

# The Cherokee Marsh News

*The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh*

## Cherokee Marsh Has Something for Everyone This Spring

Spring has something to offer for everyone in Cherokee Marsh. Of course any day is a good day to explore the marsh, but this spring brings a variety of special events. You can help with a restoration project, learn about the marsh and its creatures and plants, or just enjoy the sights and sounds. We hope you can join us at one or more of these events.

Directions to locations mentioned are on page 2 after the listings.

### Make Room for Wildflowers

**Saturday, April 2, 12:00 noon - 3 pm**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**

Join a garlic-mustard pulling party to remove this invasive plant that can cover the forest floor, crowding out native spring wildflowers. In early spring, the plants are small and easy to pull.

Pulling garlic mustard is a good excuse to spend time outdoors in spring. No experience needed. Sponsored by the Madison Area Weed Warriors.

### Watch a Sky Dance

**Friday, April 22, 6:30 - 8:30 pm**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**

Take an evening walk to view the spectacular evening sky dance of the American woodcock. At dusk, male woodcocks perform their mating dance, spiraling upwards 200 ft. or more, then diving toward the ground. We'll also have a good chance of spotting sandhill cranes, snipe, and other early signs of spring.

Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Audubon.

*(continued on page 2)*



*Skunk cabbage, with its unusual flowers, is one of the earliest plants to bloom in spring. Watch for it in the North Unit between the boardwalk and the river. Photo by Janet Battista.*

## Thanks for Renewing

Thanks to all who have renewed their membership for 2011. 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.

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# Something for Everyone

(continued from page 1)

## Help with a Planting Project

**Saturday, April 23, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**

Celebrate Earth Day by helping plant an area with native shrubs and scattering seed in a restoration of an oak opening. No experience needed. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

## Help with a Prairie Burn

**Tuesday, April 26, 10:00 am, may work through lunch**

**Yahara Heights County Park**

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

Sign up with Rhea (224-3601). Call 245-6898 for cancellation information and rain date scheduling. Rain/weather date: April 27.

## Paddle to Find Secretive Marsh Birds

**May 7 (Saturday), 6:30 am - 8:30 am**

**School Rd. Boat Landing**

Join a paddle tour in search of secretive marsh birds on the upper Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh. We'll seek out Virginia rail, sora, American bittern, sedge wren, swamp sparrow, sandhill crane, herons, and more.

Bring your own canoe or kayak. Call Jan at 241-5828 only if you have a question about the trip or the weather is questionable. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Audubon.

## Seek Out Spring Migrants

**Wednesday, May 11, 6:00 am - 8:00 am**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**

Early risers, bring your binoculars and join the search for migrating warblers, vireos, tanagers, thrushes, and more.

Call Peter at 226-0260 only if you have a question about the walk. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Audubon.

## Enjoy Wildflowers and Other Signs of Spring

**Sunday, May 22, 1:00 -3:00 pm**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**

School-district naturalist Ami Rupnow has decades of experience leading field studies in Cherokee Marsh. Join Ami on a walk to look for wildflowers and other signs of spring. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

## Save the Dates

Details to come on these tours in partnership with Madison Audubon

**Saturday, June 25**

**Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh**

**Saturday, August 6**

**Canoe Cherokee Marsh Ecological Restoration**

## Directions

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**

6098 N. Sherman Ave. Head north on N. Sherman Ave to the parking lot at the end of the road.

**School Road Boat Landing**

Heading north on Northport Drive/HWY 113, turn right on School Rd. Where the road curves right onto Wheeler Rd. take an immediate left into Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park. Follow the gravel road to the boat landing.

**Yahara Heights County Park**

Heading north on HWY 113/Northport Dr., just past HWY M, turn right on River Rd., then right on Riverview Dr., and right on Caton Ln. From the end of Caton Ln., drive into the park.



*Watch for critters like this pickerel frog spotted in Yahara Heights County Park. Photo by Janet Battista.*

# Update on Senior Housing Proposal

Jan Axelson

As we reported in a previous newsletter, the nonprofit group Independent Living has proposed a senior housing development north of Wheeler Rd., east of N. Sherman Ave., near and uphill from hundreds of acres of Cherokee Marsh wetlands. An initial step in gaining approval for the project is to amend the City's Comprehensive Plan to allow a higher population density on the site.

