

# The Cherokee Marsh News

*The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh*

## Annual Meeting Will Feature WDNR Wildlife Biologist Andy Paulios

*Jan Axelson and Lesleigh Luttrell*

Mark your calendar for our annual member meeting, January 26, 2013 at 10 am. Our featured guest will be WDNR wildlife biologist Andy Paulios with a presentation on *Wetland bird conservation in Wisconsin: From Avocets to Aythya and everything in between*.

Many of the birds we see in Cherokee Marsh have a long and adventurous trip twice a year and face challenges along the way. Andy will share some of their stories.

Andy coordinates the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI) through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Bureau of Wildlife Management. He promises to share an overview of recent wetland conservation and management efforts, challenges and success stories, and a look to the future on what we'll need to do as a conservation community to maintain healthy populations of wetland birds.

Preceding Andy's talk, we'll have a short member meeting to elect directors for 2013-2014.

We'll also have free refreshments and our popular door prizes donated by local businesses.

Everyone, members and non-members, is welcome to attend.

### **Saturday, January 26**

**10:00 – 10:30 am** - member meeting to elect directors for 2013-2014.

**10:30 – 11:30 am** - WDNR wildlife biologist Andy Paulios with *Wetland bird conservation in Wisconsin: From Avocets to Aythya and everything in between*

**11:30 – 11:45 am** - Door prizes.

### **Lakeview Branch, Madison Public Library**

2845 N. Sherman Ave. (in the Northside Town Center, next to Pierce's Market)



WDNR biologist Andy Paulios with a northern shrike, one of Wisconsin's winter visitors.

### **Inside This Issue**

Annual Meeting Will Feature WDNR Wildlife Biologist Andy Paulios	1
It's Time to Renew Your Membership	2
Grants Awarded for Restoration Projects	2
Clean Lakes Alliance Releases Plan for Cleaner Lakes	2
What We Did in 2012	3
The Kestrels are Coming	4
Meet the Director Candidates	5
Friends VP Janet Battista Wins North Star Award	6
Wheeler Road Ponds Update	7
Portable Toilet Installed for Winter Use in North Unit	7
Membership Form	8

# It's Time to Renew Your Membership

Show your support for Cherokee Marsh and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh by renewing your membership this December.

Your member dues provide the resources to help protect, preserve, and restore Dane County's largest wetland. Just as important, your membership helps to demonstrate public support for protecting the marsh.

## Is My Membership Up for Renewal?

All memberships expire on December 31. If you joined the Friends after June 30, 2012, your membership is paid through December 31, 2013. For everyone else, it's time to renew. If you're not sure when you joined, contact us at [info@CherokeeMarsh.org](mailto:info@CherokeeMarsh.org) or 608-241-5828.

As a member, you'll receive our newsletter six times a year and will know that you're helping to protect and preserve a healthy Cherokee Marsh.

## How to Renew

You can save us time and money by renewing right now. Use the member renewal form on the last page of this newsletter or at [CherokeeMarsh.org](http://CherokeeMarsh.org)

You can also renew online at [CherokeeMarsh.org](http://CherokeeMarsh.org)

You can pay online with your PayPal account or a credit card.

## A Friends Membership Is a Perfect Gift

If you know someone who loves Cherokee Marsh, consider giving them a gift membership to the Friends this holiday season or as a birthday gift.

## Clean Lakes Alliance Releases Plan for Cleaner Lakes

The Clean Lakes Alliance has released its Yahara CLEAN Strategic Action Plan for Phosphorus Reduction in the Yahara Lakes.

The plan prioritizes the 14 most important, achievable and cost-effective steps to reduce phosphorus in the Yahara chain of lakes. The goal is to reduce the phosphorous by 50% to improve water quality and clarity and significantly reduce toxic algal blooms.

The recommendations include promoting the restoration of drained wetlands for stormwater cleansing functions and harvesting wetland plants to remove phosphorus taken in by the plants.

Read the full report and watch videos on the Strategic Action Plan at:

[cleanlakesalliance.com](http://cleanlakesalliance.com)

# Grants Awarded for Restoration Projects

*Jan Axelson*

Madison's Community Foundation has awarded grant funding for restoration work at Cherokee Marsh and the Westport Drumlin State Natural Area.

An \$18,000 grant will help fund oak savanna restoration at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's North and South Units as well as at Turville Point, Edna Taylor, and Prairie Ridge Conservation Parks.

