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Home on the Prairie

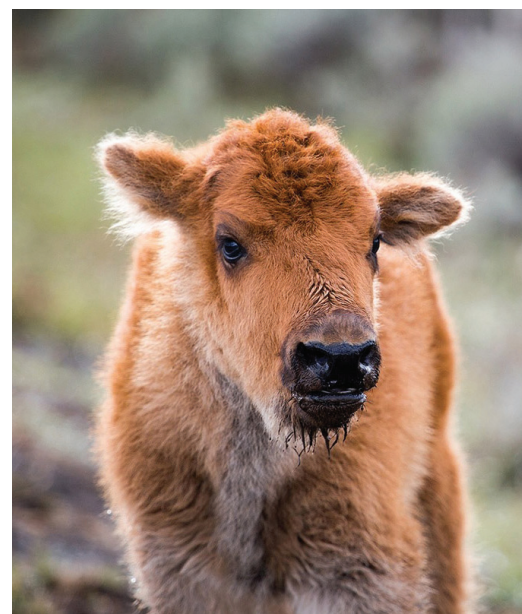
by Sam Robinson

American bison (*Bison bison*), once native to the state, haven't roamed free in Indiana for over 200 years, although they've been commercially raised for meat.

The Nature Conservancy, a national conservation group, wants to change that by bringing 26 bison to Kankakee Sands, a 7,800 acre tall-grass prairie near Morocco, Indiana. The bison, which will live across 1,100 acres, arrived from South Dakota in late October.

Tony Caprizzo, Land Steward at Kankakee Sands, said he's excited for the arrival of the herd, which will be an opportunity for staff to see how bison and the prairie interact with one another.

"The goal is to have between 50 and 70 animals," Caprizzo said. "We want to see a drought year, a flood year, and see how the herd reacts and see what the prairie tells us." >>



▲ Photo: This bison calf could grow to 6 feet tall and weigh up to 2,000 pounds!

Home On the Prairie, contd.

Bison, the largest land mammals in North America, play integral roles in grassland habitats as grazers and herd animals. Once common throughout the United States, they were excessively hunted to near-extinction in the nineteenth century.

"To be on a project on the ground level is very exciting," Caprizzo said.

Caprizzo said that bison will open up new habitats and support the growth of native wildflowers because they tend to eat grasses exclusively. Areas grazed by bison are also less likely to catch fire during controlled burns, leading to a more diverse landscape.

Bison also carve out depressions in the soil when they rest, which fill with rainwater and attract amphibians. Seeds caught in bison fur find their way to new grazing areas, which promotes biodiversity.

The arrival of bison to Kankakee Sands will also be an opportunity for the public to see and learn about the animals. An observation deck will be available for visitors to see the herd in their natural habitat. Hiking will be prohibited in the bison habitat, however.

To learn more about the bison coming to Kankakee Sands or to learn about volunteering, visit www.nature.org.

Calendar Updates

Feb. 17 - PIE Day at Cold Spring Environmental Magnet School

Feb. 23-26 - Deer, Turkey, & Waterfowl Expo

Mar. 13-17 - Kids' Contest Opens / Wildlife Week

Mar. 18 - IWF Annual Meeting

Apr. 22 - Earth Day Indiana

May 14 - Native Plant Sale orders begin arriving

May 19 - PIE Day

June 10-11 - Hoosier Outdoor Experience

June 10-18 - Nature Play Days

June 15 - Holt Scholarship Deadline

Volunteer Opportunities

Not sure how you can help Indiana's wildlife? Check out these great volunteer opportunities with IWF and find one that fits you!

- Join our Speakers' Bureau. We need volunteers to give presentations on backyard habitats throughout the year. No prior knowledge needed, just a passion for wildlife!
- Photography – We are always looking for quality photographs of wildlife and habitat to use for our website, marketing, social media, and outreach materials.
- Earth Day Indiana & Hoosier Outdoor Experience (Spring/Summer 2017) - We will need volunteers for our bird feeder building activity at both events. Look for more details in our next newsletter!

To find out about all our opportunities visit: www.indianawildlife.org/about/volunteer/. To volunteer, call us at 317.875.9453 or email us at info@indianawildlife.org.

