ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY
LOCAL SANCTUARY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORTS

April 1, 2025 thru March 31, 2026

ADAMS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
Report submitted by: Mike Holinga

Management Activities:
Restoration and maintenance of 2.1 miles of trails at the sanctuary. This includes mowing, mulching and clearing as needed.
Maintenance of exterior infrastructure. This includes the IAS headquarters.
Burning the prairie as needed.
Repair and maintenance of the equipment located at the sanctuary.
Removal of trash in and around the facility.
Planning and conducting educational programs for students and adults.
Survey flora and fauna at Adams.
Construct a savanna to enhance the number of plants and animals found at the sanctuary.
Develop model gardens around the grounds.

Total Volunteer Hours: 1600

List of Volunteers:
Mike and Donna Holinga
Jim and Mary Grundel
Grace Norris
Marilyn Robbins
Nick Klobuchar
Greg Feeny
Stan Korza
Allen Andrews
Ann Klose
AJ Bennett
Dennis Campbell
Susan Allen
Rhetta Jack
Martha Armour
Tom Larson
Dan Moore
Randy Speck
Jeanne and Tom Handy
Chris Liebman
Larry Small
Rae Dinardo

Donations Received:
Mulch donations by the City of Springfield.
Equipment and shelving donated by an anonymous donor valued at $20,000.

Contracts and Grants Awarded:
Contract work done to remove and spray winter creeper growing up trees in the sanctuary.

Number of Visitors: 2000

Promotions:
Website, face book page, sanctuary brochures, maps and newsletter.

GREEN RIVER LOWLANDS PRESERVE
Report submitted by: Deb Carey

Management Activities:
Management Activities
Successful research projects and restoration of savanna, wetland, woods and prairie at Amboy Marsh beginning December 4, 2012 (date of the first acquisition) through March 2026 has been swift and satisfying because of dedicated volunteers, and available funding.

The volunteer Local Sanctuary Committee (LSC) of Birdsong Chapter assumes the daily role in restoration activities and management of what is now called Green River Lowlands Preserve. The acres of Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve, Guanci, Spears, Hatch, Grigalauski, Ryback, Sinadinos and Queen of the Prairie parcels include INAI Site #1621 and INAI Site #1111. The same restoration and research efforts began on the date of acquisition of Gremel Nature Preserve, INAI #1828, included within the Green River Lowlands Preserve. Current total of all parcels owned and managed by Illinois Audubon Society in Lee County is 1,017 acres MOL.

LSC/Birdsong Chapter is indebted to IAS staff for providing administrative and technical assistance, and for answering hundreds of emails, texts and phone calls. Members and friends of IAS have generously supported the financial needs of GRLP. We are extremely appreciative of the continued support from the IAS Board.
There are not enough words to thank and glorify the volunteers who cheerfully spend hours in all kinds of weather caring for all sites. Not every volunteer is mentioned by name in this report but EVERY volunteer is appreciated! The sites would not exist but for volunteers.

The Volunteer Center at Amboy Marsh is well used by volunteers every day of the reporting period. Jim Hampson, donor of the Center and faithful volunteer, keeps the bird feeders and bird baths cleaned and filled 365 days of the year. Bluebird boxes, kestrel boxes and purple martin houses were maintained and checked throughout the nesting season. Jim Hampson, Jean Larson and Jack Hartford maintained the bird house trails and recorded nesting efforts. Their efforts made purple martins the second most common bird at Amboy Marsh in summer 2025.

Deb Doyle dedicated many hours as she scheduled and led our stewardship workday events in FY26, while photographing the flora and fauna of GRLP.
John McCrosky spent many hours caring for infrastructure and grounds. And he was always available for computer issues. He and Bob Chinn worked diligently on archiving all documents pertaining to GRLP. Bob also photographs the sites.

Spring Bird Count, Christmas Bird Count, The Big Sit, and a Sandhill Crane Count were completed thanks to Diana Rod and family for organizing teams of counters, assigning count areas and compiling and reporting statistics. A mini bio-blitz was conducted by Birdsong Chapter members.

