

The Cherokee Marsh News

The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh

Stories Shared, Directors Elected at Annual Meeting

Jan Axelson

Over fifty people turned out on a snowy morning for the Friends' annual member meeting on January 21. Our guest, Dane County Parks Naturalist Wayne Pauly, captivated everyone with his prairie lore and plant stories. Among the things we learned were where frostweed gets its name (not where you might think), how to find a king on a throne in a violet, and the legend of Monroe Sprowl and his raspberry jam.

In the business portion of the meeting, the membership elected five directors to serve 2-year terms: Jan Axelson, Lydia Maurer, Muriel Simms, Dick Walker, and Dorothy Wheeler. Five other directors in the middle of their 2-year terms weren't up for reelection: Timothy Baker, Janet Battista, Dana Erlandsen, Lesleigh Luttrell, and Justin Sargent.

Following the member meeting, the directors elected officers for 2012: President Jan Axelson, Vice President Janet Battista, Treasurer Lesleigh Luttrell, and Secretary Dorothy Wheeler.

For generous donations of door prizes, we thank:

Altered States Alterations (Northside TownCenter)
AnchorBank (Northside TownCenter)
Associated Bank (Londonderry Dr. off Northport Dr.)
Benvenuto's Italian Grill (Northside TownCenter)
Culver's (Northport Dr.)
D & S Bait & Tackle (Northport Dr.)
Jim's Meat Market (Northport Dr.)
Jung's Garden Center (Northport Dr.)
Meikle's Northside True Value (Northside TownCenter)
PDQ Food Stores (Northport Dr.)
Pizza Hut (Northport Dr.)
The Coffee Gallerie (Northside TownCenter)

Thank to Friends member **Pete Mueller** for donating an original, framed cartoon for our silent auction.

Thanks to **Pierce's Market** for delicious refreshments. Thanks to the **Lakeview Branch Library** for providing a great location for the meeting and helping to get the room ready. And thanks to the **volunteers** who helped with setting up, keeping things running smoothly during the meeting, and cleaning up afterwards.



Dane County Naturalist Wayne Pauly shares prairie lore with the group. Photo by Janet Battista.



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Cherokee Marsh North Unit: What's There?

Janet Battista

Most people first experience Cherokee Marsh by visiting the North Unit. That's where you end up if you follow North Sherman Avenue to its dead end. There's a parking lot there and the City of Madison has a park kiosk and maintains restrooms year round.

From the parking lot you can follow one of several footpaths, or the service road, to enter and explore this Conservation Park. The maps at www.CherokeeMarsh.org show these and other, less common, entry places.

The Wisconsin glaciers set the stage for the diverse topography found in the park. Glacial scour left a bedrock knob surrounded by northeast/southwest trending lowlands that were just right for glacial meltwater to carve into the Yahara River.

For thousands of years after the glaciers left, deep peat wetlands grew in the lowlands; prairie, savanna, and oak woods grew on the uplands. Follow a path to the west of the parking lot and you will come to the river's edge where you will see some of the extensive wetlands that once grew thick beside it.

On the way to the river, look for a plaque identifying an Indian mound left by the first occupants of the area. Their fires helped keep open the sedge meadows, prairie and savannah terrains now being restored in the North Unit. The conical mound sits on Hickory Island, so named because of the many shagbark hickories located on this bit of upland soil.

A fishing cabin built by the Feuerbach family once sat on this island and you will have tread on the path they created with bottlecaps, as the story goes, to get there.

The boardwalk and platform next to the river cut through a remnant of native fen, with wetland plants that grow where groundwater seeps to the surface.

Besides unique wetland vegetation, the boardwalk allows for great birding along the Yahara River. You may see sandhill cranes, now thought to nest by the old wooden boardwalk remnant, or pelicans, eagles and many other species of birds and waterfowl.

