

Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge

Quarterly Newsletter

ISSUE 08 April 2019

The 2019 Bald Eagle Nesting Season at Crab Orchard NWR: A Progress Report

In 2018, four out of the seven nests monitored produced a total of nine fledglings. Based upon these results, and lacking reports of new, accessible nests on the Refuge, the seven sites of last year appeared to offer the best places to start current observations.

I began the program on February 24, 2019, with visits to five nests. Of these, four already contained adult eagles that appeared to be incubating eggs. During subsequent weekends I have visited all the sites on at least two occasions, and most have been checked four times.

The results to date are as follows: six of the seven nests have shown strong suggestions of egg incubation. In two of these nests, recent changes in the activity of previously incubating adults suggest that one or more eggs may have hatched, but no chicks have been observed.

In one nest today (Sunday, March 24), I watched a chick attempting to stand and move about the living quarters under the critical eye of the attending adult. This was the first confirmed sighting of a newly hatched eagle this year. The nest can be seen through binoculars or (better) spotting scopes from the Little Grassy Lake NE boat ramp.

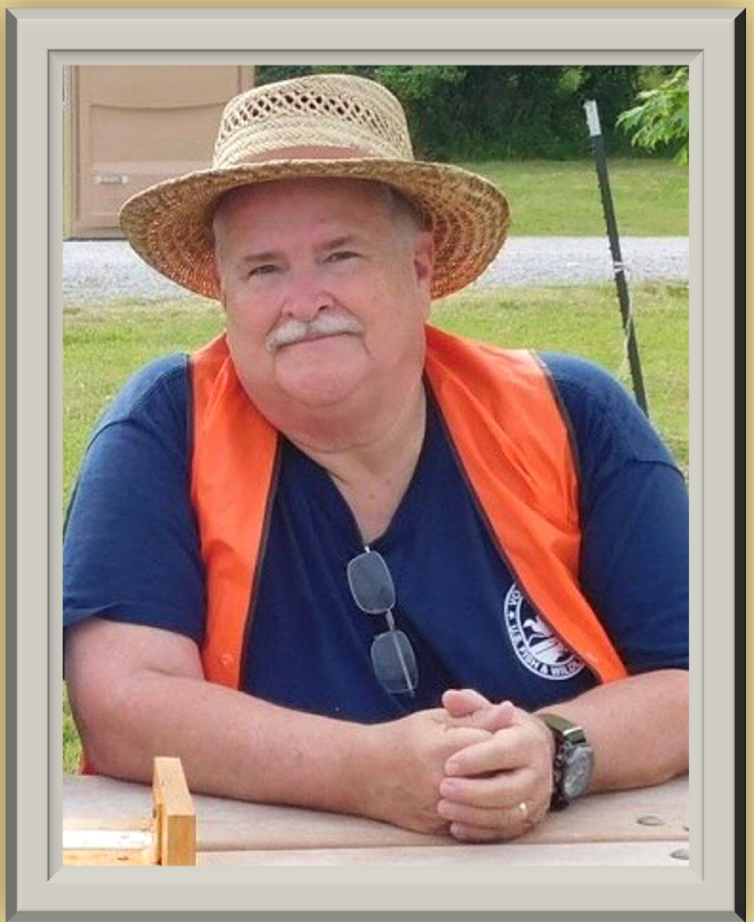
The single nesting failure to date has been at Crab Orchard campground where two juvenile birds fledged last year. So far, there has been no evidence of activity at this site, and I feel reasonably sure that the nest will not be used this season.

Jay Zimmerman, 24 March 2019

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Volunteer of the Quarter



Our volunteer of the quarter is Jim Osborn. Though Jim has only been a volunteer for a little over 2 years, he has donated many hours of work in several programs. Jim serves on the Friends Board and is active in several committees. As Chair of our Merchandise Committee, he is currently involved in reorganizing our Woodland Gift Shop. Jim also leads the Crab Orchard photographers group and assists with the yearly Refuge Photo Contest. Thank you Jim!

Upcoming Quarterly Events

April

Crab Orchard and Devils Kitchen Campground Open

April 1

Our campgrounds open again!
Time to go camping!

Cast Iron Cooking with a Ranger! Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

April 7

Join a refuge Ranger for a delicious course of cast iron cooking! Although cast iron cooking may be an old and challenging way of cooking, it can be fun too! Learn some cast iron cooking secrets while enjoying the beautiful scenery at Devils Kitchen Group Campground Area. Bring the whole family down, learn a few recipes, and end with a well earned lunch!

