

THE CHEROKEE MARSH NEWS

Cherokee Marsh Is a Wetland Gem!

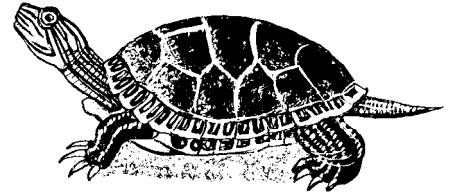
Jan Axelson

It's official: Cherokee Marsh is a wetland gem. On May 18, on a knoll overlooking Cherokee Marsh near the School Road boat landing, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) presented the news to a gathering of wetland enthusiasts, conservation professionals, and elected officials.

The occasion was the rollout of the Wisconsin Wetland Gems, a list of 100 high quality wetlands statewide. The WWA compiled the list to celebrate the state's diverse wetlands, including Cherokee Marsh.

The WWA's Becky Abel reminded those present that wetlands have many functions, including providing homes for fish and other wildlife, reducing flooding, improving water quality, connecting to ground water, protecting shorelines, and offering recreation. Department of Natural Resources Secretary Matt Frank stated that Wisconsin's wetlands helped minimize flood damage after last year's heavy rains. Topf Wells, Chief of Staff to Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, affirmed the County's commitment to preserving and restoring wetlands in the Lake Mendota watershed. Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton spoke about how the Art of the Marsh exhibit has helped increased appreciation for the marsh.

The occasion also included a reunion of former Madison School District teachers, administrators, and naturalists who led or were involved with summer programs and field trips in the marsh since 1971. The naturalists attending were Pat Woicak, Mickey Thomas, Barb Voglesang, Lois Seymor, Amy Rupnow, Don Samuelson, and Nan Cheney. The teachers and administrators attending were Gene Sturdevant, Henry Lipke, Rick Kalveledge, Cliff Howard, Bob Umberger, Mary Klecker, and Carolyn Anderson.



Some of the program's students, such as Middleton's Public Lands Manager Penni Klein, have gone on to careers in environmental fields.

Concluding the Gems event were tours on foot and in replica Voyageur canoes on loan from the Department of Natural Resources.



Photo by Mario E. Quintana

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Know Your Director: Nan Cheney

Nancy Helgesen Lyons

Nan Cheney is one of The Friends of Cherokee Marsh's newest directors, having begun as an interim director in November, 2008. She currently serves on the Strategic Planning Committee. Nan's love of nature led her to serve the Madison Metropolitan School District as a naturalist for 13 years, she said, "back in the early days of school (group) tours". She enjoyed leading tours in Cherokee Marsh then, and her love of the marsh still continues. Nan said that her hopes for the Friends are to "find the place in the environmental and political community to best serve the health of the marsh."

Nan has spent many hours over the years in volunteer service in the Madison community, and we appreciate the expertise she brings to the FOCM board. Thank you, Nan for all you're doing for the good of Cherokee Marsh!



Nan Cheney shares the history of the Cherokee Marsh naturalist program. Photo by Mario E. Quintana.

Welcome to Our New Directors

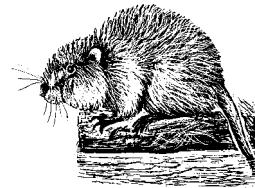
Jan Axelson

In April, the Friends welcomed two new directors, Ron Pegram and David Clutter. I asked each of them to say a few words for the newsletter, which they graciously agreed to do.

From Ron

I'm Ron Pegram. My background is in business management and I am currently a divisional manager with W.W. Grainger. I run a small business for them known as McFeely's. McFeely's is an Internet and catalog distributor of construction and woodworking supplies. In addition, I hold a Master's degree in business and I'm a licensed CPA in WI and VA.

I am interested in saving our natural resources because I think we've moved too far too fast when it comes to growth for growth's sake. I don't have nearly the environmental background as many of the members of FOCM but I do have a lot of experience when it comes to strategic planning. I'd like to help the board when it comes to clarifying our goals and determining a long-term vision.



From David

I am extremely pleased and excited to join the Friends of Cherokee Marsh board! For over 15 years I've worked as a conservation professional with county, statewide and national nonprofits and agencies, dedicating my life to protecting lands, waters and wildlife. I currently serve as Director of Wisconsin Corps and Lands Programs for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and help to build capacity to steward Wisconsin State Natural Areas. Over the years I've acquired, restored and managed natural lands, and facilitated regional conservation planning and coalition development. I am very much looking forward to working with this strong, diverse and dedicated board of trustees, and helping to protect and restore one of Wisconsin's wetland gems.

Crane Counting in Cherokee Marsh

Daniel Gomez-Ibanez, Ginny Swisher, Mary Manering, & Dennis Tande

Our report on this year's Midwest Crane Count is by two veteran counters (Mary and Dennis) who have been members of the International Crane Foundation and crane counters for almost 30 years; and two 'beginners' (Daniel and Ginny) who participated for the first time last year. The four of us count in two of the six designated sites on the marsh. Using kayaks, Mary and Dennis cover both sides of the Yahara, between the bridge on Hwy 113 and Token Creek. Daniel and Ginny cover the north end of Cherokee Marsh, a square mile east of the parking lot, counting from the observation platform that looks east across the marsh, from the hilltop, and walking between the two.

