



Education Growing at Nahant Marsh

New Partners, Old Friends All Helping to Make the Marsh a Better Place

By Brian Ritter

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In July, it was announced that the Eastern Iowa Community College District (EICCD) and the Advanced Technology Environmental and Energy Center (ATEEC) would be partnering with Nahant Marsh to head up educational programming at the preserve. Brian Ritter, who had been a Biology and Environmental Science instructor with the district since 2002, was hired to be the new facilitator of Nahant.

Since that time, Brian and River Action have been meeting with area colleges and school districts to inform them about all that Nahant has to offer. To date, EICCD, St. Ambrose University, Western Illinois University, Blackhawk College, and the Davenport Community School District have agreed to financially part-

ner with Nahant. The University of Iowa's Environmental Education program is looking at potentially developing some educational opportunities at the marsh as well.

Fall of 2007 was a busy time at the marsh. Brian, with the assistance of volunteers and Wapsi Environmental Education Center Staff held programs for dozens of school and community groups at the marsh. Several college classes and their instructors also utilized Nahant Marsh, including SAU's Dr. Rich Legg and WIU's Dr. Susan Romano. With the expanded number of groups now utilizing the facilities at Nahant Marsh, Brian was able to secure funding through EICCD to purchase new computers, internet access, LCD projectors, and hand-held GPS units for the



St. Ambrose's Dr. Rich Legg with General Biology students at Nahant

marsh. Also, the official Nahant Marsh Education Center website will be launched in 2008. ATEEC has been generous enough to donate 2 Green Energy Machines, which demonstrate renewable energy. Furthermore, the city of Davenport has begun plans to expand the restroom facilities in the education center, install a new dock/pier system, and enhance trail accessibility.

An Increased Appreciation Of Nahant Marsh

By Bob Bryant, Interim Resource Manager

When I retired as Director of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center last December, I said that I did not plan on retiring completely and would continue to be involved with the Friends of the Wapsi Center, Nahant Marsh Education Center, hunter safety edu-

cation program, doing some consulting work, working part-time for the Scott County Conservation Board, and finishing my e-book on the ferns of Iowa. I have worked more than I had planned. A good part of my time was spent at Nahant Marsh.

I have been a member of the Nahant Marsh technical committee since it was organized by River Action in 1994. As a committee member, I have taken an active role in establishing and assisting the environmental education program, **continued on page 2**

Visit us at our new Nahant Marsh website:

www.nahantmarsh.org

Nahant Marsh Website:

- Educational information
- Photos and web-cam
- Marshy Facts
- Marsh Blog
- Calendar of Events
- And much more!!!

An Increased Appreciation of Nahant Marsh-continued



Don Sanders, Arnie Christian, Bob Bryant, and Brian Ritter working on the new Nahant Bird Blind

Photo by Fran Sanders

fundraising, and management of the marsh's natural resources and infrastructure. Last spring, I agreed to serve as the interim naturalist, conducting school field trips, until the Eastern Iowa Community College District took over the Nahant Marsh's environmental program and hired a new naturalist. I also have been overseeing the construction of the new bird observation blind. Having spent a large amount of my time at the marsh on a regular basis since last spring, I could not help but develop a greater appreciation and understanding of the marsh's natural resources, complexity of managing a wetland ecosystem and its potential as an education facility.

Nahant Marsh had gone without a naturalist from October 2005 until last spring. It was like Nahant Marsh, especially the education program, had taken a step backwards. This would have been a big step backwards if it had not been for the Friends of Nahant Marsh. They stepped forward to help with the day-to-day operation of the marsh, organizing volunteer activities, opening the center on Saturday mornings, invasive species control and took a very active role in getting a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant for trail planning and development. I could not have conducted school field trips last spring and built the observation blind without their help.

After River Action, Eastern Iowa Community College District, and the Nahant Marsh Education Board completed their fundraising, the Eastern Iowa Community College Dis-

trict (EICCD) hired a new naturalist, Brian Ritter, and with help from the Friends Group, he began conducting school field trips this September. Brian also has a natural resource background, and will help with resource management where appropriate and as time permits.

Brian Ritter and I are members of the Milan Bottoms night roost survey team. The Milan Bottoms, located in Illinois downstream from the I-280 bridge, is a major night roost for bald eagles. Preliminary studies indicate this roost could be the largest documented bald eagle night roost on the Upper Mississippi River and possibly the largest in the lower 48 states. It would be a unique situation having the largest Upper Mississippi urban wetland and bald eagle night roost across the river from each other. Also, on the bluff overlooking Nahant Marsh is the Fairmont Cemetery prairie which is one of Scott County's largest prairie remnants.