*Program begins at 1:00 pm
This program will be at Devils Kitchen Group Campground Area. Reservations are required.*

Crab Orchard Photography Group

April 17

Meets every third Wednesday of the month.

Meeting begins at 8:00 am at the Refuge Visitor Center.

Wildflower Hike: Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

April 20 and April 27

Join an informed CONWR volunteer at the Rocky Bluff trailhead for a spring wildflower hike.

While walking through the woods you will see an explosion of colors in the landscape and get a closer look at one of the most beautiful wildflower viewing spots in Southern Illinois.

This trail is a moderately difficult hike. Meet at the Rocky Bluff Hiking Trail, Tacoma Lake Road. Program begins at 10 am. Reservations are recommended.

May

Spring Nature Photography Course Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

May 11

After the winter season, spring season arrives accompanied by an enchanted and impressive change in the landscape. Flowers will bloom, often creating a bed in the forest floor and songbirds will return with a brilliant melody to your ears. This could be an inspiring time to capture nature's beauty. Come and join a CONWR volunteer and learn the basics of spring photography with the whole family and then practice your new skills on a group hike!

*Program begins at 10 am
Program meets at the Refuge Visitor Center. Reservations are recommended.*

Crab Orchard Photography Group

May 15

Meets every third Wednesday of the month.

Meeting begins at 8:00 am at the Refuge Visitor Center.

Full Moon Kayak Tour: Becoming

an Outdoors-Family Program

May 18

Kayak under the glow of the full moon at Crab Orchard NWR Devils Kitchen Lake! Paddle as the moon rises and learn about the land around you. Explore nature in a unique way during a starry night. Learn interesting facts about the Refuge history, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the breeze as you kayak out with our rangers. Kayaks are limited make, sure to reserve your space!

Ages 15 and up only.

Program begins at 6 pm

Reservations are required.

Refuge Rendezvous Program at CONWR Campground

May 25

The Refuge Rendezvous Program occurs once a month during a Saturday through camping season.

Program begins at 5:30 pm

Meets at the Crab Orchard Lake Campground.

Free to the public and camping is not required to attend.

June

Hiking with the Ranger : Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

June 1

Hiking is an awesome way to spend time outdoors and create memories. Hiking trails have a story to tell and can introduce you to a new appreciation of the history and the woodlands of the Refuge. A Ranger-led hike is an excellent way to learn more about Crab Orchard NWR. Come and join us on National Trails Day!

This trail is an easy partially paved hike.

Meets at the Refuge Visitor Center

Program begins at 10 am

Reservations are required.

Upcoming Quarterly Events—Continued

Kids Fishing Derby

June 8

The Kids Fishing Derby is a free event hosted by the Refuge and our many local sponsors. It is a wonderful opportunity for families to spend a day together on the Refuge fishing. The Derby is for kids 12 and younger. Free lunch will be provided for participants and their families.

Registration begins at 8 am.

Prairie Creek Recreation Area

Event runs from 8am - 12 pm,

Fee Free Day

Saturday June 8 and Sunday
June 9

Refuge Rendezvous Program at CONWR Campground

June 15

The Refuge Rendezvous Program occurs once a month during a Saturday through camping season.

Program begins at 5:30 pm

*Meets at the Crab Orchard
Lake Campground.*

Free to the public and camping is not required to attend.

Crab Orchard Photography Group

June 19

Meets every third Wednesday of the month.

*Meeting begins at 8:00 am at
the Refuge Visitor Center.*

Halloween in Summer - Building a Bat Box: Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

June 22

Despite their peculiar appearance, the truth is that bats are fascinating animals. Often called ugly or misunderstood they play an important role to maintain the balance of an ecosystem. Learn about the importance of bats and build bat boxes with us to encourage these important creatures. Come to Crab Orchard NWR for some Halloween in Summer Fun!

Program begins at 1:00 pm

Reservations are required.

Kayaking The Refuge: Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

June 29

Come and paddle Crab Orchard NWR Devils Kitchen Lake under a blue summer sky! Join a Refuge Ranger through the backwaters of the Refuge and explore nature in a unique way. Seeing nature from the water could expose you to a different perspective of the landscape. Learn interesting facts about the Refuge history, view wildlife as you pass by, and enjoy the summer breeze. Kayaks are limited, make sure to reserve your space!