Bill Rogers handled general daily maintenance of infrastructure, but more importantly, devoted every day to restoration plans and projects. You know that everything is ok when you see his white truck parked on the sites each day. Equipment maintenance and repairs were as expected; good, well-running equipment is critical to managing the sites.

Dave and Amy Brewer are the media crew - they create newsletters, Facebook and the chapter webpage. Dave is a link to the local Master Naturalists and provided programming for that group at Amboy Marsh.

Cheryl Newlan, Mike Gallagher, Steve Gillam, and Tim Smith are part of the faithful crew that always appear at workdays. More volunteers are willing to help with varied projects.

Deb Carey handled administrative duties, plus everyday stewardship duty.

Green River Lowlands Preserve (contd.)

A focus in FY26 was emergency and general preparedness. An extensive list of preventative maintenance jobs was created and followed. This includes up to date first aid kits and eyewash stations in all buildings, and kits in all UTVs/golf carts along with fire extinguishers. Written emergency procedures for the sites are posted. All gate entrances (16 at this count) are noted on site maps, and each gate is posted with a large red number.

A second focus in FY26 was invasive beaver control. These intelligent animals are master engineers but unfortunately do not abide by legal boundaries. Dams, and resultant new wetlands, are welcome of IAS properties but we cannot flood neighbors' land. This is an on-going challenge.

Unfortunately, prescribed fire opportunities were few in FY26. Dry weather, wet weather, windy weather, few skilled volunteers; all joined to create an issue for the implementation of fire. The lack of fire causes an increase in the amount of chemicals applied to the land; decreases floral diversity; and greatly increases costs of mechanical removal of woody invasives.

The Green River Lowlands Preserve offers unparalleled opportunities for natural area restoration due to their hydric and sandy soils. First priority has always been given to the identification and restoration of those areas which have best resisted succession and retained their natural, pre-settlement integrity, and to the implementation of management strategies designed to preserve indigenous characteristics with the least possible negative impact. It is rewarding to volunteers that high quality native vegetation often emerges after invasive species are removed. This has been the normal reaction – no seeding has been used in any restoration effort. Herbaceous species, with number nine and ten S&W ratings, that have returned to areas cleared of invasives are listed in a Conservative Species Inventory.

Research has been a priority since day one of the first land acquisition.
All inventories are available for review: Flora; Avian; Mammal; Herpetological; Moth; Lepidoptera; Sound Recording; Fungus; Odonata; and Insect.
Researchers are required to apply for an IAS permit and an Illinois Nature Preserves permit as needed.
Researchers must provide a written report on their activities including data collected.

FY26 saw an assessment of odonates carried out and funded by the Great Rivers Research and Educational Center, East Alton, IL. Amy Janik was the principal surveyor.

FY26 IAS Contracted Research included:
Bill Handel – Flora
Dr. Richard King/David Mauger/Tom Anton – Herpetological
Tara Beveroth – Avian
Isaac Stewart – Entomology
Professional research projects are critical to successful restoration and management of the site, including providing data for grant applications. Individual researchers greatly add to our data collection and have provided information on methods and areas that enhance restoration. All research reports are available for review.

Volunteer research is invaluable since it covers almost every day of the year. A frog call project, associated with the Peggy Notebaert Museum, was completed by Dave and Amy Brewer. Dr. Steve Hager, Augustana College, provided avian expertise. Daily sightings of flora and fauna are documented by experienced volunteers.

Both sites are completely closed to visitors and volunteers during shotgun deer seasons since adjacent neighbors all hunt. Although currently no hunting is allowed on the Green River Lowlands Preserve, we close the sites as much as possible without interfering with normal site activities, as a precaution.

Green River Lowlands Preserve (contd.)

Total Volunteer Hours: 4488.5

List of Volunteers:
Participating Volunteers
Jim Hampson
Dave Brewer and Amy Brewer
John McCrosky and Deb Doyle
Cassandra Rodgers
Bill Rogers
Damian Considine
Connie Dickinson
Steve Gillam
Cheryl Newlan
Randy Singleton
Jack Hartford
Bob Chinn
Tim Smith and Teresa Smith
Diana Rod and Gene Rod
Alyssa Rod
Dick Todd
Shane Coers
Steve Hager
Alice Topping
Jan Williams
Deb Carey
Russ Gremel Scout Troop
Middle Rock Conservation Partners
Total Volunteer Hours - 4,488.5 hours

Donations Received:
Donations
Jerry and Christine Guanci, continue to support the original Amboy Marsh site with an annual donation of $5,000.00.

