

Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge Quarterly Newsletter



April 2022

Volume 20, Issue 1

Volume 20, Issue 1

Inside this issue:

- Happy Trails 1
- Woodland Gift Shop is open!
- Photo Contest Winners 2
- Membership Matters 3
- Heron Flats Wetland Project 4
- Bluebird Nest Box Reports
- The View From My Perch 5
- Spring Wildflower Walks at Rocky Bluff Trail 6
- Digital Photo Album 7
- “Can You Hear Me Now?”
- New Signs For Pollinator Garden 8
- Other Pollinator Garden Happenings 9
- Pollinator Work Resumes

Happy Trails

Rev. Dr. Dave Estep and his wife Sandie Estep have been volunteers on the Refuge for many years. Both have served on the Friends Board, Sandie as Secretary, and Dave as Data Administrator, Woodland Gift Shop Assistant Manager, and all around Tech Guru. If there was a job to be done, they were there ready to help out.

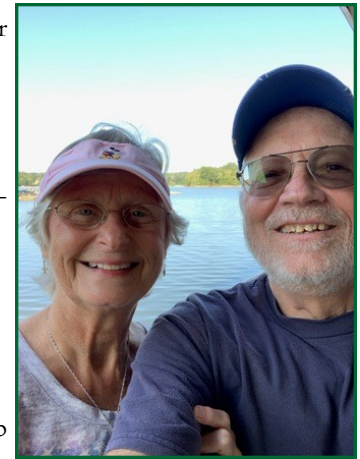
Dave and Sandie have been married for 33 years. They live on Lake Egypt.

Sandie is a retired medical transcriptionist of 35 years.

Dave served 22 years in the Air Force and Civil Service. He has been a United Methodist pastor for 32 years with a Doctor of Ministry degree in Spiritual Direction and Formation.

Dave and Sandie have decided to retire and are going to “hit the road” and travel to new sights.

A very grateful Friends of Crab Orchard Board of Directors wish them well, and we all would like to say, “Happy Trails to you, until we meet again...”



Dave and Sandie Estep

Article submitted by Dave Estep and Ruie Whitecotton

Woodland Gift Shop is open for business!

After being closed for almost 2 years because of the COVID pandemic, the Woodland Gift Shop re-opened for business in early February. While future plans are to locate the Gift Shop in the new Visitor’s Center, Refuge management made space available in the lobby of the new Headquarters Building for a mini-store. As in the past, the Woodland Gift Shop is selling books, toys, jewelry, mugs, hiking sticks, and clothes including t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats and

Jr. Ranger clothing for the kids...And here’s the best thing—everything is being sold at 2020 prices! The Gift Shop is open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. seven days a week and, as in the past, the store accepts credit cards. Have time on your hands? Consider volunteering in the Gift Shop. Minimum requirement is 3 hours per week and your schedule can be flexible. There are openings in the schedule right now! Call the Refuge and tell them you are interested in volunteering

Have retail experience? The Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge is looking for someone to serve as Assistant Manager of the Gift Shop --let’s talk!



Volunteer Jonathan Lake has placed the Woodland Gift Shop signs he designed over our new space. Thank you Jonathan!

Article submitted by Chair of Merchandise Com. Jim Osborn

“The wild heart of Southern Illinois”

75th Anniversary Photo Contest Winners

During this 75th Anniversary year of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, the Photography Group decided to choose four photographs taken on the Refuge to be displayed on the video screen located in the New Headquarters. Each month, judges will choose the photographs submitted to the Friends of CONWR and Photography Facebook Page that represents the best of these four categories: Wildlife, Landscape, Plants and Trees, and Most Unique. Here are the winners for January and February:

JANUARY WINNERS



WILDLIFE
Suzanne Asaturian -
“Walk this Way Little
Beaver”



LANDSCAPE
Donna Denson -
“Psalm 118:24”



PLANTS AND TREES
Bob Steele -
“A Frosty Morning”



