

# The Cherokee Marsh News

*The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh*

## Elected Officials Learn about Cherokee Marsh on the Water

*Jan Axelson*

County Supervisor Melissa Sargent and State Senator Mark Miller were among those who experienced Cherokee Marsh up close at the Send Your Legislator Down the River event on June 7. The annual event invites lawmakers to learn about our waters by paddling with local residents and City, County, and WDNR staff. The Rock River Coalition, the group that organizes the event, chose Cherokee Marsh as the location for this year's event, with the Friends of Cherokee Marsh as co-sponsors.

Many in the group brought their own canoes and kayaks while others helped paddle a 25-ft replica Voyageur canoe provided by the Department of Natural Resources. The group launched from the School Road boat landing and paddled up the Yahara River where Russ Hefty from Madison Parks explained shoreline restoration efforts. Before the paddle, participants gathered for a buffet picnic dinner at the Nau-ti-gal Restaurant on Westport Rd.

*(A version of this story will appear in the Aug/Sept. Northside News.)*

## Butterfly Walk Yields Butterflies, Dragonflies and More

*Jan Axelson*

The Cherokee Marsh butterfly walk on June 19 turned up 14 species of butterflies in the Conservation Park's North Unit. The easiest butterflies to spot were the Hackberry Emperors, which landed right on us as we walked the service road that leads to the boardwalk.

Other highlights were a variety of dragonflies and the larvae of the ragweed leaf beetle, which ward off predators by lifting and waving tiny balls of feces. Trip leaders Kathy Kirk and Karl Legler provided their usual expert help with finding and identifying butterflies and other creatures.



*A replica Voyageur canoe was one of many watercraft in Cherokee Marsh for the Send Your Legislator Down the River event. Photo by Justin Sargent.*



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# In Search of Silphium

Alex Singer

Even though it's no longer spring, there are still several prairie flowers blooming in the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park into the fall, or at least September. Among them are at least two species of silphium, a genus belonging to the Asteraceae, or Daisy, family, which in turn belong to the Compositae, the largest group of flowering plants, perhaps those that appeared most recently on earth. Compositae are characterized as having flower heads, clusters of many small flowers growing together (hence the name) that produce many seeds, which *Silphium perfoliatum* and *Silphium terebinthinaceum* both display in abundance.

The word "silphium" comes from the Greek silphion, the resinous juice of a plant now probably extinct due to its extreme popularity in the ancient world as a spice, a cure-all medicinal remedy, and even a form of birth control, but which wouldn't grow outside of its native Greek colony of Cyrene in modern Libya.

Luckily, our own silphium are abundant and can be found in sandy-loamy soil in the moderate-full sun of prairies, meadows, streambanks, and woods. Where *S. perfoliatum* (meaning "through the leaf"), also known as the "Cup Plant" due to the shape made by the opposing leaves, grows from 3-8 feet high and has strongly toothed leaves and flower heads from 1.75-2.75 inches wide, *S. terebinthinaceum* ("like turpentine"), a.k.a. "Prairie Dock" or "Basal-leaved Rosinweed", has a wider range of 2-10 feet in height and large, unlobed but toothed leaves. They both have several heads in open-branched clusters with similar size disks, though the Prairie Dock generally has larger flower heads and fewer rays, and both are attractive to bees and birds alike.



*The cups formed by the leaves of cup plant hold water that insects and birds may drink from.*

*Photo by Jan Axelson.*



*Compass plant reaches high above the other flowers in the prairie at Cherokee Marsh. Photo by Jan Axelson.*

Although there are other silphium present in the Marsh and surroundings, the previously-mentioned two were listed as present in an unpublished 1973 survey of plants and animals of Cherokee Marsh. You can also look for *S. integrifolium* (Prairie or Whole-leaved Rosinweed) and *S. laciniatum* (Compass Plant), which are known to flourish in similar habitats and have a similar flowering time. Happy hunting.

*Alex Singer is a new Northside resident who greatly enjoys his proximity to Cherokee Marsh and other green areas, although continues to miss the Ecuadorian Amazon where he spent time as a naturalist guide.*

## Resources Used

*Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region: A Comprehensive Field Guide, 2nd ed.* by Merel Black and Emmet Judziewicz, The University of Wisconsin Press: London, 2009.

*The Prairie Garden: 70 Native Plants You Can Grow in Town or Country* by J. Robert Smith with Beatrice Smith, The University of Wisconsin Press: London, 1980.

*A Field Guide to Wildflowers of Northeastern and North-central North America* by Roger Tory Peterson and Margaret McKenny, Houghton Mifflin Co: New York, 1968.