John Burns (40 years ago he was a young scout under the tutelage of the late Russ Gremel) donated $7,400.00.

Many volunteers, while financially donating to IAS, in addition expend their own dollars on needed items without expectation of reimbursement, along with supplying time and energy. This is greatly appreciated.

Contracts and Grants Awarded:
Green River Lowlands Preserve has significant ecological value, and offers opportunities for wildlife watching, research, education and for restoration of natural communities that were once widespread in the Green River Lowlands, but are rare today.

Numerous large and small restoration projects, included removal of woody and herbaceous invasives and wetland enhancement, occurred at all sites during FY26, and utilized volunteers and contractors. The restoration budget of $182,600.00 (contracted labor) was fully utilized in FY26. All specific projects were successfully completed - but more work is always needed!

Green River Lowlands Preserve (contd.)

The recently acquired Sinadinos site saw removal of invasive red and white pine. The pines were shading out unusual species such as glass lizard (Ophisaurus attenuatus), New Jersey Tea (Ceanothus americanus), Prairie Dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepsis) and more native flora and fauna.

An additional hotbed for the glass lizard at Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve underwent extensive removal of woody invasives.
The invasive beaver project is on-going.

No grants, unfortunately, were received in FY26.

While restoration is critical for the re-emergence and health of native species, we are careful to leave abundant refugia for flora and fauna. Insects and birds have witnessed declines in population, and we must provide critical habit for both breeding species and migratory visitors.

Number of Visitors: 1050

Promotions:
website: https://amboymarsh.wixsite.com/amboymarsh

Facebook: Birdsong Chapter-Stewards of Amboy Marsh/Gremel

Contact us: amboymarsh@illinoisaudubon.org

Full color brochures complete with color-coded trail maps are available. The Amboy Marsh Nature Preserve brochure is available in Spanish.

HICKORY HILLS CHAPTER
Report submitted by: Don Krefft

Management Activities:
Hickory Hills Chapter, AKA Bremer Sanctuary, has a wonderful group of dedicated and skilled volunteers. On a typical Tuesday and Thursday morning there will be 6 to 10 volunteers busy making Bremer a nice place to visit. With over 5 miles of trails mowing and general trail maintenance takes a lot of time. Monitoring of 50 nest boxes is performed at least weekly during the nesting season. Volunteers perform repair and maintenance of all equipment, unless under warranty. We try to be good stewards of the land and Illinois Audubon Society finances. Restoration is an important aspect of efforts at Bremer. Much time and effort are devoted to removing invasive species and collecting and disbursing the seeds of native grasses and forbes. Fire is an essential restoration effort and we had a good dormant season with multiple burns Inventories are performed periodically of trees, birds, shrubs, grasses, and forbes.

Total Volunteer Hours: 1500

List of Volunteers:
Jerome Epplin - Retired physician. Helps with restoration. A fountain of knowledge regarding medical advice for aging volunteer group.
Ron Gazda - the ultimate handyman, can build and fix nearly anything.
Jim Hefley - Chapter president, Heads education program. Retired IDNR aquatic biologist, a valuable resource.
Don Krefft - Chapter Rep. and Treasurer. Enjoys helping on restoration. Also serves as Latrine Orderly.
Ray Luebbert- active in social media, restoration, and always ready to lend a hand.
Dane Murphy - Retired from power company. Knowledgeable of wiring and has building skills. Active in mowing and maintaining trails.
Jerry Prater- former chapter rep and now serves as Chapter secretary. Helps with trail maintenance and community outreach.
Nancy Redman - Monitors nest box trail.
Dick Rompasky - most senior volunteer. Helps with mowing.
Bob Schwandner – Skilled carpenter. Chapter VP.
Ken Schaal - retired biology teacher with an extensive knowledge of nature and sanctuary management. Heads restoration activities and the creation of quarterly newsletter.
Jim Yount - Tireless worker who can fix or build nearly anything.