MOST UNIQUE
John O’Connell -
“Grassy’ Bay
Milky Way”

FEBRUARY WINNERS



WILDLIFE
Linda Hine -
“Afternoon Flight”



LANDSCAPE
Suzanne Asaturian
-
“Rocky Bluff
Sunrise”



**PLANTS AND
TREES**
Rhonda Branum -
“Morning Rays
On Ice”



MOST UNIQUE
Michael Sarver -
“Winter Scape”

Article presented by Photography Chair Don Mullison

Membership Matters

LIFETIME MEMBERS

General Dynamics since 2001	So IIL Bass Busters since 2001
So IL Hunting & Fishing Days since 2001	Take Pride In America since 2001
Colleen Bogard since 2015 (Board)	John Brewster since 2002
Lewis Fosse since 2001	Judy Groskind since 2022 (1st VP Board)
Gene Honn since 2022 (Board)	Rosemarie Howerton since 2018 (Board)
Anita Hutton since 2018	Cathy D. Jennings since 2021
Melanie A. Kasson since 2019	Nancy Nowak since 2018
Paul Restivo since 2020	Marlene Schaede since 2001
Cheryl Stein since 2019	Kathryn Stevens since 2020
Bill Thomas since 2021	Laurel Wendt since 2014

MEMBERS 2022

Jill Adams (Board)	Pamela Adams	Ray Adams	Howard Allen
Lorie Allen	Nathan Alexander	Mary Bachman	Don Banfield
Steve Banker	Olivia Barragon-Velasquez	Steve Battiste	Kathy Belletire
Steve Belletire	Wesley Calvert (Board)	Katie Carl	Allen Carstens
Melissa Carstens	Kathy Carstens	Bonnie Cissell	Kim Conley
Tricia Conley	Robert Cook	Sarah Cook	Donna Denson
Patricia Dunbar	David Estep	Sandie Estep	Peter Fox
Mary Finley	Kathleen A. Gaare-Wiese (Board)	Steve Gariepy	Liz Gersbacher
David Gray	Joseph Groskind	Matt Gustavson	Ron Hamberg
Darlene Hancock	James Hancock	Aimee Hemphill (Board)	Angela J. Higgins
Randy Higgins	Dennis Holtzclaw	Leann Johnson	Barbara Kuntsman
Marvin Kunstman	Jonathan Lake	Vicki Lang-Mendenhall (Board)	Danell Lemasters
Vern Lemasters	Carolyn Loving	Ken Loving	Kathleen Manfredi
Pat Manfredi	Bob McCan	Sue McCan	Mary McCarthy
Barbara McKasson	Stephen McKasson	Don Mullison (Board)	Miriam Link-Mullison
Kent Newton	John O'Connell	Laura O'Connell	Jim Osborn (2nd VP Board)
Mary Jo Osborn (TR Board)	Randy Osborn (Board)	Janie Pettigrew	Jean Ann Ray
Kathy Renfro (Board)	David Sain	Laura Sain	Ernest Scott
Maxwell Senteney	Sam Spiller	JoAnne Swafford (Board)	Ronald E. Swafford
Harry Threlkeld	Elizabeth Todd	Monty Tyner	Carol Warriner
Fred Warriner	Lyle J. White	Rick Whitecotton (PR Board)	Ruie Whitecotton (S Board)
Jonathan Whiteside	Larraine Wright	Janet Young	William Young
Arthur Zaitz	Susan Zaitz		

Article submitted by Secretary Ruie Whitecotton

Heron Flats Wetland Project Update

The wetland habitat project on Heron Flats is finally scheduled to resume this summer. The project, funded by generous donations from many local groups and individuals and a 3:1 matching grant the Friends secured from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation in March of 2020, was put on hold due to the pandemic. Refuge management and the Friends Wetland Committee are meeting later this month to discuss plans. Our next Newsletter will contain the details!

