

The Cherokee Marsh News

The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh

Friends of Cherokee Marsh Receive Grant for Schools

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh have received a \$500 grant to support hands-on, outdoor, science education for third and fourth graders in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.

For many years, the Madison School District has provided skilled naturalists to lead field studies in Cherokee Marsh. But participation in the field studies has dropped dramatically since budget shortfalls caused the district to stop funding transportation to the Conservation Park.

To help bring students back to the marsh, the Friends worked with naturalist guide Ami Rupnow and the

Madison School District’s Environmental Coordinator, Tim Peterson, to develop a grant proposal for transportation funding.

The grant, from the Dane County Environmental Council, will pay to bring four to five buses, each holding up to 55 students, to the Conservation Park. The students will learn about pond life, the value of wetlands, and life cycles of plants and animals.

To boost awareness of the resources for science education in Cherokee Marsh, the Friends will produce a brochure for distribution to local teachers.

Volunteers on Ice Help with Wetland Restoration

Volunteers from the Friends of Cherokee Marsh ventured onto the ice on March to build brush circles as part of Madison Parks’ ongoing wetland restoration. When the ice melts, the brush sinks and lodges in the shallow bay’s muck bottom. The brush attracts fish and blocks wave action so beneficial plants such as white water lily can gain a foothold.

The circles are in the restoration area near the Conservation Park’s boathouse. A crew from Operation Fresh Start also helped with the project.



These brush circles are now lodged in the bottom of the bay with stakes marking their location in the water.

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Middle Schoolers Will Join “Planetwalker” John Francis on Walk to Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park

In 1971, John Francis witnessed the damage from a large oil spill in San Francisco Bay. The experience motivated him to travel only by foot and non-motorized vehicles for the next 22 years. For 17 of those years, he followed a vow of silence and communicated by gestures, writing, and banjo-playing. During this period, he walked across the U.S. and earned several degrees, including a Ph.D. in land resources from UW-Madison.

On April 21, John Francis will speak to students at Blackhawk Middle School and then lead the seventh graders and school-district naturalist guides on a walk from their school to Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park. In the park and along the way, the students will study soil and water samples, observe wildlife, learn about Indian mounds, and write about their experiences.

John Francis' visit to Madison is part of the Nelson Institute's fourth annual Earth Day conference at Monona Terrace. On April 20, John will speak at the conference on the topic Redefining Environment and Making a Difference. For more about the conference visit:

<http://www.nelson.wisc.edu>



John Francis, who has walked across the country and beyond, will walk to Cherokee Marsh with local students. (Photo courtesy of the Nelson Institute.)

DNR Awards Grant Funds for Studies in Cherokee Marsh

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has awarded \$20,000 in grants for two environmental studies on the upper Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh. The studies, which will investigate carp movements and sediment dynamics, will provide a foundation to enable developing a restoration plan for the river ecosystem.

The carp study will track the movements of carp in the river. Carp are a large, bottom-feeding fish whose feeding and spawning activities stir up sediments and uproot wetland plants. Understanding the seasonal movements of the carp, including where they overwinter, will help in developing strategies to reduce the number of carp in the river. Researchers will implant tiny transmitters in 20 captured carp this summer and will track the carp through the winter of 2012.

The sediment study will measure and model how sediments move in the river under varied conditions of wind, water currents, runoff events, water levels, and carp densities. For much of the year, the upper Yahara is turbid with suspended sediments. A better understanding of sediment movements will help in finding ways to

stabilize the sediments and thus improve water clarity in the river and downstream. The studies will build on preliminary work done in 2009. The field work will take place in the summer of 2010, followed by computer modeling on the results in 2011.

Dane County's Land and Water Resources Department will administer the grant. The principal investigators are Richard Lathrop from the WDNR Bureau of Science Services and the UW-Madison Center for Limnology and Professor Chin Wu from the UW-Madison Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Collaborators will include John Reimer from the City of Madison's Engineering Division and Kurt Welke, Fisheries Biologist for the WDNR.



DNR Monitors Cherokee Marsh Fish Populations

The DNR is monitoring fish populations in the upper Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh this spring. According to DNR Fisheries Biologist Kurt Welke, the survey is part of an ongoing, rotating survey of the Yahara Lakes fishery. This year, the rotation includes Cherokee Marsh. The data gathered provides a sampling of the size and condition of northern pike and other game fish and panfish. The survey helps in making decisions about stocking and size and bag limits.

In March, fisheries staff set out several fyke nets, which are bag-shaped traps that fish swim into as they seek habitat for spawning. The nets are set perpendicular to shore and in water at least 2.5 ft. deep. Every day except Sunday, staff visit the nets to count, measure, and weigh the captured fish. Each fish also receives a fin clip or other visible mark before being released.

The nets stay in place until the catch rate slows, signaling that the spawning is complete and the fish have dispersed.



This fyke net is sampling the fish population on Cherokee Lake.