Donations Received:
Nothing significant.

Contracts and Grants Awarded:
We have budgeted about $28,000/year the past few years to hire contractors in an effort to curtail the spread of invasive species such as honeysuckle and sericea lespedeza. This work is performed in various area throughout the sanctuary.

Number of Visitors: 5300

Promotions:
Refer to www.bremersanctuary.com for quarterly newsletters and other information highlighting activities at the sanctuary.

Like us on Facebook at "Bremer Sanctuary, Hickory Hills Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society".

The local newspaper "The Journal- News", headquartered in Hillsboro, is very good about giving us press coverage, frequently on the front page.

PLUM ISLAND EAGLE SANCTUARY
Report submitted by: Don Goerne

Management Activities:
Continued to mow a large area of invasive Japanese hops. Also mowed paths in reed canary grass areas and around tree cages from the 2022-2024 plantings so cages could be accessed for grass removal inside the cages.

Mowed paths and tree site locations for this year's tree and shrub planting. Cut, treated and chipped invasive honeysuckle from a large area on the east end of the island. Transported honeysuckle chips to the concrete pads on the east end so they could be composted for a future pollinator garden.

Designed, transported and constructed a 10ft tall, 16ft wide Plum Island
Eagle Sanctuary sign, with fourteen inch letters, at the southeast corner of the island. Sign is positioned facing the bluffs of Starved Rock State Park which has been consistently setting attendance records of over two million visitors per year.

Planted and caged fifty-five trees and shrubs during our annual fall planting day with the LaSalle-Peru and Streator High School FFA Chapters. A total of twenty-two students and two teachers attended. Over thirty PIES LSC volunteers along with three IAS staff members assisted the students with planting and caging the trees and shrubs. A pizza lunch was served at the Starved Rock State Park boat ramp pavilion after the planting.

Our island restoration partners, Living Lands and Waters, once again supplied water transportation for twelve workdays throughout the stewardship season of July thru October. Additional workdays were held with 2-3 volunteers accessing the island by canoe.

Erosion continues to threaten most of the south shoreline including the southeast corner of the island where the new sign has been installed. Erosion mitigation measures will be researched for action to take place in the near future.

Total Volunteer Hours: 749

List of Volunteers:
Cardia Dunn, Sonia D'Cruz, John McCrosky, Brendon Lautwein, Gene Kistenfeger, Anya Kirkowicz, Lisa Nelson, Patricia Svissero, Dave Vescogni, Steven Gillam, Tanya Smith, Joanne Fitzgerald, Jim Boisso, Jillian Pender, Abram Pender, Pete Johnston, Dave Manigold, Don Goerne, Amy Williams, Joan Perona, George Young, Robin Rose, Alyssa Rod, Amy Lamango, Elaine Goerne, Jill Billingsley, Brian Clark, Chris Woeltje, Gene Anderson, Joy Huebner, Tim Huebner, Nick Brandt, Scott Goerne, Sean Figuray, and Jeff Billingsley. Also, twenty-two high school students and two teachers previously mentioned that participated in the fall tree planting.

Donations Received:
Donations totaled $2,562.25, all of which was used for the new Plum Island Eagle Sanctuary sign.

Donor were:
Marseilles Sheet Metal
Halm Electric Contracting
Starved Rock Audubon Society Members

Contracts and Grants Awarded:
None

Number of Visitors: 0

Plum Island Eagle Sanctuary (contd.)

Promotions:
Annual fall tree planting day with local high school FFA Chapters.

Bald Eagle Watch Weekend in January 2026 at the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center where Starved Rock Audubon members manned an information booth inside and scopes on the outside balcony. Alyssa Rod presented a program about the history of Plum Island and how it became an Illinois Audubon eagle sanctuary.