Ages 15 and up only.

First program begins at 8:30 am

Second program begins at 11:30 am

Reservations are required.

Pollinator Project Update

Early in the year, Friends President Judy Groskind asked each committee to formulate a set of goals and objectives for the coming two years. We thought we would share ours with the larger group of Friends to keep you up to date on our plans for the ICECF Grant funds that we have available thanks to Judy's hard work and grant-writing skills!

For the coming three-year grant period, we will continue to plant and care for a variety of native plants in the Martha's Theater/Harmony Trail area, both north and south of the road. The plants will be chosen for their ability to attract, feed, shelter and provide for all life stages of native pollinators including bees, butterflies, moths, wasps and other native birds and insects. In addition, some larger shade trees will be bought and planted in the Prairie Creek Recreational Area.

An effort will be made to 1) provide a continuum of bloom from early spring through late fall, 2) Choose plants attractive enough to encourage home use in backyard gardens and landscapes, and 3) create drifts and clusters of native plants in order to facilitate foraging by appropriate species of pollinators. A plan for controlling invasive species at the site will be developed in conjunction with the Refuge staff.

It is hoped that by our efforts to create and maintain these Demonstration Gardens, threatened species of pollinators, both known and unknown, will be aided in their survival efforts and that the general public will be made more aware of their plight.

Specific 2019 - 2020 Goals Timeline:

1. Spring 2019: extend spring ephemeral beds into the woods east of the parking lot with 250 native plants purchased from Southernwood Gardens
2. Spring 2020: extend full sun beds in the prairie south of the parking lot by two more beds with 150 native plants
3. Fall of 2019 and 2020: create mass plantings of native shrubs in the Martha's Theatre and Harmony Trail area with shrubs grown from seedlings purchased from the Missouri State Native Tree and Shrub Nursery and nurtured by our Friends members to be planted in the fall.
4. Fall of 2019 and 2020: plant 6' - 8' native shade trees purchased from Plantscape in Herrin, IL in the Prairie Creek Recreational Area as approved by the Refuge staff
5. Spring and Fall 2019 - 2021: coordinate with the Refuge staff and contracted providers for spraying of invasives and prescribed burning of the Martha's Theater/Harmony Trail Site

Ongoing Objectives:

1. Have regular volunteer workdays on Fridays during the growing season to weed, water, prune and mulch existing beds. Try to involve Friends Members and Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners through Facebook page announcements and emails. Encourage any volunteers to become Friends members
2. Partner with younger volunteer groups for major planting events - YCC, 4-H, SIU Forestry Club
3. Assist in educational and citizen scientist activities held at the Refuge, notably Earth Day, Butterfly Roundup, tours of the Demonstration Gardens, butterfly monitoring and seed collection
4. Participate in media releases and contribute quarterly Friends Newsletter articles.
5. Hold quarterly Pollinator Committee meetings to plan and to assess progress toward goals

Pollinator Committee Members

Aimee Hemphill, Chairman

Rick Whitecotton

Ruie Whitecotton

Judy Groskind

Terry Foster

Kathy Belletire

Photo Gallery

**Our first
on March
Clearing
for native
plantings
site**



**work day
15th
the way
shrub
at our**

Potting native shrub seedlings



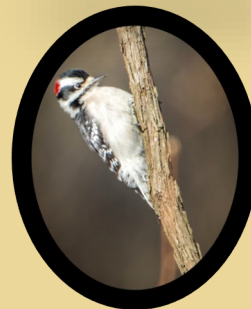
Crab Orchard Photo Group

With the exception of January when the Refuge was on shut-down the photography group continued to meet through the colder months. Now the temperatures have warmed up, the birds are starting to migrate back through the area, spring flowers are popping up, and there is a lot of activity on the Refuge.

Our March meeting marked exactly one year since the Crab Orchard Photo Group first got together. Participation in our meetings/outings has continued to grow and our email contact list has grown to over 70 names. If you haven't joined us yet, the meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 8am to 11am at the Visitor Center. Bring your camera and be prepared to go exploring with us!

Given the significant level of interest in photography, the Refuge is starting a Photo of the Month in April. Keep your eye open for more information on the Friends of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page.

