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The Cherokee Marsh News April / May 2022



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Spring is here and many events are planned including bird walks, a frog walk, and opportunities to volunteer. See Upcoming Events in this newsletter to learn more.



Madison celebrates 50 years of conservation parks

At our annual meeting in January, we celebrated 50 years of Madison's conservation parks with presentations by Si Widstrand, retired development director, and Jay Walters, conservation technician. Here is more conservation park history from their presentations and other sources.

Established in 1971, Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park was one of Madison's first conservation parks. The City of Madison established its conservation park program to conserve high quality prairie, woods, wetlands, geological features and historical sites. Trail systems provide access for environmental education and enjoyment.

Cherokee Marsh played a major role in making elected officials and others aware of the need to protect land for conservation. In 1957, Paul Olsen, a conservationist and Midvale School principal, urged acquiring land at Cherokee Marsh and stressed the importance of protecting the natural areas, the fishery, and the health of downstream lakes. The idea had strong public support, but at the time, the city didn't have funds to buy the land.

By 1964, after approval to build the Cherokee Golf Course and the announcement of plans to build housing in what is now the Cherokee Park neighborhood, funding was found. In 1967, the city owned 934 acres in and

around the marsh.

With the addition of land at Cherokee Marsh and other locations, park managers realized that conservation land needed different management compared to parks used for activities such as sports and picnicking. In 1971, Madison's Parks and Open Space Plan defined conservation parks as a special type of park.

Today, Madison has 21 conservation parks including Cherokee Marsh's North, South, and Mendota units and Meadow Ridge Conservation Park. Over the years, staffing and other resources for managing conservation parks have increased, and management methods have evolved.

This year will see the introduction of goats in Cherokee Marsh's South Unit, near the corner of Wheeler Road and School Road. Temporary fences will enclose selected areas that have been overtaken by non-native, invasive brush. A small herd of goats hired from a local farm will be set loose to browse in the fenced area. Browsing usually doesn't kill the brush but sets it back and reduces the need for other control methods.

Si Widstrand, whose career at Madison Parks included working as a park ranger, conservation resources manager, and planning and development director, recalls, "Progress seemed really slow back in the early days, but then it accelerated. We've now accomplished so much more than I ever imagined, and it has happened only because so many people worked together carrying on the conservation tradition that goes back a long way in Madison. We don't always get what we want, but we always make progress because we keep trying."

Learn more about Madison's conservation parks and upcoming events:

[cityofmadison.com/parks/find-a-park/conservation](https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/find-a-park/conservation)



Share what you see, get help with ID

Here is an update on opportunities to volunteer by documenting plants and animals you see and hear.

Participate in the Nature Conservancy's City Nature Challenge

The Nature Conservancy is sponsoring a special opportunity to log and share your observations of the natural world.

Started in 2016 as a competition between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the City Nature Challenge (CNC) has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in and around their cities using biodiversity recording apps and platforms like iNaturalist.

Run by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the CNC is an annual four-day global urban bioblitz at the end of April. Cities participate in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see not only what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal, but also which city can

gather the most observations of nature, find the most species, and engage the most people in the event.

In 2021, over 400 cities participated, with more than 52,000 people making over 1.2 million observations of nature in the four days of the challenge. The 2022 City Nature Challenge (April 29 - May 2) is gearing up to be the biggest one yet.

To participate, **head outdoors any time from April 29 through May 2 and enter your sightings into iNaturalist.** (see below for more about iNaturalist.) Or join our bird and nature adventure on May 1 to look for spring birds. (See Upcoming events below.)

Share your observations

If you are outdoors, whether on your property, on neighborhood streets, or in nearby natural areas, citizen science is a way to help while increasing your knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

You can share observations and photos using a number of online resources. You can also explore observations made by others, for example to view what birds, butterflies, or flowers have been seen recently in your area.

Casting the widest net is [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org), where you can enter observations and photos of animals, plants, and fungi. Other users can help with ID if you are unsure. The website has a series of tutorials, and there is an app for mobile users. Many formal citizen science projects use inaturalist, including the [UW Urban Canid Project](https://www.urbanwildlife.org/), which collects observations of coyotes and red foxes. The iNaturalist [Seek app](https://www.inaturalist.org/seek) uses image recognition technology to attempt to identify plants and animals in photos you submit.