War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary
Report submitted by: Sam Stearns

Management Activities:
Straighten & reinstall gate damaged by flood waters
Repair, grade, and add stone to creek crossing across Bushwack Road
Create stone walkway across leaking pond levee seepage
Winterize & maintain equipment
Mowing yards, fields, & trails
Hauling Kubota tractor to shop for repair & maintenance
Using the Kubota to bush hog trails and move stone for road & trail repair
Continue to tour Sanctuary with herpetologist Tony Gerard as he checks out stations he created to monitor reptiles & amphibians
Write WBVWS updates
Contacting Mark Basinger regarding plants found during botanical survey
Winterize house & plumbing prior to extreme cold periods
Repair storm-damaged windows, doors, & screens on Graber house
Cut & remove downed limbs & trees from storms
IAS volunteers conducted Spring Bird Count this month and were canvassing some of the more remote parts of the Sanctuary for that.
Speak to various groups about the Sanctuary and its opportunities for visiting & volunteering
Email & call volunteers for Work Days and events
Prepare & submit Annual Report
Cut back invasives
Prime pumps
Replace foot valve for water from pond
Clean & maintain equipment
Contact, contract, & supervise pest control service for bait stations
Promote events
Secure entertainment and prepare food for Hummingbird Festival
Clean Kestrel Hall and grounds for Hummingbird Festival
Secure entertainment and prepare food for Insect Awareness & Appreciation Day
Clean Kestrel Hall and grounds for Insect Awareness & Appreciation Day
Book venues, arrange speakers, & advertise presentations in Jackson, Williamson and Union Counties
Post new trail markers throughout Sanctuary
Post Sanctuary boundary signs around part of property perimeter
Patrol perimeter during firearm deer seasons to prevent trespassing & poaching
Transport Polaris UTV to shop for repairs & maintenance
Transport various small equipment to & from repairmen for diagnosis & sharpening
Routinely travel trails to identify areas needed for maintenance

Total Volunteer Hours: 860

List of Volunteers:
Sam Stearns
Hank Mulder
Kevin Navel
John Wallace
Karen Frawley
Kerry Camp
Bob Hughes
Jeff Biggers
Zack Stearns

War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary (contd.)

Jim Stearns
John Gardner
Bruce Boone
Adam Lane
Russell Lane
Tom Esposito
Amber Echo
Druid Echo
Jacob Posner
James Wilson
Faith Singer
Duane Short
Debbie Hogg
Anne Douglas
Kathryn Carter
Ed Williams

Donations Received:
Beyond time & gasoline (provided by Caretaker), no significant donations

Contracts and Grants Awarded:
Additonal termite bait stations installed and serviced by Terminix