Since the college has taken over the education program, the Nahant Board is now turning its attention to the management of the marsh and its facilities. The Board has authorized the Technical Committee to draft a management plan for the Nahant Marsh Education Center. I will be serving as interim resource manager, writing the management plan and overseeing natural resource management activities. The purpose of the Nahant Marsh Education Center Management Plan is to:

- Recognize and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Center's partners and supporting agencies
- Identify and evaluate past accomplishments
- Identify the ecological significance of Nahant Marsh and its relationship to the Mississippi River and other natural areas
- Develop a comprehensive management plan and schedule for the short- and long-term development, operation and maintenance of the center
- Develop a comprehensive environmental education plan
- Evaluate and prioritize future acquisition possibilities and needs

Even though Nahant Marsh took a step backwards, the marsh has now taken two big steps forward with Eastern Iowa Community College becoming a partner and the development of a comprehensive management plan.



- Review and update the 1998 Master Plan

“...the marsh has now taken two big steps forward with Eastern Iowa Community College becoming a partner and the development of a comprehensive management plan.”- Interim Natural Resources Manager Bob Bryant



A beautiful fall day at Nahant Marsh, an important stop-over for migrating waterfowl.

Photo by Fran Sanders

School Student Visitors to Sit in New Amphitheater in 2008!

By Arnold Christian

On November 3, 2007, the fourth Boy Scout project was completed. Following three previous scouts: Nick Cummins and Gregory Miers in 2006, and Brian McQuire this Spring, Evan Lowther of Bettendorf, IA constructed an amphitheater at the Nahant Marsh Education Center (NMEC) in cooperation with and under the supervision and partial financial support of the Friends of Nahant Marsh Education Center (FNMEC).

Evan, like the other three scouts, needed a project to qualify for the Eagle Scout Merit Badge. So, he contacted Sheri Colman; secretary and project coordinator of the FNMEC about his desire to do a community/environmental project like the other scouts. She in turn contacted Arnold Christian; chair and field supervisor of projects to meet with him and see what could be done as a beneficial project.

Thanks to the suggestions and photos of a similar amphitheater he had built while still a naturalist at the WAPSI Envi-

ronment Center near Dixon, IA, Bob Bryant was able to meet with the scout and give him guidance. Evan then had to design plans based on Bryant's photos and rough layout with stakes and boards on the site, take the plans and get cost bids from three building supply stores, and present them to the Boy Scout's Illowa Council for approval. He did that in Early October and got started on Saturday the 20th with the help of some volunteers who are also FNMECers: Darren Speth, Fran and Don Sanders, Leo Schmeink and the writer of this news.

As with previous scouts projects, K&K Hardware Building Supply in Bettendorf donated most of the lumber. Thanks to K &BK, Evan only had to pay about \$50, plus the rental fee for the post hole augur rented to drill out 27 post holes. The holes were needed to set 6X6 inch posts in the ground for supporting the 2"X12"X10-14' length treated lumber planks used for the bench seats. The FNMEC contributed the other half from donations received

from the Kenney Salwey video showings at the Putnam Museum's IMAX theater in Davenport.

The amphitheater will allow a busload of students to sit in an elevated semi-circle facing the marsh's icon-the water instead of trying to scramble for a picnic table under one of the shelters. The natural facilitator; Brian Ritter conferred with Bob Bryant that it would greatly improve the experience of visiting school groups. According to Brian, there are already several groups booked for Spring 2008 that should benefit from the amphitheater. Thanks to Evan, there is another improved facility at Nahant Marsh.



Evan Lowther and fellow Boy Scouts and Friends of Nahant Marsh members building the new Nahant amphitheater.

Photo by Fran Sanders



Interested in becoming more involved at Nahant Marsh?

Join the Friends Group

See page 6 for more details.

Trees Planted for Lost Friends of Nahant Marsh

By Arnold Christian

Nahant Marsh has lost three hard-working and supportive Friends: Marci Murphy in 06, Tom Ryan and Dr. Walter Neiswanger in 2007. To honor their association and dedication to the environmental activities at Nahant Marsh, it was decided in a Fall meeting to plant a memorial tree for each of them. River Action, via Kathy Wine, collected donations for Dr. Neiswanger's memorial, and the Friends of Nahant

donated the cost of trees for Tim Murphy's wife; Marci and Doris Ryan's husband; Tom.