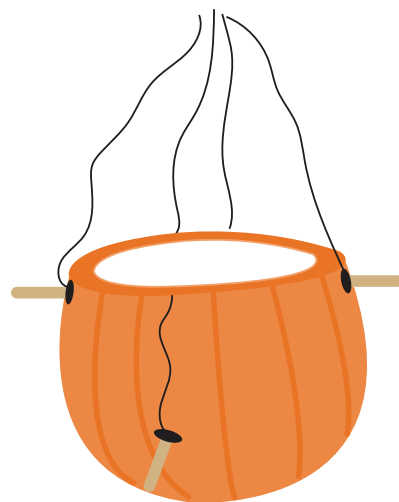


Pumpkin Bird Feeder

Things you will need:

- Cleaned-out pumpkin
- 2 wood dowels
- Twine or rope
- Scissors
- A piece of newspaper
- A screwdriver
- Bird seed

1. Cut off the top of the pumpkin and poke several small holes in the bottom for water drainage.
2. Poke a dowel into the pumpkin a few inches down from the top edge you just cut. Push it straight out through the opposite side of the pumpkin. Poke the second dowel through the pumpkin so it crosses just under the first dowel.
3. Cut the twine into four equal lengths. Tie a strand to each dowel, as shown. Then tie the loose ends together in a large knot at the top.
4. Line the pumpkin with newspaper so your seed will not spill out of the jack o' lantern face. Fill the pumpkin with birdseed, and then hang it in your yard.



Reprinted with permission from the National Wildlife Federation. For more family fun & kids games, check out www.nwf.org/Kids!



Plant THIS, Not THAT

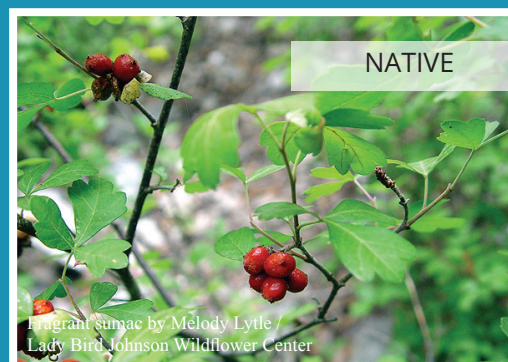


Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Commonly seen in urban areas, along roadways, and at the edges of agricultural fields, tree of heaven is a large invasive tree that has been found in over half of U.S. states. Native to China, the species grows and spreads quickly thanks to high seed production and sucker development. In late summer and early fall, it can be identified by its yellow-red winged seeds. Its allelopathic properties and widespread root system disrupt soil chemistry and damage concrete structures, like sidewalks.

Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatic*)

When its leaves turn a burnished red in fall, the fragrant sumac becomes a showcase plant in any garden. This low-growing shrub is ideal for ground cover and is an effective barrier when planted in groups. It is a host plant for several species of moth and butterfly larvae, and its berries and bark offer winter food for birds, rabbits, deer, and other wildlife.



Hunters Helping Deer: Voluntary Sampling for Bovine TB

Indiana DNR's Division of Fish & Wildlife has solidified its plans for sampling wild deer in parts of southeast Indiana. The DNR hopes to sample between 350 and 1,100 deer, preferably 2-year or older bucks. To meet this goal, the DNR is requiring mandatory check-ins of deer taken in established zones in Dearborn County between November 4th and 27th.

Hunters are encouraged to contribute to additional voluntary sampling between October 1st - November 3rd and December 3rd - 11th. Voluntary contributions to the sampling will enable the DNR to reach its goal more quickly and possibly avoid the need for alternative collection methods such as sharpshooting. Besides contributing to the health of the deer population, hunters who participate will receive an additional free buck tag. Mandatory check-ins will also be required for parts of Fayette and Franklin Counties.

For full details, visit: <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/9320.htm>

Upcoming Field Trips

Our next field trips will be:

- **TBD (Spring 2017) - Sandhill crane watching at Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area**



▲ Photo: Cold Springs School students whip up suet cakes for birds during PIE Day.



▲ Photo: John Goss and Erin Wade help celebrate the opening of the new Goose Pond FWA Visitor Center.



▲ Photo: Our eager volunteer monarch taggers help us capture, tag, and release 13 butterflies during the White River Festival.



