

Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge

Quarterly Newsletter

ISSUE 12 April 2020

this issue

New Driver P.1
RBoard Action P.2
A View From My Perch P.2
Refuge Status P.3
Quarterly Events P.4
Volunteer of the Quarter P.5
Eagle Tours P.5
Refuge Grant P.6
Creature Feature P.7
Membership P.8

New Driver, Same Roadtrip

Hi Friends, I am your new President, Judy Groskind and I switched seats, with concurrence of the entire Board of course. So, Judy is the new First Vice President and I am the President. Here is just a bit about me to orient you. I was raised in the North Bend area, just north of Colp in Williamson County. I have an Associates of Science from John A. Logan, met my wonderful wife, Ruie, there also. I did almost 11 years in the U.S. Navy and was away from the area for almost 40 years with a career mostly at DTE Energy (like Ameren) in Detroit, Michigan. We decided to return to our homeland after retirement in 2016. We started volunteering at Crab Orchard soon after and joined the Friends of Crab Orchard soon after. I joined the board as First Vice President 2 years ago, and I am glad to be of service wherever I may help.

So, I entitled this introductory piece New Driver, Same Roadtrip because there will be few visible policy changes. Judy and I have worked as a team for two years and will continue to do so. I agree with Judy on many things and strongly support her leadership. She has done a wonderful job of forming a team on the Board, challenging us to achieve new goals and undertake tasks we did not previously envision. I agree with Judy that I also have no intention to be President for any great length of time. There are and will be more qualified candidates that come along with new ideas and energies to continue our progress. I assure you all when that day arrives I will graciously stand aside for the successor. We also agree with the multiple studies of groups (or Boards) that there are four major phases of group life: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. The Board must do all at any given time, but like all groups the focus shifts by nature. We have had our turn at Forming and Storming and have survived those well. I want to focus on Norming. Norming to me means to write down successful processes, organize filing systems so they work for us, try new experiments and record the results to find our best opportunities, and such like. Every election and new Board member brings all the four phases to bear, but as we approach consistent Performing we will spend more time there, as performers simply because we know who is on the Board, and the abilities each brings to the whole. We will know how to approach problems and projects and where to find answers.

We are the same Roadtrip, our mission is to support the missions and goals of the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, period. We need members: to volunteer, to support our efforts economically and with vigor, to pursue our joy at Crab Orchard, and to simply have fun!

I like to refer to Crab Orchard as the "Wild heart of Southern Illinois" so I hope to see you all out here during the year. Let's enjoy nature together at this great place!

Rick Whitecotton, President Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge

A View From My Perch

March 23, 2020

This will be my regular Quarterly Newsletter column. The way I am approaching this is as a bird on a perch surveying the scenery. I intend to look to the current quarter highlighting some recent events we supported and likewise to look forward to upcoming events and hopefully solicit support.

The main event we support over winter is the Eagle Tours. We had a major change in approach this year and Vicki Lang will be explaining it in more detail later in this edition. The Pollinator Habitat team was sowing seeds gathered from our 2 acre prairie. We did this on a mild day on January 1, a good start for the year.

Winter is a time of refreshing and rest. We enjoy the four seasons in our area and the changed scenery of a forest or woodlot without leaves brings a new view for a few months. The green is coming back though and with local temps in the fifties expect to see more of those hibernating animals out and about. Bluebirds and other neo-tropical migratory birds will be winging their way back to Crab Orchard in the near future. By the time you get this newsletter the birds will be here. Some, as you know, stay the summer and others pause on their way further north.

I had several paragraphs concerning the many typical activities we support in the Spring quarter...things change. The fog of pandemic now obscures our vision and opportunities. All group activities are on hold until the end of April. There is an ongoing reevaluation of conditions by the Fish and Wildlife Service, but the near term future is hard to determine. I hope this newsletter finds you well, and that you are taking this Covid-19 virus seriously. It is time to take a break from our normal routines, including routines at Crab Orchard. Things will return, perhaps with some changes, but it may take a period of time. The Refuge is open and I stop by my haunts regularly, if you see me give me a yell and a wave at a safe distance.

See related articles in this newsletter.

