ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY
Helping to Preserve the Flora and Fauna of Illinois since 1897

P.O. BOX 2547
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62708
(P) 217.544.2473
(F) 217.544.7433
WWW.ILLINOISAUDUBON.ORG

August 23, 206
War Bluff Valley Sanctuary
Final Report
Grant Agreement #: 06-021W

Grantee: Illinois Audubon Society
PO Box 2547
Springfield, IL 62708
217-544-2473

Time-frame of the report: Conclusion of the grant agreement – July 31, 2006

Grantee Representative completing the report: Tom Clay
Executive Director
Illinois Audubon Society
PO Box 2547
Springfield, IL 62708

Project objective:
To produce an informational brochure and trail map for Illinois Audubon Society's War Bluff Valley Sanctuary; and to refurbish the sanctuary entry kiosk to provide receptacles for the brochure and other visitor information.

Summary of the Project accomplishments:
The brochure and kiosk projects were both completed and are available for visitor use. The 485-acre sanctuary is home to a large variety of birds and mammals native to Illinois, as well as a great diversity of plants, including several species of native orchids. The brochure with trail map makes it easier for sanctuary visitors to explore the property and to understand the importance of maintaining large undeveloped tracts of natural habitat. The sanctuary is available for organized outdoor research, demonstration, and conservation/environmental education projects.

Budget:

Brochure printing, 5000 copies Raines Press, PO Box 7037 Austin, TX 78713-7037	$721.92
Brochure shipping Theresa Treacy, RR 1 Box 216A Golconda, IL 62938	$278.08
Total Project expenditures:	$1,000.00
Project expenditures paid by IAS 4 weatherproof brochure & literature holders labor to repaint kiosk and install the holders.	$200.00

The Graber Legacy

Drs. Richard & Jean Graber were renowned ornithologists with the Illinois Natural History Survey for nearly thirty years. Early in their careers they conducted a state-wide bird population study. It was during this survey that they were introduced to the Shawnee Hills of Southern Illinois, and Jean expressed a desire to own property in Pope County

A few years later, the Grabers purchased the first of two parcels of land which now comprise War Bluff Valley Sanctuary. They eventually retired from the INHS in 1983, and moved to their private wildlife area. Here, they continued research on the relationship of birds and insects of the forest canopy until Dick's declining health curtailed their studies.

In 1996, an opportunity to purchase a neighboring farm enlarged the sanctuary to nearly 500 acres. During their years of studying bird life from Kansas and Michigan to Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, and finally to Illinois, they gradually became concerned about the loss of habitat and its profound effect on birds and other wildlife. Because of this growing concern they became actively involved in efforts to change management practices on the Shawnee National Forest, which borders the sanctuary.

Their passion for preservation of habitat resulted in seeking permanent protection for their personal wildlife refuge, and in 1990 they chose the Illinois Audubon Society to maintain the War Bluff Valley Sanctuary. The Grabers endowed the property to help IAS with long-term maintenance. Donations from visitors and *Friends of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary* also assist with maintenance and restoration work at this special wildlife haven.

Dick Graber passed away in 1998, but Jean maintains a home in nearby Golconda and still visits and takes part in Sanctuary activities.

This brochure was funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources through the Wildlife Preservation Fund.

Cover photo of barred owl ©*Richard Day/Daybreak Imagery*. All other photo credits appear with each photo. Many thanks to the generosity of all the photographers for the use of their work.

Stewardship

Stewardship of the Sanctuary rests with the Shawnee Audubon Society, the local chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society. The second Saturday of every month is Stewardship Day where you get a chance to volunteer your time and talents while spending a day in nature working and socializing with others who value nature as much as you do. For information on current activities call the sanctuary at 618-683-2222, or visit the Shawnee Audubon Society web site at: http://shawneeaudubon.org

Friends of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary

The sanctuary can always use another Friend, won't you consider becoming one? Your annual contribution makes special projects and the day-to-day upkeep of the sanctuary possible. Friends will receive the biannual *Warbler*, a newsletter that keeps you informed of improvements, projects, activities and upcoming special events. Visit the web site http://shawneeaudubon.org or fill out this form and mail to: War Bluff Valley Sanctuary, RR 1 Box 216A, Golconda, IL 62938.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____St____Zip_____

