

Fall 2016

Horizons

The Voice of Friends of Havenwoods

From the President

This has been another hot and humid summer, so I hope you had a chance to get out in nature to cool down - camping at a state park or walking the trails at Havenwoods to get some relief from the weather. But, wait, it will just be a few months and we'll be wishing for the warm weather as winter approaches.

FOH Annual Meeting. Mark your calendar for our annual meeting on October 11, 6:30 pm. Consider nominating yourself for election to the Board and assisting the staff of Havenwoods to keep the Forest a vital part of our community.

A second chance. For the second year, our application was accepted for a chance at the random drawing by the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino "Heart of Canal Street". Watch the HSF facebook page, www.facebook.com/HavenwoodsStateForest, to see how you can help to raise funds for charities like FOH. The drawing will be in



New stone figures in gift counter

November and we'll be there with our fingers crossed!

New items in sales counter. Many new items were recently purchased for the FOH sales counter. Stop and check them out.

Fall festival "Snake Fest". If you have some time to assist FOH with this event, we can



Snakes are really on our minds! They have even moved into the FOH gift counter!



use help distributing event flyers around the community and businesses, baking cookies and treats for the snack table, picking up items for the silent auction, and selling at the FOH food booth. Call Havenwoods to indicate how you can help with this event.

Friends of Havenwoods

Board of Directors

President: Judy Dollhausen

Vice President: Diane Warner

Secretary: Rachel Jones

Treasurer: Ron Hayes

Board Members: Cathy Harrison, Dennis Kaehny, George Morrison, Lorraine Schlut, Gaylord Yost

The next board meeting will be held on October 11 at 6:30 pm. All members are invited to attend Board meetings.

Nature is a Gift, Use it Often
Judy Dollhausen (jadollh@gmail.com)

From the Superintendent

by Judy Klippel

The first time I ever held a snake I was in college. My fellow students and I were about to conduct an animal program for local Stevens Point kindergarteners. As student naturalists, we had been promised we could meet the snake, turtle, toad, and frog an hour before the program so that we would be comfortable with them when we taught the kids. But the doors to the nature center didn't open until just before the kids showed up. Fear washed over me. Why did this have to be my first experience touching any of these animals? How had I missed doing this during my childhood?

One thing I was sure of was that the kids would sense any fear I had, and that could be a blow to their own confidence. I knew I needed to dive my naked hand into each aquarium and boldly grab on to cold-blooded flesh and scales or hairless skin. Fears of touching strange little bodies and being bitten set my heart to beating faster. Be cool and confident, I scolded myself. To my surprise and relief, when I picked up the first animal, it turned out not to be so scary. As I touched each new animal, I became more self-assured. No bites, no escapes. Giggling and excited five-year olds. What more could I ask for that day? It gave me such a rush of good feelings to share these animals with the kids. Luckily for me, my career since then has involved a lot of handling of these critters for visitors to meet and touch. It never gets old or boring.

We've always kept captive herps (reptiles and amphibians) at Havenwoods to share with kids and adults. As representatives of their own kind, I think of each of them as teachers who quietly allow us to handle and learn from them. The kids' initial reactions to the prospect of touching the animals range from eagerness and excitement to physical withdrawal. If they extend two fingers and touch, as most of them do, that's great. If they don't, that's ok, too. Nobody is forced to. We just hope that, as kids watch their siblings or classmates touch the animals, maybe someday they'll decide that it's safe and take a chance on it.

Reptiles and amphibians make lots of people really uncomfortable. One of the reasons is that they are very different from us. Researchers tell us that, in general, people tend to feel affinity towards animals that remind

us of ourselves biologically and behaviorally. That can include features such as eyes that face forward, four limbs, body hair, and offspring that we perceive as cute and cuddly. It can include behaviors like nurturing their young, using their forelimbs to grasp and manipulate, and making facial expressions that remind us of human emotions. People also tend to like animals that are colorful, powerful, and/or majestic.

Snakes, toads, frogs, salamanders, turtles, and lizards generally don't rank high on the checklist of those features and behaviors. Not many of us think of cuddling a snake in our arms! Fear and mistrust can come to us in other ways, too: through folklore and myths, modern media portrayals ranging from the realistic to scary fantasies, the knowledge that some species are venomous, and lack of direct exposure to these animals, to name a few.