By Jim Osborn



Woodland Gift Shop Update

First and foremost, we aren't the Woodland Bookstore any more, we're the Woodland Gift Shop. Although we've always carried more than just books, our name didn't reflect the scope of the items we carry. Considering that we don't have a lot of space in the Visitor Center, we have a nice selection of adult hoodies, youth and adult t-shirts, hats, plush toys, jewelry, maps, walking sticks, patches, pins, etc.....and of course we have books!

Second, be on the lookout in the near future for sales on select items, book recommendations from the staff and others, and NEW items. We will be posting updates on the Friends of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page, so LIKE the page and follow us!

Third, if you have experienced frustrations with the recurrent problems we encountered with our old cash register and credit card machine (as our volunteers certainly did!), it is resolved!! Last month we removed the old system and installed a totally new system that is incredibly easy for our volunteers to use and extra-convenient for customers. We can email receipts to you, accept both credit and debit cards and even take our system to remote locations to sell items there.

It's spring!! If you haven't been in the Woodland Gift Shop for awhile, stop in and see what's new.



First sale using the new Square System.

"Pollinators~ Through the Artist's Eye" ART SHOW Coming to Carbondale in June!

For butterflies and other pollinators June is high season. Milkweeds, wildflowers and home gardens are in full bloom in Southern Illinois; a veritable nectar feast and procreation party.

June is the perfect time to celebrate pollinators! National Pollinator Week is June 17-23rd. In collaboration with Carbondale Community Arts, the Shawnee Sierra Club is putting on a month long art show, ***"Pollinators ~ Through the Artist's Eye"***. Drawings, paintings, photography, fiber art and sculpture by local artists and students will on exhibit during June at CCA's, Gallery 304, located at 304 W. Walnut in Carbondale. ***All Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge artists and photography club members are invited to enter.*** The show is made possible by an Illinois Conservation Committee Grant through the Illinois Sierra Club and generous in-kind donations from CCA.

Please watch for the show flyer with specifics about entering the show, the opening reception, art workshops and lectures by Master Naturalists and area experts on conservation of pollinators. Stay tuned for up-coming editions of the on-line CCA news letter at www.carbondalearts.org.

Kathy Belletire, Artist and Master Naturalist



CREATURE FEATURE



Can you identify this tiny, earliest of spring woodland wildflowers photographed on March 11 at Dutchman Lake?

Can you identify this critter who has been singing loudly for the past month any time we get a significant rain and the temperatures warm up?



Yes, you guessed it –
Harbinger of Spring!
(or Pepper and Salt)

Erigeria bulbosa



That's right –
Illinois Chorus Frog
Pseudacris streckeri
illinoensis

2019 Bluebird Nesting Season Begins

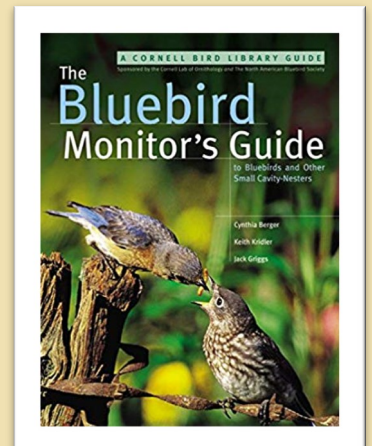
The month of March was the start of the busy season for our Refuge Bluebird Monitors. Early in the month, Assistant Refuge Manager, John Hartleb and I finished creating GPS maps of all ten Refuge Bluebird Nest Box Trails. The maps will help future monitors locate the over 180 nest boxes scattered across the Refuge. A big thank you to John for his hours spent creating these maps and moving boxes for our older ladies!

On March 6, a special CERCLA training was presented to the monitors to make them aware of the dangers of UXOs (or unexploded ordnance) that still is found from time to time on the Refuge, a holdover from the WWII days when munitions and land mines were manufactured on what is now the Refuge. We were instructed on how to *recognize* these potential hazards and how to safely *retreat* and properly *report* sightings when they occur.



We welcomed three new volunteer monitors this year – Dennis Holtzclaw, Jill Adams and Joanne Swafford. Also included in the above picture are: Mary Lou Fraunfelter, Aimee Hemphill, Becky Reed, Carolyn Loving, Ruie Whitecotton, Jean Walton, Rod Tally, Rick Whitecotton and Ken Loving. Not pictured are Jeff and Sherry Smith (who were on their Honeymoon – Congratulations Jeff and Sherry!), Mary McCarthy and Anne Johnson.

