



JOURNAL

Warren County Conservation Board

Spring 2024

Creature Feature: Virginia Opossum *Didelphis virginiana*

Virginia opossums are North America's only marsupial, and just so happen to be our newest animal ambassador. This season's creature feature is all about opossums! Of course, we can't leave out Marsi; read on the 'ANC News' page to learn about Marsi's story.

Habitat: They live in a variety of different habitats, including fields or meadows, but prefer woodlands. Woodlands provide them with a blend of trees that provide vegetation and protection. In these areas, they will make themselves at home in a tree hollow, den, or an abandoned burrow.

Eating habits: These animals are opportunistic eaters that will eat whatever they can get their hands on. Opossums are omnivores, meaning they will eat both plants and animals. They have 50 teeth to help them break down complex foods that other animals won't touch. If you leave out food for cats, opossums will take advantage and eat alongside them. However, they will likely not respond to "here kitty, kitty, kitty".

Life cycle: Marsupials are pouched mammals; another example of a marsupial is a kangaroo. When marsupials are born, they are not completely developed. In order to continue developing, they stay in the pouch (marsupium), feeding on their mother's milk until they are fully developed. For Virginia opossums, they are in the pouch until they reach about 2 months of age. An opossum can have up to 25 babies, but will usually have 7 or 8. The typical lifespan of an opossum is 2 years in the wild and 4 years in captivity.

Adaptations: Opossums have some amazing adaptations to help them survive in the wild! One of them is their tail. Yes, we are aware it looks like a giant rat tail. This rat tail plays a large part in the opossums' mobility; it is a prehensile tail. It works like a limb, helping them climb. When they are young they can even hang from it for a short time. Another adaptation they have, which is great to have when rummaging in your trash, is opposable thumbs. Virginia opossums are the ONLY other mammal native to North America that has this adaptation. The last adaptation we are going to mention is their behavioral adaptation. Opossums are considered non-aggressive animals. Their defensive behaviors typically include showing their teeth, running, hissing, or the most interesting one (in our opinion), playing dead. By doing this, the opossum is trying to avoid confrontation. If you see the opossum is 'dead', you are more likely to leave it alone.





Thank You!

Thank You!

Without the help of our amazing sponsors, donors, and volunteers we wouldn't be able to provide the programs and events that we do! If you or your business are interested in becoming a sponsor, donor, or volunteer please email Kelsey@warrencountyia.org

Storage Organization

Lori Freeman
Monty Freeman



Hidden Heart Hunt

Kacie Cowman
Lori Freeman
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Volunteer Opportunities

Geocache Adventure: Contribute to our geocaching adventure by adopting a geocache! By adopting a geocache, you take responsibility for regularly restocking and ensuring it remains in excellent condition.

Kids Fish Day: Help us give youth the opportunity to learn how to tie knots, cast, and fish safely!



Join Friends of Warren County Conservation

Please support our mission by becoming a Friends member! Want to stay involved and work with others? Ask about our committees. You can be involved in the Marketing and Social Media committee, Events committee, Membership and Volunteer committee and more!



For your convenience you may join online. Here is the link to get to the membership information.

<https://www.warrencb.org/friends-group/join donate/>

OR

Use this QR code!



Meet-a-Member



Nathan Reinke, Conservation Technician



My name is Nathan Reinke and I am excited to be a part of the team here at Warren County Conservation Board (WCCB). I grew up in Ankeny and spent much of my high school days involved in sports. However, when there were not any games to play or practices to attend, I would be out fishing or hunting. I developed a strong love for the outdoors and that took me to the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) where I studied Environmental Resource Management.

During my summers at UNI, I worked seasonal positions for the Iowa DNR as a fisheries aide and water quality technician. In addition, I spent my last summer as an integrated roadside vegetation management technician for Black Hawk County. Through my seasonal positions and the education I obtained at the UNI, I became well rounded in both management of natural resources and the importance of doing so.

I love expanding my knowledge in Iowa's native prairie species. I think they provide important wildlife habitat, structural integrity to the landscape, and an aesthetically pleasing area for people to enjoy.

Again, I am very excited to be a part of WCCB and look forward to maintaining the beautiful parks within the county.





