

# The Cherokee Marsh News

The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh

## Meet the Farmers of the Cherokee Marsh Watershed

Jan Axelson

The uplands that surround Cherokee Marsh are home to a number of active farms. At a recent Northside Farmers Market, I spoke with several folks who farm in the Cherokee Marsh watershed.

John Binkley and Laura Purdy manage Equinox Community Farm just west of the Yahara River at Bong Rd and River Rd. John grew up across the street from the farm. John's mother, Mary Binkley, is a former Cherokee Marsh naturalist guide for the Madison Area School District.

On the 5-year-old farm's 32 acres, John and Laura grow just about every vegetable that grows in southern Wisconsin. John says the soil, which was conventionally farmed in corn and soybeans for 15 years, is a silt clay that was "like concrete" at first. But growing cover crops and adding other organic matter has improved the soil structure.

Most of Equinox's produce goes to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) customers who sign up to receive weekly boxes. Tomatoes are the best sellers at the market. New this year are Laura's pickles and jams. A plan to offer pick-your-own strawberries had to be postponed until next year due to this year's heavy spring rains, which flooded the strawberry patch. The farm also has a few pigs, goats, and turkeys.

John likes the variety his work offers, working outside, seeing a tangible outcome from his labor, and being his own boss.

Next door to John and Laura, Peg Whiteside owns Earth Rise Farm. Peg's parents bought the farm in 1945, and Peg continues to operate 74 acres of her land plus 34 acres that belong to a neighbor.



John Binkley and Laura Purdy grow veggies and fruits for CSA customers and the Northside Farmer's Market. Photo by Jan Axelson.

This summer, Earth Rise Farm is home to ten cows and 23 young cattle including nine calves. The farm also has soybeans, corn, asparagus, rhubarb, mulberries, and cherries. Grass strips help to prevent erosion on the farm's *continued on page 2*

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**You're Invited  
to  
Marsh Madness!**

*See page 3 for details.*

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rolling hills. A portion of the land is in pasture and hay for the farm's grass-fed beef.

Peg, who worked as a civil engineer for 34 years, likes working outdoors and "watching the critters grow up." Her best selling product is ground beef. Peg says, "the Northside Farmers Market is a good outlet for selling direct," including finding customers for quarter sides of beef.

Several farmers rent garden plots from Peg and sell their produce at the Northside market. Nhia Vang grows lettuce, green beans, flowers, and more. Crops grown by Vang Yang and his wife, Cheng Vue, include raspberries, strawberries, flowers, tomatoes, potatoes, and green beans.

You can talk with and buy food from these local farmers at the Northside Farmers Market every Sunday through October, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, in the Northside Town Center at the corner of Northport Dr and N. Sherman Ave.



*Peg Whiteside raises beef cattle on her farm near Cherokee Marsh. Photo by Jan Axelson.*

## North Unit Signboard Has a New Look



*The new signboard, front and back. Photos by Jim Hughes.*

The next time you're in the North Unit, take a look at the new materials on the signboard. Many folks contributed to this project initiated by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

Thanks to:

- Madison Parks Surveyor Dan Rodman for the new trail map.
- Laura Whitmore, Russ Hefty, intern Brittany Kellen, and others at Madison Parks for printing the new trail map and other materials and replacing the sign's protective sheet.
- Math Heinzl at the UW's Land Information & Computer Graphics Facility for designing the area map.
- The Dane County Environmental Council for providing grant funds for the area map.
- Third-grade students at Glendale Elementary School, student teacher Jaime Borotz, and Friends volunteer Muriel Simms for a poster welcoming visitors.
- The Wisconsin Wetlands Association for permission to post the Cherokee Marsh Wetland Gem fact sheet.

# Friends Help Clean Up Cherokee Canoe Landings

Paul Noeldner

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh dove in with other volunteers to Take a Stake in our Waters on Saturday, June 10. Dick Walker, Dana Erlandsen, Janet Battista, Jan Axelson and I were joined by Gary Stone and staff from Paddleboard Specialists and some helpful fishermen to clean up the Cherokee Marsh Catfish Court and School Road canoe landings and adjacent shorelines.

We were pleased to find less litter than expected but still removed a substantial amount of recyclable cans, bottles, and plastic, and trash including several nasty tangles of fish line and tackle. Dick survived a fishhook accident that fortunately only hooked his shirt and took home a nice treble hook fishing bait, and Dana was rewarded with a sexy new set of shades.

A highlight of the day was watching a fisherman who was sitting by the Yahara bridge in a circle of discarded bait cartons, beer cans, and other litter, quietly join us and help pick up the trash. Like fishing, Its fun, and it's catching!

