

# The Cherokee Marsh News

*The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh*

## A Former Resident Remembers the Marsh as It Was

Anita Weier

It was a fantastic childhood – growing up on a family farm in the Cherokee Marsh.

Nicholas Havey’s family moved to the farm in about 1948, after living on School Road. He was six at the time, and he lived there until high school graduation.

Now 68, he recently took a walk through the past as he guided me through old haunts in what is now Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park’s North Unit.

His father Simon purchased the farm from relatives. His aunt, now 82, was born in the farmhouse.

“At first, we had no running water, no lights, an open well lined with stone and a hand pump,” Havey recalled. “The water bucket would freeze on the table at night.”

A potbelly stove gave some warmth.

Under the two-story wooden house was a stone basement with a dirt floor where his mother stored fruit and vegetables.

“We were poor but we didn’t know any other way,” Havey said. He was the oldest of six – four brothers and two sisters.

“We had pigs, sheep and cows. We raised corn, oats and hay,” he said. “My dad trapped muskrat and mink, and we hunted deer and pheasant.”

Havey showed me the spot where he shot his first deer, at age 12. He pointed out stones that once marked the entrance to the cellar.

Besides running the 78 acre farm, his dad also operated a portable sawmill.

*(continued on page 2)*



*Nicholas Havey shows the post that marked the boundary of the farm where he grew up in Cherokee Marsh. Photo by Anita Weier.*

### Inside This Issue

A Former Resident Remembers the Marsh as It Was	1
2011 Annual Meeting will Feature Local Fisheries Expert Kurt Welke	2
Surveys Provide a View of Cherokee Marsh in the 1970s	2
It’s Time to Renew Your Membership	3
Meet the Director Candidates	3
When an Opening is More Than Emptiness	5
Do We Have Your Email Address?	5
Events Calendar	6
Tree Survey Will Help with Land Management	6
Over 180 Acres of Farm Land Protected in Windsor	6
Membership Form	7

**Save the Date: January 29  
Annual Meeting &  
The Fish of Cherokee Marsh**

*See page 2*

**It’s Time to Renew Your Membership**

*See page 3*

## Former Resident

*(continued from page 1)*

The Fauerbach brewing folks and another family that owned the Gisholt Machine Company owned recreational land in the marsh and used to spend time there in the evenings and weekends, according to Havey.

"I used to ride my Shetland pony, and the Fauerbachs would give me a pop as a treat," he said.

In the 1950s, a military jet crashed in the marsh, and the pilot went to the Havey house to call the airport.

"When pilots got in trouble they dropped gas tanks, and one exploded 50 yards from me," he said.

The City of Madison ultimately condemned his dad's farm land and bought it. "He didn't want to sell," Havey recalled. "He had turned down a better offer from John Fox (of Cherokee Park Inc.) I'm sure glad the city owns this or there would be houses all over here."

Havey, who worked as an electrician at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for 34 years, said the marsh is not as lush as it used to be. "When developers dug Cherokee Lake, it drained the wetland," Havey said. "The Yahara River went way down."

*(A version of this story appears in the Northside News.)*

## Surveys Provide a View of Cherokee Marsh in the 1970s

In the 1970s, Cherokee Marsh school naturalists Maarit H. Threlfall, Lu Severson, and Don Samuelson performed a detailed survey of the plants and animals in what is now the North Unit of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.

The surveys are a precious window into what the park was like 30+ years ago. Some things haven't changed – red-winged blackbirds and cattails are still abundant. Changes since the 1970s include the introduction of turkeys, good numbers of sandhill cranes, and even an occasional flyover whooping crane.

Thanks to Pat Woicsek for providing a copy of the surveys to us.

You can see the surveys for yourself on our website:

[www.CherokeeMarsh.org/wetlands.htm](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org/wetlands.htm)



## 2011 Annual Meeting will Feature Local Fisheries Expert Kurt Welke

For our annual meeting in January, we're excited to announce special guest Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist for the Department of Natural Resources.

Kurt will share his knowledge about what fish lurk in Cherokee Marsh and nearby waters and the latest results from the carp-tracking study in Cherokee Marsh. Bring your questions about fish and fishing in Cherokee Marsh!

Kurt won a 2009 Dane County Waters Champion award for his work and advocacy for local watersheds and for his talent for giving educational, understandable, and entertaining presentations.

Everyone – members and non-members – are welcome to attend this event.

### **Saturday, January 29**

10:00 - 10:30 a.m. - member meeting to elect 2011 directors, refreshments

10:30 - 11:30 a.m. - Family-friendly Fishery Event with Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Biologist Kurt Welke.

### **Lakeview Branch Library**

2845 N. Sherman Ave., Madison  
(in the Northside Town Center / Sherman Plaza)



*Kurt Welke shows off his catch of the day.*

## It's Time to Renew Your Membership

How can you show your support for Cherokee Marsh and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh? It's easy; just renew your membership this December.

