

Friends Of Crab Orchard Refuge Quarterly Newsletter



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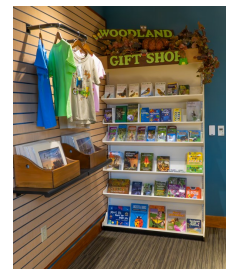
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Volume 21, Issue IV

October 2023

A Celebration of Another Year As Friends!

Having our Annual Friends Membership Meeting in the new Meeting Room helped lend a special celebratory spirit to the event. From tours of our New Visitor's Center, to a very interesting historical talk on "The Making of a Refuge," to awards, to voting, to a phenomenal spread of very tasty food, it was a festive evening.



President Rick Whitecotton began with a welcome and introduction of Board Members and recognition of Volunteers for our many projects. Visitor's Services Manager, Neil Vincent, introduced Refuge Staff that were present.

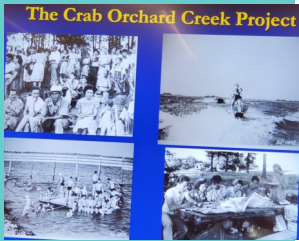
Rick assured us the "State of the Friends" is doing well, and we have accomplished much during this past year, beginning with the 75th Anniversary Celebration held last October. Treasurer Mary Jo Osborn gave a brief overview of our financials. We then voted on the roster of incumbent Board Members for another two year term.

There are 5 Board Members who are resigning from the Board this year: Wesley Calvert, Kathy Renfro, Kathleen Gaare-Wiese, Gene Honn, and Vicki Lang-Mendenhall. President Whitecotton presented Certificates of Appreciation to the resigning Board Members that were present, Wesley Calvert, for his years of Chairing the Education Committee and for Interpretive Training he has provided at Refuge events; and to Kathy Renfro, for her service on the Membership Committee. He then presented a *Lifetime Achievement Award* to Vicki Lang-Mendenhall. Vicki Lang-Mendenhall has been on the Board since it's inception. She has been a great asset to Friends and the Refuge for over 20 years; in particular our Annual Eagle Tours.



"The wild heart of Southern Illinois"

Celebration Continued



Our special speaker, Visitor's Services Manager, Neil Vincent delivered a power point presentation entitled "The Making of a Refuge". He presented photographs throughout the history of the Refuge from the 1930's to more present day. The conception of the Refuge was the brain child of Representative Kent Keller. He desired to provide a water source as well as recreation, and jobs for his constituents. At that time, it was jokingly called "Keller's Frog Pond". Initially called the Crab Orchard Creek Project, it was to be the largest man-made lake in the United States. During the 1930's and early 1940's, over 20,000 people were known to enjoy the lake in recreation. Then, with talk of war on the horizon, the Department of Defense began looking for Midwestern properties that also provided a large water source. So on December 4, 1941, just 3 days before the Pearl Harbor attack, 7,000 people began work at the Illinois Ordnance Plant (ORDIL). The War Department bought 12,000 more acres through "imminent domain" policies. At it's height, ORDIL employed over 10,000 people and sustained 3 Fire Stations, a Police Department, and 80 miles of railroad that was used to move components to make the munitions.



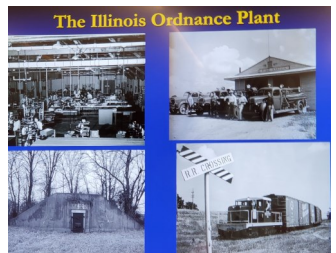
Fish and Wildlife had expressed an interest in 10,000 acres of the Crab Orchard Project. But the Department of Defense said if you want any acreage, you have to take it all. So, after WWII, on August 5, 1947, by Congressional decree, Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge was established for 4 purposes: Agriculture, Recreation, Wildlife, and Industry. These purposes remain today. This is just a small portion of the historical record that Neil Vincent presented.



