

# River Currents

## BANKS OF THE WABASH

September 2012

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**Banks of the Wabash, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, improving and promoting the significant historical and natural resources of the Wabash River Corridor.**

**Banks of the Wabash, Inc. works to improve the quality of life for residents and enhance the experience for guests from outside the corridor. Banks of the Wabash focuses on the nineteen counties in Indiana that touch on the Wabash—Indiana's premier river.**

## Mini-grants Focus on Education & Celebrating the Wabash

Three Mini-grants were awarded at the September Board of Directors meeting. One for \$300 went to Carlisle Elementary School for a Natures Classroom Field Trip for approximately 35 students. This is a 3-day outdoor classroom event along the Wabash River at Merom, Indiana.

Another grant for \$300 went to the Sullivan County Soil & Water Conservation District for their Eighth Grade Wabash River Expedition. All 8th grade students with permission take part in an educational Wabash River Float with

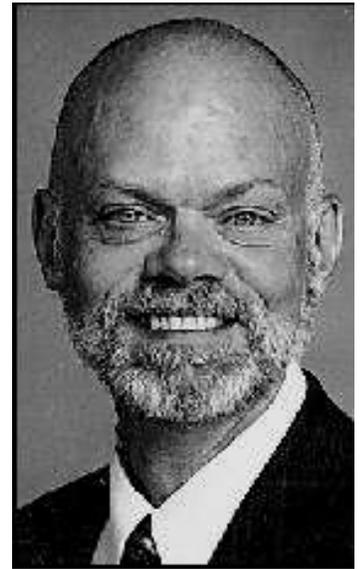
stops along the way to talk about various river and natural history issues.

The last mini-grant, also for \$300, went to Art Spaces in Terre Haute to help offset costs for their *2013 Year of the River* events. Events will include river related ecological art, art exhibits, a Tom Sawyer big read, air-boat rides, midnight run, paper boat races, numerous concerts and performances, guided nature walks, and more. There will also be a documentary on the Wabash River pearl fishing industry from the IU folklore Archives.

## Wabash River Loses A Friend

On September 3rd, the Wabash River lost one of its strongest supporters. Ron James of Fort Wayne was a partner with Benson, Pantello, Morris, James & Logan Law Firm. He left that job for five years to serve as the Executive Director of the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission (WRHCC), traveling the state to promote the Wabash. He was also a member of Banks of the Wabash, serving on the board for many years.

During his five year tenure as director of the WRHCC, he completed the Wabash River Water Trail, passed out over 350,000 brochures, produced maps covering the various stretches of the river, created and distributed an hour-long PBS documentary about the Wabash, and lobbied the state legislature on behalf of the river. A major accomplishment was the bill which dedicated the funds from pumping oil and gas from under the river to the WRHCC. Those funds are now providing grants to develop river access points and camping stopover for communities up and down the Wabash. Ron was an avid supporter of the Wabash wetland project. In 2000, he received the Environmental Achievement Award, Indiana Division. He served on the Board of the Izaak Walton League, Fort Wayne Chapter for over 20 years; and served as the Allen County Representative on the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission before becoming its executive director. He was bestowed the honor of the Mayor declaring 'Ron James Day' in Fort Wayne. In 2011 he received the Corridor Citizen Award given by the WRHCC. In addition Ron was active with ACRES Land Trust and the Little River Wetland Project. His work and enthusiasm for the Wabash and Indiana's waterways will be sorely missed.



*Banks of the  
Wabash  
Board of Directors*

- Bernie Dahl  
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- Nick Harby
- Tom Knapke
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## **BOW Elects New Officers And board members**

BOW now has new officers. Bernie Dahl was elected president, Rae Schnapp is vice-president, Bob Shepherd (a new board member and mayor of Attica) will be Treasurer, and Susan Ulrich will serve as secretary & newsletter editor. Nick Harby, who works at the Purdue Herbarium, is the second new board member. We thank both Nick and Bob for stepping up to serve. We also would like to thank departing

board members Louise Jewell and Margy Deverell for their years of service.

If you would like to join the group, send a note to the BOW post office box or simply contact Bernie Dahl at [bdahl@purdue.edu](mailto:bdahl@purdue.edu).

Join us at the Nov 28 Board meeting at 10 a.m. in the Board room at the Honeywell Center in Wabash Co. Carpooling is possible. Contact Bernie.

## **Wabash County Cleans its Banks**

The Wabash River Defenders held their second annual river cleanup the morning of Saturday July 28<sup>th</sup>. This Wabash community effort is the largest cleanup program in Indiana covering the entire 19 mile stretch of the Wabash River in the county.



More than 350 volunteers gathered for a song before dividing into teams. Equipped with canoes and flat-bottomed boats, the volunteers set off to scour the river for

trash. Rae Schnapp, the Wabash Riverkeeper and BOW board member, delivered seven canoes and three kayaks along with a lot of DeTrash equipment belonging to Banks of the Wabash, to help with the Wabash Defenders effort.