Events

April

Geocaching Fungi Adventure Begins

April 1 | Warren County

There are 25 Geocaching Fungi Adventure Caches hidden in county, state and city parks around Warren County. Your challenge is to explore the parks and find them all using a GPS. Each fungi cache includes an instruction card, a logbook, and a stack of fungi trading cards. Sign the logbook to show that you found the cache and take a fungi trading card for your collection. After finding all 25 caches, take your collectible cards to the Annett Nature Center. We will give you the coordinates to find the last cache challenge. All participants who finish the challenge by November 1, 2024 will receive a finisher's medal and will be added to our Geocaching Adventure Finishers Gallery.

Evening Prairie Burn

April 16 | Annett Nature Center

Join the WCCB as we light up the night sky! Learn about the valuable role fire plays in the prairie ecosystem, and why prescribed burns are used. Enjoy the beauty of watching the prairie burn against the night. This program is dependent on weather conditions. Registration is not required for this event. Check for event updates on our Facebook page or call the office at 515-961-6169.



Earth Day Trail Clean Up

April 20 | Annett Nature Center

The Friends of Warren County Conservation is coming together to honor Earth Day through environmental stewardship. They are leading the charge to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations. Join us as we work to make a positive impact on our planet and demonstrate our dedication to creating a sustainable future. Meet at the Annett Nature Center and prepare to get dirty!

Geocaching 101

April 25 | McCord Park

Looking for a fun new outdoor hobby? Want to participate in a county-wide Geocaching Adventure? Come discover the fun and excitement of geocaching, the high tech outdoor scavenger hunt that uses a Global Positioning System unit, or GPS for short.

Join a WCCB Naturalist for a beginner course to learn about geocaching and how to use the Geocaching app on your phone. Then head out in the park to find "treasures" called caches. Fun for the whole family! After this session you will be prepared to head out on your own and find the Geocaching Fungi Adventure caches hidden in Warren County Parks. This activity is free but please register by Tuesday, April 16th. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

It is a good idea to create an account on the geocaching app or on geocaching.com prior to the event. If you need help with that, please give us a call at 515-961-6169.



May

Family Camp

May 3-4 | Annett Nature Center

New this year to WCCB is a survivor-style family camp. Compete with your loved ones, and bond over the excitement of our challenges. Learn valuable lessons in teamwork, communication, and problem-solving as you navigate through various obstacles and tasks. Participate in camp games and enjoy an overnight camp with your family. Don't miss out on this unforgettable opportunity to connect with nature and each other in a fun and thrilling way. Your family may register beginning Wednesday, March 6th, 2024 at 8a.m. Registration may be completed in person at the Annett Nature Center (15565 118th Ave Indianola, IA) or by calling us at 515-961-6169 (no e-mail registrations will be accepted.)

The cost is \$20 per person in your family

Day Camp fees are non-refundable

For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrencb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.

Events



Raptors of Iowa

May 7 | Indianola Activity Center

Join a WCCB naturalist for an educational and interactive program that will leave you with an appreciation for these powerful predators. From our smallest raptor to our largest and everyone in-between, prepare to be captivated by Iowa's raptors. Whether you are a birdwatcher or curious about raptors there is something to learn for everyone.



Friends WCC Garage Sale

May 18 | Annett Nature Center

Friends of Warren County Conservation will be hosting their first Garage Sale! Spring cleaning is underway, and we have a wide variety of items available for sale at unbeatable prices. All proceeds from the garage sale will benefit Warren County Conservation Board's educational programming and exhibits. Don't miss out on this opportunity to find some great deals and support a good cause at the same time. See you there!

Friends WCC Native Plant Sale

May 18 | Annett Nature Center

Friends of Warren County Conservation will be hosting their annual native plant sale. Spruce up your landscaping with some native plants that the pollinators will love. A few favorites include a variety of Milkweeds, Purple Coneflower, White Indigo, Cardinal Flower, New England Aster, Goldenrod, Blazing Star, Gromwell, Blue Sage, and many more. Quantities are limited. All proceeds from the plant sale will benefit WCCB educational programming and exhibits. FWCC will be at the Annett Nature Center from 8am-12pm, but remember, some plants are more limited and may not last until 12pm!

Dutch Oven Cooking

May 9 | Annett Nature Center

Are you in need of an easy, filling, and delicious recipe for your next camping trip or outdoor adventure? Learn to prepare scrumptious recipes that will feed a crowd. Participants will prepare recipes, cook them in the Dutch oven, and learn how to care for Dutch oven cookware.

The cost is \$5 per person. This program is geared towards those 12 and older and children must be accompanied by an adult. Space is limited and registration is required by May 6, 2024. Register at www.warrenccb.org/events.