After Neil's presentation, Rick asked for a moment of silence for our former Board Members who have passed away just in this past year. They are: William Perry Young, Laurel Wendt, Aimee Hemphill, Rosemarie Howerton, and Ron Hamberg.

Door prizes were given throughout the meeting and a big thank you to ALL who provided food for the event. Thank you to all the volunteers led by Hospitality Chair Janie Pettigrew. The spread was truly spectacular! It is evident this meeting room will be a great asset to the Refuge, Friends, and the community.

Article and some photographs by Ruie Whitecotton, additional photographs by Jim Osborn



"The wild heart of Southern Illinois"

A View from My Perch
October 3, 2023
By Rick Whitecotton
President, Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge



Ah, Autumn, where are those warm days and cool nights? Hopefully just around the corner. Regardless, the walnuts are dropping, the leaves are starting to change color and most of the native plants are close to the seed production stage to prepare for the next cycle of seeding a new generation of plants. The hummingbirds are getting scarce or gone and you better catch the last glimpse of those gorgeous summer butterflies as they are going, going, gone!

October also signals our annual meeting. We are feeling a bit more prepared this year. By the time you read this, our annual meeting will be complete, another Board election behind us, and a new year for the Friends starting. The major difference is that we are holding the meeting in our New Visitor Center! I know, I know...I have been extolling this wonderful structure for more than a year. It is complete! The displays are not constructed yet though, that is a two year process, so even more to come. The Woodland Giftshop is in new quarters within the New Visitor's Center and is almost fully set up. Please come and visit us there. We have beautiful eclipse T-shirts designed by Kris Killman and matching posters.

Over this past quarter, the Friends have received a grant award of \$843 which was spent to purchase and donate 2 kayaks and a set of camp cookware. This award came from the Fish and Wildlife Retiree Association.

We had a visit from one of the three Deputy Directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service in August. It was a great visit! Our Project Leader took him on a whirlwind tour of the Refuge, and the Director was impressed indeed.

We were back at Hunting and Fishing Days and supported the event. We avoided the shutdown, thus far...we have another opportunity to dodge the bullet just as the deer season will be upon us in 44 days. Deer season, holidays, and shortly after the next newsletter-Eagle Tours!

I hope, you, dear Reader, are one of the million plus people who visit and enjoy our Refuge. It is a real gem!

FIRST ART EXHIBIT FOR OUR NEW VISITOR'S CENTER!

By Ruie Whitecotton



While we wait for the Exhibits to be installed in our New Visitor's Center, the Refuge Manager, Justin Sexton has expressed a desire for our local Nature Artists and Nature Photographers to display their artwork to fill that large space. Split Rock, the company that has been contracted to complete the Exhibits, will begin construction on the first phase in January of 2024. The full Exhibit Hall will not be finished until probably late 2025. Until then, the Manager felt we should fill the space with our local nature artwork.

The first exhibit for the new space will be filled by our own Friends Board Member and nature artist Kathy Belletire. This particular showing of hers, has just been on exhibit at Giant City State Park with great reviews. Here in her own words, Kathy Belletire describes this particular grouping of her work:



"Of all birds, OWLS are one of the most mysterious. Hidden in roosting places by day, hunting with stealth and speed by night; they are sometimes heard but rarely seen. Some nights if we tune into nature, we might hear them calling. With luck and patience, we might just catch a glimpse of an owl in the wild or even in our own yards. Unfortunately, when they die, their feather colors fade. But videos, photography, and art make it possible to visualize the aerodynamic shapes, rich patterns, and earth-toned colors that characterize these mysterious masters of the air. My artwork reveals owls as I see them." ~

Kathy Belletire, Artist

So come on out and enjoy this beautiful artwork and tour our new facility!



"The wild heart of Southern Illinois"

PUMPKINS, PUMPKINS, PUMPKINS! FALL IS UPON US. LET US ENJOY THE SEASON!