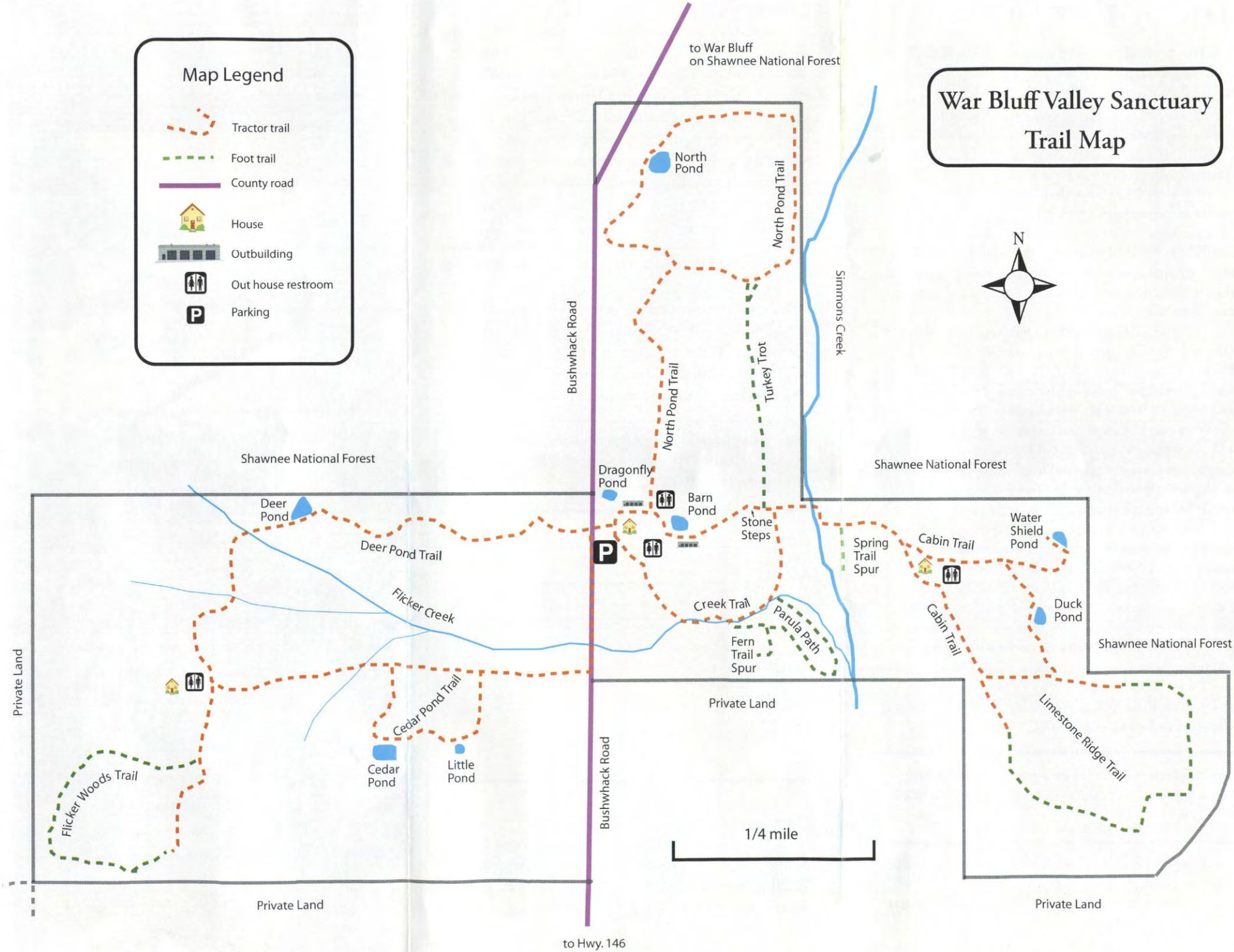
____Hummingbird		$ 5.00
____Warbler		15.00
____Woodpecker		25.00
____Heron		50.00
____Owl		100.00
____Eagle	over	100.00

Directions

From Golconda, Illinois take State Route 146 North 3.5 miles to Bushwhack Road (look for brown Wildlife Viewing sign) and turn left. Follow road approximately 2 miles to the Sanctuary entrance.

War Bluff Valley Sanctuary
Illinois Audubon Society

War Bluff Valley Sanctuary Trail Map



Trail Descriptions

Creek Trail is a moderately easy 0.75 mile hike through mature hardwood forest along Flicker Creek and Simmons Creek. Benches placed at the top of stone steps offer a resting spot after climbing out of the stream valley back to the ridge top. An easy stroll back to the parking lots passes through an area of large junipers.

From the Creek Trail there are three opportunities for longer hikes – Parula Path, Cabin Trail, and Turkey Trot/North Pond Trail.

Parula Path is an easy 0.4 mile loop off Creek Trail. Be sure to follow the short Fern Trail spur.

Turkey Trot is a lovely 0.3 mile woodland trail that bird watchers should not miss. Some of the largest trees on the sanctuary can be see along this trail. The north end of Turkey Trot intersects North Pond Trail, where you can either follow it directly back or make the entire North Pond Trail loop for a longer hike.

North Pond Trail is a moderately easy 1.75 mile round trip trail from the parking lot that leads the visitor through several habitats. Just beyond Dragonfly Pond the trail follows the top of a broad, flat ridge through old field habitat, gently drops down into dense shrub and young tree habitat and eventually passes by North Pond. This trail intersects Turkey Trot for an alternate route.