Alec Schorg, a Friend of Nahant Marsh, agreed to acquire three trees through his place of employment; Aunt Rhodie's of East Davenport. He delivered, planted, mulched, staked, and watered all three trees on November 6th, working until finished- well past sundown. He planted the

trees to the East and West sides of the amphitheater (mentioned in another update article in this edition of the Newsletter). As the trees mature, they will provide shade for the students that sit in the amphitheater when they first arrive for a educational tour getting off the bus and being greeted by Brian Ritter; facilitator at Nahant.



The completed Nahant Marsh amphitheater and memorial trees.

Photo by Fran Sanders

Internationally Known Plant Expert and Author Comes to Nahant Marsh

By Brian Ritter



Dr. Bob Mohlenbrock describing Nahant plants to students in September '07.

Dr. Robert Mohlenbrock, a leading expert in wetland plant identification, came to Nahant Marsh in September to teach plant identification to a group of Biologists from the US Army Corp of Engineers and Iowa DOT. The former Southern Illinois University professor has authored dozens of scientific articles, plant identification guides and a National Forest travel guide series. He is now a trainer with the

Wetland Training Institute. Nahant Marsh, along with 4 other locations in Western Illinois, was chosen by Dr. Mohlenbrock because of its high degree of biodiversity. Dr. Mohlenbrock and the class spent time in both the woods and restored prairie and identified over 100 different plant species. When it comes to plant identification, Dr. Mohlenbrock is like an encyclopedia and we were honored to have him

at our site. The total number of plant species at Nahant is unknown at this time, but work continues to try to identify all the plants at Nahant. A complete list of plants that were identified at Nahant Marsh will be available on our website: www.nahantmarsh.org



Nahant Marsh Plant Highlight

Calamus (*Acorus americanus*)

By Brian Ritter

American Calamus Facts:

- Smells like tangerines
- Calamus species are used medicinally worldwide for treating everything from lung infections to

Calamus or Sweet Flag as it is sometimes referred to as, is only found in wet areas and is a valuable wetlands indicator species. Calamus' leaves look a lot like the leaves of cattails or irises, but when the leaves are bruised or crushed they have a strong sweet tangerine-like smell. Calamus also has an unmistakable flower and seed head in the summer called a spadex. American Calamus is a momocot and recent studies indicate that it is the oldest living species of the monocot lineage.

Calamus propagates itself either by seed or by rhizomes (a large underground horizontal plant stem). Calamus prefers full sun and will not tolerate drought. Wood

ducks will eat calamus seed and muskrats will eat the rhizomes. Large stands of calamus also provide valuable habitat for waterfowl.

The plant was used by Native Americans and pioneers to treat a variety of conditions, including digestive ailments, lung ailments, and nervous system disorders. The plant was (and is) used throughout Europe, India, and parts of Asia as a medicine and also as a spice for flavoring foods.

The leaves have been woven into mats to make roofs on huts. And the oil has been used in making perfumes. Because of the strong-smelling oil that the plant creates, calamus has also been used to repel insects.

If you are planning to use this plant, or any wild plant, for food or medicine, caution should be taken. Studies have found that the very similar European plant, *Acorus calaums*, contains a cancer-causing chemical called cis-isoasarone. Although this chemical is not found in the American variety of the plant, it is very difficult to tell the European plants from the American. And since European settlers brought their calamus plants to the US, the two plants can be found in the same location in the wild. For this reason, Calamus is not allowed to be used for human consumption in the U.S.

It was recently discovered that American calamus is a **Continued on Page 3**



Calamus or Sweet Flag is a native wetland plant that is found at Nahant Marsh. It has traditionally been used for medicine.

Nahant Marsh Plant Highlight

Calamus (Acorus americanus)- Continued from page 4

diploid (2 sets of chromosomes) that can reproduce both sexually and asexually, but European calamus is a triploid (3 sets of chromosomes), that can only reproduce asexually. In other words, the European variety cannot produce seeds.

This plant was originally found throughout many

parts of North America and was probably spread, to some extent, by Native Americans. Because of wetland destruction and invasive plants, calamus has become rare in some areas, like Pennsylvania, where it is listed as endangered. The town Calamus, near Clinton, Iowa, was named after this plant. Calamus has been

found at Nahant Marsh, but only in a few areas.



<http://herba.msu.ru/>



American Calamus in bloom.

Photo from: www.cambridgega.gov/

Wetland Animal Highlight

Pileated Woodpecker (Dryocopus pileatus)

By Brian Ritter

The Pileated Woodpecker is the largest woodpecker species in Iowa. They are about the size of a crow and have a large red crest on the top of their heads. Pileated Woodpeckers have black bodies with white stripes on their neck and face. They tend to be shy birds that live in forests with large trees. Pileated Woodpeckers are often confused with the very rare Ivory-billed Woodpecker. There are perhaps only a few Ivory-bills left and they only live in very large southern forests.