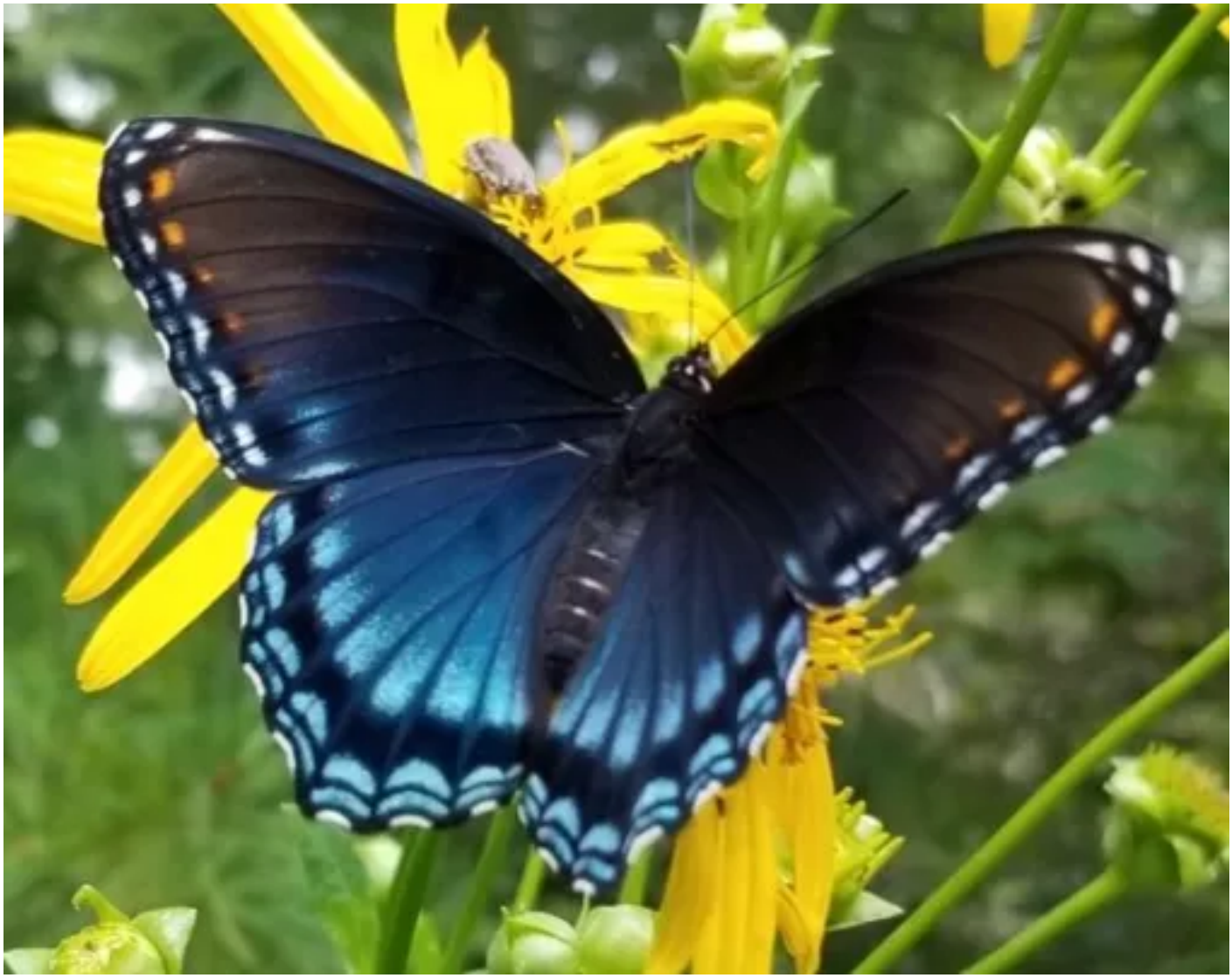
Number of Visitors: 300

Promotions:

WSIU POWERED BY YOU PBS npr Donate

Fairs & Festivals, Nature & Outdoors, Kids & Family

Sat Aug 23 - Annual Insect Day At War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary!



A celebration of all things Insect!

Insect Day takes place on Saturday August 23 at Illinois Audubon Society's War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, located at 228 Bushwack Rd, Golconda, IL and is sponsored by Shawnee Chapter Illinois Audubon Society.

Beginning at 3 PM and continuing into the evening, the event features workshops & field trips, an

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A potluck dinner will take place at 6 PM. Main dish & drinks will be provided, guests are asked to bring a dish to share. Following the potluck will be the always entertaining Really Cool Raffle of nature-related and local items (all are welcome to bring contributions to the raffle).

Insect Open Mic will be interspersed with the raffle, along with bug jokes, riddles, insect poetry and maybe even a song or two. Everyone is welcome to bring their talents and participate.

The evening will end with the popular local favorites, musical trio RognboB & Ruth playing the gospel of goof and rowdy folk music with a Southern Illinois twist. This is a can't miss performance!

Insect Awareness & Appreciation Day is free and open to the public – everyone is welcome! Please bring your favorite beverage, lawn chair & friend, but please leave your pets at home.

Directions to War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary from Golconda: Take Route 146 north 3.5 miles and turn left onto Bushwack Road. Follow the road about 2.2 miles to the Sanctuary entrance on the right - watch for signs. Bushwack Road turns into a gravel road and crosses a low water ford – don't give up - just keep going & you'll get there! (It is recommended that you download the map, as there is no signal along Bushwack Road).
For more information about the event, please call or text (618)534-7870 or email shawneechapterias@gmail.com

Shawnee Chapter is the local chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society. Established in 1897, the Illinois Audubon Society is Illinois' oldest non-profit, independent conservation organization, whose mission is to promote the perpetuation and appreciation of native plants and animals and the habitats that support them.

War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

03:00 PM - 08:00 PM on Sat, 23 Aug 2025

Event Supported By

Shawnee Chapter Illinois Audubon Society
618-534-7870
featherfoil1@gmail.com

War Bluff Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

228 Bushwack Road

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