Refuge Farmer and Friends Member Will McKinney, delivered 200 pumpkins, a wagon, hay bales, and corn stalks to Friends President Rick Whitecotton. A fall tableau was designed to enable visitors to take fall photos. Also, Friends are accepting donations for pumpkins. There is a donation box at the cashier's desk in our Woodland Gift Shop for the pumpkins. The suggested donation for pumpkins are \$4.00 for large pumpkins and \$3.00 for the smaller pie pumpkins.



Thank you so much Mr. McKinney for giving us this opportunity!

Article and some photographs by Ruie Whitecotton.

Tableau photograph by Jim Osborn



SIU Honor Students Working With Our Pollinator Project Team



SIU Honor Students and their Mentor, David Milley, have returned again this year to help out in our Pollinator Garden. These students do a fantastic job in whatever task they are given! This past Friday, October 6, 2023, the students learned to harvest seeds and to do a first cleaning of them. Pat Dunbar, Pollinator Project Volunteer, first discussed with them just what are seeds; what is their purpose?

Seed collecting is like a treasure hunt. One wades through chest high native prairie and invasive plants to find that one particular species you are hunting for. When the treasure is found, you remove only 1/5 of it, leaving, of course, seed to replenish our Refuge Prairie with the lovely native plants. On Friday, there were two treasures the team was seeking. The first was, Penstemon, a beautiful white blossom which covered the Prairie in Spring. The second, was Partridge Pea, the yellow blossoms, you dear reader, saw covering the Prairie in August, and some still bloom today. After collecting these two species, they were instructed by Rick Whitecotton how best to clean their collection to have it almost ready to ship. The seeds from our Refuge will be sent to



Mason State Nursery to be used in Project Wingspan.

The students will return next week to help in planting native plants in the Prairie Demo Beds. Thank you for your great work! The Pollinator Project Team hopes, weather permitting, to have a cookout for the students.

Article and Photographs by Ruie Whitecotton



CHECK OUT RSVP!**By Rick Whitecotton**

No, this is not the polite and expected response to an invitation in a foreign language! Rather, I am referring to Retired Senior Volunteer Persons, thus RSVP. My interaction and the Friends linkage is with this agency covering Alexander, Franklin, Hardin, Gallatin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, and Williamson Counties. It is affiliated with the Egyptian Agency on Aging and is a local agency for the federal AmeriCorps Senior program. Why is this important to you and to our area?

This program records time spent in approved volunteer activity, including travel, research, work at home, even something like writing this article! The range of volunteer work is broad. If you volunteer for a Federal agency, your hours are likely recorded already through that agency; (they are for qualified work at Crab Orchard Refuge). One wonderful aspect of the RSVP is they record and report volunteer hours both to the Federal and State governments. There is a consistent complaint in our local area about state politicians not acknowledging us. This provides hard data and proof. Some of the areas or types of volunteer activity that qualifies are:

- Tutoring children in public and faith-based schools
- Delivering meals and food from pantries to homebound people
- Serving as companions to homebound people, including veterans
- Providing information and assistance about public benefits and services
- Serving organizations and children, senior adults, and veterans throughout Southern Illinois

I wish to strongly point out that ALL volunteer work at Crab Orchard Refuge qualifies!
It is not all altruism though, how about this list of benefits?

- A large variety of volunteer service opportunities, on-going support, and assistance in your volunteer work
- Free supplemental liability insurance coverage while on assignment
- Reimbursement for volunteers age 55+ for mileage & lunch costs
- Annual recognition events and gifts
- RSVP of SI newsletters
- RSVP of SI email, Facebook, and Twitter updates – we include new volunteer opportunities and information of interest to seniors.
- Opportunity to share in the fun and camaraderie of RSVP of SI events and parties. The chance to meet new friends with common interests.
- Recognition for 4,000 hours of service with presentation of the President's Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual volunteer appreciation event.

