

The Cherokee Marsh News

The newsletter of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh

It Was a Surprise Party! Friends receive DNR Volunteer Steward of the Year award

Janet Battista

This year our annual party at the VFW proved more than fun. Amid glorious fall weather and expansive views of the Marsh, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) presented the Friends of Cherokee Marsh a proud new award: "Volunteer Steward of the Year." We were singled out among all the many State Natural Area volunteer groups statewide for the award.

See the comments by Jared Urban, the DNR's volunteer coordinator, below.

Congratulations go especially to Jim Hughes, Tim Nelson, Jan Axelson, Jim Krause, Paul Noeldner and the many others who have worked countless hours removing giant reed grass (phragmites) and girdling aspen in the historic sedge meadow and wetland that comprise the State Natural Area at Cherokee Marsh.

Besides Jared and Cherokee Friends, Russ Hefty, Madison Parks Division's Conservation Resource Supervisor; DNR botanist Kevin Doyle; DNR Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation Director Erin Crain, and State Natural Area volunteers from other locations attended the party. Don Hammes ("grill sergeant") kept brats and hamburgers flowing and lots of potluck food kept us busy.

After lunch and the award presentation, Jared and Kevin led a group of hikers into the State Natural Area. There we could see the dense stand of sedges and other native plants that have come in where volunteers have removed the invasive reed grass, and where native fall blossoms can still be seen.

Here is the statement from Jared about the award:

On Saturday the State Natural Areas (SNA) program was proud to recognize the Friends of Cherokee Marsh with the third annual Volunteer Steward of the Year Award at the SNA volunteer appreciation potluck.

The Friends efforts have benefitted Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area immensely. The Friends jumped quickly

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Friends VP Janet Battista (center) accepts the Friends' award from Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation Director Erin Crain. At right is DNR volunteer coordinator Jared Urban. Photo by Paul Noeldner.

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Suprise party *(continued from page 1)*

on board with the program in 2012 cutting, bundling, and treating an almost 2 acre clone of giant reed grass spreading into the diverse fen and wet prairie of Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area.

While giant reed grass removal has become their specialty, work has spread to include annual checks on purple loosestrife, cutting and piling brush, cutting buckthorn, girdling aspen, and removing other invasives despite the often tough walking conditions in the marsh.

The organization, experience, and enthusiasm of key, committed members have been driving forces behind the SNA restoration success of the group.

The Friends have effectively engaged other volunteers through United Way, REI, Shabazz high school, and various advertising methods, resulting in over 550 hours of labor in the past three years and multiple members leading group efforts.

Their efforts have not stopped with getting stuff done. They have also educated others by leading field trips at the marsh.

Thank you, Friends of Cherokee Marsh, for your great work!

Summer camp kids do art in Cherokee Marsh

Muriel Simms

Char DeVos, a member of the Northside Artist Group (NSAG), and myself, a member of NSAG and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, collaborated on a project called the Art-Marsh Project. The project was designed to teach the kids how to use watercolors and expose the kids to the marvels of Cherokee Marsh.

The summer camp staff at the Warner Park Community Center selected 16 fourth and fifth graders to participate. Ten of the 16 kids had never been to Cherokee Marsh. Every Wednesday morning beginning June 25 through July 23, Char taught the techniques of watercolor (e.g., pre-wetting with a sponge, laying in a wash, working wet-into-wet, and lifting out).

I assisted Char with helping the kids manage the challenges of *en pleine air* painting. *En pleine air* is a French expression meaning "in the open air." It simply means taking your paints outside and painting what you see.

Naturalist Ami Rupnow gave a guided tour. Ami's expertise about Cherokee Marsh was critical to the awareness the kids needed to have about the marsh. In addition to giving a history of the marsh, she helped them identify native plants and trees. She gave information about the American cow parsnip, horsetail, which the early settlers used as scoring pads, and the water hemlock.

Ami told the camp kids that recently, a giant reed grass (*Phragmites*) from foreign lands has invaded the sedge wetlands at Cherokee Marsh, crowding out many native plants.

Char, Muriel, and Ami helped the camp kids play the role of naturalists by guiding and encouraging them to draw the native plants.



Char and the Kids Prepare to Paint. Photo by Muriel Simms.

One of the kids said that before the art class, she did not know how to draw a tree, but now she did. After admiring her landscape painting, another kid said she was "impressed" with her own work. A camp boy said that after the previous class, he looked up a plant he had seen in the park on the Internet. Still another boy became curious about the invasive honeysuckle bush.

Char matted 10 pieces of work the kids did. Warner Park was gracious enough to allow these paintings to be displayed near the summer camp office for all to see. The Art-Marsh project was a successful experiment that gave this group of kids a grand experience in Cherokee Marsh.

Aerial photos provide a unique view of the marsh

These aerial photos, courtesy of Madison Parks, provide a unique view of the Yahara River, the marsh, and adjacent uplands.



Looking upstream from HWY 113, Yahara Heights County Park is on the left, and Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park is on the right.



This view of the river shows Yahara Heights County Park in the foreground with Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's South Unit across the river. Note the beds of American Lotus in the river!



