

# The Cherokee Marsh News

*The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh*

## Fish Expert Draws Crowd to Annual Meeting

Anita Weier

What do fishermen and women want?

Either lots of fish or lots of big fish, fisheries biologist Kurt Welke told an audience of 55 at the annual meeting of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh on Jan. 29.

To that end, the long-time state Department of Natural Resources employee described in detail how fisheries workers capture, mark and release fish to record their health, species and population levels.

Mesh traps and stun boats are used to enable biologist to weigh, measure, sex and mark the fish. The tip of the tail is clipped off so they know which ones have already been counted.

“We take a large sample to get a spread of sizes and find out whether they are thriving or emaciated,” he said.

Fish in Cherokee Marsh were tested in the spring of 2009 and 2010.

What did they find? “A healthy warm-water fishery with pan fish and seasonal northern pike,” as well as catfish and carp, he said.

“Catfish are eating panfish, but bluegills are prolific,” he said.

Carp are a nuisance and are not helping the health of the Yahara River Estuary, also known as Cherokee Lake and Cherokee Marsh, Welke commented.

“Plants need light, not harassment,” he said, and carp root around and cloud the waters. “The water would be clear if the carp are gone.”

Chemical treatment or a fish weir may be needed to limit carp, he said.

Last year, as part of a study to find out where the carp go in winter, Kurt and others radio-tagged and monitored

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*Kurt Welke shares an interesting point with fisherman Jack Hurst. Photo by Anita Weier.*

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**Volunteer Event  
February 12**

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# Annual Meeting

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the locations of 20 carp. Some theorized the carp would head downstream to Lake Mendota. Others thought they might head upstream to Token Creek. But to the surprise of many, a check in late December located every one of the tagged carp in the waters of Cherokee Lake. This information can help when planning efforts to limit the carp populations.

Another major problem for local fisheries is agriculture, he said. "We've got animal waste issues. Manure leads to phosphorus, which leads to algae."

Cherokee Marsh and Cherokee Lake dictate how beautiful the Madison lakes below them can be, he added.

## Directors elected

Though most people attended the annual meeting of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh to hear a fisheries biologist

speaking, business also was attended to. Directors elected to two year terms were Timothy Baker, Janet Battista, Dana Erlandsen, Lesleigh Luttrell and Justin Sargent. Anita Weier and Dorothy Wheeler were elected to one-year terms. Jan Axelson, Muriel Simms and Dick Walker were in the middle of their two-year terms and so were not up for re-election. Current director Sheri Harper retired from the board at the end of January.

The board later elected Jan Axelson president, Janet Battista vice president, Lesleigh Luttrell treasurer and Dorothy Wheeler secretary.

*(A version of this article will appear in the Northside News.)*



*This map shows the locations on December 31 of twenty radio-telemetered carp released into Cherokee Marsh in September, 2010. All twenty fish were clustered in Cherokee Lake. Graphic by Kurt Welke.*

# Where Have All the Animals Gone?

Alex Singer

Much as I'm thrilled by a complex mature forest in summer, there is something about the smooth, white canvass of a prairie in winter that quickens my mind. Notice I didn't write empty canvass though. While the plant and animal diversity that we know exists in Cherokee Marsh isn't as evident as it is the rest of the year, there are signs and even occasional sightings, the rarity of which makes them that much more special. Depending on how observant you are, you can note the passage or presence of a variety of mammals and birds (the ectothermic reptiles, amphibians and arthropods can't handle the Wisconsin cold) in different ways.

Identifying the animal that made tracks can be tricky, but it helps to look at the individual print, then for a pattern, and finally the place you see the track (the three Ps). There are straight walkers, such as undulates (deer), canines (foxes) and felines (cougars), which put their back foot in almost the same place as their front; hoppers, whose larger back feet often land in front of the smaller front (squirrels, mice, rabbits); waddlers, which are slow-moving animals with wide bodies that move the legs of each side together as they switch weight (muskrat, raccoon); and the bounders, animals in the weasel family that push off with all four legs and land forming a square. I've noted what look like mini-bicycle tire tracks heading into the grasses, and discovered what must have been the sites of deer mouse hoedowns.

This sight of some years ago sticks with me – the disturbed snow and rust red of a raptor strike; these signs of ongoing life (and death) can be exhilarating. The scraped bark of a tree may denote where a young buck rubbed its antler; the chew marks on a plant indicates the passing of a hungry rabbit or deer (the former clip,

the latter break/tear); nibbled hickory nuts and stripped pine cones mean that squirrels and mice have foraged. The mostly bare trees (many oaks are still hanging on) expose nests, be they holes or made of vegetation (leafy dreys of squirrels, large stick ones of great-horned owls or red-tailed hawks), and the few birds out and about can usually be spotted (and heard) more quickly, allowing for longer observation.

And yes, everybody poops. The shape, color and consistency of scat vary among species, and those well-preserved specimens stand out well against the snow. Happy (figurative) Hunting!



Watch for rodent tunnels like these in the snow along the trails. Photo by Jan Axelson.

## View Historical Air Photos of Cherokee Marsh

The University of Wisconsin's Wisconsin Historical Aerial Image Finder has placed aerial photos of Cherokee Marsh from 1937 online. To view photos of the marsh, enter an address such as 6098 North Sherman Ave., 53704. Comparing the images of the upper Yahara River with current satellite images dramatically illustrates the acres of wetlands lost in recent decades.