The staff is friendly and helpful, they are in each of the 13 southernmost counties, the Egyptian Agency on Aging is in Carterville, on the frontage road between McDonalds and Syden Strykker Nobbe John Deere. They have a useful website: <https://egyptianaaa.org/senior-centers/>

I highly recommend you check them out!

“The wild heart of Southern Illinois”

I Bet You Didn't Know...



.... that Randy Osborn, Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge Board Member, is a world-ranked professional disc golf player! Randy joined the fledgling Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA) in 1975, a group that now numbers over 260,000 members (he holds #287). For seven years, he lived a life on the road with a troupe called “The Aces Pro Frisbee Team,” performing shows twice a day, five days a week at elementary and high school convocations, summer festivals, sporting events (including half-time at an NBA playoff game in Boston). During those years, he participated in the World Frisbee Championships 3 times. Eventually, Randy made the decision to

return to school. He enrolled at Southern Illinois University and completed a Bachelor's degree in Recreation....but he never lost his love for throwing discs.

Now, 48 years after joining the PDGA, and enjoying retirement, Randy is once again playing in regional Disc Golf tournaments (albeit in an older age class). Early this past spring, Randy received an invitation to participate in the 2023 World Masters Disc Golf Championship in Flagstaff, Arizona—an offer he couldn't pass up. So, the first week of July, Randy packed up his gear and headed to the southwest. For a full week, he played different disc golf courses against competitors from around the world in the senior age group. At the conclusion of the tournament, Randy found himself in 5th place.

Back in Southern Illinois, Randy continues to play in area disc golf tournaments and mentor his Grand-Nephews who share his excitement for disc golf. Oh...and he is also proficient with boomerangs!

Randy serves as Chairman of the Membership Committee for the Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge and works a half-day a week in the Woodland Gift Shop.

Article by Jim Osborn

Beautiful Artwork In Woodland Gift Shop Window



When you visit the Woodland Gift Shop, be sure to notice the beautiful stained-glass artwork provided by

Artist and Lifetime Friends Member Bill Thomas. Bill has placed two of his nature pieces in the window, and they really enhance the look of our new Shop! One is a stained-glass work of an Owl and the other is of a White Pelican. Thank you Bill! They are gorgeous examples of stained-glass artwork!



*CRAB ORCHARD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
75TH ANNIVERSARY PHOTO CONTEST
JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER, 2023*

Insects and Pollinators



June
"Leopard Moth"
Jack Walters



July
"Spicebush Swallowtail In Flight"
Peggy Jarvis



August
"Three Butterflies On Thistle"
Kathy Carstens



September
"Painted Lady"
Kris Killman

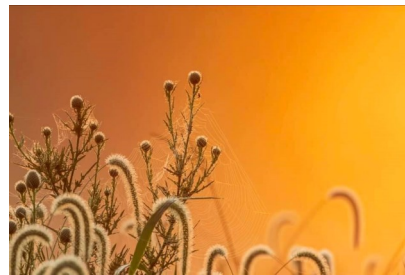
Plants and Fungi



June
"Purple and White Milkweed"
Suzanne Asaturian



July
"Passion Flower"
Suzanne Asaturian



August
"Early Morning Walk"
Steve Bailie

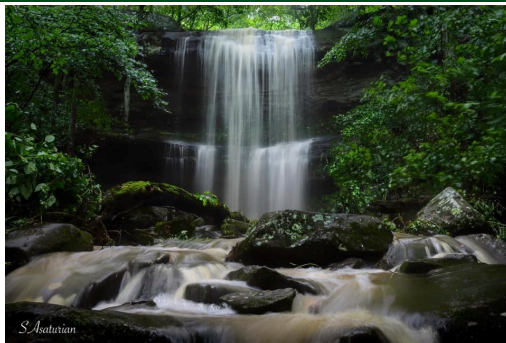
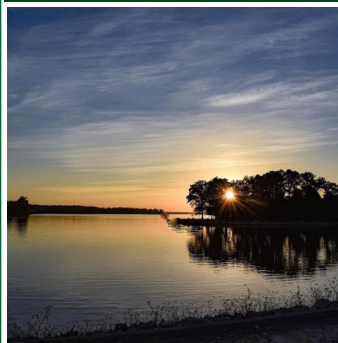


