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The Cherokee Marsh News Feb / March 2023



In this edition

- [Long-time resident shares history of the marsh and river](#)
- [Recent happenings](#)
- [Conservation Fund supports restoration in Cherokee Marsh SNA](#)
- [Treasurer's report](#)
- [Help sew bags for seed collecting](#)
- [Events and volunteering](#)



Annual member meeting held, Nature Is for Everyone was the theme

On January 21, we were delighted to hold our annual meeting in person for the first time since 2020. Our presenters, focusing on the theme of Nature Is for

Everyone, were (from left to right in the photo above):

Ron French with Access Ability Wisconsin

Caitlyn Schuchhardt with the Feminist Bird Club

Diane Schwartz with Get Kids Outside

Paul Noeldner with FUN - Friends of Urban Nature



From Madison Parks, Conservation Resources Supervisor Paul Quinlan shared updates, and new Conservation Technician Trainee Jazmine Bevers introduced herself to the group. Jazmine's responsibilities include working with volunteers.

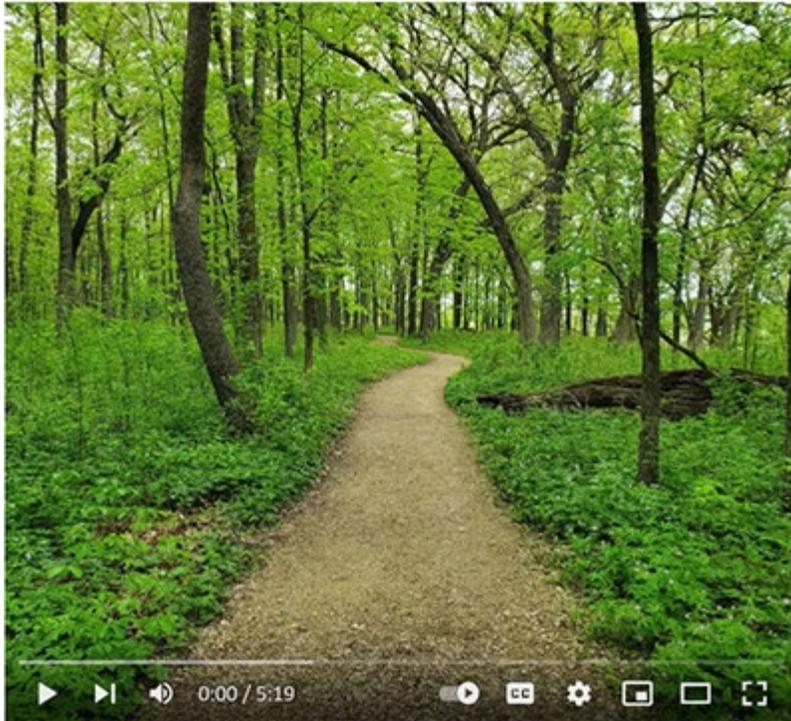
Directors elected

In the business portion of the meeting, we thanked outgoing director Mary Manering for serving on the board and as secretary. Members elected Timothy Baker, Lesleigh Luttrell, and Wendy Murkve for 2-year terms on the board. Unfortunately, director candidate Sean Gere had to remove his name due for personal reasons. Directors Jan Axelson, Mary Binkley, Sheila Leary, Jim Mand, and Paul Noeldner will also continue as directors.

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 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. Our bylaws permit adding interim board members at any time.

Watch our year in review video



Thanks to Sheila Leary for once again summarizing our year in a video.

[See the video](#)

Thanks for renewing

Thanks to all who have joined or renewed their membership for 2023.

To pay online or download a member form, visit:

[Join, renew, or donate](#)



Long-time resident shares history of the marsh and river

Jan Axelson

In years of living on her family's farm on Bong Rd, Peg Whiteside spent many hours exploring the upper Yahara River and nearby lands. The farm is north of Dane County's Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area, between River Rd and HWY 19.

Growing up, Peg and her two sisters attended two one-room schools in the area. In fourth grade, Peg recalls, "I was one of 11 students at the Crossing School," located at the junction of highways 113, 19, and I. Later, she attended Catfish School on River Rd just east of HWY 113. That building is still standing and is used as a residence. Not long after she left for high school in Waunakee, the school discontinued the upper grades and then closed the school completely.

In the summer, Peg often spent all day on the river. She recalls, "My mother would drop me off in the morning on the way to work. I kept a clock on the boat so I would know when to return in time for her to pick me up on the way home." Peg and a neighbor friend explored the river using the friend's boat and a boat retrieved from a dump behind what is now Murphy's Pub.

Peg recalls catching catfish as large as 36 inches at night from a pier, as well

as carp and bullhead, and crappies in the spring. She remembers seeing muskrats, a few foxes, and an occasional water snake. The farm had eastern meadowlarks and nesting orioles.

Another memory is hearing the pile drivers in the 1960s when a line was put in to bring sewage from Waunakee under the river to the School Road pumping station. A land owner on the north shore occasionally burned the shoreline vegetation.

