



Fall 2011

Wargo Nature Center Newsletter for Volunteers and Friends

## Their Time to Shine

Most people know that humans and other animals are affected by the length of daylight (photoperiod). Humans generally find themselves in better moods when the days are longer and there is more daylight. Animals respond to changes in day length by changing their diet or preparing for hibernation. What many people don't know is that plants are also affected by the seasonal availability of daylight.

Plants' activities are affected by many factors including temperature, moisture, and nutrient availability. However, one of the most important factors is light. Of course a plant depends on sunlight to make its food via photosynthesis, but other functions are controlled by light as well. Flowering is one of those major functions. "A plants [sic] ability to measure photoperiod enables it to monitor seasonal changes, and to respond to them," (Ravenscroft 2011). Some plants are called short-day plants and they tend to flower quickly when the photoperiod is below a certain length (when days are short). This adaptation means that they usually flower after June 21, when the days start getting shorter. Some examples of short-day plants are rice and strawberry. Long-day plants require at least a certain amount of daylight before they will flower. Some examples of long-day plants include carnation and clover. Other plants grow in areas like the equator, with the same length of day year-round. These are called day-neutral plants and include kidney beans and desert sand verbena.

So as we move into fall, we will experience all the usual changes - cooler temperatures, falling leaves, and earlier sunsets. We won't be the only beings noticing these changes, though. Most plants will be adjusting to the new light conditions as well, waiting for their time to shine.

Ravenscroft, Dean. "Photoperiod Response, Photoperiodism." Plant Biology. Web. 16 August 2011. <<http://www.plant-biology.com/environmental-control-flowering.php>>.

### Don't Miss...

Birding with Bob:	2
Environment	
Principles:	3
Gourmet w/ Gallop:	5
Volunteer Update:	6
Wargo Warblings:	7
Q & A:	8



Creeping Bellflower



Clover



Duckweed



## Bird of the Season: Dark-Eyed Junco

by Bob Holtz



Many migratory birds which do not nest in our area can be found here in the spring and in the fall. A few of the fall migrants are birds which we find here only in our colder weather. The **Dark-eyed Junco** is one such bird. It usually arrives in Anoka County in September and will stick around until April. Many people refer to them as "snow birds." Because they are here in colder weather, they prefer to sleep in sheltered areas such as evergreens.

#

Juncos are members of the sparrow family and are sparrow-size birds which have a pale bill, a black head, back, tail and throat. The chest and belly are white. When they fly you will see white outer tail feathers. In the western United States there are several color variations and a few of those occasionally show up in Minnesota. Males and females are very similar in color.

You will usually find juncos at the edges of wooded areas, in brushy areas and along roadsides. They are mainly seed eaters and will clean up dropped seeds under bird feeders. They also will eat seeds on platform feeders.

Dark-eyed Juncos do not sing much when in our area, but if you do hear them you will note that they sound a bit like a Chipping Sparrow.

Fill your feeders and watch for these winter visitors.

# Environmental Perspective

## The Land Ethic

**Bob Holtz, Wargo Naturalist**



The development of a sense of ethics has been a slow process for humans. When we add land or wilderness to the process it becomes very difficult for many to grasp the concept and logic of the importance of developing a land ethic.

First, we need to have a basic understanding of ethics. It has been defined many ways, but I believe the easiest definition to understand is that the key ethical question is "What is it that I ought to do?" That can be a hard question to answer, particularly in our interactions with others. When we add land to the equation most struggle even more to find the "right" answer.

Many questions come to mind when dealing with a land ethic. These can include:

- What are our responsibilities when owning a piece of land?
- What can we do to improve the land for future generations?
- Is it wise to clear cut a large forest?
- Are there alternatives to using herbicides and pesticides?
- Must we build a road to everywhere?
- Because a deed says I own a certain amount of land, can I do whatever I please with that property?

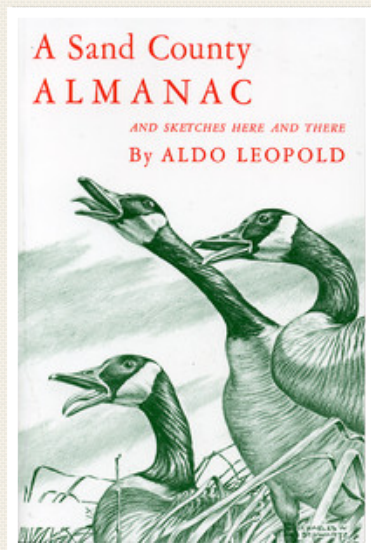
Many other questions could be listed, but the above ones should make us realize that we will not all come up with the same set of answers. Therefore, if we can agree that they are important questions we need to try to clarify our thinking on these issues.

continued ...

# Environmental Perspective cont.

The idea of a land ethic was developed by Aldo Leopold in his 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*. A key point he made was that we need to move away from seeing ourselves as conquerors of the land and realize we are only members of the whole human/land community. If we want to clarify the importance, or for that matter the unimportance, of humans in the environment, answer the following question, "How do you think planet earth would do if there were no humans on it?"