▲ Photo: Our summer intern, Kathryn, enjoys the Dave Matthews concert after manning the IWF outreach booth.

Habitat Program Updates

CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE WILDERNESS TRAIL

We have received our first submission for the Sustainable Trails Program from the new Urban Wilderness Trail along the White River and Fall Creek. We held several events along the emerging trail this year and look forward to hosting more next year.

BACKYARD HABITAT WORKSHOP

Our Habitat Programs Coordinator, Aaron, presented portions of our Backyard Habitat Workshop during the Southeastway Park BugFest in August and the 2016 Pleasant Run BioBlitz in September. He also delivered a native plant presentation at the Turn Festival, a day of events and talks focused on sustainability and conservation.

If you are interested in having us present in your community, for your neighborhood association, at your school or church, or for another group, contact us at **info@indianawildlife.org** or **317-875-9453**. Or if you would like to help out by volunteering as a speaker, please let us know as well!

LANDSCAPING THE SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS

This fall we have been in touch with the Indiana Institute of Technology (Indiana Tech) about pursuing certification for their campus. We have scheduled an initial meeting with Indiana Tech and an on-campus visit to see their sustainability efforts later this year.

Making Charitable Giving Work For You

How can you make the most out of your charitable giving and reduce your taxable income?

Individuals turning age 70 ½ are required to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) from their retirement accounts. This may cause unexpected income tax implications. So how can an individual avoid these unexpected implications? Consider making a charitable contribution with your RMDs.

An individual is allowed to distribute their otherwise taxable RMD, up to \$100,000, directly to tax-exempt organizations/charities such as the Indiana Wildlife Federation. Such qualified charitable distributions are federal-income-tax-free to the donor. Also, a contribution equal to (or in excess of) an individual's RMD is considered to satisfy his or her minimum distribution requirement for that year. Please consult your Tax Professional and/or Financial Advisor.

If you would like to learn how your charitable contribution will provide support to the Indiana Wildlife Federation, please call 317-875-9453.

Legislative Updates

Our highest priority item in 2017 will be advocating for **CONSERVATION FUNDING**. We will focus most of our work at the state level but will also support efforts at the federal level from the National Wildlife Federation and other partners.

The **INDIANA STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN** is an important tool for receiving federal funding. The SWAP could also be useful for bringing partners together to work on priority wildlife and habitat areas in the state. IWF has prioritized supporting the Division of Fish and Wildlife on the implementation of our SWAP.

FISH AND WILDLIFE REGULATIONS - Our third high priority item is continued engagement in the Natural Resource Commission Administrative Rules Process and the DNR Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee.

With ongoing concerns about the **PRIVATIZATION OF WILDLIFE**, IWF will continue to engage in work concerning captive cervids, catfish pay lakes, and other commercialization issues.

With increasing interest in **FOREST MANAGEMENT** across the state, IWF will continue to support active management of our forests, including the use of sound timber harvesting practices, as a means of providing varied habitats required by our state's wildlife.

IWF has prioritized **WATER RESOURCES** as an issue of growing concern. IWF will support efforts and awareness surrounding the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, bring forth a Soil Health Resolution at the NWF Annual Meeting, and engage in statewide conversations concerning both water quantity and quality.

Deadlines for Bylaws & Resolution Changes

Any member in good standing may review our current resolutions and bylaws and propose new resolutions or changes to the bylaws. The deadline to submit bylaws to the Secretary of the Board is December 16, 2016, and resolutions must be proposed to the Resolutions Committee by January 21, 2016.

INCA Conservation Congress

More than 90 people attended the Indiana Conservation Alliance's inaugural Conservation Congress in September. Representatives from state agencies, conservation groups, and the general public networked and listened to various speakers, including the keynote presenters from Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. The DNR's new SWAP Coordinator, Brad Feaster, led a session on implementation of Indiana's SWAP (State Wildlife Action Plan). Event-wide discussions covered potential new partnerships, additional INCA committees, and tactics for improving the state's conservation ethic.



Plan Your Conservation Legacy

Support *Common Sense Conservation* for years to come. Please consider including IWF in your will or other future financial plans. Visit www.indianawildlife.org/giving or contact us at 317.875.9453 to learn more and to start a conversation about planned giving.

If you have already included IWF in your future plans, please let us know--we would like to thank you for your gift!