Another highlight was talking to a dog park regular who expressed concerned about marsh restoration efforts that seemed to be restricting fishing access. He was glad to hear about the long range plans, opportunities for public input and the efforts of the Friends.

When people feel like it's fair and others are helping, they will often do the right thing, even things that seem unfair or even disgusting to take on alone. Everyone enjoyed a beautiful day and the cool soaring cottonwood grove cathedral along the shoreline ringing with bird song.

People who have not yet visited this part of Cherokee Marsh can easily find the Catfish Court canoe landing by turning off Highway 113 on River Road and taking an immediate right on Catfish Court. This leads directly to the parking lot for the dog park and a path to the canoe launch. The path ends at a convenient large low wooden dock platform for safely launching canoes, kayaks, and

paddleboards to enjoy the beauty of lower Cherokee Marsh and a variety of wildlife and local and migrating birds. The School Road boat and canoe/kayak landing is at the corner of School Rd and Wheeler Rd.

If you paddle past the dog exercise area on the north shoreline be prepared to see a tennis ball fly over followed by Cherokee's native alligator, the soggy happy Golden Retriever.

The Take a Stake in Our Waters initiative, sponsored by the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission with help from County staff and the Clean Lakes Alliance, is now an ongoing activity rather than a single day. So stuff a trash bag in your pocket whenever you hike or paddle and you can do your part to help pick up litter whenever you get the chance! The cleaner it is, the easier and more motivating it is for everyone to do the right thing.



*Friends volunteers Dick Walker, Janet Battista, and Dana Erlandsen remove trash from the shoreline. Photo by Paul Noeldner.*

## Marsh Madness Is Back!

Join us on **Friday, September 6**, from **5:00 – 7:00 pm** at the **VFW on County HWY CV**. We'll have complimentary snacks, brats on the grill outside, and conversation. Plus, the VFW has a fabulous hilltop view of the marsh.

The Truax Longmire VFW Post 8483 is at 5737 County HWY CV. Traveling north on Packers Ave/HWY 113, stay in the right lane to continue on County HWY CV. At just under 3 miles from HWY 113, the VFW is on the left. Look for the airplane at the curve.

Meet and get to know those who share your interest in safeguarding the marsh. Everyone welcome!

### Keep in touch!

"Like" our Facebook page:

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

Join our email group:

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

# Celebrate Bird City

Jan Axelson and Paul Noeldner

Madison will soon be a Bird City! Much as Tree City designation helps cities enjoy and protect trees, Bird City helps cities enjoy birds and save important habitat for migrating birds and local wildlife.

To be certified as a Bird City, the community must show that it works to create and protect bird habitat and to educate the public about the importance of birds and their conservation needs.

On **Sunday, September 29**, Cherokee Marsh and other locations will be host a Bird City Celebration featuring a variety of activities:

## Live Birds of Prey

12:30 - 1:30 pm

**Lakeview Branch, Madison Public Library**, 2845 N Sherman Ave in the Northside Town Center next to Pierce's Market. (Yes, the library will be open on this Sunday only!)

Hoo's Woods raptor education center will present a program featuring live raptors and other birds of prey.

## Cherokee Marsh Bird Walk

5:30 - 7:00 pm (tentative, check website to verify time)

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Meet in the main parking lot at the end of N. Sherman Ave.

Take a family-friendly guided walk to look for migrating birds and other creatures. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Madison Audubon, and Madison Parks.

## And More

Plus more activities throughout the day at the Warner Park Community and Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr., and other locations on the Northside, including Maple Bluff, and around Madison.

Find out more about Bird City and the celebration at [birdcitywisconsin.org](http://birdcitywisconsin.org) and [cityofmadison.com/parks](http://cityofmadison.com/parks)

# Bike Rack Installed at South Unit



*We asked Parks for a bike rack in the South Unit, and they installed one. It's at the boat landing at the corner of School Rd and Wheeler Rd. Photo by Jan Axelson.*

# Photography Contest Announced

A collaboration of artists, poets and water resource experts invite Dane County photographers to participate in "Beyond the Water's Edge," a creative investigation of Dane County lakes, rivers and wetlands to celebrate 25 years of service from the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission.

The contest is open from July 22 to August 22. This is a juried photography contest with selected poetry to accompany the contest winners in five categories: beauty and (re-)vision, recreation and tourism, caring for our waters, troubled waters, and water and daily life.

An exhibition of winning photographs and accompanying poetry is planned for November and December 2013 at the Goodman South Madison Branch of the Madison Public Library. The Lakes and Watershed Commission will rotate the exhibition around the county in 2014.