An oak savanna is midway between a prairie and a woodland. Unlike prairies, savannas contain trees, but the trees are scattered and support an understory of grasses and flowers. Oak savannas were once the dominant ecosystem in Dane County.

Madison Parks will hire Operation Fresh Start's Conservation Crew to thin the tree cover and haul away accumulated heavy wood debris. Parks will ask the Friends of Cherokee Marsh to provide volunteer help in preparing for prescribed burns, scattering seeds, and planting shrubs. When complete, the restored area will have a canopy

cover of 50 – 70%.

Also in the Cherokee Marsh watershed, crews from Operation Fresh Start will be constructing trails and performing restoration work at the Westport Drumlin State Natural Area. The Westport Drumlin, which lies just north of Bong Rd. between HWY 113 and River Rd., is a glacially sculpted ridge that hosts a diverse prairie of than 100 native species.

To support the work at the Westport Drumlin, the Natural Heritage Land Trust received funding from the Madison Community Foundation and the Dane County Partners for Recreation & Conservation (PARC) grant program.

Operation Fresh Start (OFS) is a non-profit organization with a goal of enabling youth and adults to become self-sufficient through employment training and education programs. OFS conservation crews have previously worked on a variety of conservation projects for Madison Parks and other local sponsors.

# What We Did in 2012

Jan Axelson

In 2012, we continued our activities advocating for, educating about, restoring, and enjoying Cherokee Marsh. We even added some new events and projects.

## Advocating

To protect the wetlands and water quality, we supported public land purchase of land adjacent to Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's South Unit and the creation of stormwater ponds north of Wheeler Rd.

To reduce erosion of shoreline wetlands, we advocated for lower summer target lake levels on Lake Mendota in comments to the DNR's Yahara Lakes Advisory Group 2.

To support other groups whose activities benefit Cherokee Marsh, we became an organizational member of the Clean Lakes Alliance and continued our membership in the Natural Heritage Land Trust.

## Educating

We donated a \$1000 grant from the SisBros foundation to support transportation for hands-on, outdoor, science education in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park through the Madison Area School District's Naturalist program.

We reprinted our information card about the Madison Area School District's Naturalist program in Cherokee Marsh for distribution to all 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-grade teachers.

We answered many questions at our tables at the Northside Farmers Market, Clean Lakes Festival, and Ride the Drive - Northside.

We kept folks informed about what was happening in the marsh in our bi-monthly newsletter, Facebook pages, and email group.

## Restoring

We co-sponsored and helped promote restoration activities including pulling garlic mustard in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, collecting and planting prairie seeds at Yahara Heights County Park, and collecting and planting wetland plant seeds for the restoration of the

"east marsh" at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park. Thanks to our partners, Madison Area Weed Warriors, Madison Parks, and Dane County Parks, for sponsoring activities this year.

In a new partnership with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), volunteers removed invasive purple loosestrife and over 1.5 acres of invasive giant reed grass (phragmites) from the Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area. We wrote letters of support for grants to fund oak savanna restoration in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.

We celebrated Earth Day by planting prairie plants in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.

We sponsored a trash pickup as part of Dane County's Take a Stake in the Lakes days.

## Enjoying

We co-sponsored and helped promote a variety of tours in the marsh and on surrounding lands including walks that focused on birds, wildflowers, butterflies, bats, and fall colors, plus paddle tours in canoes and kayaks and replica Voyageur canoes. We led hikes for Madison Parks' hayrides and hikes event.

Thanks to the many dedicated and knowledgeable tour leaders and our partners, Madison Audubon Society, Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association, the DNR, Dane County's Office of Lakes and Watersheds, and Madison Parks, for sponsoring events this year.

We sponsored a presentation on "Prairie Lore and Plant Stories" by Dane County Naturalist Wayne Pauly.

## Thanks for Your Support and Participation

With your support in the coming year, we can continue and expand our activities to promote land protection, restoration, education, and enjoyment of Cherokee Marsh.

If you have ideas for Friends activities or would like to help, we want to hear from you. Call, write, or attend one of our monthly meetings.

Thanks to Deputy Conservation Warden Jonathan Kaiser for attending our recent board meeting and talking with us about how to reduce the spread of aquatic invasives. Find out more at:

[dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/prevention.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/prevention.html)

Keep in touch!

