

# The W.R.E.N.

Wapsi River Environmental News

WINTER 2024

Scott County Conservation Board's Environmental Education Newsletter

[www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi](http://www.scottcountyjowa.com/conservation/wapsi)



[www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation](https://www.facebook.com/scottcountyconservation)



<https://www.instagram.com/scottcountyconservation>

The Wapsi River Center is owned, managed and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board

## Wapsi Happenings

By: Director, Dave Murcia



### Leave No Trace SEVEN PRINCIPLES

1. Plan Ahead & Prepare
2. Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

© 1999 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics; www.LNT.org.

## Iowa's Outdoor Places

*"The aim is to illuminate and reveal the alluring world outdoors." – Enos Mills*

According to *Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's* annual ranking of state outdoor recreation economies, Iowa ranks in the top three states in growth since 2022 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis)! Economically, this appears to be a positive outcome regarding funding, accessibility, favorable opportunities, and jobs. "Over the last year, the outdoor recreation economy grew 2.5 times the rate of the U.S. economy as a whole and jobs

grew 2 times faster than the U.S. economy" - *Outdoor Recreation Roundtable*. Such growth must come with advocacy for sustainable, clean, and safe natural areas.

Right here in Scott County, our department is actively improving outdoor access with new trail projects at both Scott County and West Lake parks. Our department has even added a Park Ranger position as reflected in the job growth statistic above. Outdoor spaces are vital for connection- of mind, body, and spirit. It is well documented that staying connected to nature improves our lives. What we must maintain, is the sustainability of, the freedom of, and the right to safe, healthy, natural spaces.

In order to maintain such spaces, there is research based, practical, effective principles that humans (over eight billion on Earth), can act upon- **Leave No Trace** (<https://lnt.org/>). "The **7 Principles of Leave No Trace** provide an easily understood framework of minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors. The Principles can be applied anywhere — from remote wilderness areas, to local parks and even in your backyard. Each Principle covers a specific topic and provides detailed information to empower you to minimize your impacts."

"The 7 Principles are well-established and widely known but not static. **Leave No Trace** continually examines, evaluates, and reshapes the Principles and conducts research to ensure that they are up to date with the latest insights from biologists, land managers, and other leaders in outdoor education."

Reflecting **Tilden's principles** you are encouraged, as free citizens, explorers, and adventurers, to relate, reveal, provoke, and live in connection with, as beings in, as stewards of, the natural world. It is **Maslow's hierarchy of needs** that I believe we all can agree that we all want and need clean water, clean air, clean food (soils), natural space, and the freedom to choose just that. This is common ground. We do not want a silent spring, for all that breaths, all that are moved by waters, all that kiss the ground, want connection. Seek out the natural world, the need to grow, leave the world behind, for the health and wellness of both creature and Mother Earth.

*"Through interpretation understanding, through understanding appreciation, through appreciation protection." – Freeman Tilden*

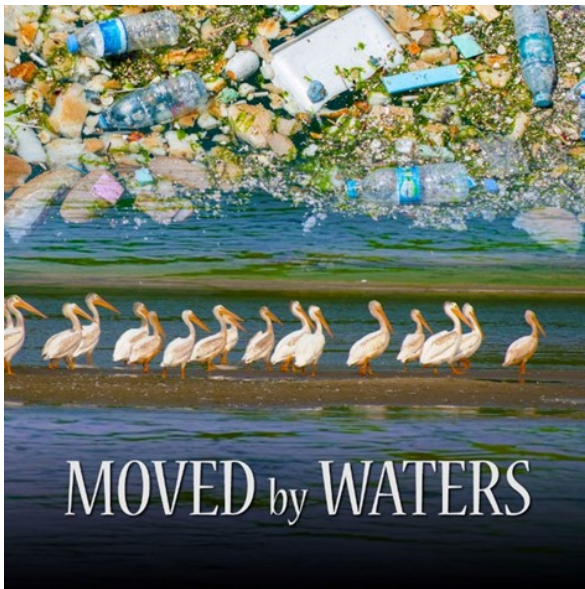


Photo: Fourth Wall Films

## Director Murcia Makes a Splash

When QC-based filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle contacted me in October about a short environmental film they were working on, focused on watersheds and water quality, I dove in! After all, **Fourth Wall Films** is an Emmy-winning QC-based film and video production company!