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

### What We Did This Year

In 2010, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh:

- Advocated to protect land and water quality in the Cherokee Marsh watershed by supporting public purchase of land, stormwater management, and groundwater protection.
- Received a \$500 grant to provide transportation for hands-on, outdoor, science education in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park. Worked with the local school-district naturalists to produce and distribute information to teachers about field studies for students in Cherokee Marsh.
- Co-sponsored the Send Your Legislator Down the River event that brought elected officials, City, County, and DNR staff, and Friends members together for a tour of the upper Yahara River.
- Co-sponsored and helped promote volunteer activities including improving wetland habitat, a prairie burn, removing invasives, trash removal, and collecting and planting prairie seeds.

## 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 our annual member meeting (see page 2), the members elect directors for the coming two years.

Directors normally serve 2-year terms, with half of the terms expiring in even-numbered years and the other half in odd-numbered years. Because we added director positions in 2010, some candidates are running for 1-year terms to maintain the balance.

Our 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 our board or helping out on a committee, contact Jan at [info@CherokeeMarsh.org](mailto:info@CherokeeMarsh.org) or 608-241-5828.

Here are statements from the seven candidates for seven open positions in January's election. Directors Jan Axelson, Muriel Simms, and Dick Walker are in the middle of their

- Supported a \$20,000 DNR grant to Dane County's Land and Water Resources Department to track carp and study sediments in the upper Yahara River.
- Co-sponsored and helped promote walks and paddles in the marsh and surrounding lands. Sponsored Cherokee Marsh Day at the Northside Farmers Market.

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

### Is My Membership Up for Renewal?

All memberships expire on December 31. If you joined the Friends after June 30, 2010, your membership is paid through December 31, 2011. 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 emailed newsletter six times a year with the latest updates on what's happening in and around the marsh.

### How to Renew

Sending your renewal now will save us the time and expense of sending reminders. A member renewal form is on the last page of this newsletter and also at

[www.CherokeeMarsh.org](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org)

We appreciate and rely on your support!



2-year terms and thus aren't up for re-election. Current director Sheri Harper will retire from the board at the end of her term in January.

### Two-year term

The terms of these candidates will end at our annual meeting in January, 2013.

#### Timothy Baker

I first became interested in Cherokee Marsh as a fisherman, realizing that this marsh is tremendously important to the water quality and ecology of the entire chain of Yahara lakes. Since moving from West to East three years ago, I have found the marsh to be a great place to walk and explore nature with my wife, Beth, and two small children, Della and Dorothy. Concerned about the health of the marsh, especially in the face of potential development, I joined this organization, sat in on several board meetings, and eventually joined the board as an interim director this year. It is my intent to help the FOCM strengthen efforts to educate the public and advocate  
*(continued on page 4)*

# Candidates

*(continued from page 3)*

for the health of the marsh ecosystem. My personal interests related to the marsh include fishing, native plants (especially prairie), and birding.

## **Janet Battista**

I have been a northside resident for 17 years and an avid user of Cherokee Marsh for about 18. The remaining northside wild places, including Cherokee Marsh, need protection if they are to survive population growth. 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. The Friends have made great progress in this area since I was on the Board a few years ago, with a great newsletter, days at the Northside Farmer's Market, trips and tours, and website. I hope I can help keep the ball rolling by being a Board member again.

## **Dana Erlandsen**

As a walker, canoeist, and skier, Cherokee Marsh is part of my life in all seasons. I'd like to help 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 have over 20 years experience with law, administration and nonprofits, and would like to continue to use that experience to benefit Cherokee Marsh.

## **Lesleigh Luttrell**

I have been a fan of Cherokee Marsh for 30 years or more, enjoying it as a hiker, birder, and for a couple of years as a Bluebird Trail monitor. I have been involved with a variety of organizations on the Northside, include NESCO (North/Eastside Senior Coalition), Friends of Lakeview Library, and the Northside Community Council. All of these groups work to improve life for all Northsiders, and I've been proud to be part of that effort. I consider Cherokee Marsh to be the crowning jewel of the Northside and take seriously our responsibility to preserve it, both for ourselves and for it's importance to the folks who enjoy the downstream side of the Yahara watershed.

## **Justin Sargent**

I started serving on the Friends board because I feel strongly that we must act to safeguard 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. 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.

## **One-year term**

The terms of these candidates will end at our annual meeting in January, 2012.

## **Anita Weier**

As the environmental reporter for The Capital Times, I became aware of the importance of Cherokee Marsh to the Madison area and its lakes. I also live near the marsh and enjoy walking there. The marsh is truly a Wetland Gem that deserves protection. It provides habitat for wildlife, protects water quality and gives residents of the region a place to relax and enjoy hikes through wetlands, forest and prairie.

It is vital that the Friends of Cherokee Marsh continue efforts to protect the marsh from its increasingly urban surroundings and to help restore wetland, prairie and oak savanna environments. I would be proud to continue as a director of this fine organization.