Conservation and Nature Book Club

May 21 | Middleswart Lodge

Friends of Warren County Conservation will be hosting a bi-monthly book club. Simply read the suggested book and join us at the Middleswart Lodge for a discussion followed by an extended activity related to the book. There is no charge for this program but participants will need to provide their own copy of the book. For this session we will be discussing *Prodigal Summer* by Barabara Kingsolver. Please register ahead so we can have enough materials on the Friends of Warren County Conservation Facebook page.

Plant Pot Painting

May 17 | Annett Nature Center

Let your artistic skills shine as you transform ordinary terracotta pots into beautiful works of art. Whether you prefer intricate patterns, vibrant colors, or whimsical designs, the possibilities are endless. Elevate your home decor or create unique gifts for friends and family - the choice is yours. So grab brushes, paints, and get ready to show off your creativity through terracotta pot painting! Supplies are provided but our space is limited, please register at www.warrenccb.org/.

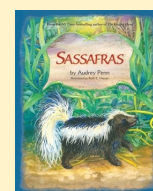


June

StoryWalk

June | Annett Nature Center

StoryWalk® is a fun way to get communities outside and reading. Each month, we will put a new nature themed children's story along the trails in different parks. Stories will all be nature themed and fun to read! This month's story is *Sassafras* by Audrey Penn, and illustrated by Ruth E. Harper.



For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrenccb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.



ANC News

June Cont'd

Kids Fish Day

June 8 | Lester Pond at the ANC

Have some fishing fun with us! Bring the family out to participate in the art of fishing. The fishing competition will take place at Lester Pond. There will be awards, door prizes, and a free fish-cleaning demonstration. Bring your own pole or borrow one of ours. Bait will be provided. You will also be able to try fish bites cooked by the Izaak Walton League. *Fish will be fried in peanut oil.*

It's FREE — join us. A fishing license is not required for participants at Kid's Fish Day. Please register each child so we can plan for bait and materials! This program is put on by Friends of Warren County Conservation and the Warren County Izaak Walton League.

Wild Outdoor Women

June 21-22 | Annett Nature Center

Would you like to meet other women with similar interests, attend classes to learn new skills and enhance older ones, or just kick back in the great outdoors? If so, this is the event for you. Grab your hiking boots and your gal pals and get ready for an exciting day in the outdoors! With so many interesting sessions to choose from, the hardest part will be deciding which to attend. The registration fee is \$65 and itinerary includes: Friday night activities, breakout sessions on Saturday, silent auction, and a Wild Outdoor Women gift! Registration opens March 15th! Register at www.warrencb.org/events.

International Mud Day

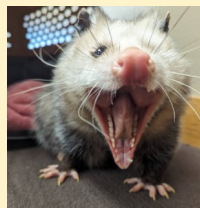
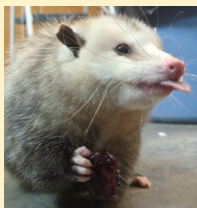
June 27 | Annett Nature Center

Did you know there is a National Mud Day? It takes place annually in June! Come out and help us celebrate National Mud Day with an invitation to get muddy and enjoy exploring mud with your kids! Discover, or rediscover, the messy joy that comes with a good mud pile. We will be watering down a mud pit at the Annett Nature Center to celebrate this holiday. You can observe this festive day in any way you like, make a mud pie, have a mud bath, or a mud mask! Get as muddy as you can, we'll have a hose available for a quick rinse-off after you are done enjoying yourself. Share your photos and tag us on Instagram or Facebook. You will want to wear clothing and shoes that you don't mind getting dirty or becoming your "mud clothes." *This program will be canceled if we are under drought conditions*



Marsi: Virginia Opossum

Marsi, a two-year-old survivor, was discovered last spring following a tragic vehicle accident. Rescued and brought to Dr. Melinda Austin at Ahimsa Wildlife Medicine and Rehabilitation, her caregivers soon discovered that she was pregnant, motivating them to go above and beyond to save her. Despite losing an eye and her tail in the accident, Marsi's resilient spirit shines through. Dr. Austin reached out to us, offering an opportunity for our education team to expand, and we gratefully embraced it. We are delighted to report that Marsi did great during her first program, fueling our excitement to bring her to schools and continue spreading awareness. Our opossum will soon be moving to a new enclosure that will have an inside and outside portion. This will give her more opportunities to explore and to interact with her environment.