This inspiring film project “focuses on the important work of individuals, organizations and coalitions to improve the water quality of the watersheds in our Quad Cities region”. The short film was premiered at the Iowa Nature Summit in November at Drake University.

“What unites us is more important than what divides us. Emmy-winning filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle turn their lens on their Quad Cities homebase and discover a network of people and organizations working toward improved water quality in the Upper Mississippi watershed. This uplifting and inspiring new film depicts

collaborative projects involving a diverse group of students, teachers, artists, farmers, and volunteers of all ages. Setting aside political or other differences, all are working toward improving the quality of water in the Quad Cities and downstream. Did you know a piece of trash discarded in a Moline, Illinois neighborhood can end up in the Gulf of Mexico? How is water quality monitored and evaluated? Is water pollution an urban or rural challenge? How does water quality affect wildlife and their habitat? We all need water that is clean and safe to drink, and the people and projects in "**Moved by Waters**" model a way forward that benefits us and the environment.”



Photo: Kelly Rundle, Fourth Wall Films

The Rundles' **Emmy-Winning "Over & Under: Wildlife Crossings"** and **Emmy-Nominated "Places To Be Wild"** will precede the Premiere showing of "**Moved by Waters**". The Premiere film showing will be followed by a discussion and Q & A with the filmmakers and people who appear in the film. Quad-Cities organizations/institutions featured in the film include Partners of Scott County Watersheds, Augustana College--Upper Mississippi Center, The City of Davenport, Quad City Arts, River Action, Quad City Conservation Alliance Wetlands Center, Nahant Marsh Education Center, **Scott County Conservation, Wapsi River Environmental Education Center**, and Living Lands & Waters.

Please support the film and all the efforts by local advocates in water quality. Pre-order tickets at <https://www.putnam.org/movie-theater/> beginning December 26, 2023. Advance tickets recommended.

**"Moved by Waters"** Premiere: Saturday, January 27, 2023 at 3 p.m.

Putnam Museum National Geographic Giant Screen,  
1717 W. 12th St., Davenport, IA 52804

Studio: Fourth Wall Films, total running time with post-screening discussion: 90 minutes.





## QC Environmental Film Series

Join **Director Dave Murcia** and River Action Inc. at this year's inspirational and educational QC Environmental Film Series being held at the Figge Art Museum. Director Murcia will be reflecting thoughts about the film, **All That Breaths**, at the premiere showing of this year's film series.

"As legions of the black kite (birds of prey) fall from New Delhi's smoke-choked skies, two dedicated brothers care for them in a makeshift bird hospital in their tiny basement. The majestic raptors are essential in controlling vermin in the urban ecosystem. **All That Breaths** was a 2023 Academy Award nominee for best documentary."

The mission of the film series is "to bring inspirational and educational environmental films to our community encouraging grassroots activism in care of our planet and environmental justice."

Please **take action**, and support the series by visiting this site for more info and to purchase tickets: <https://www.riveraction.org/filmseries>. The series runs Sundays, from January 21 – March 3, 2024 at the Figge Art Museum.

## Partners of Scott County Watersheds



## Partners of Scott County Watersheds Seek Members

Becoming a Member shows that you value healthy watersheds in your community and beyond! With your annual membership, you will receive a PSCW water bottle and logo decal, be recognized in our annual

newsletter and at PSCW events, and receive guidance to water quality ideas, resources, projects, and funding assistance. For info visit: <https://www.partnersofscottcountywatersheds.org/membership/>

## Center Updates

Renovations of the old **Owl's Nest Dormitory** keep flowing. The front entry addition is now complete with visitor desk and gift shop space. The grand multipurpose room addition is now complete as a large program space with fireplace, restrooms, and kitchens. We are now in final stages in the original "dormitory" space with exhibit/display spaces being constructed. Stay tuned in to upcoming announcements as the multi-phase project continues.

The **St. Ambrose University's Menke Observatory** site is now complete with a 2<sup>nd</sup> functioning roll-off building thanks in part from the QC Astronomical Society.