Article submitted by 1st Vice-President Judy Groskind



Photograph by Ruie Whitecotton

“The prolonged below freezing temperatures and snow cover lasting for more than 2 weeks in February of 2021 resulted in the death of close to 70% of our local adult bluebird population...”

Bluebird Nest Box Report

Of Special Note for 2021: The prolonged below freezing temperatures and snow cover lasting for more than 2 weeks in February of 2021 resulted in the death of close to 70% of our local adult bluebird population from hypothermia and starvation. Reports of winter-killed birds from Texas through Ohio was an indication of how widespread the area affected by the unusu-

ally cold weather was.

This loss was reflected in the number of bluebirds fledged from our Refuge boxes last year (2021). Our Refuge boxes experienced a nearly 75% reduction of fledged bluebirds last summer compared to 2019's numbers. (There was no data for 2020 due to COVID 19 restrictions on monitor-

ing at the Refuge). The number fell from 667 in 2019 to 152 in 2021. We are hoping to see a rebound in numbers over the next few years.

Article submitted by Bluebird Chair Aimee Hemphill



A Few Words About Nest Box Maintenance

If you have bluebird nest boxes on your property, it is very important to make sure they are in good repair and stay dry inside during most bad weather. Ideally, they should face the south-east away from most prevailing storms. Bluebirds will nest up to 3 times in a nesting season that runs from early March through the end of August. As fledglings do not return to the boxes, old nests should be

removed as soon as the young fledge and the box cleaned and readied for the next nesting. The boxes should be checked every 7-10 days and problems remedied. Wasp nests should be removed, Vaseline applied at the base of the pole to deter ants, and predator guards installed if predation by raccoons, cats, or snakes is a problem. To prevent starlings from nesting in the box, round entry holes

should be 1 9/16" in diameter. Slots should be 1 3/16" high. For more information on how to maintain a successful bluebird nest box, please go to <http://sialis.org>.

Article submitted by

Bluebird Chair

Aimee Hemphill

Photographs by

Ruie Whitecotton

A View From My Perch

Spring, that action packed time is upon us. Nature is abundantly sending forth new growth, young animals will soon abound. Around the Refuge we have seen some changes already and more to come. COVID has abated for the moment and we can all enjoy that. The limit of 50 people gathering outdoors in one location is now lifted! The requirement to wear a mask in the HQ is also lifted. You may, of course, continue to wear one as you desire.

The construction company has a trailer set up near the HQ, they are starting construction of the new Visitor's Center. We eagerly await that building!

You may have noticed many areas that were burnt recently. The prescribed burn team has been busy, fresh green is popping up in all those areas. We are very glad to see a burn on our Pollinator Habitat Project area in the Headquarters prairie. We had our first workday yesterday on the Pollinator Project. It was a warm up of applying mulch to all the newest trees and shrubs planted. You will hopefully see an article with more detail related to developments with the project.

In May, the Refuge is planning some night programs while the details are not set, they may have portions including: astronomy overview, night kayaking, light pollution awareness, and evening bird migration.

The big news this year though is Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge's 75th Anniversary! The planning for this event and accompanying opportunities to participate in the celebration are being developed currently. The actual anniversary date is August 5, 2022, there may be related events in the third quarter of the year. Likewise, we saw the opportunity to add 75 new members to our numbers. We have a membership campaign going on. If you have friends or neighbors that come out to Crab Orchard Refuge, please inform them of the benefits of membership. (10% discount at the Woodland Gift Shop, quarterly newsletter, Board meeting minutes, and voting rights at our Annual Meeting).

Just a reminder...the Woodland Gift Shop is OPEN. We are more limited in space, but have the best nature book collection in the area. We just had a merchandising meeting yesterday and I feel you will be pleased with some of the new merchandise available soon. Come by and visit us at the HQ soon!

Five years can spin off pretty quickly and we have found ourselves at the appropriate time for renewal of our Partnership Agreement, a required agreement outlining the goals of our Organization and the mutual responsibilities of both the Fish and Wildlife Service and our Friends Organization.