For more details and information, or to register for events, please visit www.warrencb.org/events or call 515-961-6169.

2024



Warren County Conservation 2024 Events Calendar

JANUARY

- ___ Snowshoe Hike PopUps
- ___ 4 Iowa Mammals
- ___ 16 Conservation & Nature Book Club
- ___ 20 Snakes Program
- ___ 20 Animal Tracks & Sign Hike
- ___ 26 Full Moon Hike

FEBRUARY

- ___ Snowshoe Hike PopUps
- ___ Wolf Exhibit
- ___ 10 Hidden Heart Hunt
- ___ 13 Marsupial Madness– Meet & Greet
- ___ 22 Owl Prowl @ ANC

MARCH

- ___ 6 Day Camp Registration
- ___ 9 Make & Take Rain Barrel
- ___ 19 Weather 101
- ___ 21 Conservation & Nature Book Club
- ___ 23 Armadillos in Iowa

APRIL

- ___ 1 Geocaching Fungus Adventure Begins
- ___ 16 Evening Prairie Burn
- ___ 20 Earth Day Trail Cleanup
- ___ 25 Geocaching 101 @ McCord

MAY

- ___ 3-4 Family Camp
- ___ 7 Raptors of Iowa @ Activity Center
- ___ 9 Dutch Oven Cooking
- ___ 17 Plant Pot Painting
- ___ 18 FriendsWCC Native Plant Sale
- ___ 21 Conservation & Nature Book Club

JUNE

- ___ StoryWalk @ ANC
- ___ 4 Fire Starting @ Moats Park
- ___ 8 Kids Fish Day
- ___ 21-22 Wild Outdoor Women
- ___ 27 International Mud Day

JULY

- ___ StoryWalk @ Woodland Mounds
- ___ 16 Conservation & Nature Book Club
- ___ Kids Day at the Fair



AUGUST

- ___ StoryWalk @ Otter Creek
- ___ 1 Dutch Oven Cooking
- ___ 7 Archery
- ___ 13 Natural Dyes

SEPTEMBER

- ___ 14 Monarch Tagging
- ___ 17 Conservation & Nature Book Club
- ___ 21 Monarch Tagging
- ___ 21 FWCC Prairie Picnic

OCTOBER

- ___ 6 Iowa Trail Run
- ___ 12 50th Anniversary
- ___ 21 Halloween Hike
- ___ 26 Costume Party on the Square

NOVEMBER

- ___ 14 Moonlight Hike
- ___ Farm to Table
- ___ 19 Conservation & Nature Book Club

DECEMBER

- ___ 7 Nature Market
- ___ 7 Candy Cane Hike
- ___ 14 Family Nature Trees

At the event, have a WCCB staff member initial to keep track of events you have attended.
Attend 6 or more events to win a mineral-themed gift!
*Programs are subject to change or cancellation

TO REGISTER VISIT: WWW.WARRENCB.ORG/ACTIVITIES/EVENTS OR CALL (515)961-6169.

Living in an Eco-friendly Way: Contributing Your Part

Approximately 15 billion trees are cut down each year for paper. We at Warren County Conservation want to encourage a more sustainable lifestyle. This can be a hard change but by making small efforts we can make a difference. By choosing the electronic version of the newsletter, you are helping to save trees, reduce waste, and save money that can be put to other uses. Our electronic newsletter provides the same valuable information and updates as the physical copy, but without the environmental impact. Additionally, it offers the convenience of being delivered directly to your inbox, allowing you to easily access it anytime and anywhere.

Subscribing to our electronic newsletter is simple. Just call us at 515-961-6169 or email wccb@warrencb.org and let us know that you would like to sign up for the electronic newsletter, and remove yourself from the “snail-mail “ list.

We understand that some may prefer to have a physical copy in hand, and we respect that choice. However, we encourage you to consider the benefits of going electronic. By making this small change, together we can make a big impact on the environment and work towards a more sustainable future.

Thank you for your understanding and support in our efforts to promote sustainability.



Spring 2024

Warren County Conservation Board



The Warren County Conservation Board manages over 2,700 acres of land for the benefit of its citizens. Visitors can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities on areas being conserved for this generation and generations to come.

Subscribe to *Three Rivers Journal* via email! Reduce waste and get frequent updates on programs, parks, & projects:



wccb@warrenccb.org



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