

DECEMBER 2009
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# The Warbler

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

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Visit Shawnee Audubon Chapter website at [shawneeaudubon.org](http://shawneeaudubon.org) where you can download a color copy of this newsletter.

## NATURE CALENDAR

by Terri Treacy

The spring-like weather of November 2009 quickly changed with the advent of December. Night temps dropping into the 20s attracted a family of bluebirds to the pokeberry and fox sparrows returned to glean goodies among the fallen leaves beneath the shrubbery right outside my living room window.

During early January yellow-bellied sapsuckers and purple finch were regular visitors sipping sap at the sugar maples. Turkeys could be heard gobbling in the woods and a few times a whole squadron of them would cruise through the front yard. Once the hermit thrush and brown thrasher discovered the plump berries of the deciduous holly they also became dependable visitors. Red-shouldered hawks were quite vocal during the day, as were the barred owls in the evenings. A Cooper's hawk was seen patrolling the area several times throughout the month.

A little rain on January 21 aroused the chorus frogs, which began singing in earnest by the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Just six days later, 7 inches of snow put an end to that!

The first half of February was quite wintry. The resident barred was seen and heard most days, yellow-rumped Myrtle warblers and bluebirds kept the Cooper's hawk on his toes. Despite very cold temps on the 18<sup>th</sup> both cardinals and titmice were singing. Perhaps they could sense that two days later it would be a beautiful, sunny 62-degree day. A warm rain the next evening brought out chorus frogs and spring peepers. The following day, woodcocks joined the winter crooning.

Several times in early March a siege of migrating sandhill cranes could be heard and seen flying over the sanctuary. On the 8<sup>th</sup> two ring-billed ducks were spotted on Barn Pond. Fairly warm evenings initiated a great deal of frog and toad activity. First were the peepers and chorus frogs on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

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Barred owl. Photo: Donna Caplinger

## 2010 NEST BOX RESULTS (OR THE BLUEBIRD BLUES)

by Ann Douglas



Eastern bluebird. Photo: Donna Caplinger

It was a dismal year for successful fledglings in our nest box monitoring. Out of twelve nest boxes, only three fledged a total of 12 bluebirds from 29 eggs, compared to last year's 25 from 44 eggs. There were no Carolina chickadee or tufted titmouse attempts this year compared to six attempts last year and two unsuccessful tree swallow attempts and those were lost to predation.

Predation was evident in five of the nests while it looked as if five nests were just abandoned. The abandoned nest boxes had completed nests but no eggs appeared and were on both sides of the sanctuary. All of the predated nests were on the west side of the sanctuary so we will consider moving them this fall/winter.

On a more positive note, we did have some fledglings from a phoebe nest on the guesthouse. This nest was observed but not monitored due to its height, but little fledglings were seen. Another

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## SHAWNEE AUDUBON CHAPTER'S 16TH ANNUAL INSECT AWARENESS & APPRECIATION DAY

Whether scooping pond muck, swooping a net, gazing through a microscope, making a paper butterfly or getting a face painted, the approximately 100 children and adults that attended the 16th Annual IAAD had a fabulous time! This popular, fun and educational event would not be possible without all the help from our Shawnee Chapter volunteers and the dedicated insect experts that volunteer their time to share their expertise. Please see page 5 for a complete list of the people who made this day special.



## OWL PROWL AT WAR BLUFF

The first Owl Prowl at War Bluff was lots of fun and very informative--thanks to Bev Shoffstall of Free Again Wildlife Rehabilitation Center who brought and talked about 5 species of owls. First in the lineup were our most common owls--Eastern screech owl, great-horned owl and barred owl. The last 2 are our state-endangered owls--the short-eared owl and barn owl (pictured at right respectively).

The "prowl" portion of the evening didn't happen! Instead, the folks that stayed on after the presentation enjoyed an owl "sit" in front of a cozy campfire!



NATURE CALENDAR con't from page 1

American toads followed on the 10<sup>th</sup>, wood frogs on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and crawfish frogs on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

During this frog frenzy I witnessed the most amazing cross-species interaction—a downy woodpecker and chorus frog “talking” to each other. For over a period of fifteen minutes the male downy would drill and a chorus frog would respond and vice versa! All that drilling paid off for the downy—before long a cute little female appeared. I'm not sure if the chorus frog saw any action!

