortunate end under the lawnmower.

The first of June brought an explosion of green tree frogs. Their monotonous “metallic honking” dominated the pond chorus throughout the month.

As I finish up this edition of the War Bluff Nature Calendar things around the sanctuary have settled into the typical summer routine. Birds are busy sitting on eggs or feeding young; giant puddles of newly emerged male butterflies congregate at moist spots along Bushwhack Road; frogs, toads, whip-poor-wills, and coyotes rule the night; and the first wobbly-legged fawn of the season can be seen shadowing her mom most mornings and afternoons as they make their rounds through the yard.



### 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.

Andrea & Dave Douglas  
Jean Graber  
Brad Hill  
Deg Hogg  
Kevin Nagele  
Frank Rustin  
Frank & Harriet Schneidinger  
Seth Turner  
Dan Underwood

### Friends

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

#### Hummingbird

Ruth Meyer  
John P. Nagel

#### Woodpecker

Maurice Brucker & Emiko Yang  
Kelly Cichy & Lorenzo Cristaudo  
Patricia Ganyard  
Michael & Susan Shaw  
Laurel Toussaint  
Richard & Vicki Zimny

#### Owl

Jim Burnett  
Marilyn Campbell  
Joan S. Palincsar  
Glen & Beverley Sanderson

#### Eagle

Ray, Liesel, & Tad Boehmer  
Diane Deleonardo  
Mary Anne Harrison

#### Other donations

Metropolis Garden Club  
Marilyn Campbell--sugar for hummers!

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

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

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

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome two new volunteers--Dan Underwood and Seth Turner--you have both been a tremendous help--we hope to continue to see you in the coming months.

In January more interior barbed wire fencing was removed. Ann Douglas' beautiful wooden, routed trail intersection signs were installed

along North Pond Loop and Turkey Trot trails. A portion of the boundary was walked and sanctuary signs were installed as necessary. It was during this foray that garlic mustard was spotted (for the first time ever at the sanctuary) in Simmons Creek valley.

In February, we took care of some housekeeping chores: gutter cleaning, tree limb removal near buildings, shed cleaning, etc. Nest boxes along the blue bird trail were checked, relocated, added, removed,

etc. And the garlic mustard we found the month before was pulled.

The remainder of the Stewardship Days since winter have been primarily devoted to removing trees from trails that fell during the February ice storm. Another project included a very profitable run to the metal recycler with some of the many miles of barbed wire fence we've been removing over the years.

Special recognition goes to Ann Douglas, Frank

Schneidinger, Dan Underwood, Kevin Nagele, and Deb Hogg who made extra trips here to help out with special projects such as additional garlic mustard pulling and blue bird trail monitoring; miscellaneous repairs and maintenance; and attending to routine chores when was out of town.

Thanks everyone! The Sanctuary appreciates your devotion!



Seth Turner helps move a brush pile.



Ann Douglas loading brush into truck.



Kevin Nagele sporting chain-saw cutting.

### 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, weat 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.