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The Cherokee Marsh News

Dec 2023 / Jan 2024



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Annual member meeting

Our annual member meeting is scheduled for:

Sat, Jan 27, 10 am - 12 noon

Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr

We'll begin with a **business meeting** to review 2023, look forward to 2024, and **elect directors** for 2024-2025. Election information is below in this newsletter.

Paul Quinlan from Madison Parks and **Claire Lamberg from Dane County Parks** will update us on news, happenings, and opportunities in parks.

Our special guest presenter will be **Jessica Hua, Associate Professor, UW-Madison Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology**. This past spring, Jessica recruited volunteers to survey frogs and toads at Cherokee Marsh and other locations.

Jessica's talk will focus on ***When does preserving biodiversity protect communities from disease?***

Communities with higher biodiversity are expected to be less vulnerable to diseases compared to communities with lower biodiversity. However, increasing evidence indicates that this is not always the case. To address why, Jessica's talk will focus on:

-how common pollutants (such as road salt and pesticides) and human land use influence whether biodiversity protects or worsens disease and

-how citizen science and outreach using the arts can help us understand human contributions to disease dynamics and improve public learning and perceptions of science.

We hope to see you at the meeting!



It's time to renew your membership

If you've renewed your membership for 2024, thank you! If you aren't yet a member, please consider joining.

Your member dues help fund our activities, including our popular naturalist-led bird and nature adventures, hiring five summer interns to perform restoration work, and much more.

[Join, renew, or donate](#)

Renewing now helps us by saving time, resources, and postage to send reminder letters.

Is my membership up for renewal?

All memberships expire on December 31. If you joined the Friends after June 30, 2023, your membership is paid through December 31, 2024. For everyone else, it's time to renew. If you're not sure when you joined, contact us at janaxelson@gmail.com or (608) 215-0426.

As a member, you'll receive our newsletter six times a year, and you'll know that you're helping to protect and preserve a healthy Cherokee Marsh.

How to join or renew

To pay online or download a member form, visit:

[Join, renew, or donate](#)

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our Tax Identification Number is 77-0689194.

A membership is a perfect gift

If you know someone who loves Cherokee Marsh, consider giving them a gift membership to the Friends this holiday season or as a birthday gift.



What we did in 2023

In 2023, we continued our activities in restoration, education, advocacy, and *having fun* at Cherokee Marsh.

Our annual meeting in January had the focus ***Nature is for everyone***, with guests Ron French with Access Ability Wisconsin, Caitlyn Schuchhardt with the Feminist Bird Club, Diane Schwartz with Get Kids Outside, and Paul Noeldner with FUN - Friends of Urban Nature.

We held volunteer events to **remove invasive species** on City of Madison, Dane County, and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands, including pulling garlic mustard and Japanese hedge parsley, cutting brush, and cutting and treating phragmites.

For our fourth year, we funded and supervised five **Prairie Partner interns** who put in close to 400 hours of conservation work at Cherokee Marsh and Meadow Ridge Conservation Parks and Yahara Heights Park. Our Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund supported **DNR crew work in the Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area**.

We continued our monthly guided **Bird and Nature Adventures** featuring topics including birds, wildflowers, bugs, and trees. Special events included an evening frog walk. At **Hayrides and Hikes**, we partnered with Madison Parks to offer nature activities for both kids and adults, including creating new self-guided nature trail markers that we can re-use for future events. We led a **hike and two paddles as fundraisers** in collaboration with the Wisconsin Natural Resource Foundation. We paddled the upper Yahara River and discussed environmental issues with State Senator Melissa Agard and her staff.

In cooperation with the UW-Madison Division of Extension, River Alliance of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, we and Wild Warner again served as hosts for **Aquatic Invasive Species Snapshot Day**.

Other **citizen science** efforts we supported included our continuing plant surveys in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, the International Crane Foundation's Great Midwest Crane Count, Madison Audubon's (now Badgerland Bird Alliance) Christmas Bird Count, and the Natural Resource Foundation of Wisconsin's Great Wisconsin Birdathon. We also participated in a new frog survey project with Professor Jessican Hua.

We developed relationships with local **Scouts organizations** for boys and girls and renewed contacts with the Madison Public Schools and Madison School-Community Recreation to support **hands-on nature learning for youth**, including funding transportation to the marsh.

Our volunteers continued our project to **sew seed collecting bags** for use by Groundswell Conservancy and Dane County Parks.

We celebrated the spring arrival of nesting **red-headed woodpeckers** in snags at Cherokee Marsh - South Unit, **purple martins** in artificial gourds at Cherokee Park, and **eastern bluebirds** and other species that use nest boxes monitored by volunteers.