Just like clockwork, the lovely song of the Louisiana waterthrush could be heard echoing along the creeks on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The next day the large wiggly masses of spotted salamander egg masses were discovered on Dragonfly Pond.

On April 1, a breeding aggregation of over 25 pair of



*Green heron. Photo: Donna Caplinger*

American toads left behind their signature string-like egg masses in Dragonfly Pond and in small puddles in the driveway. Just five days later thousands of wriggling tadpoles had emerged from the eggs.

That same day the first chipping sparrows arrived from the south, followed each consecutive day by another new species—Northern parula warbler, yellow-throated warbler, prairie warbler, warbling vireo, tree swallow, blue-winged warbler, white-eyed vireo and finally whippoorwill. Hummingbirds greeted my return from the Great Smoky Mountains on April 20, and two days later the common yellowthroat arrived.

Arriving the first week of May were Nashville and Tennessee warblers, summer and scarlet tanagers and orchard oriole. The gray tree frog was now the dominant evening songster; however, a close second was the squeaky chitter-chatter of flying squirrel. The plummeting temperature with the arrival of blackberry winter on May 10 didn't seem to phase the ensuing migration. Over the next couple days several new species were observed—blue grosbeak, catbird, ovenbird, Kentucky warbler, Acadian flycatcher, magnolia warbler, blackpoll warbler, worm eating warbler, Eastern wood peewee and indigo bunting. Tree swallows began checking out (and eventually nesting in) the purple Martin house on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Green tree frogs began chorusing on the 13<sup>th</sup>. And, on the 15<sup>th</sup>



*American toads. Photo: Terri Treacy*

a great-crested flycatcher collected nesting material from the garden.

By May 22 the beautiful flute-like song of the wood thrush was finally heard radiating from the forest. The next few warm days brought about the emergence of great spangled fritillary and monarch butterflies. Towards the end of the month I began seeing bobwhite quail regularly along the road as they crossed from the cover of tall grasses and shrubs of the sanctuary to the cornfield on the neighboring property. One day, however, I saw something I had never seen before—a quail perched on the power line above the road! White-tailed deer fawns began appearing with their moms by the first of June. One such appearance was particularly amusing. A brand new fawn—perhaps only minutes old—struggled to keep its little wobbly legs propelling itself forward in a straight line as it tried to follow mom. Barely able to keep its legs from buckling under, the fawn swerved off course head first into a line of shrubs and couldn't figure out how to disentangle himself. By this time, mom was out of sight—apparently oblivious to her little fawn's predicament. But, no sooner had I thought perhaps I should intervene, mom raced back at a full run to rescue her little one!

By mid-month, I was lulled to sleep each evening by the raspy, ascending begging call of juvenile barred owls and awakened each morning by the song of a summer tanager. Wood ducks and green herons were busy feeding at the ponds, hummingbirds mobbed the nectar



*Silver-spotted skipper nectaring on common milkweed. Photo: Terri Treacy*

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Question mark butterfly larva. Photo: Terri Treacy

feeders, and lepidoptera crowded the milkweeds.

It wasn't until July 6 that I heard the first yellow-billed cuckoo. Swallowtail butterflies of all varieties were abundant; but it was especially exciting to see dozens of zebra swallowtails among the paw paws along Simmons Creek. Summer wildflowers were at their peak.

The main attractions in August were the bobwhite quail seen nearly daily crossing the road, a rattlesnake and her young

seen in the pole barn and the amber-winged skimmer dragonfly that John Schwegman found flying over Dragonfly Pond.

It's always a surprise how quickly fall arrives and southward migration ensues. Early in September male ruby-throated hummingbirds were quite numerous as they moved through. By the end of the month there were but just a few juvenile hummers still hanging around. On the 7<sup>th</sup> I found a caterpillar in the brushfooted family, but since it didn't quite match any of the photographs in my book I decided to try rearing it. By 4 pm on the 9<sup>th</sup> it started its transformation into a chrysalis—by 7 am the following morning the process was complete. Ten days later a beautiful question mark butterfly emerged.