## **Dorothy Wheeler**

I've had a lifelong interest in protecting the environment. I won election to the county board emphasizing the importance of keeping our urban environment as clean as possible. People should also be friendly to ecosystems already established for wildlife. I feel that human influence should be strictly controlled. I think that if we humans despoil the lakes and streams along with polluting the air that our descendants will pay a heavy price. Cherokee Marsh exists for its ecosystems in the marsh and for filtering the water that flows into Lake Mendota helping to keep the lake clean. It is a treasure in our midst and we must work to protect this most important area!

Thanks to Charlotte Blotz of Madison Parks for leading our full-moon hike on Oct. 23. Thanks also to Dorothy Wheeler for providing fixings for s'mores, and to Dorothy, Janet Battista, and Jim Hughes for tending the fire. The clouds kept the moon away, but all who attended enjoyed the rare chance to experience the park in the dark.

# When an Opening is More Than Emptiness

Alex Singer

As anyone who has walked or paddled the Cherokee Marsh and environs knows, there is a variety of habitat types to be discovered, from wetland to savanna. While there are at least five species of oak to enjoy (per the 1973 survey, now found on the Friends' website), the Bur Oak is among the more distinctive, especially with its autumn yellow-based color combinations that remain on the tree (like all oaks) long into the fall. An "oak opening" is one of Wisconsin's rarest remaining native ecosystems, and Cherokee Marsh has some fine remains of them on upland bordering the wetlands.

Wisconsin oak openings are a part of the Midwestern oak savanna concentration, one of three in North America. A savanna oak generally develops in an open area where competition is reduced, which in the Midwest is usually a prairie, and these scattered oaks develop into large trees that receive maximum sunlight, with large lower branches that sweep close to the ground. The open nature of the oak savanna results in the establishment of numerous kinds of prairie plants, but in addition to the prairie-like and woodland-like herbaceous plants, a third category of savanna specialists that grows best at intermediate light intensities multiplies the diversity of vegetation found.

Bur Oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*) are hardwood trees that commonly live 200 to 300 years, often much longer; in the northern section of the Marsh there are a pair that could date from the 1700s. It is tall (from 100-120 feet), a fairly slow-growing tree with a massive trunk (up to 10 feet), stout branches and corky ridges on stems, with a medium and somewhat rugged bark. Bur Oak leaves are 4-10 inches long, the upper half being broadest, with deep and rounded lobes. The acorns are the largest of any North American oak (thus the Latin name *macrocarpa* – large fruit), over half covered by a fringed cup, and are an important wildlife food.

The openness of the oak savanna is usually maintained by fire, and the Bur Oak is not only fire resistant, but



Have you seen this oak savanna in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park? Photo by Janet Battista.

possesses significant drought resistance by virtue of a long taproot. At the time of European settlement, there were about 50 million acres of oak savannas in the Midwest, but were among the earliest areas to be settled since one could avoid the intense summer heat by building in a savanna grove at the edge of a prairie. Even if the trees weren't cut down, their roots were damaged by nearby digging, rolling over, and walking upon, and offending branches were cut off; the herbaceous layer would be quickly eliminated by trampling or mowing to keep down tall "weeds". Much of the vast savanna area was destroyed during the settlement period in the latter half of the 19th century; at most, Midwestern savannas today amount to only about 30,000 acres, much of which is degraded.

Let us enjoy and continue to build upon the diversity that is Cherokee Marsh.

*Alex Singer is a new Northside resident who greatly enjoys his proximity to Cherokee Marsh and other green areas.*



Duane Raver, USFWS

## Do We Have Your Email Address?

If you received this newsletter in the mail, we don't have your email address!

Our newsletter goes out six times a year by email to all members who provided an email address on their membership form. For this issue only, we mailed the newsletter to members whose email addresses we lack.

To begin receiving every issue of the newsletter, send your email address to us at [info@CherokeeMarsh.org](mailto:info@CherokeeMarsh.org). Family memberships can have two email addresses. You can also access current and past newsletters at [www.CherokeeMarsh.org](http://www.CherokeeMarsh.org)

## Events Calendar

Just one event...

### Annual Meeting / The Fish of Cherokee Marsh

January 29 (Saturday), 10 am to 11:30 am

Lakeview Branch Library, 2845 N. Sherman Ave.

### Tree Survey Will Help with Land Management



The City of Madison's Forestry Division, with assistance from a private surveying firm, has been surveying the trees on City land north of Wheeler Rd., between School Rd. and Comanche Way. The survey is creating a record of the species and diameters of trees of interest in the area.

*Photo by Jan Axelson.*

### Over 180 Acres of Farm Land Protected in Windsor

Good news from upstream – an agricultural conservation easement has been placed on over 180 acres of high-quality farm land in the Town of Windsor, east of the Village of DeForest.

Under the terms of the easement, the farm family voluntarily gave up the right to build additional houses on the farm, ensuring that the fertile land will always be available for farming.

Four years ago Windsor created a purchase of development rights program to protect farmland, modeled on the Town of Dunn's successful program. The Natural Heritage Land Trust has been assisting the town in the implementation of the program; Friday's transaction was Windsor's first.

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



*Volunteers collect seeds in the prairie at Yahara Heights County Park. Photo by Jan Axelson*



#### 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

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.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <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.