

Give Mother Nature hand with habitats

The Department of Natural Resources and its Division of Fish and Wildlife are to be commended for a plan announced last week to bolster habitat for both game and non-game species of birds and animals.

Still, there is plenty of room for individuals who care about wild things to get in the habitat act on a smaller but equally important scale.

Let's face it: Birds and a great variety of wild things can always use some help in fighting the rigors of winter, not to mention the natural inclination of nature's children to prey upon each other.

I have never quite known, or been able to develop a philosophy on, how far man should go in taking sides in struggles that pit one natural thing against another.

But one day last fall I watched in awe as a beautiful monarch butterfly became entangled in the web of a huge (identity unknown) spider.

Sensing a good meal, the spider headed for its prey. Before the spider could reach the struggling butterfly, I used a long stick to extract the butterfly from the web, remove the silver threads of the web and watch the monarch flutter on with its business of perpetuating the species.

On another occasion, I became aware of crows trying to rob the young from a robin's nest.

I shushed the crows off a couple of times but knew they would return until they turned the little birds into lunch.

So the next time the crows approached the nest, I intervened with my little 20-gauge shotgun, making sure the doses



'Bayou' Bill Scifres
OUTDOORS

of No. 6 shot went wide but too close for comfort. And the boom-boom of the shotgun must have helped.

In more than 50 years of turning out columns on hunting, fishing, and enjoying the bounties of nature in other ways, I have from time to time tried to encourage individuals to help wild things with simple but important projects.

Back in the 1960s, when bluebirds were finding it difficult to find nesting quarters, my "Hoosier Bluebird Club" inspired hundreds of individuals (including entire classes of many schools) to build and put up bluebird nest boxes.

Later, we encouraged individuals to simply construct or develop dens for any species of animal.

Now we will go such projects one better by encouraging the development of any kind of place to live for any species of wild creature or plant.

Launch a project of any kind to help some form of animal or plant survive at a time when all kinds of habitat is on the wane, and tell me about it via e-mail (billscifres@aol.com), and we will share your experiences with others who might like to get involved. Pictures would be helpful but not necessary.

Yeager honored

The late Paula Yeager, executive director of the Indiana Wildlife Federation for six years until her death last fall, recently was honored as the first recipient of the Indiana Bow Hunters Association's Dick Mercier Conservation Award.

In presenting the award to Paula's son, Corey Yeager, Mercier, a longtime director of the Indiana Sportsman's Roundtable, said he had always been impressed by Paula's knowledge of environmental and conservation subjects and her energetic application of that knowledge.

Mercier noted that her tireless efforts on behalf of Hoosier sportsmen and sportswomen had brought her the 2001 Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Conservationist of the Year Award.

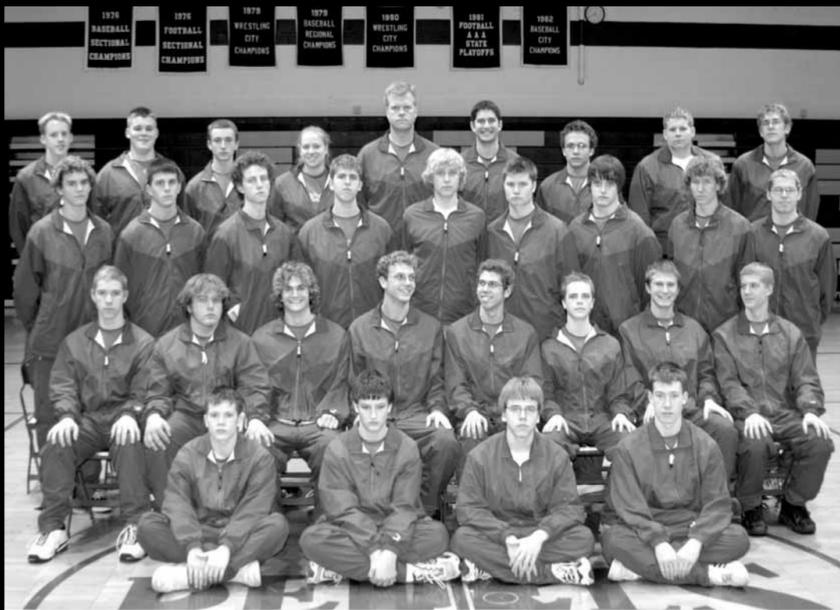
She twice received the IWF President's Award and in 2004 was recognized by the National Wildlife Federation with its Conservation Service Citation.