My Friends, enjoy spring, it is always too brief but wonderful. I'll see you on the Refuge!



Rick Whitecotton

March 26, 2022

- 50 person limit gathering outdoors is lifted
- Mask wearing in HQ is lifted
- Prescribed burns
- Night programs in May planned
- 75th Anniversary of the Refuge
- Membership drive
- Woodland Gift Shop is open
- Partnership

Notes From The Refuge by Aimee Hemphill Chair of Pollinator Project:

Announcing Spring Wildflower Walks at Rocky Bluff Trail

Our new intern, Olivia Barragan-Velasquez, along with Friends volunteers will be leading three Wildflower Walks at Rocky Bluff Trail this year. The walks will take place on April 3 at 10 a.m., April 10 at 1 p.m. and April 24 at 10 a.m. We will meet at Rocky Bluff Trail Parking Lot near Devil's Kitchen Lake. Please reserve in advance by calling the Refuge Headquarters at 618-997-3344. Also check the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page for any updates or cancellations.



Olivia comes to the Refuge as an intern through the Environment for the Americas, a conservation-focused non-profit organization, and will be with us until July 3, 2022. She grew up in Washington State, has a degree in Outdoor Recreation from SIU and recently finished internships at Giant City State Park and Cache River State Natural Area.

Environment for the Americas sponsoring Olivia aims to connect diverse people to birds and nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists by connecting diverse people to nature and to the protection of birds and their habitats. Later this spring on May 14, to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), Olivia will lead an evening program at 7 p.m. at Martha's Theater near the Harmony Trail entrance about light pollution and how migratory bird species are impacted. Please join her to explore this very important topic. Follow the Refuge Facebook page for program information.

Welcome Olivia!

Pretty Boy

“Ooh, you’re such a pretty boy!”
I said, as I saw the bright flash of red.
“The ladies are going to love you!”
“They do, they do, they do!” he replied
While looking me in the eye.
A little dance,
And a bobbed goodbye,
The bright, red Cardinal
Did fly, fly, fly!

Poem and photograph by Ruie Whitzeolton

Poet's Corner



“The wild heart of Southern Illinois”

“Spring Flora Along Rocky Bluff Trail at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge” Photo Album by Bill Thomas

During the pandemic, Lifetime Friends member and volunteer Bill Thomas put together a beautiful digital photo album of spring ephemerals found at Rocky Bluff Trail. Ranger Dana Malave-Miller during her time here, inspired Bill to do a photo survey of the early spring wildflowers along the trail to share with visitors. Bill was assisted in the identification by Friends member Sam Spiller. The album can be viewed by following this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n4iesR6c93-wWTNHeozskBErmkbG1Fmn/view?usp=drivesdk>

or by scanning the following QR code:



Scan to download the guide to Spring Flora Along Rocky Bluff Trail (64MB)

Article submitted by Aimee Hemphill
Chair of Pollinator Project

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Opinion

Rick Whitecotton

March 26, 2022

I am taking a zoom course currently, a six-week combined self-study and group meeting format. The title for those interested is: “Journey to Beloved Community,” it is developed and moderated by the Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church. I am enjoying it, like always though, I wish I could meet the participants face to face. The information is challenging and enlightening. Within the program is a daily guided meditation focused on the week’s theme. It got me thinking of this season and the accompanying sounds. I just want to challenge you to take a few moments to experience the Refuge in a unique way.

Go to a location you typically visit on the Refuge. Turn all sounds you can off, like your phone or vehicle. Get outdoors to a comfortable location and relax for a bit, just five minutes time. Close your eyes and just listen. What do you hear? Are you hearing water lap the shore or a structure? Do you hear the wind passing through nearby tree limbs or remnant grasses? Do you hear vehicles passing, cars, trucks, bicycles? How about people walking or running? Do you hear them talking about topics important to them? Do you hear laughter, how about a child’s laugh? Do you hear birds? What species are they? Does that make you interested in birds and finding out more about a species whose call you just heard? Is this a bird you have been hearing year-round or through the winter months? Is it perhaps a new arrival staying with us for the summer? How does that make you feel? Do you appreciate the sound more now that you have focused on it? Sound is a backdrop to our lives and unless we recognize it as important to us (like for example safety information) it may be largely ignored.