The count begins in near dark at 5:30 on an April morning, and goes for two hours. This year it was dry and about 40 degrees as we made our way to our sites. For Daniel and Ginny it felt much chillier than last year, but for Mary and Dennis, who had experienced much colder crane count mornings over the years (including snow), the morning was comfortable, and beautiful. When the alarm went off they wondered why they ever volunteered, but when they were out on the water, heading upriver toward Hwy 19, they knew why. The sun wasn't quite up, shades of pink turning to gold and a slight fog over the water. In short, it's a wonderful way to start the day, and the best volunteer job there is.

Data collection is largely by ear, except when cranes fly into view. The observer needs to distinguish calls from inside the site from those outside; to make notes rapidly as calls come from every direction; to try to decide if a call is coming from a new spot or not; and sometimes, to try to keep warm. At 5:42 a.m., Daniel and Ginny heard a single call to the northwest, answered by first one, then another one, then another. The calls came thick and fast, nearly overlapping with one another, but they were able to identify 8 distinct directions from which they heard either unison calls from breeding pairs or single calls. At around 6:00 a.m. a brassy call from a flying crane started a second symphony of calls inside and outside the area. Calling continued on and off until nearly 7:30. During the two hours, they saw 3 cranes in flight, heard 15 unison calls from four pairs, and 58 guard calls or other single calls. They estimated that they heard 14 cranes total. Listening conditions were good, with not much noise from the freeway or planes taking off.



*Mary Manering counts cranes at sunrise in Cherokee Marsh.
Photo by Dennis Tande.*

Mary and Dennis counted 15 cranes and saw 2 fly over. This was fewer sightings than usual, but the cranes were as noisy as ever. For the past several years, the usual count for their site has been in the teens. This number should not change much since the cranes will not over-populate any one area. They are very territorial, so each of the nesting pairs will keep other cranes away.

Mary and Dennis have seen many physical changes in the marsh. The land formations have changed over the past 20 years, primarily due to flooding. They have seen islands and peninsulas disappear, and the shoreline be reconfigured. They commented that the marsh is in danger--but they are hopeful that the extensive restoration projects will help it become more stable. Dane County is very fortunate to have such a beautiful natural resource, but it is threatened by heavy rains and high lake levels.

Note: Last year only 49 out of the 107 sites in Dane County were counted, and this year one of the six sites on the marsh was not counted (though it has been in the past). If you are interested in volunteering next April, contact the county coordinator, Brandon Krueger, at curlykru@yahoo.com, or visit the International Crane Foundation website, www.savingcranes.org.

Upcoming Events in and around the Marsh

WATERSHED WALKS

Wednesday evenings through June 17. A series of walks in the upper Yahara watershed and beyond. Sponsored by the Benedictine Women of Madison. See cherokeemarsh.org for a link to the schedule.

ART OF THE MARSH

An exhibit of art that reflects Cherokee Marsh. Presented by the Northside Artists Group and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh. Through July 30, the show is at Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton's office in the State Capitol (East 16).

GARLIC MUSTARD PULLING

June 6 (Saturday), noon - 3:00 pm.

Help remove the invasive garlic mustard that crowds out native spring wildflowers in the woods.

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit, 6098 North Sherman Ave. Meet near the parking lot restrooms.

Sponsored by the Madison Area Weed Warriors. To volunteer or for more information, call (608) 266-5949.

VOYAGEUR CANOE PADDLE

Friday, June 12, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm and 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm, plus if demand warrants, also Saturday, June 13, 9 am - 10:30 am and 10:30 am - noon.

Tour Cherokee Marsh in a Department of Natural Resource replica of a Voyageur canoe. Each of the two canoes holds ten people. This event is part of Dane County's Take a Stake in the Lakes weeks.

Launch at the School Rd. Boat Landing, 802 Wheeler Rd, Madison. From Hwy 113 (Northport Drive), go north on School Rd. to the junction with Wheeler Rd. Proceed north on the gravel road to the landing.

Reservations required. To sign up, contact Steve at (608) 347-0907 or slimbach@wisc.edu

WETLAND CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE

June 21-26 at Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center in Madison. Registration fee.

Sponsored by the North Central Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and others. More info at www.sws.org

BUTTERFLIES OF CHEROKEE MARSH

June 27, 10 am to noon

Join a walk to view butterflies in the marsh. Sponsored by the Madison Audubon Society and the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit., 6098 North Sherman Ave.. Meet in the parking lot.

www.naba.org/chapters/nabawba/fieldtrips.html

YAHARA HEIGHTS COUNTY PARK VOLUNTEER DAY

July 10 (Friday), 9:15 am - noon

Help restore prairie. The work may include cutting and digging invasive plants and collecting early prairie seeds.

Meet on Caton Lane. Going north on HWY 113, turn right (east) on River Rd., then right on Riverview Dr., and right on Caton Lane.

A project of the Dane County Parks Adult Conservation Team. To sign up, contact Rhea at (608) 224-3601.



Tour Cherokee Marsh in a Voyageur canoe!

Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Inc.

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*To protect, preserve, and restore
the beauty, value, and health of the
Cherokee Marsh and upper Yahara
River watershed*