The Planning Division expects to schedule neighborhood and community meetings on the proposed amendment in June and July.

The board of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh has submitted a statement to the Planning Division saying that we believe the best use of the land is as a conservation reserve, but if development proceeds, the City should designate additional open space as a wetland buffer to compensate for the effects of increased population density.

Our statement and wetland buffers fact sheet plus links to our previous newsletter article about the proposed development and information from City Planning are here: [www.CherokeeMarsh.org/news.html](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org/news.html)

## Welcome Winged Visitors

Alex Singer

"On April nights when it has become warm enough to sit outdoors, we love to listen to the proceedings of the convention in the marsh." (*A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*)

Would that I lived close enough to be able to use Aldo Leopold's words as my own, but only a short bike ride away I can "listen to the proceedings" of the numerous migratory birds now repopulating Cherokee Marsh. From the Latin *migrare* – to go from one place to another – spring movement has begun by both short (partial) and distant (complete) migrators, diurnal and nocturnal navigators, those in transit or here to stay 'til autumn. Together with the regulars – such as crows, house wrens, cardinals – they are some of the many reasons we spend our time, energy and money to maintain the Marsh and its myriad ecosystems, but they give us much in return, aesthetically, scientifically, ecologically and economically.

Taking advantage of winds and flying economically to conserve strength are important to survival; for transient long-distance migrators, a stopover to rest and refuel at Cherokee Marsh can mean the difference between life and death. To get here, some have relied on an internal magnetic compass, fine-tuned by patterns of sunlight polarization, but the majority are night flyers that use star patterns and other night sky cues as navigation aides. The great Vs of geese, swans and cranes include youngsters learning the return leg of their first migration, using a combination of landforms, rivers and the sun's movements to guide them.

Active birding and backyard feeding not only give pleasure to millions, but as growing pastimes are big business; add hunting, and their economic importance is undeniable. Whether you think the turkey or the bald eagle should be the nation's symbol, birds are representative of many values, but it is their scientific and ecological importance that is most impressive.



*Sandhill cranes are early spring visitors to Cherokee Marsh.*  
Photo by Jim Hughes.

Many bird species are bioindicators of habitat change or pollution, even climate change, and where would we be without the conclusions drawn from Darwin's finches? Observation of their flight inspired Da Vinci, and the field of biomimicry garners regular insight from their behavior and physiology. The importance of birds in natural systems include as top-level eaters of insect pests, rodent predators, pollinators and seed dispersers.

I hope that "the convention" will continue to be heard loud and long in and around Cherokee Marsh, but in addition to the well-known deleterious effects of habitat loss, pollution, pesticides and invasives, the increase in human activities has caused a relatively sudden rise in low-pitched noise levels that may be detrimental to birds through direct stress, masking of predator arrival or associated alarm calls, and by interference of acoustic signals in general. A return to rakes, snow shovels and push mowers may help.



## Electrical Lines Buried



Have you noticed something missing in the North Unit? MG&E has buried the electrical lines that run from the parking lot to the boathouse. The poles and wires are gone.

## 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 16, you can join over 3000 volunteers counting cranes in five states. Training is provided. To find out more, visit:

<http://www.savingcranes.org>



Read past and current issues of this newsletter at [www.CherokeeMarsh.org](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org)

### FRIENDS OF CHEROKEE MARSH 2010 FINANCIAL STATEMENT (1/1/10-12/31/10)

	2010 Actual
<b>INCOME</b>	
Contributions	\$ 995.00
Interest	1.90
Member Dues	1,495.00
Grant Income	2,308.50
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 4,800.40</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
General	\$ 97.30
Insurance	353.00
Printing	17.09
Reimbursements	71.04
Rental	60.00
Assn/Prof Memberships	60.00
Education	325.96
Special Projects/Grants	500.00
Stamps & Supplies	66.63
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 1,551.02</b>
<b>ACCOUNT BALANCES:12/31/10</b>	
Checking and Program	\$ 4,384.07

### Friends of Cherokee Marsh

PO Box 3390

Madison WI 53704

[info@CherokeeMarsh.org](mailto:info@CherokeeMarsh.org)

[www.CherokeeMarsh.org](http://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)

Justin Sargent

Muriel Simms

Dick Walker

Anita Weier

Dorothy Wheeler (Secretary)

#### Advisor (non-voting)

Don Hammes

# 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.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <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](http://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.