"This year, the Lakes and Watershed Commission marks the 25th year that it has been working for Dane County residents and the waters on which they depend," said Melissa Malott, Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission Chair and Contest Honorary Co-Chair. "Inviting photographers and poets to help us celebrate the good work done by so many to protect and improve our waters seemed a perfect way to honor this milestone."

Contest details are at [dclwc25.org](http://dclwc25.org).

## Have you contributed to the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund?

In less than five months, we've raised \$5135 to support the management, protection, conservation, restoration and appreciation of Cherokee Marsh and its watershed. If you haven't contributed to the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund yet, please consider making a donation.

With a donation of any amount, you can request a free 1-year membership in the Natural Resources Foundation (NRF) of Wisconsin. NRF membership includes access to members-only field trips to interesting natural areas around the state. Donors of \$100 or more in 2013 will receive special recognition as Founding Contributors.

Donations of any amount appreciated! Use the form on the last page of this newsletter or visit [Cherokeemarsh.org/conserv](http://Cherokeemarsh.org/conserv) to donate online or for more information.

# Events Calendar

Don't miss out on last-minute events that don't make it into this calendar. For the latest event information, "Like" us on Facebook, join our email group, or visit CherokeeMarsh.org.

## Help Remove Invasive Giant Reed Grass

Various dates, Aug/Sept

Help bundle and cut invasive phragmites (giant reed grass) that is invading a high-quality wetland in the Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area. Contact Jan at info@Cherokeemarsh.org or 608-241-5828 for details.

## Paddle the Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh

Saturday, August 3, 8:00 – 11:00 am

**School Road boat landing.** 5002 School Rd, corner of School Rd and Wheeler Rd.

Enjoy the fragrant beauty of thousands of American lotus flowers in bloom while paddling the upper Yahara River at Cherokee Marsh. Learn about the crucial role these plants play in a decade-long effort to protect and restore the river and shoreline.

Bring your own canoe, kayak, or stand-up paddleboard and meet at the School Road boat landing. Sponsored by Madison Parks, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, and Madison Audubon Society.

## Help Collect Seeds for a Prairie Restoration

Tuesday, Aug 13, 9:00 am – noon

AND

Saturday, Sept 14, 9:00 am – noon

**Yahara Heights County Park, Caton Lane entrance.**

Heading north on HWY 113/Northport Dr., just past HWY M, turn right on River Rd., then right on Riverview Dr., and right on Caton Ln. For volunteer events only, drive into the park from the end of Caton Ln.

Help collect seeds that will be used to plant new prairie at Yahara Heights and other parks around the county. Join us to view this successful prairie restoration and to help out!

Wear long pants and wear or bring a long-sleeved shirt and hat. Be prepared for mosquitoes. We'll have pruning clippers and gloves or bring your own.

Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Dane County Parks.

## Marsh Madness

Friday, September 6, 5:00 – 7:00 pm

**Truax Longmire VFW Post 8483, 5737 County HWY CV**

See page 3 for details.

## Celebrate Bird City

Sunday, September 29, all day

Multiple locations

See page 4 for details.

## Tour the New Trail System at the Stormwater Ponds

Wednesday, October 9, 5:30 – 7 pm

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, South Unit.** Meet at the corner of Wheeler Rd and Ilene Rd.

Explore the new trail system created in 2012 as part of a stormwater pond/natural landscape restoration project. Sponsored by Madison Parks, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, and Madison Audubon Society.



## 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

Paul Noeldner

Justin Sargent

Muriel Simms

Dick Walker

Dorothy Wheeler (Secretary)

### Advisor

Don Hammes

# Membership Form

Join or renew online at [CherokeeMarsh.org](http://CherokeeMarsh.org)

## YES! I want to be a Friend of Cherokee Marsh.

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. Your contribution of time, talent, or funds will help preserve and restore the crucial wetland ecosystem of Cherokee Marsh.

Memberships are per calendar year. New memberships paid after June 30 are valid through the current and following year.

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- Mallard \$50
- Additional donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in honor of \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in memory of \_\_\_\_\_
- Osprey \$100
- Sandhill Crane \$250
- Great Blue Heron \$500

Find out more about the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund at [CherokeeMarsh.org/conserv](http://CherokeeMarsh.org/conserv)

**Additional donation to the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Family member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Second Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  Don't publicize my financial support.

I'm interested in helping with:

- Field work
- Publicity
- Tours
- Education
- Board/Committees

Other \_\_\_\_\_

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!

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh is a Federal tax-exempt charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.