In mid-October the indubitable sign that fall had arrived was appearance of white-throated sparrows, dark-eyed juncos, yellow-rumped myrtle warblers and fox sparrows. Signs of the changing season continued in November with robins, cedar waxwings, purple finch, bluebirds and a mockingbird feeding on the deciduous holly. The other big change starting in mid-November was the end of a three-month drought with over 6 inches of rain during the final two weeks of the month. This Nature Calendar ends just as it began--Springlike November rains and singing American toads quickly giving way to biting cold temps during the first days of December.



NEST BOX RESULTS con't from page 1

pleasant surprise was the tree swallows nesting in the Martin house. Even more surprising was the discovery on the day they fledged that there were actually two pair of tree swallows nesting in the house! On the big day, ten fledglings were seen on the nearby power line begging from four adults. After one frantic day of feeding and practice flying they all took off on their long southward journey.

Reasons for the poor results may have something to do with the record sustained heat we had this summer. The successful nests occurred during the spring. It is also possible that the ice storm from last year opened up natural cavities that the birds may have preferred. Whatever the reason, it was a disappointment to have so few babies. It is part of the wonder and joy of monitoring to see eggs hatch, watch the progression of feather growth and see bright-eyed healthy young ready to leave the nest.

The Shawnee Chapter has been monitoring and submitting results of our bluebird trail on the War Bluff Valley Sanctuary since 2002. Results are sent in to Cornell Lab of Ornithology at what was then the Birdhouse Network and is currently Nest Watch, which includes natural nests, not necessarily man-made boxes.

Anyone interested in helping monitor next year can contact Terri Treacy at the sanctuary. Optimal coverage is twice a week after the late morning to not disturb the mother in her laying or incubating. We will gladly work out a schedule with those willing to help. As a citizen science project, our results get tabulated in a giant database showing trends in the avian population. The best part is getting out in nature and observing – my favorite is seeing the different wildflowers in their seasons as I walk the trails at War Bluff Valley Sanctuary.



Ann monitoring bluebird nest box. Photo: Terri Treacy

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|  | <p>For more information about the Birdhouse Network visit:<br/> <a href="http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=1664">http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=1664</a></p> |
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| <p><b>VOLUNTEERS</b><br/>                 The success of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary is a direct result of fantastic volunteers. Many thanks go to the following people who have volunteered on our regularly scheduled Stewardship Days and/or helped with events.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">                     John Behl &amp; friends<br/>                     Kathryn Carter<br/>                     Ann Douglas<br/>                     Karen Frailey<br/>                     Jean Graber<br/>                     Ruth Hoak<br/>                     Deb &amp; Steve Hogg<br/>                     Hank Mulder<br/>                     Kevin Nagele<br/>                     Georgia Norman<br/>                     Jim Rodemaker<br/>                     Frank "Rusty" Rustin<br/>                     Frank &amp; Harriet Schneidinger<br/>                     Terri Treacy<br/>                     Dan Underwood<br/>                     John Wallace                 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IAAD Volunteer Presenters</b></p>                     Minnie Ahrendt<br/>                     Bill Black<br/>                     Dr. Laura Campbell, Ph.D.<br/>                     Dr. Nancy Garwood, Ph.D.<br/>                     Dr. Richard Thomas, Ph.D.<br/>                     Dr. Agustin Jimenez, Ph.D.<br/>                     John, Martha &amp; John Jr.<br/>                     Schwegman<br/>                     Dr. Matt Whiles Dept. of Zoology<br/>                     Grad Students SIUC<br/> <br/>                     Dede Lechner--Face Painter<br/>                     Extraordinaire<br/> <br/>                     RognboB--Musicians<br/>                     Extraordinaire                 </td> </tr> </table> | John Behl & friends<br>Kathryn Carter<br>Ann Douglas<br>Karen Frailey<br>Jean Graber<br>Ruth Hoak<br>Deb & Steve Hogg<br>Hank Mulder<br>Kevin Nagele<br>Georgia Norman<br>Jim Rodemaker<br>Frank "Rusty" Rustin<br>Frank & Harriet Schneidinger<br>Terri Treacy<br>Dan Underwood<br>John Wallace                                                                                                                       | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IAAD Volunteer Presenters</b></p> Minnie Ahrendt<br>Bill Black<br>Dr. Laura Campbell, Ph.D.<br>Dr. Nancy Garwood, Ph.D.<br>Dr. Richard Thomas, Ph.D.<br>Dr. Agustin Jimenez, Ph.D.<br>John, Martha & John Jr.<br>Schwegman<br>Dr. Matt Whiles Dept. of Zoology<br>Grad Students SIUC<br><br>Dede Lechner--Face Painter<br>Extraordinaire<br><br>RognboB--Musicians<br>Extraordinaire | <p><b>FRIENDS</b><br/>                 My bad -- VERY BAD!! Somehow I let an entire year slip by without putting out a <i>Friends</i> newsletter! And it shows--we gained only one new <i>Friend</i> and received only one renewal.</p> <p>Many, many thanks to:<br/>                 Shawnee Adventure Guides (Warbler)<br/>                 Joan Palincsar (Owl)<br/>                 Jean Graber--new roof on residence</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>Please remember War Bluff Valley Sanctuary this holiday season. Maybe you can give a little extra this year. Or, consider giving the gift of a <i>Friends</i> membership for that nature-lover in your family that has everything. Or, help promote the <i>Friends</i> to your friends and family--share your newsletter and encourage them to join. Whatever clever way you come up with to help--your generosity will be very much appreciated!</p> </div> |
| John Behl & friends<br>Kathryn Carter<br>Ann Douglas<br>Karen Frailey<br>Jean Graber<br>Ruth Hoak<br>Deb & Steve Hogg<br>Hank Mulder<br>Kevin Nagele<br>Georgia Norman<br>Jim Rodemaker<br>Frank "Rusty" Rustin<br>Frank & Harriet Schneidinger<br>Terri Treacy<br>Dan Underwood<br>John Wallace                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IAAD Volunteer Presenters</b></p> Minnie Ahrendt<br>Bill Black<br>Dr. Laura Campbell, Ph.D.<br>Dr. Nancy Garwood, Ph.D.<br>Dr. Richard Thomas, Ph.D.<br>Dr. Agustin Jimenez, Ph.D.<br>John, Martha & John Jr.<br>Schwegman<br>Dr. Matt Whiles Dept. of Zoology<br>Grad Students SIUC<br><br>Dede Lechner--Face Painter<br>Extraordinaire<br><br>RognboB--Musicians<br>Extraordinaire |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