I hope this exercise helps you appreciate the sounds of your life wherever you may go.

New Signs For Pollinator Garden

Keep an eye out for new signage at our pollinator gardens and at the Refuge Headquarters. Thirty black aluminum 3”x 5” arboretum signs and stakes were purchased with funds from our Pollinator Project grant which is funded by the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF). The ICECF was established with an endowment provided by Commonwealth Edison and has been funding environmental community projects since 1999.

The arboretum signs will identify each plant and have a QR code that when scanned with your cell phone will direct you to a web page with information about the specific plant. Most of our redirects are to www.illinoiswildflowers.info. Each webpage contains a wealth of information about the individual plant including descriptions, photos, cultivation tips, faunal associations and wildlife uses. The website was created by Dr. John Hilty of Urbana, IL in 2002. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at www.wildflower.org was also used for redirects.

In addition to the new metal signs, we are replacing most of our card holder sign inserts with new ones that also contain a QR code to scan for more information. Thanks to Dave Estep for creating, printing, and laminating these new inserts.



Article submitted by Pollinator Project Chair Aimee Hemphill

Other Pollinator Garden Happenings

On March 3 the Refuge fire crew accomplished a prescribed burn that included the 2.5 acre prairie established in a winter seeding by our Pollinator group in January of 2018.



Prescribed burns are a required maintenance tool for the management of permanent grasslands and should be conducted every 3-5 years. The fire crew picked a perfect day with conditions just right for a hot burn. The burn accomplished a number of things:

1. prevention of successional trees and shrubs from overtaking the prairie,
2. discouraging non-fire adapted and non-native plants from invading,
3. prevention of buildup of dead vegetation that encourages weeds and prevents new growth of prairie wildflowers and grasses,
4. the return of nutrients to the soil,
5. and improvement of habitat for prairie birds, mammals and butterflies.

Thanks David Jones and fire crew!

Pollinator Project work resumes

The Pollinator Project volunteers resumed their Friday morning workdays at the Harmony Trail area on March 25. Mulching the shrubs and trees planted last fall was top priority as well as general cleanup. On Friday April 1, the group is expected to pot out 150 native tree and shrub seedlings purchased with grant money that will be cared for over the summer by members and planted in the fall. This will be the fourth year for this endeavor and we are starting to see the results of our labors. The perimeter of the Martha's Theater area is being kept free of invading bush honeysuckle, autumn olive and multiflora rose by our islands of native trees and shrubs as well as providing food and cover for native pollinators and birds.

Thank you, Joseph Groskind for your generous donations of compost and mulch!

Articles submitted by Chair of Pollinator Project Aimee Hemphill

Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge

Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge
6987 Headquarters Road
Marion, IL 62959

Website:
www.friendsofconwr.com

Facebook:
Friends of Crab Orchard
National Wildlife Refuge

Instagram:
friendsofcraborchardrefuge

A Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge Membership provides you with a Quarterly Newsletter, monthly Board Minutes, right to vote at our Annual Membership Meeting in October, and a 10% discount at our Woodland Gift Shop. Mark the Membership you desire and send this form and a check made payable to:

Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge, 6987 Headquarters Road, Marion, IL 62959.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

- Annual Single Student (age 16 and above) \$ 5.00
- Annual Individual \$ 10.00
- Annual Family \$ 20.00
- Annual Business \$100.00
- Lifetime \$250.00



Bluebells in the Ephemeral Garden at Martha's Theatre



Volunteer Sam Spiller working on Prairie Demo Garden



President Rick Whitecotton
Teaching children about native plants



1st VP Judy Groskind
Teaching children about bees



"The wild heart of Southern Illinois"