## New Volunteer Memorial



Photo: Pat Pierson Memorial Bench

Patricia Pierson (known by Pat), loved to be outdoors with nature, she enjoyed her garden and canning. She also enjoyed photography and music. Pat had three children with husband Mike and traveled, especially to Wisconsin to camp. Many memories were made while spending time in nature with friends and family.

She enjoyed nature so much that she began volunteering in 1995 during the early days of the Wapsi River Center assisting the first Director, Bob Bryant. Whether along the trail with Bob for a nature program, or volunteering at a clean-up or workday, Pat was there spending time in nature.

Jamie Sass is Pat's granddaughter, who along with her boyfriend Brandon, wanted to pay tribute to her and



Photo: Tree plantings at the Wapsi River Center

reached out to me this Autumn to make it happen. Brandon happens to work at a local nursery and asked if I would consider plantings and even a bench as a memorial to Pat. I was delighted to hear this and suggested adding plantings on campus in memory of Pat for all visitors to see and learn about. I explained that not only will the plants live on in Pat's memory, but add value to our wild edible programs. The plantings that the Wapsi staff completed last month, are situated in such a way that offers those visitors easier access to learn about edible/medical and wildlife plants while also adding privacy to Kestrel Cabin guests!

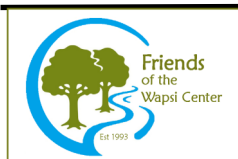
Jamie writes. "I remember going to the Wapsi with my grandma and hiking trails, spotting turtles, and the education building. I am honored the Wapsi is doing this for my grandmother. Thank you very much for letting my grandma be forever remembered." Pat passed away on March, 18 2022. Donated in the memorial were: six elderberry shrubs, ten hazelnut shrubs, eight witch hazel shrubs, and twenty-four milkweed plants! A bench in her honor was also donated and sit along the walk in view of the plantings. It is with great appreciation, honor, and a shared love of nature, that we thank Jamie and Brandon along with her family for this very kind memorial gift in Pat's name!

## Nature Center Hours

The **Eagle View Eco Center** is announcing new Saturday open hours. The Center will be hosted by a ***Friends of the Wapsi Center*** volunteer from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays, except for observed holidays. Please call ahead of your visit **before any Saturday**, to ensure availability at (563)328-3286.

## Sponsor an Animal

If you are interested in sponsoring an educational animal, please contact us at (563)328-3286 for details.



**"BECOME A WAPSI RIVER CENTER FRIENDS MEMBER TODAY!"**  
[www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/Wapsi-friends](http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/Wapsi-friends)

The Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc. organized in 1993, is a citizens' support group dedicated to encouraging the public use and enjoyment of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and to the preservation of the Center's natural resources for present and future generations. Please contact the Wapsi River Center for more information (563)328-3286.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION LEVELS (PLEASE CHECK ONE):

**\$10** \_\_\_\_\_ **KESTREL ~ Receive a Friend's Newsletter**  
**\$20** \_\_\_\_\_ **RED-TAIL HAWK ~ Receive Newsletter and Magnet**  
**\$30** \_\_\_\_\_ **GREAT HORNED OWL ~ Receive Newsletter, Magnet and Wapsi T-Shirt at discounted price.**

**\$50** \_\_\_\_\_ **BALD EAGLE ~ Receive Newsletter, T-Shirt at discounted price, Magnet and 10 % Discount off of Gift Shop Purchases.**

**PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP FORM TO:**

**FRIENDS OF THE WAPSI CENTER - 31555 52nd AVENUE, DIXON, IOWA 52745**



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Attention visitors: Registration has changed! Starting last July the Wapsi River Center moved to online registration. **Unless otherwise noted**, registration for our programs can be completed by visiting: <https://web2.myvscloud.com/wbwc/iascottcitywt.wsc/splash.html> and clicking on **Public Programs**. If you have any questions during the registration process, please call the Wapsi River Center at (563)328-3286.