For those of you who are interested in having a nest box in your yard or setting up a nest box trail on your property or in your neighborhood. Sialis.org is an excellent website for learning how to successfully set up and monitor your boxes and to answer all your questions about bluebirds. Another good reference is *The Bluebird Monitor's Guide* by Berger, Kridler and Biggs from HarperCollins Publishers.



Many bluebirds are singing, choosing mates and looking at nest sites as of today, March 11. Last year the first nesting of 5 eggs was discovered on March 26th.

Aimee Hemphill

Come join us at the
BUTTERFLY
BALL

*A Fundraising Event for
the Friends of CONWR*

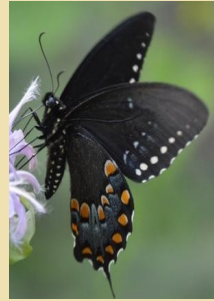
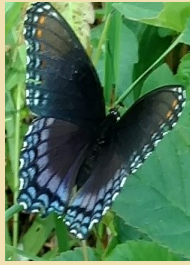
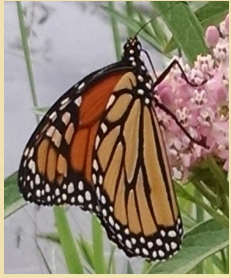
*Saturday, April 27th 5-9 pm
at The Haven on Rt. 13*

———— Tickets: \$50 ————

Purchase online at <https://www.friendsofconwr.com/>

Dinner, Music, and Silent Auction

Dress Code: Fun, Funky, Formal, or Flutteringly Butterfly!



Butterfly Monitor Training

April 13 and 14 at Crab Orchard NWR Visitor's Center

Do you enjoy taking nature walks and watching butterflies? This training is for you!

The Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network (IBMN) is recruiting citizen volunteers to monitor butterfly populations in Southern Illinois. A 2-day training workshop, that will include both classroom and field sessions, will be held on April 13 and 14, 9AM to 3:30PM, at Crab Orchard NWR. Monitors are needed for several public land sites, and volunteers can suggest locations close to their home community. Volunteers pledge to turn in at least 6 surveys of their assigned trail between late May and early August. Trails, mapped by IBMN, can usually be walked at a slow pace in about an hour. There is no charge for the training. Participants are asked to pre-register by calling the Refuge Visitor's Center at 618-997-3344. Bring binoculars if you have them, sack lunches, a water bottle and appropriate clothing for outdoor field trainings. All participants are welcome to attend both days. New monitors must attend at least the first day's session. Day 2 will offer information valuable for returning experienced monitors. The training workshop plan is:

Saturday, April 13

9:00 to Noon Classroom Sessions

Getting Started with Butterfly Monitoring will include an overview of the IBMN project, the monitoring protocol, and data submission.

The Top 25 Species for Southern Illinois will provide identification training for the species most common to our area.

Noon to 1PM Lunch (participants are asked to bring a sack lunch and water bottle)

1PM to 3:30PM Field training (weather dependent)

The Headquarter Prairie Site will be used to demonstrate a monitoring walk using the Pollard protocol. The demonstration wildflower beds may provide observation of several Spring butterfly species.

The Wolfcreek Bay Monitoring Trail Site will be explored. This trail contains grassland, edge and woodland habitats. Workshop leaders will net, then display and release, butterfly specimens to give participants up-close looks at several species.

Sunday, April 14

9:00AM to Noon Classroom Sessions

The Top 7 Skippers will be an introduction to those hard to identify Skippers.

Beyond the Beginners checklist, Now that You Know the Top 25 will give tips for recognizing some of the less common species.

Noon to 1:00PM Lunch (participants are asked to bring a sack lunch and water bottle)

1:00PM to 3:30 PM Field Training (weather dependent)

Westgate Wetland Area Participants will walk a gravel road through wet woodland, wetland, and woodland habitats. Workshop leaders will net, then display and release, specimens for up-close looks at several species.



MEMBERSHIP

Each year, members should renew their membership dues. **Membership dues expire on December 31st.**

Please fill out the form below and mail it to : Friends of CONWR, 8588 Route 148, Marion, IL 62959. Please send this form along with your payment of \$10.00 per person or \$20.00 per family.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

AMOUNT PAID: _____

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SERVE ON A COMMITTEE: YES _____ NO _____

COMMITTEE NAME: _____

FRIENDS of CONWR

8588 Route 148
Marion, IL 62959

618.998.5933

Website: www.friendsofconwr.com

Email: admin@friendsofconwr.com

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