I will leave you with that question to ponder. I also encourage you to read Leopold's small book, *A Sand County Almanac*. If you prefer not to read the whole book, at least read the last chapter, The Land Ethic.



Remember, the importance of a land ethic is embedded in the reality that our survival as a human race depends on a healthy planet.

Send questions or comments to Bob Holtz at [bobholtz33@comcast.net](mailto:bobholtz33@comcast.net).

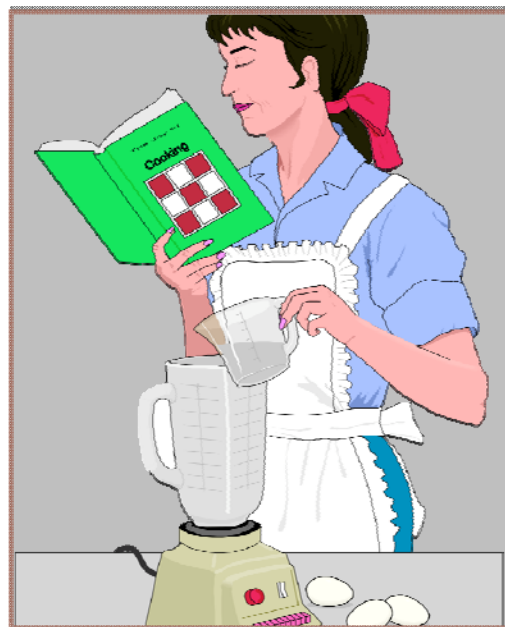
# Gourmet with Gallop

Fall is definitely my favorite time of year. Although I always think of things slowing down, that is really not the case. All the garden vegetables and herbs are ripe and need to be taken care of. Rice Creek Farms day camp held at Wargo this summer was a huge success and the vegetable garden is still producing. And of course apple season is also here and Minnesota has some great varieties. Here is one of my favorites- enjoy!

## Apple Cake

1 cup sugar  
1/3 cup butter at room temperature  
1 egg  
1-1/2 cups flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1-1/2 cups apple, peeled and grated (about 3)  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/2 cup pecans or walnut pieces  
1 teaspoon almond extract

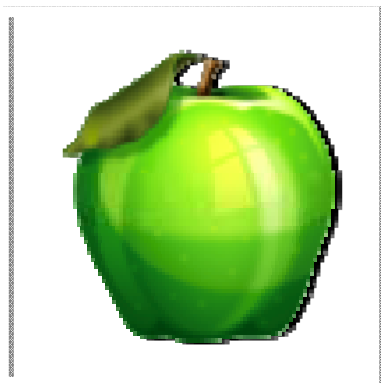
Cream sugar and butter together.  
Add egg and mix to combine.  
In a separate bowl, flour, soda and salt together.  
Add to sugar mixture.  
Add apple, ginger, nuts and almond extract.  
Mix to combine.  
Pour into an 8x8 pan.



## Topping:

1/2 cup brown sugar  
2 Tablespoons flour  
3 Tablespoons butter at room temperature  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
Mix until crumbly. Sprinkle over the top.

Bake at 350° 30-40 minutes.  
Cake is done when a toothpick inserted comes out clean.



# Volunteer Update

by Deb Gallop Volunteer Coordinator

## What Volunteers have been doing at Wargo Nature Center!

*A special thank you to our volunteers this summer!*

**Summer Stretch** volunteers came out 5 times and helped weed and beautify the surrounding landscape.

**Carley Hill** did a great job pulling and cutting "unwanted" plants out of the restored prairie and helping Krista with some animal care projects.

**Jeanne Daher** spent many hours in the woodland garden and it was gorgeous this spring.

**Greg Barnes** put together the woodland garden trellis.

**Glennie Gilleen** helped out with the Eastern Bluebird house monitoring program.

**Shirley Sundquist** continues to volunteer at the reception desk when needed.

**JOIN US!**



Wargo greatly appreciates the hours volunteers put in making the center a better place!

## Feeder Watch will start up again in November



Annual Volunteer Harvest Dinner  
at 1 p.m. on Saturday, November 19  
at Wargo Nature Center.

More information will be sent out in October.  
Thanks again for a great summer and all the  
wonderful volunteer work you do.

# WARGO WARBLINGS



Summer was hoppin' at the nature center. We all embraced (!) the heat and humidity with many happy day campers who enjoyed catching toads, exploring the pond and following animal tracks. Day camps were offered for pre-schoolers through 7<sup>th</sup> graders and covered topics from habitats to kayaking skills and even farming.

As we all look back on the fun we had, we can rest assured that more fun is in store for everyone as fall brings a new programming season to us. In late September and early October, we will be seeing students from area schools for our Heritage Lab on Milling, Mining and Lumbering. Following Heritage Lab, we will be busy with curriculum-based field trips both on and off-site.

And, don't forget about our awesome public events:

Apple Cider Fest is on October 16, from 1:30 – 3:30 and it's FREE!!!

Come enjoy a peaceful hike, a new volunteer opportunity or Apple Cider Fest; we hope to see all of you soon.