## JANUARY

**1st ~ HOLIDAY ~ County Offices will be closed in observance of the Holiday.**

**5th – 7th ~ Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days ~ (See show times below) ~ Quad Cities Expo Center ~** The Quad Cities Conservation Alliance, Modern Woodman, Arconic, and Army Corps of Engineers are sponsoring this annual event. This event features live birds of prey, over 90 display booths, and of course, viewing of our national bird, the American bald eagle. The event is held at the QCCA Expo Center at 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, from 4:00 to 8:00 P.M. on Friday, 10:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. on Saturday, and 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Sunday. Come see us at the Wapsi River Center display. Please call (309)788-5912 for more details.



**10th ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate 3) ~** The Scott County Conservation Board normally meets the second Wednesday of every month at the West Lake Park Headquarters office, 14910 110th Ave, Davenport, Iowa 52804. The public and press are encouraged to participate. Please call (563)328-3281 for more information.

**13th ~ Menke Observatory Open House ~ Dusk ~ Menke Observatory (Wapsi River Center) ~** Join local astronomers from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society and St. Ambrose University for a tour of the night sky. Please call Dr. Mitchell (563)333-4141 for current viewing conditions the day of the event.

**15th ~ HOLIDAY ~ County Offices will be closed**

in observance of the Holiday.

**17th ~ Snowshoe Adventure ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Lakeview Shelter) ~** Join Wapsi River Center staff for an outdoor adventure on snowshoes. Snowshoes are weight rated for both adult/children and waterproof boots are suggested. This program is dependent on weather/site conditions. Space is limited and online registration is required.



**17th ~ Homeschool Day ~ 10:30 A.M. -2:30 P.M. ~**

**Wapsi River Center ~** Once a month the Wapsi River EE Center will be hosting a day just for homeschoolers! The goal of this series is to immerse children in the natural world and help them experience seasonal phenomena in a hands-on way. Most appropriate for K-8th grades, though all ages welcome. Please come prepared for the weather because much of the planned programming will take place outdoors. Online registration is required and there is a fee of \$1/ participant. All participants must be registered (children and adults). Registration opens the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

**18th ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Virtual Only ~** Learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. This meeting will be virtual only. Please call for more information (563)328-3286.

**20th ~ Winter Wild Edible Workshop ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center ~** Join Naturalist Becky to learn about the many wild edibles in your own neck of the woods. We will focus on foraging basics, foraging safety, identifying plants, and preparing wild edibles. We will take a hike outdoors to identify some of the winter wild edibles available during this time. At the end of the program, you will get to sample some wild flavors! Online registration is required for this program.



**21<sup>st</sup> ~ Figge Art Museum -QC Environmental Film Series “All That Breaths” ~ Figge Art Museum ~** Join Director Dave Murcia and *River Action Inc.*, for the premiere film of the 2024 QC Environmental Film

Series, *All That Breathes*. As legions of the black kite (birds of prey) fall from New Delhi's smoke-choked skies, two dedicated brothers care for them in a makeshift bird hospital in their tiny basement. The majestic raptors are essential in controlling vermin in the urban ecosystem. *All That Breathes* was a 2023 Academy Award nominee for best documentary. Director Murcia will offer reflection about the film in support of the series' mission: "to bring inspirational and educational environmental films to our community encouraging grassroots activism in care of our planet and environmental justice". The series runs on Sundays from January 21<sup>st</sup> through March 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Figge Art Museum. Information can be found at: <https://www.riveraction.org/filmseries>.

**27th ~ Paint By Nature ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Paige at this fun family-friendly event! She will guide you through the creation of a seasonal painting. All skill levels welcome! All supplies will be provided, just bring your creativity! There is a program fee of \$5 / canvas. Space is limited and online registration is required for all painters.



## FEBRUARY

**3rd ~ Winter Fun Day ~ Winter Fun Day ~ 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Wapsi Naturalists to discover the wonders of winter at the Wapsi River Center. Please dress accordingly, waterproof boots are suggested. This program is dependent on weather/conditions. Space is limited. Online registration is required for this event.

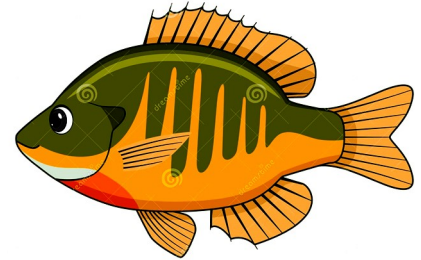
**\* 9:00 A.M. to 10:30 ~ Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe:** Come explore the winter wilderness on snowshoes or x-country skis.