Rick Whitecotton

Friends Board Takes Action on Covid-19 Response

On Monday March 16 we held an emergency meeting of the Board. The cause of the meeting was a staffing emergency at the Woodland Gift Shop. Many volunteers felt a need to cease their work at the Gift Shop until the pandemic is over. We held our meeting via a conference call, this was a first. Many thanks go to Vice President Judy Groskind for finding a free service to support our needs.

You will have already received the minutes of the meeting by the time you get the newsletter so you know our responses. At the time of the meeting the Fish and Wildlife staff had not determined to close the visitor's center. We had four motions, two of them passed.

There was a motion to close the Woodland Gift Shop for one month, reevaluate with changing conditions and review at the next meeting of the board

There was a motion to restrict disbursement of our funds; any single expense over \$200 requires the approval of five Board members.

Our rationale was related to the Gift Shop as our major income source and a large amount of unknown variables.

Please see related articles within the newsletter.

Crab Orchard Refuge Status

If you volunteer on the Refuge you hopefully received an information and status email on March 18.

This is her note below:

Good afternoon, everyone!

Here is some updated information about our visitor center, volunteers and your volunteer gift shop shifts in the coming weeks.

Effective today, our visitor center is closed and the opening of all campgrounds and marinas on the Refuge have been postponed until further notice. As of right now, you do not need to come in for any of your volunteer shifts.

We will reassess again next week information, and will base our decisions off of the State of Illinois latest guidance, the White House, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), and local state authorities to promote social distancing as we consider reopening. If you have a volunteer activity please do not plan to come until further notice.

We know that these are uncertain times, and information and communication are very important to all of us here at Crab Orchard NWR. To that end, know that you can call me at 618-997-5953 at any time if you have questions or concerns. You should feel no obligation to come for your shift if you are feeling unsafe or unhealthy doing so. All I ask is that you communicate with us ASAP if you are unable or unwilling to come when we resume volunteer activities. Your communication helps me work with the Visitor Services Manager, Neil Vincent, and all our staff to make decisions.

Be sure to have staff phone numbers handy:

- *Refuge Visitor Services Manager, Neil Vincent: 618-998-5954*

Park Ranger, Dana M. Malavé Miller: 618-998-5953

Other important details:

Volunteer Banquet has been postponed.

All Refuge events for the month of March and April have been canceled

While our Visitor Center is temporarily closed, hiking trails, refuge grounds and boat ramps are open

We want you to be safe, and have the ability to follow recommendations to socially distance, quarantine as necessary, and avoid gatherings of 10 or more people. Stay home if you can, wash your hands frequently, and limit time in public spaces such as grocery or department stores. If you have any reason to suspect you've been in contact with someone who carries or has a confirmed case of COVID-19, let us know immediately. We will do whatever we can within our power to support you!

Thank you again for all you do for this Refuge, including your passion to share your love and appreciation for our federal public lands within our Refuge. We'll be back to sharing that love soon enough, and for now want you all to be safe!

Thank you,

Dana Michelle Malavé-Miller

Park Ranger

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

8588 Rt. 148

Marion, IL 62959

Phone 618 - 998 - 5953

dana_malave-miller@fws.gov

The bottom line for everyone is:

The Visitor's Center is closed

No Programming and events through April

The water and land are open, please practice social distancing and enjoy the Refuge!

Thanks to Dana for the critical information!

Rick Whitecotton

QUARTERLY EVENTS

April

ALL EVENTS CANCELLED

May

Full Moon Kayak Tour: Becoming an Outdoors-Family Program

May 8

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!

Pollinator Talk and Garden Tour

May 16

Join a dedicated group of refuge volunteers for pollinator talk and garden tour. Learn about the amazing attributes of pollinators and finish the talk with a stroll through the pollinator garden.

*Program begins at 10:00 am.
Meets at the Refuge Visitor Center.
Reservations are recommended.*

Crab Orchard Photography Group

May 20

Meets every third Wednesday of the month.

Meeting begins at 8 am at the Refuge Visitor Center.

Refuge Rendezvous at CONWR Campground

May 23

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.

Talking Tombstones: Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

May 31

From time to time cemeteries are seen as melancholy or eerie places. People could visit a cemetery to pay respect to a love one or pursue silence. Cemeteries can help you to know the past of the land that surrounds you, understand history, or get to know your ancestors. While traveling in time, join a Refuge Ranger and take a closer look at some of the Crab Orchard NWR cemeteries, explore parts of the refuge usually unseen, and learn interesting facts about the Refuge history.