[Ebird.org](https://www.ebird.org/) focuses entirely on birds. Mobile users can use the ebird app for entering sightings and the Merlin app to help with ID. The Merlin app now includes sound ID for identifying birds by recording their calls in real time.

[Wisconsin butterflies](https://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org/) shows recent sightings and allows you to enter your observations.

Facebook has a variety of special-interest groups for sharing photos and information. Some, including the Wisconsin Naturalists and Badger State Naturalists groups, have a Wisconsin focus. Other groups focus on birds,

butterflies, dragonflies, and other areas of interest. All of these groups can be useful for getting help with IDs.

Monitor frogs and toads

Madison Parks is seeking volunteers to perform phenology surveys of frogs and toads for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The surveys require learning the local frog and toad calls (there are nine in our area) and then visiting a spot twice per week after dark from spring through early summer and documenting the calls heard.

The [Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey website](#) has links to videos with recordings of the calls for each species (and a link to a quiz) and information about how to participate. (Select *phenology surveys*.)

While this is a DNR citizen science program, Madison Parks is asking volunteers to consider monitoring in ponds and wetlands in Cherokee Marsh and other Madison conservation parks, as well as Warner Park and Tenney Park.

For more information about biological monitoring in the conservation parks and to learn about locations where Parks would like data, contact Paul Quinlan at PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com.

Other projects

Madison Friends of Urban Nature (FUN) has opportunities to **monitor bluebird boxes in local parks**. Contact Paul Noeldner at paul_noeldner@hotmail.com.

The [Wisconsin aquatic and terrestrial resources inventory](#) is a project of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) that recruits volunteers to monitor plant and animal species of special interest. Current targets include **dragonflies and damselflies, owls, marshbirds, nightjars, forest raptors, bats, turtles, rare plants, mussels, bumblebees, and karner blue butterflies**. The frog and toad surveys described above are also part of this project. The website has more information on each of these surveys.

The Rock River Coalition sponsors a **citizen-based stream monitoring program**. (The Yahara River is within the greater Rock River watershed.)

Training is available April 30 in Waunakee and at other locations and dates. [Learn more and sign up.](#)

And there's more! Check out this list of [citizen science opportunities, people and projects](#) from the UW-Madison Libraries.

Get help with ID

In addition to the resources above, a number of other websites and mobile apps can help with identifying plants, bugs, fungi, and more. An internet or app store search will turn up options to try.



Become a Master Naturalist

Friends of Urban Nature (FUN), a coalition of Madison Parks, friends groups, and nature groups, is happy to offer its sixth [Summer Wisconsin Master Naturalist training](#). Held on a series of Saturdays in July and August, this training offers a special focus on learning about nature recreation, nature education, nature restoration, and connecting communities and kids with nature.

Each Saturday session has a mix of indoor and outdoor education featuring morning and afternoon field trips. Naturalists and topic experts will help you discover and interpret the history, geology, human impacts, ecology, birds and wildlife of nearby urban natural areas including Warner Park, Cherokee Marsh, UW Arboretum, and the Lakeshore Nature Preserve.

The classes take place on six Saturdays, July 16 - Aug 20. Cost is \$275. Need-based scholarships are available, contact info@wimasternaturalist.org, 608-262-0020



About the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program

Supported through the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension, the Master Naturalist program promotes awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the natural environment by developing a network of well-informed volunteers dedicated to conservation service within their communities.

To become a Master Naturalist, individuals complete 40 hours of expert-led training at locations across the state. Equipped with new knowledge, experiences, and connections, Master Naturalists then go on to serve stewardship, citizen science, and education efforts in Wisconsin and continue their learning through advanced trainings.

[Learn more and register](#)



Provide your input for the Wisconsin Conservation Congress spring hearings

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress is the only statutory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to advise the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin's natural resources for present and future generations. The Congress accomplishes this through open, impartial, broad-ranged actions.

The Spring Hearings provide an opportunity for the public to weigh in on a wide range of natural resource-related topics.

You can provide input on Wisconsin's natural resource issues through the 2022 Spring Hearings which will again be online beginning **April 11, 2022 starting at 7:00 pm and remain open through 7:00 pm on April 14, 2022.**

There are no age or residency requirements to participate. You don't have to answer every question though responding with *no opinion* rather than leaving a question blank is preferred.