**\*10:30 A.M. to 12:00 ~ Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe / Cast Iron Cornbread Cooking** ~ Come try on some snowshoes or x-country skis, Learn about the history of corn bread and how indigenous tribes made corn bread. Then get the opportunity to make corn bread in a cast iron for you to enjoy.

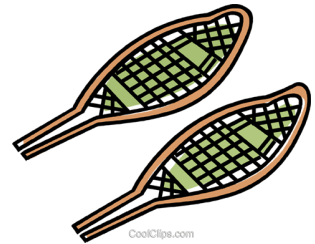
**\*Noon to 1:00 P.M. ~ Chili Cook-off** ~ Join us for the chili cook off and a chance to win the chili cup. Participants are invited to bring a crock pot of their best chili recipe. The winning participant will get their photo taken with the coveted chili cup!



**4th ~ Learn to Ice Fish ~ 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. ~ Pride Lake (Scott County Park)** ~ Join Rangers for a morning of ice fishing at Pride Lake at Scott County Park. Bring a bucket or chair to sit on and we will provide the rest! We will pre-drill the holes, provide bait, poles, and will discuss the types of fish you may catch. We welcome all ages and experience levels for this free event. (Please park in the parking lot across the road from Pride Lake (Sledding hill parking lot). Space is limited and online registration is required.



**7th ~ Snowshoe Adventure ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Wapsi River Center staff for an outdoor adventure on snowshoes. Snowshoes are weight rated for both adult/children and waterproof boots are suggested. This program is dependent on weather/site conditions. Space is limited and online registered required.



**10th ~ Backyard Birds ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Becky to learn how to identify and attract backyard birds! Plus learn about the Great Backyard Bird Count. At the end of the program, you will make take-home pine cone bird feeders to hang in your own backyard. Bird watchers of all ages can participate in this free program. Online registration is required for this program.



**10th ~ Menke Observatory Open House ~ Dusk ~ Menke Observatory (Wapsi River Center)** ~ Join local astronomers from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society and St. Ambrose University for a tour of the night sky. Please call Dr. Mitchell (563)333-4141 for current viewing conditions the day of the event.

**14th ~ Snowshoe Adventure ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park (Whispering Pines Shelter)** ~ Join Wapsi River Center staff for an outdoor adventure on snowshoes. Snowshoes are weight rated for both adult/children and waterproof boots are suggested. This program is dependent on weather/site conditions. Space is limited and online registration is required.

**14th ~ Scott County Conservation Board Meeting ~ 3:00 P.M. ~ West Lake Park (Gate 3)** ~ The Scott County Conservation Board normally meets the second Wednesday of every month at the West Lake Park Headquarters office, 14910 110th Ave, Davenport, Iowa 52804. The public and press are encouraged to participate. Please call (563)328-3281 for more information.

**15th ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center Meeting ~ 6:00 P.M. ~ Virtual Only** ~ Learn about the current happenings at the Wapsi River Center. This meeting will be virtual only. Please call for more information (563)328-3286.

**17th ~ Health and Home "Spring Cleaning" ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Come join Wapsi River Center staff and learn to become more sustainable by creating your own health and home products made with natural ingredients. Also learn about upcycling and reducing your footprint on the planet! The program costs \$8/person for supplies. We plan to make hand sanitizer, multipurpose cleaner, and lemon-scented soap. Please bring a small reusable squeeze bottle (a 2-3 oz travel shampoo for example) and a container to transport soap home.



**21st ~ Homeschool Day ~ 10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. ~ Scott County Park (Whispering Pines Shelter)** ~ Once a month the Wapsi River EE Center will be hosting a day just for homeschoolers! The goal of this series is to immerse children in the natural world and help them experience seasonal phenomena in a hands-on way. Most appropriate for K-8th grades, though all ages welcome. Please come prepared for the weather because much of the planned programming will take place outdoors. Online registration is required and there is a fee of \$1/ participant. All participants must be registered (children and adults). Registration opens the 1st of the month.

