



# WING's E-Newsletter

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<http://www.blackthornhill.org>

## What's Happening at Blackthorn Hill?

The summer was a busy one which started with the addition of our access road. Thanks to Opal and John Murray for taking charge and completing this much needed project assisted by Ed Smith who operated John Yeager's tractor to spread gravel! We couldn't have done it without you! Also on April 8, Tad Johnson sawed and stacked the basswood tree that had fallen across our fence. Kraig McCluskie and Mark Johnson worked all day removing the fence and posts from the creek to below the hill, hauling and stacking the old fencing next to the parking lot for removal. Thanks a lot guys! On April 29 a group of ladies endured the gentle rain while bird watching and discovering "pussie toes" growing along the west fence.

In June, Blackthorn Hill hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Girl Scout Day Camp at the preserve. We had over 40 girls attending the camp. The theme was Monkey Business and it was enhanced with a monkey bridge over the first small creek on the main trail and zip-lining in the woods just like monkeys would swing from trees. Special thanks go to Kraig McCluskie and Mark Johnson for construction and maintenance of the monkey bridge. Additional special thanks to Billy, Tyler & Zach Leahy who donated their time and equipment for the running of the zip-line. Thanks to BNSF for the donation of the cable used for the zip-line. We had the usual campfires, cooking, crafts, songs and games as well. The expansion of the activity area was greatly appreciated as the Monmouth area service unit joined the Galesburg area service unit for Day Camp this year. There are already plans to work together again next year.



In July we had planned a star-gazing event which was postponed until August when it was postponed again because of clouds. Carl Sandburg students will be joining us when we do host this activity. In August, the Monmouth area Girl Scout service unit camped overnight. WING board members, Mike and Lora Wright led the 24 girls and their 8 leaders on a night hike which was lots of fun. The next day, we held our Spider ID hike with Ken Cramer of Monmouth College. The Girl Scouts remained for the hike which was both educational and entertaining. Board member, Mariette Smith taught a spider bead craft after the hike.

Coming up, we have a Leaf and Bug ID hike on Sept. 27 at 5:30 PM led by Peter Schwartzman, board member and Professor of

Environmental Sciences at Knox College. Cost is \$1. This will be a great way for kids to work on their leaf and bug projects for school. On October 15 at 1:00 we will hold our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hike 4 Wildlife to collect pledges to help pay for the latrine in the activity area. The hike will be about 2 miles. Get your pledge sheet and start collecting your pledges now! If we have enough interest, we may have a hay rack ride and/or fall craft after the hike. Cost will be determined later and relayed at pre-registration. November 4 brings a wiener roast at 4:00. We'll also hike to look for animal tracks and homes. Cost is \$2. December would be a great time to take the family out for sledding or looking for animal tracks in the snow.

Pre-registration required for all events by calling Lora at 343-4321 or emailing her at [llwright@insightbb.com](mailto:llwright@insightbb.com).

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## What Can I Do?

Jubilee State Park, just West of Peoria, has a group of volunteer stewards who call themselves the "Prairie Dawgs." For over twenty years, they've helped restore and maintain prairies at Jubilee Park. Weeding, to fight invasive plants, controlled burns, and collecting and planting native prairie seeds are some of their major tasks. From spring to fall, the Prairie Dawgs have workdays twice a month. Henry County has a similar group of volunteers, the Natural Areas Guardians, to maintain state preserves in Henry County.

WING would like to establish a group of volunteers like these, for workdays at Blackthorn Hill, and hopefully, if there's enough interest, other nature sites in the Galesburg area.

Workdays can be fun for everyone, and are opportunities to see and learn about wildlife and plants. If you can volunteer once a year, or once a month, all help is welcome and needed! Please contact Lora Wright, [llwright@insightbb.com](mailto:llwright@insightbb.com) or 309-343-4321. If you have other ideas of ways you can help, please contact Opal at 342-5493 or email her at [blackthornhill@insightbb.com](mailto:blackthornhill@insightbb.com).

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## Boy Scout Completes Eagle Project at Blackthorn Hill

Daniel Schofield, member of Boy Scout Troop 230 of Galesburg and resident of Monmouth, IL completed his Eagle Scout Project this summer. He recruited the help of his fellow troop members to assemble and put up 10 bluebird houses at WING's Blackthorn Hill. Some of the houses are already occupied by bluebirds. The Eagle Scout award is the highest honor a Boy Scout can receive. These bird houses will attract more bluebirds to nest on the property bringing even more wildlife to the facility. For more information about Boy Scouting, call 563-388-7233.