Cedar waxwing

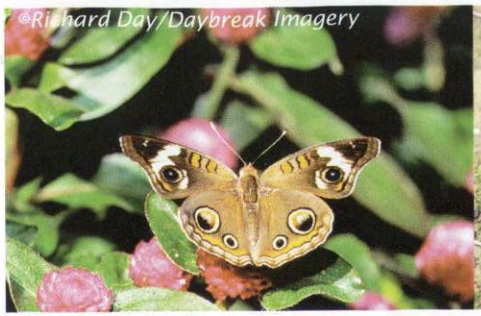
Cabin Trail crosses Simmons Creek and ascends to an 1800's log cabin. Round trip from the creek the trail is about 1 mile in length. Continuing past the cabin to the right the trail goes through a young forest of elm and honey locust . Continue to bear left and the trail passes Duck Pond and a 1/4 mile spur trail to Water Shield Pond before looping back to the cabin. For a longer hike take in Limestone Ridge Trail.

Limestone Ridge Trail forms an extended 3/4 mile loop off of Cabin Trail. After passing an old field that has grown up into shrub habitat the trail drops down into a southward facing hardwood forest. A thin bed of limestone occurs at the surface along portions of the trail.

Deer Pond Trail, approx 1.75 miles, begins across the road from the Sanctuary entrance. It passes through old farm field, ephemeral creek and pond habitats. For a longer hike take the Flicker Woods and/or Cedar Pond trails.

Flicker Woods Trail quickly leaves the old field habitat and enters a woodland habitat that contains interesting conglomerate rock formations. This trail is an 8/10 mile round trip extension from Deer Pond Trail.

Cedar Pond Trail is a short quarter mile loop through old fields and past Cedar Pond and Small Pond. Look for beaver sign at Cedar Pond.



Buckeye butterfly

Marbled salamander

Tiger swallowtail butterfly

Squirrel corn

©Richard Day/Daybreak Imagery

Wood duck

The Land Tells a Story

The land that is now War Bluff Valley Sanctuary was once a completely forested landscape. As European settlers arrived the forests were cut to make way for farming and grazing.

The first tract of land of what is now the Sanctuary was purchased in 1965 by Drs. Richard and Jean Graber. It was an 80-acre tract with an 1800's log cabin located on the east side of Simmons Creek. The land had been farmed hard with mules and horses for over 100 years. Jean Graber described the condition of the land as being so worn out that it wouldn't even grow lichens.

Today the old fields on the ridge top have reverted to shrubs and trees, such as sumac, blackberry, winged elm, and honey locust, while the area along the creek has reverted primarily to tulip tree, sycamore, and river birch. In addition, the Grabers built five ponds, which have naturalized with healthy stands of cattail and a floating aquatic plant called water shield.

These original acquisitions were donated to the Illinois Audubon Society in 1990. An additional 240 acres were added in 1995 and 1996. Today, grasses, wildflowers, blackberry are giving way to juniper, sycamore, sassafras, and elm.

Older growth oaks and hickories remain intact in many areas of the Sanctuary. These forested areas are critical for species that require mature forest interior habitat.

Habitat....the Key to Biological Diversity

Forests

Large unbroken tracts of forest are needed for deep wood bird species such as wood thrush, scarlet tanager, northern parula and red-shouldered hawk. Forested habitat is critical for breeding and migrating birds. Many other species also inhabit the forests of War Bluff Valley Sanctuary — bobcat, box turtle, golden mouse, marbled salamander, spicebush swallowtail butterfly, and climbing milkweed to name just a few.

One of the missions of the sanctuary is to allow reforestation of the old farm fields. But while the process is taking place we are delighted with the large variety of species that make their home in the grasses, shrubs and young tree habitat that currently exist.

©Todd Fink/Daybreak Imagery

Prairie warbler

Grassland, Shrub & Young Trees

Previously cultivated fields transforming into grasslands, shrubs and small trees provide food and cover for an amazing variety of bird species. Of special interest are the prairie warbler, chat, blue-winged warbler and woodcock. Wildflowers including milkweeds, ironweed, and goldenrod attract numerous species of butterflies.

As you walk the trails through the old fields notice the abundance of life in them. Listen to the songs and rustlings of sparrows, warblers, and towhees. Stop to gaze upon the butterflies as they float from flower to flower. Now imagine you are standing in a pasture or cultivated field — would life around you be so bountiful and diverse?

Wildlife Research Lab

Bobcat

Creeks and Ponds

Water is important for all forms of life. Our ponds and creeks support amphibians, birds, insects, and mammals as well as plant life. Giant cane growing along Simmons Creek harbors the golden mouse and rare species of moths. Beaver and muskrat sign and lodges can be seen at most of the ponds. Dragonfly Pond is unique because it does not contain any fish, making it an ideal habitat for frogs, toads and insects such as dragonflies, whose eggs, young and larva are routinely eaten by fish.