Program meets at the Refuge Visitor Center.

*Program begins at 10 am.
Reservations are required.*

June

Hiking with the Ranger: Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

June 6 and June 7

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 gravel path hike.
Meets at the Refuge Visitor Center.
Program begins at 10 am.
Reservations are required.*

Kids Fishing Derby

June 13

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.*

Crab Orchard Photography Group

June 17

Meets every third Wednesday of the month.

Meeting begins at 8 am at the Refuge Visitor Center.

Refuge Rendezvous at CONWR Campground

June 20

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.*

Kayaking The Refuge: Becoming an Outdoors Family Program

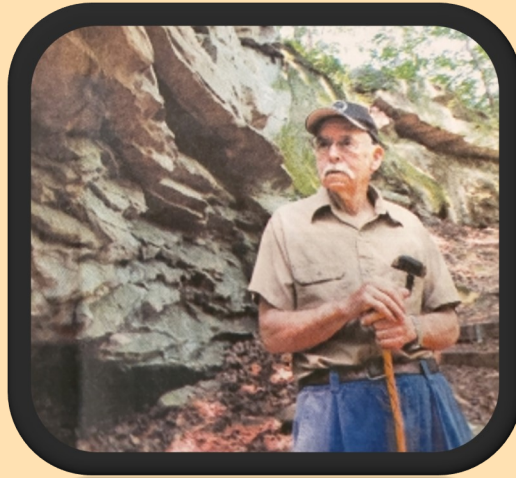
June 27

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.*

VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER

Darrell Livsay
Refuge Volunteer
1987-2017



Darrell Livsay a long time Refuge Volunteer passed away on January 3, 2020. Darrell volunteered over 11,000 hours to Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. While a volunteer, he was the lead for the Refuge's Volunteer Trail Crew. He helped established the Rocky Bluff Trail and the trails Wildflower Walk program. He laid out the section of the River to River trail that goes through Crab Orchard NWR. He received numerous awards for his volunteer work including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Volunteer of the Year 1992, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Outstanding Volunteer of the Year 2006, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer of the Year 1992 & 2010, River to River Trail Society Volunteer of the Year 1997, River to River Board Hall of Fame 1998 and 2008, and Woodman of the World Conservation Award 1992. Darrell's service was further honored by the naming of a spring near Dutchman Lake, Livesay Spring and the local PBS station featured him and the Rocky Bluff Trail Wildflower Walk in a documentary program. Darrell was an avid outdoorsman who loved everything that it offered especially hunting, fishing and mushroom hunting.

EAGLE TOURS

The Friends of Crab Orchard sponsored the annual Eagle Tours on January 31, February 1, 2 and 3 this year on the Refuge. The 3 tour times daily remained the same but instead of 2 separate weekends, the tours were offered on 4 consecutive days Friday through Monday. Neil Vincent, our Friends liaison with the Refuge was able to secure a USFWS van for this time period in lieu of the Friends renting a van locally. Most of the tours were filled up with just a few empty spaces. We used 2 large passenger vans, 1 mini-van along with the spotter truck to guide the way through parts of the restricted area and the auto tour route on the Refuge.

The tours are free of charge and a very popular activity on the Refuge. Some of the participants are regular visitors on the Refuge while others experience Crab Orchard for their first time.

The tours took visitors to see 2 of the active Bald Eagle nests and all but one tour were able to view eagles in their natural habitat on the Refuge. Some tours included the viewing of nest building behavior or pair bonding. This was an educational and fun activity for all ages. Judging from the feedback and smiles, participants seemed to be enjoying themselves while visiting Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge.

