

DECEMBER 2010
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OCTOBER 2011

The Warbler

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

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A VISITOR'S JOURNAL

by Joe Schelling

My first visit to the War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary was in early June of 2011, where I was fortunate to stay for a few days before the Cache River Nature Fest. Coming from New Mexico, the heat, humidity, ticks, and mosquitoes were somewhat of a novelty to say the least, but well worth it for the absolutely fascinating time I had exploring many of the trails and observing the incredible diversity of wildlife in the varied habitats of forest, meadows, and ponds at the sanctuary.

Each of the trails at War Bluff had its own unique character and led to new discoveries. Close to the parking area are the Dragonfly and Barn ponds. It was at the Dragonfly Pond that I surprised a female deer and its new fawn drinking from the far end of the pond, observed a variety of dragonflies and damselflies, and spotted a number of cricket frogs. As I approached the Barn Pond, another startled young deer bounded away, a green heron flew off from its perch in a leafless tree, and a box turtle plodded along through the tall grasses. More dragonflies appeared near the shore, where one also can spot raccoon tracks and signs of recent beaver activity.

From the Barn Pond, the Creek Trail was a pleasant loop down to a creek through a fairly open forest of tall trees, alive with bird song. The more open trail to the North Pond was good for butterflies and birds including indigo buntings and yellow-breasted chats. The pond itself was rather quiet but held a family of wood ducks, who swiftly made for the far shore in a single file line led by the female



Doe and her fawn drinking water at Dragonfly Pond.

Photo: Joe Schelling

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2011 BLUEBIRD TRAIL SYNOPSIS

by Ann Douglas



Bluebird eggs--first little naked nestling breaking out! Photo:T. Treacy

2011 success on the Bluebird Trail was a mixed bag. Out of 39 bluebird eggs, only 15 fledged. Chickadees fared better with 11 out of 13 eggs hatching to reach the fledging state. The tree swallows had three eggs before bluebirds took over the nest box and then had their two eggs predated.

Most of the predated eggs were snake victims leaving the nest undisturbed. At least there weren't any surprises of discovering the snake in the box. Raccoons did reach in two nests getting a few eggs and rolling the others under the grass nest.

There were two nesting phases; the first in spring was the most successful but the ones in late spring/summer had a rough time. Only seven hatched out during a long sustained heat spell, with indices well

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17TH ANNUAL INSECT AWARENESS & APPRECIATION DAY AT WAR BLUFF VALLEY SANCTUARY



On August 27th Shawnee Chapter hosted another successful IAAD with over 50 people enjoying expertly led field trips, the best potluck in southern Illinois, a Really Cool Raffle and musical entertainment by RognboB! (the Gospel of Goof).



Bluebird Nest Box Workshop

Hammers were flying in February when 15 people converged at the Sanctuary to build nest boxes for bluebirds.



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and her eight tiny charges. The loop trail to Deer Pond and then Cedar and Little Ponds was also interesting, with a bit more shade and alive with a variety of birds. Even walking along Bushwack Road approaching the sanctuary entrance proved interesting, with several butterfly species enjoying the damp areas at the Flicker Creek crossing.

My main hobbies these days include birds, butterflies, and dragonflies, of which War Bluff has an amazing variety. Photographing these and other aspects of the natural world is another interest of mine, and the sanctuary provided excellent opportunities for lots of good photographs. During my visit, many of the birds were nesting and it was a treat to see baby eastern bluebirds, a mourning dove, that string of eight baby wood ducks paddling behind their mother, and the greenish blue eggs of a yellow-billed cuckoo (which apparently hatched a few days later). Yellow-breasted chats, indigo buntings, ruby-



Baby mourning dove. Photo: Joe Schelling

throated hummingbirds, northern cardinals, a green heron, and several flycatchers were among the other species spotted during my visit.

Odonates, the order that includes dragonflies and damselflies, caught my eye for the first time last summer when I discovered they are relatively easy to identify with a good field guide and that it was possible to take reasonably good pictures of them. Dragonfly pond (or any of the ponds) at War Bluff had quite a few species buzzing about, including the common whitetail, spangled skimmer, widow skimmer, blue dasher, blue-fronted dancer, dragonhunter, carolina saddlebags, eastern pondhawk, and certainly several others.

Butterflies are another new interest of mine, so it was great to add a few new ones to my list, including several that never make it quite as far west as New Mexico. Some of the ones seen in June were the great spangled fritillary, banded hairstreak, silvery checkerspot, checkered white, eastern tiger swallowtail, zebra swallowtail, spicebush swallowtail, red admiral, question mark, lots of little wood-satyr, hackberry emperor, and clouded sulphur. Not to be outdone, many moth species were also present, although they can be much more difficult to identify due to the much larger number of species and often



Male spangled skimmer dragonfly. Photo: Joe Schelling

few obvious identifying features; one that stood out for me was a clymene haploa moth, which is mostly white but with a striking symmetrical black pattern.

Several species of frogs and lots of cicadas provided the background to an incredible variety of insects, reptiles and amphibians, and mammals at the sanctuary. Cricket frogs and bullfrogs joined in at night with the singing of the cicadas, while fireflies put on their usual show. And if one looks closely during the day, the variety of shapes and colors among the insects can be quite amazing. White-tailed deer, including several fawns, were regularly sighted, as were numerous rabbits and squirrels. Evidence of beaver, raccoon, and muskrats indicates their presence as well. Several box turtles and two black rat snakes were also fun to see during my walks in the woods.