Organizer Michael Beauchamp says most of the people who dump trash in the river do so because they think they have to pay to take items to the solid waste district or recycling center. **"[The Solid Waste Center] takes light bulbs, they'll take chemicals, they'll take tires, they'll take appliances, they'll take gas bottles,"** he says. **"You name it they'll take trash for free. You don't have to dump it in the river."** As the River Defenders made their way downstream they collected everything from washing machines and bicycles to car batteries and furniture. Two off duty police officers who volunteered even found material from a mobile methamphetamine lab. Wabash City Police Officer Jerry Honey Honeycutt was then called to the scene.

**"We call it cooking, it's a chemical reaction, and they do that in a moving vehicle and when they're done with their product they throw the waste out,"** he says. **The left-over chemicals from the mobile lab are corrosive, so Wabash's drug task force was called out to dispose of the material.**

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## Riverkeeper Update

Rae Schnapp gave a report on her recent Riverkeeper activities at BOW's September board meeting in Merom, Indiana.

Good news for the program is that Don and Ruth Ferris of West Lafayette donated a 24 foot *Alu-micraft* boat and trailer to the Riverkeeper program. The boat was built in 1964 and is in good condition. Once the paperwork is completed the boat will be ready to use.

As mentioned on page 2, the Riverkeeper has been helping with various DeTrash events. For the Wabash event, Rae ferried seven canoes borrowed from the Wildcat Guardians, and three kayaks along with BOW's DeTrash equipment. Other groups planning river cleanups can contact her for help with their events.

Rae is seeking sources of financial support. A September 29 Fish Bowhunting Tournament is donating part of their registration funds to the Riverkeeper. In addition Rae has started meeting with Foundations and other potential supporters including people from the Eli Lilly Foundation.

If you know of a Foundation or potential funding source, please contact Rae through the BOW post office box.

### Support the Riverkeeper

You can now make a donation to Banks of the Wabash specifically to help fund the Riverkeeper. Look for the donation line on BOW's membership form.

## Least Tern Nesting Survey along Wabash River

Indiana's Non-game Biologist, John Castrale, surveyed the Wabash River via air-boat on July 24 to look for evidence of Least Terns nesting on the river's sand and gravel bars. Chuck Mills found two sites with nests on a similar survey on June 20th. The stretch of river surveyed extended from the Harmony State Park boat ramp south to Wabash Island, just north of the Uniontown locks and dam. It covered roughly 36 river miles. The trip took about 90 minutes each way. John noted 26 extensive sand/gravel bars and islands along this stretch of the river which was at a very low flow.



Least Tern—  
Our smallest North American Tern.

Least Terns were at two sites; one with evidence of nesting with 3 adults and a one-week old chick (later 12 adults and 2 older fledglings were noted at this spot). Another gravel bar had 5 adults but no evidence of nesting.

As they travelled along the river, John also kept tallies of eagles, herons and a few other species. He was especially impressed by the large number of Bald Eagles. On his winter counts he'd never encountered as many in that area. On the southward trip, He noted 46 bald eagles; on the northward trip, 48. He did not attempt to age each bird but around 65-75% were in immature plumages. He noted 81 Great Blue Herons, 13 Great Egrets (on the southbound trip and 9 on the northbound trip), 2 Caspian Terns, 1 Ring-Billed Gull, but no Double-crested Cormorants.

Although John didn't try to identify and count shorebirds, he was impressed with their numbers along the shorelines and wet areas of the sand and gravel bars. They numbered in the hundreds (and possibly in the thousands), Killdeer predominated, but others seen ranged from yellowlegs to peeps. He noted that, "One doesn't often think of rivers providing much habitat for shorebirds, but when water levels are this low, much shallow water exists along the major rivers".

**Banks of the  
Wabash's 2012-13  
Meeting Dates**

*Please join us. Meetings  
start at 10 a.m.*

- Nov 28 Honeywell Center  
Wabash Co
- Jan 16 Lafayette  
Tippecanoe Co
- March 20 Terre Haute  
Vigo Co
- April 17 Delphi  
Carroll Co

# The Sailor Squirrel — Sent in by Nick Harby

The "Sailor Squirrel" was a favorite story of the late Capt. F. M. Van Natter. He said it was told to him by an old mussel-fisher in Pearl City. Capt. Van Natter was a collector of Hoosier stories and anecdotes, many of which he used in his book, "Lincoln's Boyhood: A Chronicle of His Indiana Years". **Here's the story as told by the captain.**

Down about Pointe O'Chene, below Vincennes, an old Frenchman was wandering along the Wabash River. Presently, he saw a squirrel come down to the water's edge and leap aboard a clapboard. He saw that squirrel hoist its tail like a sailorman would a sail, and deliberately tack out across the river.

Using its tail for a sail, the squirrel sailed to the other side and slid the clapboard into the mud-bank. The squirrel went ashore and disappeared into a farmer's cornfield. The old Frenchman sat down and waited. After a while, he saw the squirrel come out of the field, carrying an ear of corn in its forepaws. He went aboard the clapboard, hoisted his tail as he had done before, and sailed back across the Wabash. On reaching the Indiana shore, that funny squirrel snatched up the ear of corn and scampered to a high knothole in a sycamore tree.



