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The Cherokee Marsh News

April / May 2020



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Park Safety Tips

- Go to the parks, or go for a walk or hike! Getting outside is good for mental and physical wellbeing.
- Playgrounds are closed and team or contact sports, like basketball, are not allowed per Wisconsin's "Safer at Home" emergency order.
- Just like everywhere, stay 6 feet away from others as much as possible. For example, move to the side to make space when on a walking path.
- Assume that bathrooms, benches, and other surfaces could have COVID-19. Bring your own wipes and hand sanitizer.

 **Public Health**
MADISON & DANE COUNTY

3/25/20

COVID-19 update

On March 24, Governor Evers issued a Safer at Home order to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The order advises residents to stay home as much as possible but allows engaging in outdoor activity while maintaining social distancing. With any outdoor activity, please keep informed of and follow current advisories and precautions.

There are some hard things to report here, but also some brighter thoughts about how we can continue to enjoy, learn about, and help maintain our natural areas.

All of our and our partners' events and group volunteering have been canceled for April and May.

Guidelines for visiting parks

Public Health Madison & Dane County advises: ***You can still go outside if you're alone or with your household members.*** Remember to practice social distancing if you see others.

[Public Health Madison & Dane County updates](#)

These guidelines from Madison Parks are good advice when visiting any park or public outdoor area.

- **Do not use parks or trails if you are sick** with symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- **Maintain a social distance of at least six feet** from people other than your household members.
- **Do not play team or contact sports.** This includes but is not limited to basketball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, or football since these activities do not meet social distancing requirements. Suggested park activities include but are not limited to walking, biking, fishing, hiking, or running.
- **Assume that surfaces could have COVID-19.**
- **Do not use playground equipment or sports courts.** If you must touch any surface within the park such as gates, tables, handles, playground equipment or other common touchpoints, use gloves or a bag over your hand, then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after.
- **Practice good personal hygiene** such as washing your hands, carrying

your own hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes, sneezing or coughing into a tissue or the inside of your elbow, avoiding touching your face, etc.

- **Avoid public restrooms.** Use the restroom before you leave your home.
- **Bring your own water** or drinks since many public drinking fountains may be disabled and should not be used, even if operable.
- Bring a trash bag with you and **take out your own trash.**

Madison Parks updates

City of Madison parks are open.

At Cherokee Marsh – North Unit, the restrooms are closed. The new lower parking area, which had been closed due to soft ground, is now open.

The dock at the School Rd boat landing is normally put in around the end of April, but plans are on hold for now.

Solo volunteers and household units can do the following in Madison Parks while observing social distancing with others and other guidelines:

- **Pick up trash**
- **Pull garlic mustard** (see below)
- **Dig (cut roots of) burdock** (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)
- **Cut buckthorn or honeysuckle** (without chainsaw) (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)
- **Conduct frog call surveys** (see below)
- **Plant natives** (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)
- Conduct **vegetation surveys** (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)
- Conduct **photo monitoring** (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)
- **Monitor/maintain bluebird houses** (contact Paul Noeldner at *paul_noeldner@hotmail.com*)
- **Oil goose eggs** (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)
- **Monitor and haze geese** (contact Paul Quinlan at *PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com*)

The Madison Fire Department has suspended all permits for prescribed burns.

[COVID-19 Update for Madison Parks](#)

Dane County Parks updates

Parks, including dog parks, are open.

Toilets are closed or removed.

Trash pickup by individuals is encouraged.

Prescribed burns have been cancelled.

[Explore County Parks](#) has suggestions for indoor and outdoor activities for individuals and households, some with prizes!

[Dane County Parks Changes and Updates Due to COVID-19](#)

Help pull garlic mustard

If you are an experienced garlic mustard puller, you can help out on your own schedule. With Madison Parks staff, we've identified several areas to concentrate our efforts in the three units of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park. If you would like to help out, contact Jan at janaxelson@gmail.com for suggestions on where to pull. If you do pull, please report to Jan the date, number of hours, and location so we can track our efforts.