We documented Cherokee Marsh's history in **conversations with several long time residents** of the area. We talked to community members while tabling at the **Northside Farmers Market** on two Sundays and at the annual **Bird and Nature Festival**..

We installed **wayfaring maps** provided by Madison Parks along the trails in Cherokee Marsh - North Unit and advocated for Madison Parks and Dane County Parks to **reroute trails away from Native American mounds**. We celebrated a new trail added by Madison Parks with our encouragement. Volunteer Jim Mand **kept five kiosks updated** with events and other timely information.

And we again enjoyed watching **goats** hired by Madison Parks perform prescribed grazing on brush at Cherokee Marsh - South Unit. Volunteers helped care for the goats and monitor for escapees.

You make it possible

It's only with the support and participation of you, our members, that we can continue and expand our activities to promote land and water protection, restoration, education, and enjoyment of Cherokee Marsh. If you have ideas for activities or would like to help, we want to hear from you. Attend our annual meeting or a board meeting, or contact me at (608) 215-0426 or (*janaxelson@gmail.com*) or any other director.



Meet the director candidates

Our Board of Directors is responsible for planning, coordinating, communicating, and managing the activities of our organization. At our annual member meeting, members elect directors for the coming two years.

Directors Timothy Baker, Lesleigh Luttrell, and Wendy Murkve are in the middle of their 2-year terms and thus aren't up for re-election.

Our candidate slate for terms that begin at the 2024 annual meeting consists of current directors Jan Axelson, Mary Binkley, Sheila Leary, Linda Malkin, Jim Mand, and Paul Noeldner.

Our board meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 pm at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr. In good weather we may meet outdoors at the rainbow shelter. The meetings are open to all. To confirm the time (occasionally we reschedule) or request an agenda, contact Jan at (608) 215-0426 or janaxelson@gmail.com or any of our other directors.

If you are interested in joining our board, we invite you to attend a board meeting. Our bylaws permit adding interim board members at any time.

Here are statements from the slate of six candidates:

Jan Axelson



I've spent many hours exploring the marsh on foot, skis, snowshoes, and by canoe and kayak. I would like to continue working to encourage folks to visit the marsh for learning and enjoyment, to preserve and restore our public lands and waters in and around the marsh, and to protect the watershed in the face of development.

Mary Binkley



I wish to remain on the Friends of Cherokee Marsh Board of Directors because I firmly believe in the necessity of preserving and improving the land and waters in and around Cherokee Marsh. Having a background as a Naturalist, I have

given many nature tours of Cherokee Marsh trying to help others appreciate what is outside, and hoping they will want to help preserve and improve the beauty and diversity here.

Cherokee Marsh has changed dramatically through the impact of people, and will benefit through restoration efforts to return it to a more natural, healthy nstate. I wish to be a part of this.

Sheila Leary



I've been a Northside resident for 33 years and have served two terms on the Friends board. I enjoy leading walks at the Marsh and helping with communications, events, and fundraising for the Friends. I am retired from a career in publishing and communications and am a Wisconsin Master Naturalist.

Linda Malkin



In 2016, I was introduced to Cherokee Marsh as a great place for outdoor recreation. Hiking and paddling were my main reasons for visiting. Then, in 2021, I took part in Wisconsin Master Naturalist training and chose Cherokee Marsh for my capstone project. This is when I began to understand the specialness of this place and to appreciate peoples' efforts to restore and protect it. Shortly after "graduating" I joined the Friends and began helping with conservation work and community events. In May, 2023, I became an Interim board member.

I would like to continue serving on the Friends of Cherokee Marsh Board. If elected, I would use my 30+ years of experience in science education and my developing naturalist skills to encourage more school and community groups to experience Cherokee Marsh so that they, too, may enjoy, understand, and value this wetland gem in our community.

Jim Mand



I wish to continue serving on the Board of Directors, I would like to submit my name to be elected to another term on the board. Have enjoyed working with other board members and group members in promoting the goals of the Friends, through educational opportunities, volunteer work parties with City & Parks departments.

Have also been the Bluebird Monitor for Cherokee Marsh North Unit for 7 years now (2017-2023), checking and maintaining 21 nest boxes, and submitting season totals to the Bluebird Association of Wisconsin.

And taking care of the 6 kiosks at the various Cherokee Marsh units and 2 county parks units in the watershed. Posting notices of upcoming events for the public, such as nature walks and volunteer opportunities.

Originally from Chilton WI (Calumet County), have had a life-long interest in nature and birds. Graduated from WSU-Oshkosh in Biology, and Geology. Have lived in the Madison area for 40+ years. Retired 7 years ago from a production management position with a local metals manufacturing company. Live in the Cherokee Condos near the marsh.