***Become a Friend .... or Renew Your Membership***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- |                  |             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ \$5        | Hummingbird | 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 one to two newsletters per year, and good feelings the whole year through. Complete this form and mail it with your check payable to: |
| _____ \$15       | Warbler     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| _____ \$25       | Woodpecker  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| _____ \$50       | Heron       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| _____ \$100      | Owl         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| _____ over \$100 | Eagle       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
- IAS/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 sturdy shoes or boots, and don't forget your binoculars! Please sign in at the main kiosk sign--you'll also find trail maps, bird checklists and other information there.

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 primitive camping or staying in the guest cottage at the sanctuary. Call Terri for more information at 618-683-2222 or email [warbluff@shawneeaudubon.org](mailto:warbluff@shawneeaudubon.org).

Directions: From Golconda, IL take Rte. 146 north out of town 3.5 miles to Bushwack 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.

## SANCTUARY PROJECTS AND VOLUNTEERS



Thanks to the extreme generosity of Jean Graber, the residence house now has new metal roof!



Volunteers Kevin Nagel, Frank Schneider, Rustin and Dan Underwood take a well-deserved break to pose for a photo.



The cistern water supply for the residence required an extreme makeover this summer.

The outdoor/Kestrel Hall water supply is also going to require an extreme makeover before next summer. The pond, which was the outdoor water source got so low in the drought this summer that there has been no water since August.

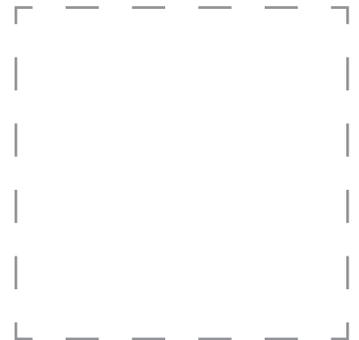


Ann Douglas is a regular volunteer and runs the bluebird trail at War Bluff. Ann is also the Shawnee Chapter President. In this photo she is touching up the entrance sign.

**\*\*\* Please Remember War Bluff Valley Sanctuary This Holiday Season \*\*\***



Illinois Audubon Society  
*War Bluff Valley Sanctuary*  
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Save Stamps for Wildlife  
Return this stamp with your  
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