[Garlic mustard information](#)

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. The early species in our area are wood frog, boreal chorus frog, spring peeper, and northern leopard frog.

Volunteers should then contact the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey staff at WFTS@wisconsin.gov to register. Program staff will provide more information and make sure you are ready to collect data using the survey manual and data sheets.

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.

Perform plant surveys

Madison Parks is hoping to continue surveying plants in conservation parks later this year.

If you have good basic plant ID skills and are interested in helping with this project, contact Paul Quinlan at PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com.

[Read about last's year's surveys at Cherokee Marsh](#)

Board meetings

Our April and May board meetings will either be held online or cancelled. If you are interested in attending an online board meeting, contact me at janaxelson@gmail.com for details.



Share what you see, get help with ID

On March 24, Governor Evers issued a Safer at Home order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The order advises residents to stay home as much as possible but allows engaging in outdoor activity while maintaining social distancing. Please keep informed of and follow current advisories and precautions.

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, for example to view what birds or butterflies 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.inaturalist.org/projects/urban-canid-project), which collects observations of coyotes and red foxes. The inaturalist [Seek app](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/seek-app) uses image recognition technology to attempt to identify plants and animals in photos you submit.

Ebird.org focuses entirely on birds. Mobile users can use the ebird app for entering sightings and the Merlin app to help with ID.

[Wisconsin butterflies](#) 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. There are also groups that specialize in birds, butterflies, dragonflies, and other areas of interest. All of these groups can be useful for getting help with IDs.

Formal projects

Due to discouraging travel for non-essential activities and the need for social distancing, participating in some formal citizen science projects may require waiting until restrictions are lifted. Some activities are available close to home however and can be done solo or with household members. Check with a project's sponsor for the latest information and always observe required and recommended social distancing and other precautions.

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.) For updates on training workshops, contact Becca Dymzarov at becca@rockrivercoalition.org.

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

Message from the UW Madison Extension and Master Naturalist Program:

We have been keeping a close eye on developments around the novel coronavirus COVID-19. At this point, the Master Naturalist Volunteer Trainings beginning after June 1, 2020 are still moving forward as planned. This is an ever-changing situation; we will continue to monitor it, follow best practice guidelines, and update the website as it relates to these Master Naturalist Volunteer Trainings.

If conditions permit, Madison Friends of Urban Nature, a loose coalition of Friends groups and others with an interest in nature study, recreation, and restoration in and around Madison, will once again offer Master Naturalist training based at Warner Park. The training is scheduled for six Saturdays, July 11–August 15. The cost is \$275 with scholarships available.

Field trips

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.

Topics

Wisconsin's historic prairies, oak openings, lakes, rivers, and streams, and the native birds, wildlife and natural ecosystems they support, and related topic chapters from the Master Naturalist Class instruction manual will be woven into all of the studies. Participants will also meet representatives of the Department of Natural Resources, City and County Parks, and Friends and nature groups to learn about many opportunities for Master Naturalists to engage as volunteers, participate in citizen science, help provide leadership for activities, job opportunities, and community involvement.

About the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program is a network of well informed people dedicated to conservation education and service within Wisconsin communities. The Master Naturalist volunteer training course provides 40 hours of coursework in natural history, interpretation, and conservation stewardship. Trainings combine classroom instruction with field experiences and are taught by professional natural resources educators and scientists.

Once trained, Wisconsin Master Naturalist Volunteers provide 40 hours of service and take 8 hours of advanced training each year to maintain their certification and receive a recognition pin.

Other trainings are scheduled for various locations around the state, including at the UW–Arboretum in October.

[Learn more](#)



Upcoming events...

[See full calendar](#)

will return!

Receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities

Our newsletter comes out 6 times per year. You can also sign up to receive timely notices and reminders, including announcements for last-minute events and volunteer opportunities that don't make it into the newsletter.

[Sign up](#) to receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

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