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**23rd – 25th ~ Quad Cities RV & Camping Show ~ (See show times below) ~ Quad Cities Expo Center, Rock Island, Illinois** ~ The RV & Camping show is the place to get inside and up close to all the newest RV's and campers! Mr BBQ, Ken Versluis Bone Collector BBQ will be cooking up some tasty treats! The event is held at the QCCA Expo Center at 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, from 12:00 to 8:00 P.M. on Friday, 10:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. on Saturday, and 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Sunday. Come visit with Scott County Conservation Staff. For more information call the expo center at (309)788-5912.

## MARCH

**2nd ~ Maple Syruping ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~Join Naturalist Mike for a lesson on maple syruping. Learn the history of syruping, tree identification, and then learn how to gather sap! Fun for the whole family. Space is limited. Online registration is required for this program.



**9th ~ Volunteer Round-Up & Docent Training ~ 10:00 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ The Friends of the Wapsi Center is looking for more volunteers! Will you join us? This is your chance to learn more about the Wapsi River Center and how to get involved. Share your passion for the environment with like-minded people and learn how to host the nature center. No experience necessary! Registration is required by CALLING (563)328-3286.

**9th ~ Friends of the Wapsi Center MEMBERS ONLY event: Meet our Raptors! ~ 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Welcome to our very first Friends of the Wapsi Center MEMBERS ONLY event! During this event, you will get to meet our educational ambassadors and learn their natural history, ecology, habitats, and human impacts along with the natural history and behaviors of other Iowa raptors. Since this is a members' only event, registration is required by CALLING (563)328-3286.

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**16th ~ Maple Syruping ~ 1:00 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Mike for a lesson on maple syruping. Learn the history of syruping, tree identification, and then learn how to gather sap! Fun for the whole family. Space is limited. Online registration is required for this program.



**16th ~ Menke Observatory Open House ~ Dusk ~ Menke Observatory (Wapsi River Center)** ~ Join local astronomers from the Quad Cities Astronomical Society and St. Ambrose University for a tour of the night sky. Please call Dr. Mitchell (563)333-4141 for current viewing conditions the day of the event.

**18th ~ Leave No Trace Camping 101- Plan Ahead & Be Prepared~ Wapsi River Center~ 1:00 P.M.** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director Dave Murcia for a presentation on camping basics that emphasize *Leave No Trace* ethic and principles. Bring the whole tribe. Are you prepared for your adventure? Prepare for regulations, weather, emergencies, high use areas, repackaging food and supplies. This # 1 LNT principle will be presented along with “how to” set camp for an experience that reconnects us, and honors nature we recreate in. Space is limited and online registration is required.



**19<sup>th</sup> ~ Leave No Trace Camping 101- Dispose of Waste Properly~ Wapsi River Center~ 1:00 P.M.** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director Dave Murcia for a presentation on camping basics that emphasize *Leave No Trace* ethic and principles. Bring the whole tribe. Are you prepared for your adventure? What do you consider waste, and what do you do with it? Prepare for packing in/packing out, disposing of trash/food/litter, and washing. This # 3 LNT principle and more, will be presented along with “how to” set camp for an experience that reconnects us, and honors nature we recreate in. Space is limited and online registration is required.

**20th ~ Homeschool Day ~ 10:30 A.M. -2:30 P.M. ~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Once a month the Wapsi River EE Center will be hosting a day just for homeschoolers! The goal of this series is to immerse

children in the natural world and help them experience seasonal phenomena in a hands-on way. Most appropriate for K-8th grades, though all ages welcome. Please come prepared for the weather because much of the planned programming will take place outdoors. Online Registration is required and there is a fee of \$1/ participant. All participants must be registered (children and adults). Registration opens the 1st of the month.



**21st ~ Leave No Trace Camping 101- Minimize Campfire Impacts~ Wapsi River Center~ 1:00 P.M.** ~ Join Wapsi River Center Director Dave Murcia for a presentation on camping basics that emphasize *Leave No Trace* ethic and principles. Bring the whole tribe. Are you prepared for your adventure? Prepare for campfires, learn how to build and start campfires, including alternatives to campfires. This # 5 LNT principle and more, will be presented along with “how to” set camp for an experience that reconnects us, and honors nature we recreate in. Space is limited and online registration is required.