Yet, there are lots of people who do love these cold-blooded creatures. For many people, it is an attitude that started with childhood contact. People who have been lucky enough to grow up exploring nature, poking around in ponds and streams and playing in woods and fields, were bound to run into herps as they explored. These animals became part of their childhood play, and they grew to like herps.

It's not as easy to find these animals today. Worldwide, populations are dropping for a variety of reasons. Habitat loss, pollution, global climate change, and an emerging disease affecting amphibians are the biggest reasons. Living in suburban and rural areas still affords opportunities to find reptiles and amphibians. But kids growing up in cities could easily spend their entire childhood never finding any of these animals on their own. That's sad and frustrating to me. Wherever people live, we need access to nature – to discover snakes and toads, explore habitats, follow animal footprints, and develop our own connections to nature. Those direct experiences with nature help us care about it and develop a willingness to act on its behalf.

Reptiles and amphibians are critical to biodiversity on our planet. They are an important part of the food web, both as prey and predator. Many species of other animals depend on them for their own survival. Some herps are indicators of the health of their habitats, providing early warnings of conditions dangerous to life. Additionally, numerous species have become important in medical and other science research, ultimately helping to protect health and well-being of people and the environment.

All of this helps to explain why we keep captive herps in the nature center and teach with them. And it's why we are having Snake Fest on October 1. Reptiles and amphibians need more advocates!

I hope you can bring your favorite kids to the festival. Or take them anytime out to the ponds or fields to search for these quiet, secretive critters who are beautiful in their own ways.



Mystery Photos!

by Beth Mittermaier, Conservation Biologist

Mystery Photo #28 (the new mystery)

During fall, one of Havenwoods' resident mammals is very active (sometimes too active). The photo shows one of many signs that this mammal leaves behind. Do you know what happened here? How many other signs can you recognize?



Answer to Last Issue's Mystery

In the last issue, I shared a photo of a nest that I found at Havenwoods and hinted that sometimes a photo can't tell the whole story behind an object.

This is certainly true of a nest—like this red-winged blackbird nest. While you can marvel at the architecture depicted in a photo, you are probably left with more questions than answers.

I teach the preschool storytime programs here at the nature center. In spring, we learn about birds' nests. As part of the program, we try to make nests from dried grasses. It takes many hands and quite a bit of glue to create something that even slightly resembles a nest!



In the 1930s, a naturalist picked apart a nest. The female redwing had woven together 34 strips of willow bark and 142 cattail leaves, some 2 feet long.

I can't begin to imagine how a bird does it with only a beak and two feet.

Female redwings do all the nest construction, collecting grasses, cattails, and reeds from the surrounding area. It takes 3 to 6 days to make a nest. Using wet stems, she weaves around standing vegetation, placing the nest 3 inches to 14 feet above the water or ground. Then she binds the nest with milkweed fibers. Finally, she plasters the inside with mud and lines it with fine, dry grass. If you would like to watch some of this process, go to YouTube and search for "red-winged blackbird building a nest."

The male spends most of his time defending his territory from intruders and predators with loud "conk-a-ree" calls. Meanwhile, the female incubates the eggs. And, when the eggs hatch, she does most of the caregiving, bringing food to the nest and carrying away the nestlings' fecal sacs. When the young fledge and leave the nest, both parents care for the young.

Before rushing to judgment about the heavy work load on the female and the male's lack of involvement, you need to know more of the story. The male mates with one or more nesting females and defends these nests within his territory. However, genetic testing has shown that the females have actually "cheated" on him and mated with nearby males! One-quarter to one-half of the nestlings turn out to have different fathers than the one working to keep them safe.



Female red-winged blackbirds are shades of brown. Their stripes and streaks help them stay hidden.



Male red-winged blackbirds are black with bright red shoulder patches designed to stand out and be noticed.



Friends of Havenwoods, Inc.
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Don't forget to let us know if you are moving. Call 527-0232 to update your address or phone number.

You can also "Like" us on Facebook at <www.facebook.com/HavenwoodsStateForest>.



If you would like to know more about volunteer opportunities at Havenwoods, call 527-0232 and ask to receive the Volunteer Connection.

Remember, if you misplace your newsletter, you can find it online at <www.friendsofhavenwoods.org/about.html>

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