

# The Cherokee Marsh News

*The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh*

## You're Invited to Marsh Madness

Join fellow Cherokee Marsh enthusiasts for complimentary refreshments and conversation on **Wednesday, September 21, 6 – 8 pm**, at “JJ’s Top of the Swamp.”

This first ever Marsh Madness happy hour is an informal, fun gathering to meet and get to know those who share your interest in safeguarding the marsh.

We will also have the regularly scheduled board meeting from 5:30 – 6:00 pm at the same location. Members are always welcome at the board meetings.

### Directions

Traveling north from Madison on HWY 113 (Northport Dr.), JJ’s Top of the Swamp is on the right, a little less than a mile past Kennedy Rd. and south of CTY HWY M. The address is 5344 HWY 113.



## New Housing Installed for Purple Martins

*Jan Axelson*

Purple martins are the largest swallows in North America, and Cherokee Marsh has some new housing for them. The gourd houses, mounted on a pole in the Yahara River, are visible from the path in the Conservation Park’s North Unit. A crew from Operation Fresh Start helped create and install the houses. The houses are real gourds, not

plastic, painted white to keep the birds cool. Specially shaped holes keep out European starlings (but not other competitors such as tree swallows).

Legend has it that purple martins consume large numbers of mosquitoes, but studies have shown that martins actually favor larger flying insects such as dragonflies and damselflies. The birds winter in Brazil. Their natural nesting sites are abandoned woodpecker nest cavities.



*Look for the new purple martin houses in the Yahara River upstream from the boardwalk. Photo by Jan Axelson.*

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# A Network of Nature

## Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's South Unit

Alex Singer

*Over the course of the coming year, I'll write briefly about the three units of the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park – North, South, and Mendota – as well as the nearby Yahara Heights County Park, Cherokee Marsh Fishery Area and Token Creek County Park. If there's an interesting point or anecdote you'd like me to share with readers about any of these areas, please send them to [info@CherokeeMarsh.org](mailto:info@CherokeeMarsh.org) to pass along.*

Previously part of the Doc West farm, the South Unit constitutes 1/5 of the overall Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, a managed area of about 1,300 acres. The goal of conservation parks is “to restore native plant and animal communities while providing educational areas and opportunities for everyone.”

Though the noise of traffic on HWY 113 can often be heard the nearer one gets to Lake Mendota, and the houses on Wheeler Road can be glimpsed along part of the trail, and the occasional strong odor of the sewage lift station on the road to the boat landing can be distracting, in general the South Unit offers a fairly secluded and peaceful place to explore and appreciate nature year round.

I became reacquainted with cross-country skiing on the marked groomed trails, the slight hills of which provide just enough challenge, and I'll always remember the 30 garter snakes I came across during one fall walk sunning themselves on the mowed paths.

The hills also provide glorious views of marsh, prairie, forest and the Yahara River (where American lotus has been planted in a successful attempt to catch sediment, lessen damaging wave action, and provide a fish nursery). A bench atop the hill nearest the boat landing – part of a memorial to Rodney Johnson, who loved the marsh – allows one to rest while spying on an ephemeral pond that



*The South Unit offers great views of prairie, wetland, and the Yahara River. Photo by Jan Axelson.*

sandhill cranes have been known to frequent. The cries of a resident redtail hawk cause one to search the skies, and smaller birds can be spotted in the hardwood stands, shrubby undergrowth and wide open prairie land.

The views, the biodiversity, the tranquility, and the plain existence of this park are due to planning, management and restoration. Perhaps once upon a time it would have been enough to merely “leave it alone”, but these days it requires burning, mowing, dredging, planting, and invasive species control, as well as all of our cooperation, to restore and maintain this area of natural beauty.

The main entrance to Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's South Unit is at 5002 School Rd., at the corner of School Rd. and Wheeler Rd. If arriving by water, the park has a boat landing with a dock. For a map of the park's three miles of trails, visit [www.CherokeeMarsh.org](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org).

## Trash Removed from Cherokee Marsh

As part of Dane County's Take a Stake in the Lakes days, volunteers collected trash from the trails and ditches in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park. Thanks to the Madison Streets Division for making a special trip to pick up the trash.



*Muriel Simms, Jan Axelson, and Dana Erlandsen show off some of the haul. Photo by Janet Battista.*



## Events Calendar

### Tour the Cherokee Marsh Restoration by Canoe or Kayak

**Saturday, August 6, 8:00 am – 11:00 am**

Join Conservation Resources Supervisor Russ Hefty on a tour of Madison Parks' wetland restoration project on the upper Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh.

This is joint tour with the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Madison Audubon, and Madison Parks.

Bring your own canoe or kayak and meet at the 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.

### Friends of Cherokee Marsh at the Clean Lakes Festival

**Saturday, August 27, 1-6 pm**

Stop by and talk with the Friends of Cherokee Marsh at the 2011 Clean Lakes Festival. We'll be in the Lakes Education tent from 1 – 6 pm. The Festival, which will feature a variety of fun events, takes place at Olin Park, 1156 Olin-Turville Court, off John Nolen Dr. on Lake Monona. For more information, visit:

[www.cleanlakesfestival.com](http://www.cleanlakesfestival.com)

### Friends of Cherokee Marsh at the Northside Farmers Market

**Sunday, September 18, 8:30 am – 12:30 pm**

You're invited to visit the Friends' table at the Northside Farmers Market in the Northside Town Center, on the corner of N. Sherman Ave. and Northport Dr.

### Marsh Madness Gathering

**Wednesday, September 21, 4 – 6 pm**

See page 1 for details about this event.

### Join the Conversation about the City Budget

Join your neighbors, city staff, Mayor Soglin, and alders to help develop the city's 2012 budget. The City is holding five meetings in locations, with each meeting focusing on a different group of city services.

At the meetings, you will have the chance to work with city staff, citizen committee members, and other residents to figure out the most important priorities.

**Topic: Large Community Facilities and Parks (Recreation)**

**Monday, August 22, 7 – 9 pm**

Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ, 1501 Gilbert Rd.

[www.cityofmadison.com/budgetprocess](http://www.cityofmadison.com/budgetprocess)

## Westport Drumlin Will Have Improved Access

The Natural Heritage Land Trust of Madison has received a grant from Madison Community Foundation to make it easier for visitors to explore the prairie and oak savanna at Westport Drumlin. The site includes two of the finest prairie remnants in Dane County: Koltes Prairie, managed by The Prairie Enthusiasts, and Westport Drumlin Prairie, a designated State Natural Area owned and managed by DNR.

The plans are to install a small gravel parking lot, post interpretive signs, and remove interior tree and fence lines to open up views and improve habitat for grassland birds.

Westport Drumlin is just north of Bong Rd. between HWY 113 and River Rd. Saturday, October 1, is Discover Westport Drumlin Day. To find out more and to register for the event, visit [www.nhlt.org](http://www.nhlt.org).

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

### 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

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.