At the edge of the boardwalk you can see how close the river now cuts into the wetland where many acres of peat have broken off and floated away. A map on the sign nearby shows just where the river used to be, before backwash from Lake Mendota widened the river. Lake Mendota is 4 or 5 feet higher than presettlement lake levels because of the dam at Tenney Park and management of the dam to favor higher levels.

Follow a path northeast from the parking lot and you will find an old quarry, now fenced in to create a protected snake hibernaculum. Across the path from the quarry is the foundation of the old Havey homestead where, if



The North Unit's boardwalk provides a view of the upper Yahara River. Photo by Janet Battista.

you search early in the spring you can find some of its original stone blocks where a milk snake may be curled up, warming itself.

Travelling north from here you will walk through restored native tallgrass prairie. On the northeast side of the hill you may discover Frog Pond, one of several permanent and ephemeral ponds sprinkled about the North Unit. Walk to the top of the hill and from the broad vista you can picture the enormous extent of the original wetland.

You can also see where those peat wetlands were ditched for sod farming. Ditch fill and wetland restoration projects are helping reverse the loss of wetland ecosystem there.

Back around to the south slopes of this hill you will see some wide-spreading open-grown oaks, remnants of the once extensive savannah terrain here. And in the lowlands south of the hill, on a spring evening, you may see or hear the woodcock on one of its courtship flights.

Explore the river's edge by canoe to see where Russ Hefty, the park's conservation manager, has been planting lotus, sedges, wild rice and other native emergent wetland plants to help stabilize the shore. Then paddling north, with some persistence, you may discover some of the drowned springs that drain the porous bedrock of the surrounding uplands.

In winter, the North Unit has lots of ski and snowshoe opportunities (no trail grooming). And on your winter visit you may see a hawk or two circling the meadows, or a watchful owl.

The Wisconsin Wetland Association designated Cherokee Marsh a wetland gem. With its many facets in time and space, here too briefly mentioned, the North Unit is a diamond!

Bluebirds and More Found on Christmas Bird Count

Jan Axelson

On the morning of December 17, the team of Mike Rewey, Paul Noeldner and I birded Cherokee Marsh as part of Audubon's annual Christmas bird count. With temperatures in the 20s and a fresh snowfall but no deep snow, we had easier going compared to recent years.

We began at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's North Unit. Mike, with many years' experience maintaining bluebird trails, spotted a flock of small birds in the distance and exclaimed, "those look like bluebirds!" He was right.

We later learned that the 13 eastern bluebirds we saw were the only ones on the entire Madison count, which covers a 15-mile diameter circle. (The bluebirds have remained in the area through January.)

Another highlight was two bald eagles in the top of a tree on the island in Cherokee Lake.

Some birds that eluded us on the day of the count were a belted kingfisher seen near the School Rd. boat landing in the South Unit on Dec. 16th and 19th and a northern harrier seen in the North Unit shortly after the count day.

Madison Audubon's count is part of a larger effort by birders throughout the Americas. The data collected helps identify species and habitats that need protection. A summary of the full count is in Madison Audubon's Feb. 2012 newsletter at MadisonAudubon.org.

Here is the complete list of birds we saw in the North Unit:

Canada Goose 440
Northern Pintail 6
Common Merganser 5
Bald Eagle 2
Red-tailed Hawk 3
Ring-billed Gull 6
Red-bellied Woodpecker 8
Downy Woodpecker 4
Hairy Woodpecker 1
Northern Flicker 4
Northern Shrike 2
Blue Jay 2
American Crow 39
Black-capped Chickadee 8
White-breasted Nuthatch 4
Eastern Bluebird 13
European Starling 1
American Tree Sparrow 20
Northern Cardinal 6
American Goldfinch 11

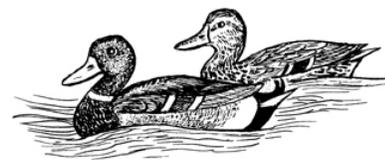
(A version of this article appeared in the Northside News.)