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**23rd ~ Paint By Nature ~ 1:00 P.M.~ Wapsi River Center** ~ Join Naturalist Paige at this fun family-friendly event! She will guide you through the creation of a seasonal painting. All skill levels welcome! All supplies will be provided, just bring your creativity! There is a program fee of \$5 / canvas. Space is limited and online registration is required for all painters.



# ANIMAL PROFILE: WHITE FOOTED MOUSE

By Naturalist Michael J. Granger

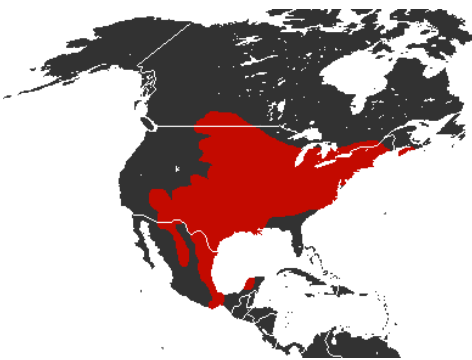
As the winter begins, shorter days and freezing nights have many animals struggling for warmth and shelter. One such small furry creature may become very fond of human dwellings, seeking warmth and a possible meal. The white footed mouse, *Peromyscus leucopus*, is a small mammal of the countryside that regularly seeks out shelter during the winter months in farm houses, outbuildings and country residences. There are also city populations, living in city parks, open fields or vacant lots.

White footed mice are native rodents in the eastern portion of North America. Populations can be found as far as Ontario and Quebec and south to Texas and Mexico. Its

range does not cross into western United States.

Populations of white footed mice can be found in warm, dry

brush or woodland areas, located next to agricultural land. They are also very adaptable to higher forest elevations and even desert regions of the U.S.



White Footed Mouse  
North American  
Range: Wikipedia

The white footed mouse has beautiful reddish brown fur, and a white underbelly. A darker fur “stripe” can be seen on their backs. Their bodies are up to 4 inches long and their tails are not as long as their bodies. The white footed mouse’s name refers to its white feet, but this can be misleading, for another small rodent the deer mouse, *Peromyscus maniculatus*, has very similar coloration. Deer mice look similar, but are smaller with 2 – 3 inch long bodies and tails that are as long as their bodies.

The white-footed mouse creates their nest in tall grass, under fallen trees, decaying logs, in tree stumps, and in the abandoned nests of other small animals. Like with most prey animals they like to place their nests in hidden, out-of-the-way places.

White footed mice are omnivorous eating a variety of seeds, berries, nuts, insects, fruits and fungi. They do not hibernate and are active during the winter months. In the fall they store up large caches of nuts and seeds to survive the colder months.

White footed mice are nocturnal, hiding from predators during the day.

They are excellent climbers nesting in hollow trees, shrubs and even empty bird houses in the winter time.

When checking our bluebird houses in the spring we find many white footed mice inside. There can be up to 10 mice in one bluebird box!

Breeding occurs from March to October. Litters may have up to nine babies, and two to four litters are possible, a year. Young white footed mice are born blind and helpless. The mother nurses them

until they are weaned. When mature, young mice venture out on their own eventually leaving their mother’s territory. White footed mice live for one year, meaning a new generation begins every season.

White footed mice can be abundant and are very important to the ecosystem. They have many predators including fox, coyotes, owls, hawks and snakes. They are very secretive, wary, alert and catching them would be challenging. Even so, they are a large portion of the diet of many small predators. They are also important to the spread of fungi, eating the spore producing portions and spreading spores in their droppings.

White footed mice unfortunately do carry disease and should be eradicated from human dwellings. As unpleasant as mouse traps are, they are the first line of defense for many farmhouse’s throughout Iowa’s countryside. On a lighter note the white footed mouse is a common small mammal who plays large roles in Iowa’s ecosystems and are an essential element in food chains and habitats across the state.