*Plant and Animal Survey in Cherokee Marsh: A Preliminary Report* by Maarit Threlfall, Lu Severson and Don Samuelson, unpublished, 1973.

*An Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions* by N.L. Britton and Addison Brown, Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1913.

*The Lost Panacea of Silphium* from Irrational Geography, July 2009. <http://irrationalgeographic.wordpress.com/2009/07/08/the-lost-panacea-of-silphium>

## Westport Drumlin Land Protection News

The Westport Drumlin State Natural Area lies north and east of Cherokee Marsh, just north of Bong Rd. and east of HWY 113. The area contains a diverse, high-quality prairie and savanna and the state's largest population of the federally-threatened prairie bush clover plant.

In June, the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) permanently protected an additional 30 acres on the north side of the drumlin. The purchase was possible due to the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Conservation Fund, the generosity of the landowners, and contributions from NHLT members.

In July, partnering with the NHLT and the Town of Westport, Dane County approved a \$239,000 Dane County Conservation Fund Grant to pay 20% of the cost to preserve an additional 100 acres of land for public use along Bong Rd. and adjacent to the drumlin. The county grant will help the NHLT obtain the remainder of the funding from the United States Forest and Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Stewardship program.

Last year, the NHLT protected 73 acres on the east side of the drumlin.

The land purchases will offer opportunities to better protect the remnant prairies on the site and improve public access to this special place.

## New Pollution Rules Will Help Our Waters

*Reprinted with the permission of the River Alliance of Wisconsin*

After decades of talk and months of haggling and negotiations, and with the threat of a lawsuit and upcoming legislative elections hovering over everything, the Natural Resources Board (the Department of Natural Resources' governing body) has approved two new rule packages that should help clean up Wisconsin's rivers and lakes.

One rule package will set limits for how much phosphorus should be allowed in a particular river or lake. That policy will mostly affect cities and industries that dump wastewater into rivers. The other rule, known as NR 151, has to do with polluted runoff. That rule largely affects farmers, but it also touches cities in that it tries to limit runoff from streets and parking lots. All farm field runoff and street runoff eventually runs to the rivers.

In state code there is now a number farmers must aim for, called the phosphorus index (PI), to reduce their runoff. A landowner is supposed to reach that magic

## Discover Wisconsin's Wetland Gems in a New Book

The Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) has published *Wetland Gems*, a guide to 100 high quality wetlands that represent the marshes, swamps, bogs, fens and more that historically made up nearly a quarter of Wisconsin's landscape.

The full-color, spiral-bound book includes a map and fact sheet for each featured wetland plus an overview of the *Wetland Gems* project and a pictorial guide to Wisconsin's twelve wetland types.

The book costs \$25 + \$5 shipping from WWA:

<http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org>

The book's contents are also available for free viewing and downloading from WWA's website.





Participants gather to learn about Cherokee Marsh and the upper Yahara River at the Send Your Legislator Down the River event. Photo by Jan Axelson.

## Events Calendar

### Wildflowers of Koltes & Westport Drumlin

**August 12 (Thursday), 6 pm**

Sponsored by Good Oak Ecological Services and the Madison chapter of Wild Ones.

<http://www.goodoakllc.com/wildflowerwalks.html>

### Canoe Cherokee Marsh Ecological Restoration

**August 15 (Sunday), 7 am**

View wildlife and learn about the restoration project in the upper Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh. Led by Madison Parks Conservation Resource Supervisor Russ Hefty. Bring your own canoe or kayak and meet at the School Road boat landing, 802 Wheeler Rd. Sponsored by Madison Audubon, Madison Parks, and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

### Cherokee Marsh Day at the Northside Farmer's Market

**September 12 (Sunday), 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Hear the Knotty Pines folk trio, see live snakes and other critters, and chat with fellow members of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh. The market (which takes place every Sunday through October) is in the Northside Town Center at the corner of Northport Dr. and N. Sherman Ave.



Read past and current issues of this newsletter at <http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org>

## Directors Update

Welcome to new Interim Director Anita Weier. A Northside resident, Anita is a former environmental reporter for The Capital Times and serves on the board of directors of the Northside Planning Council. Anita says, "I am extremely proud to join the board of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh. This is an important organization that continues to protect this valuable resource."

### Friends of Cherokee Marsh

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[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

Dana Erlandsen (Treasurer)

Sheri Harper

Justin Sargent (Vice President)

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. 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. New 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 \_\_\_\_\_ Second Email \_\_\_\_\_

Include your email address if you would like 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](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org)

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