Email group - news and discussion

[www.groups.yahoo.com/group/cherokeemarsh](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/cherokeemarsh)

Facebook page - news

[www.facebook.com/friends.of.cherokee.marsh](http://www.facebook.com/friends.of.cherokee.marsh)

Facebook group - photos, open discussion

[www.facebook.com/groups/cherokee.marsh](http://www.facebook.com/groups/cherokee.marsh)

# The Kestrels are Coming

*Paul Noeldner*

The small grey-winged American Kestrel, sometimes called a Sparrow Hawk (*falco sparverius*), flew in a blur low over the restored prairie dodging the tips of Big Bluestem, Prairie Dock and Rattlesnake Master in pursuit of a dragonfly.

Clutching his prize in curled talons he swooped back toward a weathered wooden box on a power pole next to the road softly calling 'klee-klee-klee' to his partner. Hearing his approach she flew out to accept the grocery delivery and slipped back inside their house to drop the protein-rich dinner into the gaping mouths of five fluffy white youngsters.

Mister Kestrel returned to his favorite perch a ways down the power wire, bobbed his tail, and settled back to watch for something bigger, perhaps a mouse this time.

This is the scenario we hope to see in Cherokee Marsh on Madison's north side. Like Eastern Bluebirds, American Kestrels nest in cavity holes and need a bit of help and accommodation from humans who have removed many of the old trees and hollow snags they used to call home.

Kestrel boxes have increased populations and nesting success. A Cherokee Marsh Kestrel monitoring team of Brand Smith, Tim Nelson, and Paul Noeldner recently installed three Kestrel boxes provided by Mark Martin of Madison Audubon at locations that were selected with assistance from Russ Hefty, Conservation Resources Supervisor for Madison Parks.

Scott Nelson of Madison Gas and Electric approved mounting two of the boxes about 12 feet high on the side of power poles, one along the entrance lane to Cherokee Marsh from North Sherman Ave. and the other on the entrance lane from School Rd. The third is mounted on a pole-like tree snag. All are adjacent to open areas near to Cherokee Marsh prairie restorations.

Kestrels seem to like snags, poles and wires where they can be seen sitting quietly and occasionally bobbing their tails as they watch for insects and small mammals such as mice and shrews. They can also hover in a light breeze when homing in on food, similar to a Northern Harrier but noticeably smaller.

Kestrels are fairly accommodating of human habitation and activity as long as people do not approach closely. A lightweight pair of binoculars will help you enjoy their striking markings and interesting behavior from a polite distance.

Look for a small, beautiful reddish and grey hawk-like bird a bit larger than a Mourning Dove with a grey cap and dramatic grey vertical bars on its white face, somewhat like an Osprey or a super-hero character.



*Brand Smith and Tim Nelson install a kestrel box in Cherokee Marsh. Photo by Paul Noeldner.*

You can find pictures, sounds and information about Kestrels online at eNature ([enature.com/fieldguides](http://enature.com/fieldguides)) by searching for "Kestrel" and at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology ([allaboutbirds.org/guide/american\\_kestrel](http://allaboutbirds.org/guide/american_kestrel)).

Brand Smith has experience monitoring Kestrel boxes and designed a couple innovations to make monitoring simpler and safer for the team. The 18-in.-high 10-in.-square boxes are mounted on 8-ft-long 2x4 boards attached vertically to the tree or pole about four feet off the ground with two lag screws.

By removing one lag screw, the board can be swung down to lower the box for inspection and cleaning without the risk of climbing a ladder. This is done in early spring or late fall when no birds are using the box.

The pole and 2x4 are each wrapped with an 18-in.-wide strip of aluminum to prevent Raccoons and other predators from reaching the nest.

Brand has also constructed a pole-mounted video camera that can be used to peer inside the box to monitor nesting activity and count chicks without climbing a ladder and with less disturbance to the Kestrels.

The team may also ask for advice and assistance from Janet Eschenbauch of Central Wisconsin Kestrel Research ([kestrelresearch.com](http://kestrelresearch.com)) and other experts if there is interest in banding the birds to help track their migrations and success.

Watch for Kestrel updates and pictures this coming year on the Friends of Cherokee Marsh website Facebook pages.

# Meet the Director Candidates

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh Board of Directors is responsible for planning, coordinating, communicating and managing the activities of our group. At the annual member meeting (see page 1), the members elect directors for the coming two years.