Paul Noeldner



Being a board member of Friends of Cherokee Marsh continues to offer wonderful special volunteer opportunities and I would love to continue to help contribute. I enjoy helping with newsletter articles, events and collaboration on volunteer activities with Parks staff and other groups.

My main contribution is helping organize and lead Madison FUN partners co-sponsored year round family and kid friendly Bird and Nature Adventures and other outreach and education activities to help connect more people and diverse communities with Cherokee Marsh and with our Friends group and to help grow support for our goals.



Acorns abundant this year

Have you noticed an abundance of acorns this fall? Every 2-5 years, oak trees produce a much larger than usual number of acorns. This year appears to be such a year.

The nuts and other fruit of forest trees and shrubs is termed the *mast*, and a year with an especially large yield is a *mast year*. The year following a mast year typically has a low yield.

The cause of mast years is unknown. A benefit of producing more acorns than wildlife can consume is having more acorns left to sprout and grow into new trees.

Learn more about it:

[Oaks & Acorns: The Mystery of the Mast](#)



New crew member and volunteer coordinator added

This fall we met Madison Parks' new Conservation Technician Trainee, Erin McCune. Erin will participate in a training and career progression program and receive on-the-job training. A major focus of her work will be working with volunteers. A goal of the conservation technician trainee program is to provide

the skills needed for professional-level, permanent Conservation Technician positions at Madison Parks.

Erin graduated from UW-Stevens Point with a BS in Ecosystem Restoration and Management, worked with volunteers at the Schmeckle Reserve on campus there, and formerly worked for Tallgrass Restoration LLC. Erin reports that she loves cutting brush.

Pictured above from left: Friends member Jim Mand, Erin McCune, and Paul Quinlan, Madison Parks Conservation Resources Supervisor.

Also new at Madison Parks is John Weichert, in a new and much needed position of volunteer coordinator. Future enhancements to the volunteer program will include:

Volunteer recognition

Training videos, manuals, and handbooks

Annual volunteer reports

Volunteer management software

Volunteer requirements like background checks and required training (don't worry about this yet)



The Madison Parks crew took advantage of favorable weather to perform prescribed burns at Cherokee Marsh this fall.



Events and volunteering

Join us for any or all of these upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. *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, Dec 3, 1:30 - 3 pm, Winter native plant ID with Eva Roos

AND

Sunday, Jan 7, 1:30 - 3 pm, Nature resolutions with Master Naturalist Sheila Leary

AND

The 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](#)

Help package native seeds for seed libraries

Monday, Dec. 4, 1:30 - 3:30 pm

Lakeview Library, 2845 N Sherman Ave + other dates and locations

[Learn more and sign up](#)

Brush cutting work party

Tues, Dec 5, 9 am - 12 noon

Meet at Westport Meadows Park, 4338 Beilfuss Drive. Park on street. This park is west of HWY 113 and adjacent to Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit.

Help clear honeysuckle and buckthorn from Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit. No experience needed. Loppers provided, but you're welcome to bring your own. Certified chainsaw operators are welcome - bring your own saw and PPE.

Signup recommended so you can be notified of any changes or cancellations. To sign up, contact janaxelson@gmail.com or text 608-215-0426.

With no snow cover, we won't be burning, just cutting and piling.

Christmas Bird Count

Sat, Dec 16, sunrise to sunset

Help count birds at Cherokee Marsh and nearby areas as part of the Christmas

Bird Count. Join the group for a short time or all day or bird on your own within the designated area. New birders welcome. Contact Paul Noeldner, paul_noeldner@hotmail.com, 608-698-0104

[Christmas Bird Count information](#)

Certified Land Steward Orientation

Thurs, Jan 11, 8:45 am. - 3:30 pm

Lussier Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Rd

Join the group of Cherokee Marsh certified land stewards by attending this orientation for volunteers who want to take a leadership role to help manage natural areas within county parks, including Yahara Heights and the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area.

[Learn more and sign up](#)

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See story in this newsletter for details.

Chainsaw training

Volunteers who want to use chainsaws on public land must complete training. These trainings are hosted by Dane County Parks, but the certification is also valid for Madison Parks and DNR properties. Multiple dates. **Women-only** option available.

[More information and sign up](#)

Board meetings

Friends of Cherokee Marsh board meeting. Public welcome. Warner Park

Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr. *In the summer, you will likely find us outdoors at the Rainbow Shelter.* Third Wednesdays. To confirm time and place, contact janaxelson@gmail.com.

Wednesday, Dec 20, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Wednesday, Jan 17, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Self-guided nature adventures

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

tinyurl.com/selfguided-adventures

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