He and some others cut down the tree and found that the squirrel had shelled the corn--Illinois corn--which that very squirrel had sailed across the river to find.

The wild animals around Vincennes were very, very smart in those early days!

## Unused & Expired Medicines

Reduce pollution and poisoning by disposing of medicines properly. **DON'T FLUSH** them down the sink or drain or place them in the trash, or give them to other people. Medications will work their way into the water and become a source of pollution. **Sewage plants aren't designed to deal with drugs so the chemicals** get into our streams, lakes, rivers and groundwater where they have numerous adverse affects on fish, other wildlife—and also people.

Organisms living in the water are exposed to these drugs on a 24-7 basis, Fish and other species living downstream from waste treatment centers are already showing signs of developmental and reproductive problems as a result.

Medicines thrown the trash can be ingested by pets or children with serious results. Even if the trash gets out of the house safely, it usually ends up in a landfill where it can case groundwater contamination.

What can you do? Watch for local Toxiway Days for drugs or take them to a hazardous waste collection site. You can also check with your physician or pharmacist for advise on disposal. **Don't buy more medicine than you need and take the medication as prescribed by your doctor. Don't accept physician samples if you are not going to use them.** Help keep the waters of the Wabash drug free.

# Dams & Rivers

Representative "Doc" Hastings (D) from Washington has introduced legislation in Congress that would stop river restoration in communities nationwide and strip away wildlife protections to all to benefit a handful of special interests. Here are a few reasons why this bill needs to be stopped:

It will Harm rivers and wildlife and threaten public safety by prohibiting federal funds to be used to remove or study the removal of any hydropower dam - *even unsafe dams that the dam owner and the local community want to remove.*

It can slow job growth and hurt businesses by bringing river restoration to a screeching halt and stopping growth in commercial and recreational fishing.

It will Create an expensive new subsidy that would not only allow private groups to build new dams—whether or not they are in the public interest—but taxpayers would have to *reimburse the full cost of building the dams.*

Contact your Representative today and urge them to oppose **Rep. Hasting's bill.**

## ELWHA REMOVAL WORKS

For the first time in 100 years, biologists spotted wild steelhead beyond the free flowing stretch of river that used to be Elwha Dam in Washington State..

Travelling on the river?  
**Don't forget to visit the wonderful website developed to enhance & promote recreational use of the Wabash River :**  
**[www.wabashriver.us](http://www.wabashriver.us)**

Mississiniwa Reenactment



# River Town Events & Festivals

October 6-7 Pioneer Days. **Vigo County. Terre Haute's** Fowler Park. Call 812-462-3392 for more information about events and scheduling.

October 12-14 Mississiniwa Battle 1812 Reenactment. Hours are 9-12 on Friday, 9-5 Saturday, and 9-4 Sunday with battle reenactments all three days. There is an American Military area, British Military Camp and a River Pirate Camp. Call 1-800-822-1812 for more information.

October 20 Harvest Moon Festival. Vincennes. Gregg Park. Spooky stories, pony rides, straw maze, pumpkin carving, costume parade. Free. 1-888-895-6622.

October 12-21 Park County Covered Bridge Festival. **Park County, multiple venues. Indiana's Largest Festival with 31 covered bridges.** Food, shopping, antiques, entertainment. Go to [www.coveredbridges.com](http://www.coveredbridges.com).

November 3-4 Muster on the Wabash. Fort Knox II. 1812 reenactment with period battles, crafts, Tecumseh & Harrison confrontation, period food. Free. [Spiritofvincennes.org](http://Spiritofvincennes.org).

### Clean Out the Banks: continued from page 2:

As the litter was removed from the river it was packed into boats and homemade plywood trash barges. The River Defenders waded down river with full loads and dumped the refuse into trailers waiting at a number of access sites. It was then driven to a central collection point where the debris was unloaded. Low water made it difficult to push the heavy boats full of trash along the river bottom so the material had to be tossed overboard onto the banks where others gathered it later that day. Last year the River Defenders pulled more than 40,000 pounds of material from the river. **Beauchamp estimates Saturday's load is two-thirds as big.** Hopefully, next year there will be even less.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Banks of the Wabash Inc.  
PO Box 1253  
Lafayette IN 47902-1253  
www.banksofthewabash.net

## ***BOW Membership & Renewal Form 2012-13***

Memberships in Banks of the Wabash **run to BOW's April's Annual Meeting**. Memberships given in one year are good through the April meeting of the following year. BOW's Membership categories are below. If you wish your membership credited to one of the chapters that have formed, please check the appropriate box. *Thank you* for supporting the Wabash!

### **Membership Categories:**

- |  |      |                                   |      |                                      |       |
|--|------|-----------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student           | \$ 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Town     | \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Trailblazer | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual        | \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Discoverer  | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Non-profit | \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Scout    | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Visionary   | \$500 |
|  |      |                                   |      | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate   | \$500 |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Riverkeeper donation \_\_\_\_\_

### **CHAPTER AFFILIATION**

List me as a member of :

- Wabash & Erie Towpath  
 Sullivan County

Membership & Inquiries should be sent to Banks of the Wabash, Inc. PO Box 1253, Lafayette IN 47902-1253