Mike Rewey and Jan Axelson search for birds at dawn in Cherokee Marsh. Photo by Paul Noeldner.

World Wetlands Day is Feb. 2

February 2 each year is World Wetlands Day. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits. The World Wetlands Day theme for 2012 is Wetlands and Tourism. Find out more at <http://www.ramsar.org>



Thanks for Renewing

Thanks to all who have renewed their membership for 2012. If you haven't renewed or would like to join the Friends, please take a minute to fill out and mail in the form on the last page of this newsletter or go to CherokeeMarsh.org to renew online.

Events Calendar

Madison Parks Volunteer Recognition Celebration

Monday, March 5, 6–8 pm

Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 3330 Atwood Ave.

All City Parks volunteers welcome. For more information, call Anne at 267-4919.

Save the Dates

Details to come on these tours in partnership with Madison Audubon.

April 20 (Friday)

Evening at Cherokee Marsh

May 9 (Wed.)

Warbler Walk at Cherokee Marsh

June 30 (Sat.)

Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh

August 4 (Sat.)

Cherokee Marsh, Upper Yahara River Tour

October 10 (Wed.)

Cherokee Marsh, North Unit



Friends of Cherokee Marsh
2011 Financial Statement
(1/1/11-12/31/11)

Balance 12/31/10	\$4,384.07
Income	
Contributions	\$713.06
Member Dues	\$1,556.24
Interest	\$2.72
Miscellaneous	\$206.79
Total	\$2,478.81
Expenses	
Education	\$500.00
Events	\$188.11
General	\$116.30
Insurance	\$350.00
Mailing Costs/PO Box Rental	\$159.56
Memberships/Fees	\$220.00
Printing	\$57.94
Special Projects	\$200.00
Total	\$1,791.91
Balance 12/31/11	\$5,070.97

Keep in touch!

Email group

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/cherokeemarsh

Facebook page

www.facebook.com/friends.of.cherokee.marsh

Facebook group

www.facebook.com/groups/cherokee.marsh

Visit Us at the Fishing Expo

The Friends will have a table at this year's Madison Fishing Expo, February 24–26. The event takes place at the Exhibition Hall at the Alliant Energy Center, across from the Dane County Coliseum. Be sure to stop and say hello. Admission and parking fees charged. For more information, see www.madfishexpo.com

Friends of Cherokee Marsh

PO Box 3390

Madison WI 53704

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www.CherokeeMarsh.org

To protect, preserve, and restore the beauty, value, and health of the Cherokee Marsh and upper Yahara River watershed.

Directors

Jan Axelson (President)

Timothy Baker

Janet Battista (Vice President)

Dana Erlandsen

Lesleigh Luttrell (Treasurer)

Lydia Maurer

Justin Sargent

Muriel Simms

Dick Walker

Dorothy Wheeler (Secretary)

Advisor (non-voting)

Don Hammes

Membership Form

Join or renew online at CherokeeMarsh.org

YES! I want to be a Friend of Cherokee Marsh.

Your contribution of time, talent, or funds will help preserve and restore the crucial wetland ecosystem of Cherokee Marsh.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Osprey \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sandhill Crane \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mallard \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Blue Heron \$500 |

- Additional donation \$ _____
- Additional donation \$ _____ in honor of _____
- Additional donation \$ _____ in memory of _____

Memberships are per calendar year. New memberships paid after June 30 are valid through the current and following year.

In addition to my contribution, I can help with

- Field work Publicity Tours Education Board/Committees

Other _____

Name _____

Family member(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____ Second Email _____

We won't sell or distribute your email address.

- Don't publicize my financial support.

Please mail this form and payment to:

Friends of Cherokee Marsh, PO Box 3390, Madison WI 53704

Thank you for joining us in our effort to protect this valuable resource!

www.CherokeeMarsh.org

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh are dedicated to protecting, preserving, and restoring the beauty, value, and health of Cherokee Marsh and the upper Yahara River watershed.

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh is a Federal tax-exempt charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.