White Footed Mouse  
in a Bluebird box:  
Wapsi River Center



White Footed  
Mouse: Wikipedia

# PLANT PROFILE: EASTERN RED CEDAR

By: Assistant Naturalist, Clarah Buhman

When driving down the highways and

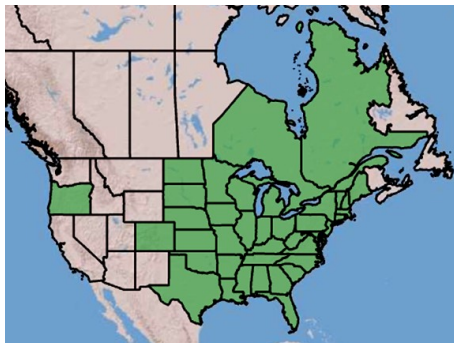


Eastern Red Cedar:  
Wapsi River Center

interstates this time of year there are only a few trees that still have leaves. There are two native conifer or evergreen trees in Iowa. These are the eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, and the white pine, *Pinus strobus*. The one you are most likely to see is the eastern red cedar. It is a very dense pyramid shaped tree that is usually one of the first trees to grow after a disturbance. Eastern red cedars can grow in almost any soil they just need full sun.

These trees

are native to all the states east of the Rocky Mountains, from Colorado to Maine, and from Canada to Texas. They can grow to be around 50 feet tall. Eastern red cedar trees get their name from the bright red colored bark and wood inside the tree used for timber.



Range Map: USDA Database

Some red cedar trees in Iowa have been aged at over 450 years old! Some think these trees look like eye sores with scale like leaves and a very bushy appearance but under the leaves is bright beautiful red bark and whitish blue berries. A lot of animals make their homes in and around the dense branches of the eastern red cedar tree. These animals include cedar waxwings, raccoons, opossums, robins, and juncos.

Eastern red cedars are planted for wind breaks and timber usage. Eastern red cedar wood is known for being mold and rot resistant making it good to use for dressers, sign posts, chests, and cabinets. Eastern red cedars have also been a wild edible for many years. The indigenous tribes have used the berries and new growth to season meat and make



Eastern Red Cedar Bark:  
Wapsi River Center

teas. Now it is commonly known and used to make gin. There are a lot of look-alikes in the Juniper family so use extreme caution when harvesting any wild edibles.



Eastern Red Cedar Berries:  
USDA/NRCS Plant  
Database:Wapsi River Center

There is a strange looking disease that eastern red cedars could get called cedar apple rust. In the fall and winter, it looks like a large raisin but in the spring and summer after rain the cedar apple rust looks like an orange glob with spiral tentacles coming out of it. Cedar apple rusts uses red cedars as a host tree to spread to fruit trees such as apple. This disease causes the fruit production to be low and after many infections the tree could lose all of its leaves and put the tree in jeopardy.



Cedar Apple Rust:  
Wapsi River Center

Eastern red cedars are long living trees that have fruit into the winter for a variety of animals to eat and dense branches to keep the animals warm on the cold winter nights.



# CRAFT CORNER: Grapevine Stars

Here is a quick project using grapevines.

Grapevines can be harvested in the fall for this project. Grapevines are easy to find and grow in prairies, and woodlands across Iowa.

Grapevines have flaky bark and curly tendrils that allow the vines to climb up into trees. To harvest grapevine simply cut the vine at the

base and pull the grapevine down. I recommend grapevine the thickness of your thumb (approximately an inch in diameter).

Loppers are the best tool when harvesting grapevine. Next cut the grapevine into



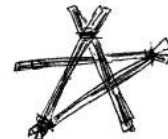
5 equal pieces, each one foot long. Next, string is used to tie two of the sections together at the ends. The next piece is added in between to form an "A". Then the last two pieces are woven at the bottom to complete the "STAR". Hang your star or stars from trees or your house for a rustic look!!!



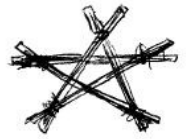
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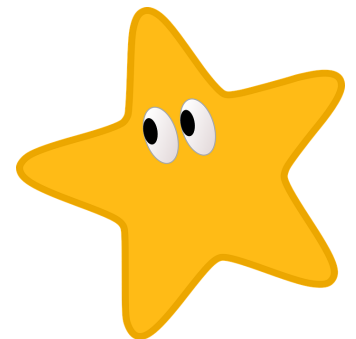
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