<http://maps.sco.wisc.edu/WHAIFinder/>

## Read about the History of Cherokee Marsh

In 1968, Ruth Baumann of the Institute of Governmental Affairs at the UW-Extension published a detailed history of Cherokee Marsh in the 1950s and 1960s.

The purpose of the history, titled *Cherokee Marsh: Win - Draw - Compromise?*, was to show the challenges of making public policy in the face of competing interests. As an example, Ms. Baumann tells the story of the decades-long campaign (which continues today) to protect the marsh and its surrounding uplands.

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh have received permission to post the document on our website. You can find it here:

<http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org/wetlands.htm>

## Explore Cherokee Marsh on Skis and Snowshoes

*Jan Axelson*

Cherokee Marsh is a different world in winter. No mosquitoes! A snow-covered landscape is an invitation to explore area trails on skis or snowshoes.

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's South Unit has three miles of trails groomed for classic (in-track) skiing. The trails have no user fee. Access the trails from the corner of Wheeler Rd. and School Rd. Park in the small lot by the waste-oil depot or go through the open gate to the winter-only upper lot.

The park's North Unit has three miles of ungroomed trails for skiing, snowshoeing, and winter hiking. Some of the trails also serve as maintenance roads and might be plowed. Access these trails from the parking lot at the north end of N. Sherman Ave.

When the ground is bare, try a winter hike. Whatever your mode of travel, watch for red-tailed hawks cruising, bald eagles along the river, turkeys feeding in open areas, woodpeckers, chickadees, and deer. Northsiders are fortunate to have these great natural areas so close to home.

(A version of this article will appear in the NorthSide News.)

## Thanks to All Who Helped Make the Annual Meeting a Success

The contributions of many volunteers and local businesses are essential in making our annual meeting a success.

Thanks to the **Lakeview Branch Library** for once again providing a great location for the meeting and helping to get the room ready.

For generous contributions of door prizes and silent-auction items, thanks to:

**Benvenuto's Italian Grill**

**Culver's Northport**

**Don Hammes**

**Jim's Meat Market**

**Jung's Garden Center Northport**

**North Side True Value Hardware**

**Pizza Hut Northport**

**PDQ Northport**

**Dick Walker**

**Dorothy Wheeler**

And thanks to the **volunteers** who helped with setting up, keeping things running smoothly during the meeting, and cleaning up afterwards.

## Madison and Dane County Seek Public Input on Parks

Both the Madison Parks Division and Dane County Parks are updating their Park and Open Space Plans. The City's plan will cover 2011-2016, and the County's plan is for 2012-2016.

The plans serve as a long range planning guide for decisions made by City and County Boards and

Commissions, agencies and staff. The plans are tools that guide decisions for a variety of Park and Open Space issues such as policies, park acquisitions, facility development, and funding. A plan is also a necessary component to be eligible for Federal and State grants.

### City of Madison

#### Information about the City of Madison's Park and Open Space Plan 2011-2016 Update

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/about/parksopenspaceplan.cfm>

#### North Side Public Meeting

February 10, 7-9 pm

Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr., Madison

#### Online Survey – deadline to participate February 15.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/parkandopenspace>

### Dane County

#### Information about Dane County's Park and Open Space Plan 2012-2016 Update

[http://www.countyofdane.com/lwrp/parks/open\\_space\\_plan.aspx](http://www.countyofdane.com/lwrp/parks/open_space_plan.aspx)

## Events Calendar

### Help remove survey ribbons

The City of Madison has completed its tree survey in a portion of Cherokee Marsh and would like some help removing the survey ribbons.

**Saturday, Feb. 12, 10 am to 12 noon.**

Meet in the parking lot of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park South Unit, 5002 School Rd. (corner of Wheeler Rd. and School Rd.)

We will be working mostly off trail, in the snow unless it has melted, so wear boots and dress for the weather. Bring a bag to hold the ribbons you collect.

For more info, call 241-5828 or call 215-0426 on the day of the event.

### Madison Parks Volunteer Recognition Dinner

**Monday, March 14, 6-8 pm**

Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 3330 Atwood Ave.

All Parks volunteers welcome. For more info, call Anne at 267-4919

### Save the Dates

Details to come on these tours in partnership with Madison Audubon

April 22 (Friday)

#### Evening at Cherokee Marsh

May 7 (Sat.)

#### Cherokee Marsh Paddle

May 11 (Wed.)

#### Warbler Walk at Cherokee Marsh

June 25 (Sat.)

#### Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh

August 6 (Sat.)

#### Canoe Cherokee Marsh Ecological Restoration



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

## Conservation Lobby Day Is Wednesday, March 16

On Conservation Lobby Day, hundreds of citizens from across Wisconsin descend on the Capitol to share their conservation values with their Legislators. Conservation Lobby Day is a unique opportunity to share your conservation stories and experiences with legislators and have a huge impact on conservation policies affecting all of Wisconsin. As we head into the 7th annual Conservation Lobby Day, there is one thing we can guarantee-when citizens come together to make their conservation values known, legislators listen!

Find out how you can help at:

<http://www.conservationvoters.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

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.