[More information about the hearings and how to participate.](#)

It can be daunting to look through the extensive set to questions provided. In this blog post, Madison Audubon provides advice about important questions to vote on: [Spring's almost here and so are the Hearings.](#)



Help honor Dorothy Wheeler with a bench at Lake View Hill Park

As the Dane County Supervisor for Madison's Northside, Dorothy Wheeler participated in the community meetings that resulted in the founding of the

Friends of Cherokee Marsh in 2007. In following years, Dorothy served as an advisor, board member, and secretary for our group. We benefitted greatly from her knowledge and practical advice about how to work with elected officials and others in local government.

A longtime Madison resident, Dorothy touched many lives in positive ways through her service on the County Board from 2004 to 2010 and her long career as a teacher in Madison public schools. An environmental advocate, Dorothy served on the boards of the Friends of Lake View Hill Park as well as the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and continues to be an active member of the Dane County League of Women Voters.

Dorothy led the effort to rezone and designate Lake View Hill as a Dane County Park, saving the land from development. Lake View Hill Park is located on the Northside at 1202 Northport Dr, near the Dane County Department of Human Services Building and the water tower.

Friends of Dorothy Wheeler would like to honor her with a bench at Lake View Hill Park. To learn more about the campaign and donate, visit:

gofundme.com/f/honor-dorothy-wheeler-with-a-lvh-park-bench



Ian Fields captured these otter tracks and slides on the upper Yahara River this winter.



Upcoming events

Unless otherwise indicated, events are free with no registration required.

[Sign up](#) to receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities including announcements for last-minute events and volunteer opportunities that don't make it into the newsletter.

[See the full calendar](#) for latest information.

Bird and nature adventures

Sunday, April 3, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, Effects of climate change with Master Naturalist Alex Singer.

AND

Sunday, May 1, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, Spring birds with Chuck Henrikson.

AND

first Sunday of EVERY month, year-round, ALWAYS 1:30 pm – 3 pm

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave.
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking area at the end of the gravel road.

Contact: Paul Noeldner, paul_noeldner@hotmail.com, 608-698-0104

[Madison Parks bird and nature adventure page](#)

Dane County dog park clean-up day

Sat, April 2, 9 am - 11 am

Volunteer crew leaders will meet you at the park entrance and will hand you a bag to help you clean. Dogs are welcome to join. No need to pre-register, come anytime during the 2-hour event. You may find it helpful to bring gloves, a 5-gallon pail or a scooper if you have one.

Yahara Heights - Catfish Court entrance. Heading north from central Madison on HWY 113/Northport Dr., 1/3 mile past HWY M, turn right on River Rd., then immediate right onto Catfish Ct.

This event is will also take place at other Dane County dog parks.

[More information](#)

An evening at Cherokee Marsh for kids

Sat, April 9, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Take a 1-mile hike to see and hear birds and then wait and listen and watch for the woodcock at dusk. Leader Diane Schwartz, sponsored by Get Kids Outside.

[More information and sign up](#)

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave.
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking area at the end of the gravel road.

Evening at Cherokee Marsh - woodcock walk

Friday, April 8, 6:30 – 8:30pm

AND

Friday, April 15, 6:30 – 8:30pm

Two events, same location! View the sky dance of the American woodcock at dusk and look for sandhill cranes, Wilson's snipe, Bonaparte's gulls, and other

spring migrants and arriving resident birds. Led by Levi Wood and Tony Kalenic. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Audubon.

More information and register:

<https://madisonaudubon.org/events>

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave.
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking area at the end of the gravel road.

Great Midwest Crane Count

Saturday, April 9, 5:30 am - 7:30 am

Each year in mid-April, over 1,600 volunteers travel to their local wetlands and favorite birding locations to participate in the Crane Count. This annual survey of sandhill and whooping cranes spans over 120 counties in six states of the upper Midwest, including Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Minnesota.

To participate in the Crane Count you first need to contact your county coordinator to be assigned a site and receive additional instructions.