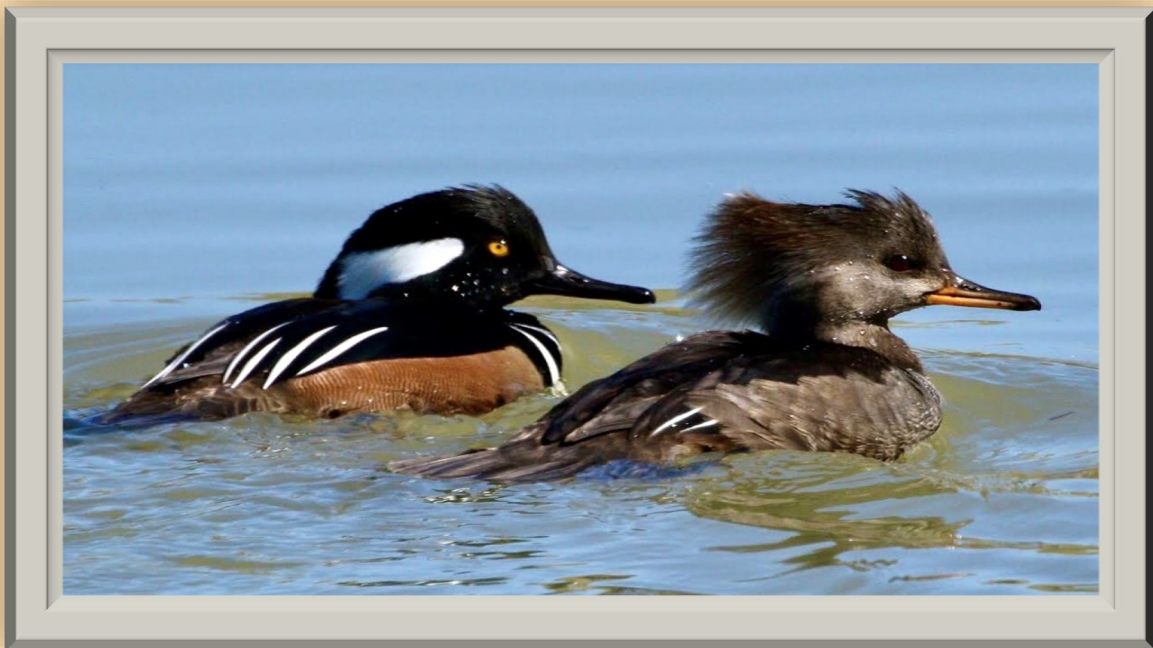
Submitted by Volunteer Vicki Lang

NOT CURRENTLY FUNDRAISING

During the current health crisis, the Friends will not actively fundraise for this project. Any donations will still be gratefully received and submitted for grant match, but please consider the needs of friends, family and community first. This will be a time of hardship for many, and community organizations such as food pantries can use our support.

FRIENDS OF CRAB ORCHARD REFUGE AWARDED A GRANT FOR STEWARDSHIP OF WETLAND HABITAT-HERON FLATS

The Friends are excited to announce a new MATCH GRANT AWARD!!! for support of a Wetland Habitat Project on Heron Flats! The Illinois Clean Energy Foundation (ICECF), which encourages increased local support and participation in care of the habitat, will provide grant funding as a 3:1 match to local dollars raised (up to a grant payment of \$21,000). ICECF will also make payments of up to \$6000 for volunteer hours. Heron Flats is the 400+ acre wetland located along Route 148 about 2 miles south of the Visitor Center (with the tall wooden observation platforms). A joint venture of the Friends and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the project will include earthwork, installation of new water control structures, invasive control, planting of native wetland species, and signage. Future plans include improvements to a public viewing area and a photo blind.



If you would like to make a donation, contributions should be mailed to the Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge Inc. 8588 Route 148, Marion, IL 62959. Please include a note that the contribution is for the Wetland Habitat Project, so we can collect the match. Remember- a \$25 donation becomes \$100, \$250 becomes \$1000— you get the idea. The Friends are a 501(c) 3 nonprofit and all contributions are tax deductible. The gorgeous photo of hooded mergansers was taken by Don Mullison.

CREATURE FEATURE

Butterfly:



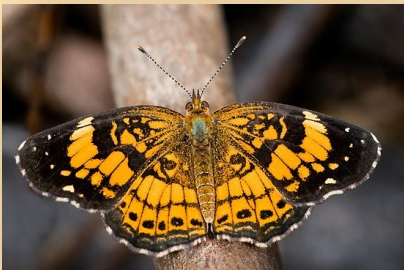
Silvery Checkerspot



Variegated Fritillary



Eastern Monarch



Pearl Crescent

Host Plant:



Purple Coneflower



Purple Passion Flower



Butterfly Milkweed



Aromatic Aster

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. Lifetime membership is \$250.00

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

AMOUNT PAID: _____

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

COMMITTEE NAME: _____

IF you would like to make a donation to Friends Projects, please fill out the form below and mail it to the address below

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

AMOUNT PAID: _____

FRIENDS of CONWR

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