"She will be sorely missed as we fight (chronic waste disease), canned hunting, poor wetland legislation, and the hundreds of other battles that we must face," Mercier said.

The annual award of the IBA also is designed to honor the work Mercier has done as the only director of the roundtable, the state's largest organization of sportsmen and sportswomen.

"Bayou" Bill Scifres' outdoors column appears Saturdays in the Daily Journal. Comments can be sent to P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131.

Roncalli Salutes Our Sectional Champion Boys' Swim Team



The Roncalli High School Boys' Swimming and Diving Team claimed the school's first ever Sectional Championship in February. All 23 swimmers in the Sectional meet earned personal best times.

Rebel swimmers were represented in four different events at the 2006 State Swimming Finals. State Finalist Swimmers and Sectional Champions included Bryce Mason (50 and 100 freestyle), Nicholas Barkman (200 freestyle), Eric Barkman, Greg Rennekamp, Bryce Mason, Nicholas Barkman, Eric Whelchel, Jake Ezell, Curtis Cox and Larry Webb (200 freestyle relay) and Bryce Mason, Jake Ezell, Eric Whelchel, Nicholas Barkman, Will Cordell, Curtis Cox, Eric Barkman and Chris O'Neal (400 freestyle relay).

Congratulations to Coach Ed Merkling and the 2006 Rebel Boys' Swim Team!

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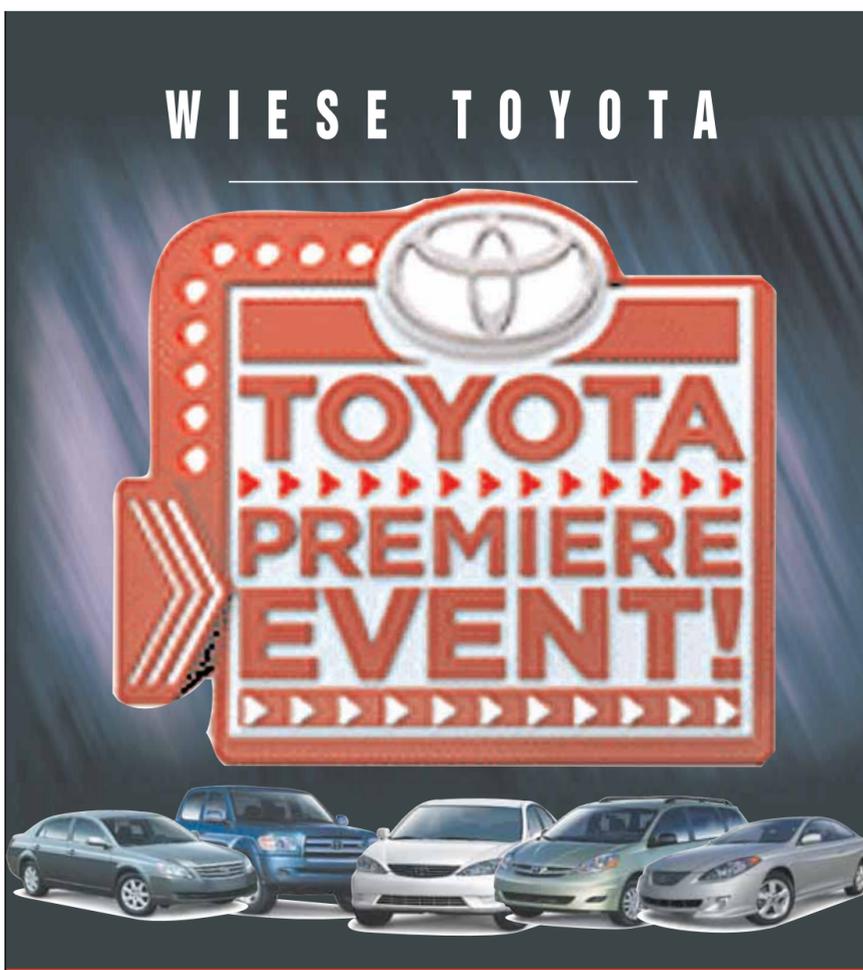
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