Looking east towards the entrance road to Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit, the open woods in the foreground are where the red-headed woodpeckers nested this year.

Keep in touch!

"Like" our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/friends.of.cherokee.marsh

Join our email group:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/cherokeemarsh

Donations bring children to the marsh

For decades, the Madison Area School District has offered naturalist-led field studies for schoolchildren at Cherokee Marsh. The guides provide hands-on, guided, learning experiences tailored to the needs of each class.

Although the school district provides the naturalist guides, in recent years, classes have had to fund their own transportation to the marsh.

Depending on class size and distance, bus transportation can cost between \$80–\$200 for groups of 20–100 students. To save money, teachers often arrange for multiple classes to share a bus. Even so, many classes have a hard time finding funds for transportation.

In 2012, the Friends board committed to contributing \$500 per year to help pay for transportation. We also forwarded a \$1000 donation from Sisbro Social Justice Fund to the school district for transportation.

Thus far, contributions from the Friends and Sisbro have brought 1083 students, from kindergarten through grade 12, to Cherokee Marsh for field studies at an average cost of just over \$2.25 per student.

We think you will agree that this is money well spent!

Memorial donations received

The Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund has received a total of \$255 from seven donors in memory of former school district naturalist guide Mary Ann Varsos, who passed away in September.

We are most grateful for these generous donations to the fund.



Event Locations

(see page 5 for events)

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit. 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Travel north on N. Sherman Ave. to the main parking lot at the end of the gravel road.

Yahara Heights County Park, Caton Ln entrance. Heading north from downtown Madison 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.

Artist inspired by Cherokee Marsh woodpeckers

Peggy Macnamara is the artist-in-residence at the Field Museum in Chicago and an adjunct associate professor at the School of Art Institute of Chicago. She is also a friend of Friends member Arlene Koziol.

Arlene is a talented and prolific wildlife photographer whose photos we featured in the Aug/Sept 2014 newsletter. Inspired by Arlene's photos, Peggy created the painting shown here.

Here is a statement from Peggy about her work:

My work is about the study of nature. I hesitate putting myself in such a grand tradition, but there it is. I admire those that have gone before and find myself studying old techniques while pushing in new directions.

Unlike science where those that follow build on the knowledge discovered before them, artists seem to emulate and eventually grow into the concerns of their time.

I believe that by looking carefully at the entirety of nature I will learn to see better and gather an understanding of form and color that will make me a better artist.



This painting by Peggy Macnamara was inspired by Arlene Koziol's photos of red-headed woodpeckers in Cherokee Marsh. Image provided by Peggy Macnamara.

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**.

If you want to be added to our email notification list for volunteer events, email info@cherokeemarsh.org.

Monthly bird and nature walks

Sunday, Oct 5, 1:30 – 3:00 pm AND

Sunday, Nov 2, 1:30 – 3:00 pm AND

First Sunday of every month

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit

Free, family-friendly bird and nature walks. On Oct 5, join School District Naturalist Betty Downs to look for migrating birds and other signs of fall. Teachers, parents, and kids especially welcome! Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Madison Parks, and Madison Audubon Society. Contact Paul Noeldner at 608-698-0104

Prairie seed collecting

Monday, Oct 13, 9 am – noon

AND

Thursday, Oct 30, 9 am – noon

Yahara Heights County Park, Caton Ln entrance

Help collect seeds of prairie flowers for use in restorations in county parks. Wear long pants and long sleeved shirt. Bring drinking water. Gloves and pruning shears will be available; bring your own if you prefer. Contact Wayne Pauly, 608-575-0396. Sponsored by Dane County Parks.

Evening at Cherokee Marsh – South Unit

Wednesday, October 15, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, South Unit. Meet at 1000 Wheeler Rd. (corner of Wheeler Rd. and Ilene Ln.)

View the fall colors and learn about recent restoration efforts from Parks staff. Sponsored by Madison Audubon, Madison Parks, and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

Hayrides and Hikes + Walk with a Doc

Saturday, Oct 18, 9 am – noon

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit

9 am – noon, Hayrides and Hikes. The Friends of Cherokee Marsh are leading nature hikes (no charge), and Madison Parks is providing hayrides (\$2/person). No reservations needed.

9 – 10 am, Walk with a Doc. Join Dr. Lee Wilke, Director of the UW Health Breast Center, for a brisk, Saturday morning walk through Cherokee Marsh North Unit. Dr. Wilke will speak about the basics of breast cancer, with opportunities for you to ask questions.

Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Madison Audubon, and Madison Parks.

Madison Nonprofit Day Yelp Helps event

Tuesday, Oct 21, 6 – 8 pm

FEED Kitchens, 1219 N. Sherman Ave.

Stop by and see us at this free event highlighting local nonprofits and volunteer opportunities.

Year of the Fox: Wildlife Photos by

Stephen Lang

Saturday, Nov 8, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Lakeview Branch, Madison Public Library. 2845 N. Sherman Ave.

Stephen Lang has been photographing Wisconsin wildlife for the past 35 years and will present a selection of his Madison wildlife photos, including those of the fox family currently living in the Cherokee Park neighborhood. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

Directions to locations are on page 4.

Friends of Cherokee Marsh

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

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