The board usually meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 pm at the Lakeview Branch of the Madison Public Library, 2845 N. Sherman Ave. All meetings are open to members and the public. To confirm the time or request an agenda, or if you're interested in joining the board or helping out on a committee, contact Jan at info@CherokeeMarsh.org or 608-241-5828.

Half of the directors' terms end in even-numbered years and the other half in odd-numbered years. Directors Jan Axelson, Lydia Maurer, Muriel Simms, Dick Walker, and Dorothy Wheeler are in the middle of their terms and thus aren't up for re-election.

Here are statements from the six announced candidates for six open positions in January's election.

For terms that will end at our annual meeting in January, 2015:

## Timothy Baker

Since moving to East Madison in 2008, I have found Cherokee Marsh to be a great place to walk and explore nature with my wife, Beth, and two small children, Della and Dorothy. Before that, as a Middleton resident and regular fisherman, I was interested in the marsh as an obviously important component of the lakes and wetlands system that defines the Madison area.

Concerned about the health of the marsh, especially in the face of potential development, I joined the FOCM board in 2010. It is my intent to help the FOCM strengthen efforts to educate the public and advocate for the health of the marsh ecosystem. I am especially interested in native plants, birds, and aquatic life. I am a recent appointee to the City of Madison Committee on the Environment and enjoy a variety of outdoor activities including birding, fishing, hunting, and native plant restoration.

## Janet Battista

I have been a northside resident and avid user of Cherokee Marsh for almost 20 years. The remaining northside wild places, including Cherokee Marsh, need protection if they are to survive population growth, run-off pollution, and lack of proper management.

As a retired DNR hydrogeologist, I bring some background in the fields of groundwater, groundwater - surface water interactions, water pollution, etc. I hope to be able to use my training and experience to contribute to the Friends' efforts to protect the marsh. I am also interested in the

Friends' efforts to engage schools and the general public to better appreciate the value, beauty, and the flora and fauna of the marsh.

With our great newsletter, days at the Northside Farmer's Market, trips and tours, volunteer restoration events, and our wonderful website, the Friends have made great progress. Now, we may be able to create an endowment fund to help manage the Marsh into the future. I hope I can help keep the ball rolling by being a Board member again.

## Dana Erlandsen

As a Northside resident who regularly walks, paddles, and skis in Cherokee Marsh, the Marsh is part of my life in all seasons. I would like to keep using my experience with other nonprofit organizations and as a lawyer to benefit Cherokee Marsh. I have worked to help to the Friends increase awareness of the Marsh, as well as to help protect and restore the Marsh so it can continue to serve as a haven for plants and animals, a filter for the watershed, and a bit of serenity in our neighborhood.

I am proud of the progress we have made in the last few years (financing buses for school trips, leading public hikes and paddles, removal of invasive plants, and acquisition of the Wheeler Triangle), and look forward to expanding those efforts.

## Lesleigh Luttrell

As a fan of the Marsh for more than 30 years, I have enjoyed it as a birder and hiker, and am delighted to be active in an organization that helps introduce others to the Marsh. I have been involved with a variety of organizations on the Northside, including NESCO (North/Eastside Senior Coalition) and Friends of Lakeview Library. Serving as Treasurer of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh these past two years, I have seen first hand how Northsiders support and value our Marsh. I would be honored to serve a second term on the Friends board.

## Justin Sargent

I joined the Friends group because I feel strongly that we must act to safeguard the Cherokee Marsh and have served as a board member and officer to use my skills to help protect this precious natural area. I have swum, fished, and paddled in Cherokee Marsh and believe that our efforts have improved public awareness of this rich ecological gem. I would like to continue to serve on the board because this important work is not yet done. I bring an extensive knowledge of the legislative process and grassroots advocacy to the board. I live on the North side of Madison with my wife Melissa and our 4 boys.

## Candidates

(continued from page 5)

I appreciate your interest in the marsh and would be honored to have your vote for a new term as a director on the board.

For a term that will end at our annual meeting in January, 2014:

### Paul Noeldner

From serving a number of years on the Madison Audubon Society board and continued involvement as membership and outreach coordinator, I have enjoyed numerous opportunities to volunteer and partner in effective ways with Friends of Cherokee and other local environmental groups. I hope to bring some of that broader environmental community experience, contacts and energy to the FOCM board.