September
"Amazing Mushrooms"
Jack Walters

Photographs judged by
Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge
Photography Committee Members
Don Mullison, Miriam Link-Mullison, and
Jim Osborn

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER PHOTO CONTEST

Landscapes

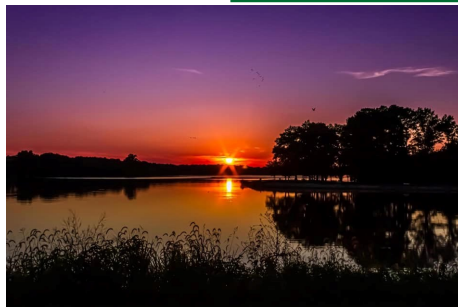


June
"Guitar Sunset"
Mary Lawson

July
"Rocky Bluff Falls"
Suzanne Asaturian

August
"Fishing Pond With Wildflowers"
Erick Christy

September
"Sunset Sparkle"
Peggy Jarvis



Birds



June
"Gotcha"
Jae Lyn

July
"Eagle With Chad"
Erick Christy



August
"Two Great Egrets"
Peggy Jarvis

September
"Juvenile Black-Crowned Night Heron"
Kathy Carstens



*CRAB ORCHARD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
75TH ANNIVERSARY
JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS*

Most Unique



June
"Boating Into
The Sunset"
Amanda
Burton



July
"Nature's Jewelry"
Bob Gulledge



August
"Eastern Box
Turtle"
Jack Walters



September
"Kayaks at Sunset"
Peggy Jarvis

Other Wildlife



June
"Male Fence Lizard"
Jack Walters



July
"Knife Wielding Squirrel"
Tina Pryor

"The wild heart of Southern Illinois"

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

Other Wildlife



August
"Fawn in Flowers"
Dwayne Sheumaker



September
"Groundhog
Close-Up"
Vern LeMasters

Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge Sponsored
High School Bass Classic Tourney
Held at Hunting and Fishing Days - Photographs by Steve Hartsock



Goreville Team
1st Place
Ty Robinson
Hunter Francis



Johnston City Team
2nd Place
Max Price
Roper Sanders



Carterville Team
3rd Place
Brian Marks
Braxton Lidell



Big Fish
Elverado
Chloe Dowdy
Caden Contes



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

Website:
friendsofcraborchardrefuge.com

Facebook:
Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge

Friends of CONWR and
Photography on Facebook

What's New in the Woodland Gift Shop?

At long last the Woodland Gift Shop has relocated into permanent space in the New Visitor's Center! We are excited to have more space, more shelving, and more great items to sell. If you haven't visited us for a while, you need to. Come check out our numerous t-shirt designs, especially our Eclipse 2024 T-shirt designed by artist Kris Killman of Marion. New long-sleeved t-shirts and a couple of different sweatshirts recently arrived just in time for cooler weather. In addition to kids' and adults' clothing, we have puzzles, (great for those cold winter stay-in days), *Wild Republic* Birds that make real-life bird calls, various pieces of wildlife jewelry (pins and earrings), games, posters, nature prints, mugs, and, of course, books. When you start thinking about shopping for Christmas, think about visiting the Woodland Gift Shop. We are open 7 days a week from 8am to 4pm. Profits from the store support various Refuge projects and programs. Remember, members of Friends of Crab Orchard Refuge get a 10% discount all year-long on non-sale items.

Photographs and article by Jim Osborn



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.** You may also join online, just go to: friendsofcraborchardrefuge.com and select donate.

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



"The wild heart of Southern Illinois"