I was truly surprised and fascinated by it all, and definitely hope to return to see what all's going on as the seasons change. Contributing to the entertainment and educational content of our exploratory forays was my constant companion, Terri's new puppy, Jade, who typically led the way and often pointed out interesting things she came across, including snakes, salamanders, turtles, feathers, and bones.



Bull frog. Photo: Joe Schelling

2011 BLUEBIRD TRAIL SYNOPSIS con't from page 1

over 100 degrees for days at a time. I wouldn't be surprised if the eggs had become hard boiled.

Our habitat is changing too. The agricultural fields are becoming shrub areas. The most dependable nest boxes were located near mowed paths surrounded by grasses rather than woody growth.

Most of the nest boxes have four inch plastic pipe guards under the box but the screen guard over the t-post might not have been enough to keep snakes from coming through and they certainly didn't deter the raccoons.

Next year is another opportunity to try and boost the bird population. Eastern bluebirds adapted well to our efforts, making a significant come back since people started building nest boxes for them.



Carolina chickadees in a bluebird nest box on the verge of fledging the nest. Photo-T. Treacy

SPRING BIRD COUNT AT WAR BLUFF

by Andrea Douglas

It's nice to wake up and start counting birds while having your morning coffee. Terri had the luxury of counting owls and whip-poor-wills from her bed during the Spring Bird Count on May 7 but she also had the inconvenience of being on foot when the rains started, albeit it only lasted 45 minutes. The sanctuary was her territory and she did well getting the woodland and scrub species.

All the woodpeckers except the red-headed woodpecker and the flicker were accounted for, but then no one had a flicker this year, which someone always gets. Fourteen of the warblers were on the sanctuary with blue-winged, prairie, chat and common yellowthroats in the high numbers. In smaller amounts, a magnolia, a couple of Nashville, a blackpoll, a redstart, two ovenbirds and four worm-eating warblers as well as a few yellow-rumped, Kentucky and Tennessee warblers.

In the flycatcher group, Acadians, Eastern phoebes, wood peewees and kingbirds were found. White-eyed, Philadelphia and red-eyed vireos represented the vireo presence. Both the scarlet and summer tanagers were around and both orioles – orchard and Baltimore. Field sparrows and one white-crowned sparrow checked in for the sparrow section. The finch category had cardinals, rose-breasted grosbeaks, a blue grosbeak and a bunch of indigo buntings.

Rounding out with wild turkeys, green herons, red-shouldered hawks and turkey vultures, chickadees, titmouse, Carolina wrens, blue jays and crows, a few doves, bluebirds, gnatcatchers, tree and rough-winged swallows, wood and Swainson's thrush, cedar waxwings and brown thrasher. Did I neglect the hummingbirds and lone cowbird? Altogether, 60 species were counted at War Bluff Valley Sanctuary.

The total Pope County count had 115 species with more than half that number at War Bluff. The 500-hundred acre sanctuary has micro habitats of field, lawn, forest, stream and hill allowing the different species to find a suitable place

to rest and feed with some just passing through and others making a home. The Spring Bird Count gives a snapshot of what can be seen at this Illinois Audubon Sanctuary under the stewardship of the members of Shawnee Chapter.



*Green Heron
Photo-D. Caplinger*

<p>VOLUNTEERS 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> <p>Lisa Barnes & Jeffrey Kellogg Kathryn Carter Ann Douglas Chris Evans Karen Frailey Jean Graber Ruth Hoak Deb & Steve Hogg Hank Mulder Kevin Nagele Georgia Norman & Norma Tomas Jim Saruda Frank & Harriet Schneidinger Beth Shimp & Troy Lear Terri Treacy Dan Underwood John Wallace Greg White</p>	<p>IAAD Volunteer Presenters Minnie Ahrendt Bill Black Dr. Ed DeWalt, Ph.D. Dr. Nancy Garwood, Ph.D. Dr. Sedonia Sipes, Ph.D. Nathan Soley Dr. Steve Taylor, Ph.D. Dr. Richard Thomas, Ph.D. Dr. Matt Whiles Dept. of Zoology Grad Students SIUC</p> <p>RognboB--Musicians Extraordinaire</p>	<p>FRIENDS</p> <p>HUMMINGBIRD John P. Nagle Ruth Meyer</p> <p>WOODPECKER Richard Brewer & Katy Takahashi Kelly Cichy & Lorenzo Cristaudo Donald Funk, M.D. Judith Joy Mary Glenn Kirkland Neil & Vivian McDermott John & Cindy McKee Laurel Toussaint & Tom Bik Richard & Vicki Zimny</p> <p>HERON Frank & Myra Bennett Arnold Bock Don & Elaine Goerne Joe Merkelbach</p> <p>OWL Ray, Liesel & Tad Boehmer Marilyn Campbell</p>
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Become a Friend or Renew Your Membership

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City, State, Zipcode _____

Email _____

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|------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ \$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
 228 Bushwack Road
 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.

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.

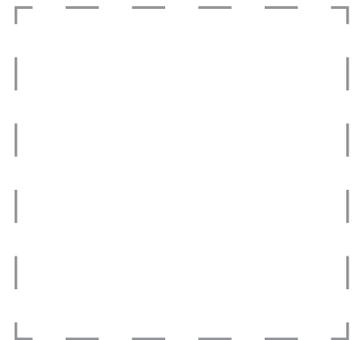
HUMMINGBIRD BANDING AT WAR BLUFF



Norma Tomas looks on as Cathie Hutchinson measures, weighs and bands a ruby-throated hummingbird. About 20 people dropped by on the morning of August 13th to experience the thrill of seeing the tiny birds up close. Twenty-one birds were captured and 19 birds were banded (one female was captured three times!).



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