Pileated Woodpecker pairs stay together in their territory all year and will guard their territory from other Pileateds. They dig large rectangular holes in dead trees looking for their favorite food- carpenter ants. The holes are very large and often attract other types of birds who are looking for a meal. Pileated Woodpeckers

also eat fruit and nuts when they are available.

Pileated Woodpeckers will make their nests creating holes in large trees. They lay around 4 white eggs at a time. The species began to decline sharply in the early twentieth century because extensive logging had destroyed much of their habitat. As forests have begun to re-grow, so have Pileated Woodpecker populations.

Pileated Woodpeckers have been seen in the forests at Credit Island, and from time to time at Nahant Marsh. They are more often heard rather than seen, however. When Pileated Woodpeckers peck at trees, it makes a very loud sound and there call sounds like “kuk, kuk, kuk.” They are a good indicator of healthy forests.



Art by: John James Audobon

The Pileated Woodpecker

To find out more about this or other Nahant Marsh species, go to www.nahantmarsh.org



Nahant Marsh Facilitator Brian Ritter with a school group. For more information about visiting the marsh, contact us.

Nahant Marsh Educational Center,
Eastern Iowa Community College District

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We're on the Web!! Visit us at
www.nahantmarsh.org

Nahant Marsh Education Center



Advanced Technology Environmental and
Energy Center

www.ateec.org



EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

www.eicc.edu

Nahant Marsh Education Center, currently comprised of 260.2 acres, is one of the largest urban wetlands on the Upper Mississippi River. It is comprised of marshy areas, mesic, wet, and sand prairie, and bottomland forest. A spring-fed quarry, known as Carp Lake, and the surrounding grounds, is part of the Nahant Marsh Preserve as well. Nahant Marsh was used for skeet and trap shooting from the 1960's to the 1990's. Because of the lead left behind, the marsh was declared an EPA Superfund site and was cleaned up in 1999. After that time, the site was declared a preserve and educational center. The building and 123 acres of land is owned and managed by the City of Davenport. The remaining land is held by the Nahant Board, a 501c3. The Educational programming is overseen by the Eastern Iowa Community College District. River Action, Inc. is also critical part of Nahant Marsh.

Getting to Nahant Marsh...

From Davenport, Iowa:

Take Highway 22 South and turn left on Wapello Avenue (last left turn before the I-280 overpass). Follow Wapello Avenue and you will see Nahant Marsh to your left, just before the railroad crossing.

From Illinois:

Take I-280 to Iowa and take the Highway 22/Rockingham Road Exit. Turn right onto highway 22 and right onto Wapello Avenue. Nahant Marsh is on the left, just before the railroad crossing.

Upcoming Events and Nahant Information

January 12th and 13th, 2008

Bald Eagle Days
QCCA Expo Center
Rock Island, IL

Feb 5th, 2008 @ 7PM *

Nahant Marsh Education Center-
Local Ecology Series Presents The Lost and the Almost Lost with Bob Bryant, Nahant Marsh Resource Manager and retired Director of the Wapsi River Center. Open to the Public, \$5/person

Feb 12th, 2008 @ 7PM *

Nahant Marsh Education Center-
Local Ecology Series Presents Wildlife Ecology with Liz Haynes, U of I Extension. Open to the Public, \$5/person

Feb 19, 2008 @ 7PM *

Nahant Marsh Education Center-
Local Ecology Series Presents The Mississippi River Ecosystem: 150 years of Shifting Currents with Tammy Becker of Living Lands & Waters. Open to the Public, \$5/person

Feb 26th, 2008 @ 7PM *

Nahant Marsh Education Center-
Local Ecology Series Presents Prairie Ecology, Planting, and Maintenance with Stephanie Crandall, U of I Extension, and **Don Bardole**, Army Corps of Engineers. Open to the Public, \$5/person

* For information about registering for Local Ecology Series, contact Stephanie Crandall at (309) 796-0512 or scrandal@uiuc.edu or go to www.extension.uiuc.edu/rockisland

For the most updated calendar of events, visit our website at:
www.nahantmarsh.org

If you enjoy Nahant and would like to **become a Friends of Nahant supporter or member**, logon to our website or contact Sheri Coleman at (309) 786-8504 or attend the Friends meeting, **the last Wednesday of every month at 7PM at the Educational Center**.

Friends of Nahant Marsh has a work day from 9am to Noon on the first Saturday of each month. Volunteers are much needed, even if just for an hour!!