My specific support for Cherokee Marsh includes testifying to local government in favor of watershed and ecosystem preservation at Cherokee Marsh and the recent wonderful additions to the protected area, establishing and monitoring the Bluebird trail and the new Kestrel Boxes, volunteering regularly with Russ Hefty and FOCM on Cherokee Marsh prairie restoration and invasives removal

activities, and leading or helping with the northside Christmas Bird Count team, Big Birding Day team, and other birding, educational, and citizen science activities that help engage the public in supporting and enjoying Cherokee Marsh birds and wildlife.

My background and career in computers and in providing leadership with Madison Audubon website, membership, education and outreach goals will carry forward to help work on similar goals for FOCM. When my wife Barb and I regularly hike, ski, and paddle at Cherokee Marsh and look at all the progress and restored areas, and when I spend time with some wonderful folks who have helped make it possible and became close friends, it feels like going home.

One of my favorite experiences was hiking a few years ago through the brambles and thickets trying to keep up with an elderly Maarit Threlfall, who at a much younger age worked on the original plant transect studies that helped establish Cherokee Marsh, as she pointed out some of the amazing biodiversity, hidden fens, and—more importantly—opportunities and challenges that remain. I will work hard to help protect it and advance this cause.

## Friends VP Janet Battista Wins North Star Award

Congratulations to Friends Vice President Janet Battista for winning a North Star Award for her work as a super-volunteer for Northside park and green spaces. Janet has a wonderful interest in supporting and accommodating all things natural and brings special knowledge of water issues and plant species to all her activities.

Janet was a founding member of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, served as the President in 2007, and has been Vice President since 2011.

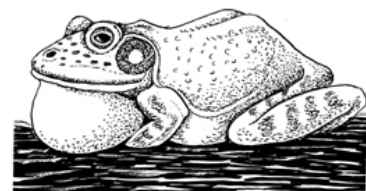
Janet has advocated for Cherokee Marsh to government staff and elected officials. She writes articles for the Northside News and Friends newsletters. She staffs tables to promote the Friends of Cherokee Marsh at the Northside Farmers Market and other events.

Janet's degrees in geology, geophysics, and water resources management, experience as a hydrogeologist with the DNR, and knowledge of native plant communities make her in demand by many groups!

Janet also serves on the board of the Friends of Lake View Hill County Park, is a volunteer technical advisor to the Madison Water Utility and a member of the Maple Bluff Urban Forestry committee, and volunteers with the Madison Audubon Society.



Janet Battista (left) shows off her North Star award with Emcee Rebecca Ryan. Photo by Mary Ambrosavage.



## Events Calendar

Directions to locations follow the event listings.

### Annual Member Meeting

Saturday, January 26, 10 am – noon

See page 1 for details.

### Candlelight Ski

Saturday, February 2, 6 – 8 pm

Coming this winter! In cooperation with Madison Parks, the first candlelight ski in Cherokee Marsh. Co-sponsored with Madison Parks.

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, South Unit

5002 School Rd. 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.

## Wheeler Road Ponds Update

The Wheeler Rd. ponds have been dug and are capturing stormwater. This fall, contractors are seeding the bare ground surrounding the ponds with prairie seeds. To protect the seeds and prevent erosion, the crews are covering the seeded areas with erosion control matting made of degradable netting embedded with straw.

In late fall or winter, crews will create two new trail loops. To prevent damage to the erosion matting, Parks doesn't plan to groom the new trails for skiing this winter, but in future years, the west loop will be part of the extended groomed ski trail system in the South Unit. Stakes currently mark the trail's route.

This spring will see the planting of patches of native trees and shrubs on the uplands and aquatic plants in the ponds.



Restoration work at the Wheeler Rd. ponds will continue through the winter. Photo by Jan Axelson.

## Portable Toilet Installed for Winter Use in North Unit

The Madison Mayor's 2013 budget proposal eliminated funding for the heated restrooms from November 1 to mid-April at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's North Unit and the Warner Park Shelter. The change would save the City \$3,900.

Alders Anita Weier, Satya Rhodes-Conway, and Shiva Bidar-Sielaff proposed an amendment, which passed, to add \$1,260 to fund portable toilets at those locations in



### Friends of Cherokee Marsh

PO Box 3390

Madison WI 53704

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)

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](http://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.

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- Mallard \$50
- Osprey \$100
- Sandhill Crane \$250
- 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.