Participate in the Annual Midwest Crane Count

Since 1976, the International Crane Foundation has sponsored a volunteer-based crane count to monitor the number and locations of sandhill cranes in the upper midwest. On Saturday, April 17, you can join over 3000 volunteers counting cranes in five states. Training is provided. For more information, visit:

<http://www.savingcranes.org>

Join the Friends on Facebook

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh are now on Facebook. Search on "Friends of Cherokee Marsh" and join the group!

Thanks for Renewing Your Membership

Thanks to all who have renewed their membership for 2010. Every member is important to us. If you haven't renewed, please take a minute to fill out and mail in the form on the last page of this newsletter.

Learn How to Identify Invasive Species on Rivers and Streams

Wisconsin's waters are vulnerable to invasion by a number of invasive species from Eurasian milfoil to Japanese knotweed. The key to successfully protecting an area is detecting invasives early when it is still possible to isolate or eradicate the infestation. The longer we wait to find them and fight them, the more money and time it will take. Volunteers are invaluable for early detection.

Project RED (Riverine Early Detectors) is sponsoring a free training workshop where you can learn how to monitor your river by canoe, kayak, or on foot for fifteen species of concern.

The workshop is **April 24** (Saturday), 9:00 am to 12:00 noon with an optional paddle on Badfish Creek from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm to practice protocols in the field.

Project RED is a collaboration between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the National Institute for Invasive Species Science and the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

The workshop will be in the Lyman F. Anderson Agriculture and Conservation Center (Conference Room), One Fen Oak Court, Madison. To reserve your space, contact Patricia Cicero at (920) 674-7121 or patriciac@jefferson-countywi.gov. For more information, visit:

<http://www.wisconsinrivers.org>

Events Calendar

Garlic Mustard Pull

April 10 (Saturday), 12:00 noon - 3 pm

Help clear the woods of this invasive plant that crowds out native spring wildflowers. No experience needed.

Meet at the main parking lot, Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Sponsored by the Madison Area Weed Warriors. For more information or to request to be notified about future garlic mustard pulls, contact Gil Peterson at 246-2603 or gilp@charter.net.

Evening at Cherokee Marsh

April 23 (Friday), 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Watch cranes, observe the sky dance of American woodcock, and seek out other signs of spring. Meet at 6:30 pm at the main parking lot, Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Waterproof footwear recommended. Sponsored by Madison Audubon and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh. Call (608) 241-5828 if you have questions.

Help with a Prairie Burn

April 27 (Tuesday), 10:00 am

Help with the first burn of the restored prairie in Yahara Heights County Park. Bring drinking water and wear appropriate clothing (no nylon or flammable synthetics) and hat. The burn may continue through lunch. Sponsored by Dane County Parks with the Adult Conservation Team.

Directions: going north on HWY 113/Northport Dr., just past HWY M, turn right on River Rd., then right on River-view Dr., and right on Caton Ln. From the end of Caton Ln., drive into the park.

Sign up with Rhea (224-3601). Call 245-6898 for fire information, including cancellations and rain date scheduling. Rain/weather date: April 28.

Save the Dates

Check our website and future newsletters for details about these upcoming events.

Three-day paddle on the Yahara Lakes. June 4-6 (Friday-Sunday). Launch from the School Rd. boat landing. Part of Dane County's Take a Stake in the Lakes days.

Send Your Legislator Down the River. June 7 (Monday). Buffet dinner followed by a paddle on the upper Yahara River. Sponsored by the Rock River Coalition.

Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh walk. June 19 (Saturday). Sponsored by Madison Audubon, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, and the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association.

Canoe Cherokee Marsh Ecological Restoration. August 15 (Sunday). Sponsored by Madison Audubon and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

Community Forums - Exploring the Challenges of the Yahara Lakes

Three forums remain in this series of Community Environmental Forums from the Nelson Institute.

April 6 - Water Levels in the Upper Yahara Lakes: Surface and Groundwater Influences

April 27 -- Managing Water Levels in the Yahara Lakes

May 4 -- Sharing a Vision for the Future of the Yahara Lakes: Citizens Making a Difference

All forums are at 1106 Mechanical Engineering Building, 1513 University Avenue, Madison.

All forums are from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm.

Free parking in Lot 17. Ramp access is via Engineering Drive. Enter from Randall Ave.

More information at <http://www.nelson.wisc.edu>

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

Directors

Jan Axelson (President)

Justin Sargent (Vice President)

Dana Erlandsen (Treasurer)

Muriel Simms (Interim Secretary)

Janet Battista

Dick Walker

Advisors (non-voting)

Don Hammes

Dorothy Wheeler

Membership Form

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. We sponsor and promote activities and events such as:

Planting native species, collecting seeds, and controlling invasive species.

Wetland educational events and opportunities.

Paddle outings, hikes, and cultural events.

Individual \$15

Osprey \$100

Family \$25

Sandhill Crane \$250

Mallard \$50

Great Blue Heron \$500

Additional donation \$ _____

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

In addition to my contribution, I can also help with

Field work Publicity Tours Education Board/Committee work

Other _____

Name _____

Family member(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Include your email address to receive our newsletter. 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

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