[More information and sign up](#)

Earth Day Challenge

Saturday, April 23, 10 am – 12 noon

Make room for native wildflowers by helping pull garlic mustard in the woods. No experience needed.

Earth Day Challenge in most parks is focused on self-guided trash pickup. The Cherokee Marsh events are volunteer-led garlic mustard pulls, possibly with trash pickup as needed.

[Sign up](#)

[Learn about garlic mustard](#)

Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Parks. Questions, contact Jan Axelson, janaxelson@gmail.com or (608) 215-0426.

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

AND

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, South Unit, 802 Wheeler Rd, corner of School Rd and Wheeler Rd.

Madison FUN Bird and Nature Festival

Sun, April 24, 12 noon - 4:00 pm, arrive any time from 12 noon to 3:30 pm

Free, family-friendly event celebrating International Migratory Bird Day, Arbor Day, and Earth Day. See hawks, owls, and eagles close up with Open Door Bird Sanctuary in the walk-thru exhibit and visit nature displays and kids activities throughout the day. Free admission, free parking, family friendly, food carts, music.

Warner Park Rainbow Shelter, 2930 N. Sherman Ave.

Warbler walks

Wed, May 4, 6 am – 8 am (Cherokee Marsh North Unit)

AND

Wed, May 11, 6 am – 8 am (Cherokee Marsh South Unit)

Two events, two locations! Join us on these early morning walks to look for colorful warblers and other spring migrants. Registration is required. Sponsored by the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Audubon.

May 4

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave,

follow N. Sherman Ave north to the parking area at the end of the gravel road.

[More information and sign up](#)

May 11

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

[More information and sign up](#)

Frog walk

Fri, May 6, 7 pm – 8:30 pm

One of the joys of spring in Wisconsin is hearing the wonderful choruses of breeding frogs that signal the return of life to our landscape following winter. Join us on this evening hike through Dane County's largest wetland to learn about our native frog and toad species and how to identify their calls. Distance: approximately 2 miles roundtrip. Leader: Jeff Steele.

Cancellation will occur only for thunderstorms or tornado warning. (A light rain is ideal for frogging.)

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave.
Follow N. Sherman Ave north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel entrance road.

Garlic mustard pulling

We will have group events for garlic mustard pulling in May. We'll also provide our popular map and information for those who would like to pull on their own. To be informed of these events, sign up to receive event notifications.

[Sign up](#)

Self-guided nature adventures

Get ideas for your own self-guided nature adventures at Cherokee Marsh and other locations.

tinyurl.com/selfguided-adventures

Board meetings

Wednesday, April 20, 5:30 – 7 pm

Wednesday, May 18, 5:30 – 7 pm

Our board of directors is responsible for planning, coordinating, communicating, and managing our activities. Everyone is welcome to attend board meetings.

We've resumed in-person meetings in the Warner Park Community Recreation Center or outdoors at the Warner Park rainbow shelter. Contact janaxelson@gmail.com to confirm location.



VOLUNTEER WITH MADISON PARKS!
Saturday, April 23, 2022
10 am - 12 pm

Select your park and register online!
cityofmadison.com/parks/events/earthdaychallenge.cfm





Photo Courtesy:
Open Door Bird Sanctuary

Welcome nature lovers, students, families and kids!
Madison Bird City, Arbor Day, Earth Day and
Madison FUN (Friends of Urban Nature) Celebration!



Bird & Nature Festival

Sunday, April 24, 2022, Noon - 4:00pm
Warner Park Rainbow Shelter
2930 N. Sherman Ave., Madison

DON'T MISS

Enjoy Seeing Hawks, Owls and Eagles Close Up
with Open Door Bird Sanctuary

**FREE
EVENT**

See, Do & Explore

- » Free Admission
- » Family Friendly
- » Food Cart
- » Nature Groups
- » Free Parking
- » Kids Activities
- » Music

The Madison FUN Bird and Nature Festival is a free, family-friendly event celebrating Bird Day, Arbor Day, and Earth Day. See live birds close up with Open Door Bird Sanctuary in the walk-thru exhibit and visit nature displays and kids activities throughout the day. Plan 30-45 minutes for your visit anytime between 12:00 and 4:00pm.



OPEN DOOR
BIRD
SANCTUARY



For more information,
call Paul Noeldner, (608) 698-0104.

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