To prevent development, in 2018 Peg placed the farm in a conservation easement with Groundswell Conservancy. She rented ten acres to Hmong farmers until she sold the parcel to Groundswell Conservancy at a discount to ensure that the farmers can continue to use the land. Another farmer is buying the rest of the farm property except for a parcel where Peg continues to live in retirement.

When thinking back to the marsh of her childhood, Peg is most impressed by the changes that have occurred. A big item is the wildlife. There were no deer in the area during her grade school years, nor were there turkeys, sandhill cranes, or eagles. Also, the river itself was "three feet of murky water over six feet of mud," adding that being able to see fish resting on the bottom of the river now seems like a miracle.

We thank Peg for sharing her memories of growing up at Cherokee Marsh. If you have memories to share or know someone who does, we would love to tell these stories. Contact Jan at janaxelson@gmail.com or 608-215-0426.

Recent happenings



Our volunteers, led by member Ed Snyder, are having a productive winter cutting and burning brush at Meadow Ridge Park.



Madison Parks placed this portable toilet at Cherokee Marsh - South Unit for the ski season.



Conservation Fund supports restoration in Cherokee Marsh SNA

Jan Axelson

The Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund is 10 years old this year. We started the fund, managed by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, to support restoration work by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area (SNA). The fund provides an ongoing source of money to pay for restoration activities.

The SNA crew focuses on projects that are too big for volunteers, including control of invasives in large patches or in locations that are hard to access. We are excited to learn that the crew hopes to burn the SNA this spring for the first time in several years. Whether the burn takes place depends in part on the weather. Wind direction is critical because the SNA is adjacent to the airport.

In 2022, the fund provided \$1532.79 for this work. Here is a portion of the report submitted by the crew.

The funding provided by the friends of Cherokee Marsh allowed the Southwest State Natural Areas Crew to continue battling invasive species that are threatening the high-quality wetlands found within Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area. In particular, the crew focused on control of narrow-leaved cattails and phragmites, both of which are known to aggressively outcompete native plants and completely take over wetlands if left unchecked.

In order to protect the groundwater and sensitive native plants that call the Cherokee wetland home, the “glove of death” and wick-bar techniques were used, which allow for the speedy treatment of a high number of plants and eliminate the potential of overspray and for over-application in general. The crew was able to treat phragmites and cattails over 10 acres, covering areas that had been treated in previous years, and steadily pushing back the infestations to allow more room for high-quality prairie.

While 10 acres is less than we would like to get done at a site, there are still further plans for Cherokee Marsh this year. The crew plans to spend a day installing burn breaks in preparation for a prescribed burn intended for Spring 2023, as well as continue the buckthorn removal project that began last year. Implementing prescribed fire is one of the greatest tools when it comes to removing invasive species, thinning brush, and encouraging native plant growth and seed production.

We have been pleased with the herbaceous invasive control that these grants have helped us undertake, and we are very excited to be able to continue to open up and get fire down on the increasingly rare landscape that is protected at Cherokee Marsh.

\$1,711.90 was used for State Natural Areas Crew LTE labor, and \$35 was spent on supplies. This is more than the allotment due to leftover funds being used from last year.

Big thanks to all who have contributed to the fund. It's great to see the work being done with the funding.

[Learn more about the Cherokee Marsh SNA](#)

[Learn more about the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund](#)

Friends of Cherokee Marsh
Treasurer's Report 2022

		Balance 12/31/21	Balance 12/31/22
		\$33,103.48	\$44,760.43
Income	Budget	Total	
Dues	\$3,500.00	\$3,180.92	144 memberships
Contributions	\$3,500.00	\$5,087.22	68 donors
Memorial/Honor	\$500.00	\$150.00	2 donors
Prairie Partners	\$3,000.00	\$5,213.32	27 donors
Environmental Education	\$500.00	\$704.39	15 donors
Endowment	\$2,500.00	\$644.56	13 donors
Draw from Saved Funds	\$3,000.00		
Other Donations		\$804.08	(including IRA distributions)
Reimbursements		\$6,353.00	(Dane County grant, annual mtg space)
Interest	\$5.00	\$1.77	
Total	\$16,505.00	\$22,139.26	
Expenses			
Brochure/other materials	\$300.00	\$0.00	
Display	\$200.00	\$0.00	
Donations to other orgs	\$500.00	\$625.00	6 organizations
Endowment	\$2,500.00	\$650.00	added to Conservation Fund
Environmental Education	\$500.00	\$0.00	
Events	\$1,000.00	\$546.93	
Field Work	\$250.00	\$0.00	
Insurance	\$475.00	\$500.00	
PO Box rental	\$150.00	\$182.00	
Postage/Envelopes/Supplies	\$300.00	\$282.40	
Prairie Partners	\$8,000.00	\$7,469.66	
Printing	\$200.00	\$0.00	
Special Projects	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	
Website/Software/Domain	\$120.00	\$216.32	
WI Dept Financial Inst	\$10.00	\$10.00	
Total	\$16,505.00	\$10,482.31	

Treasurer's report

Generous donors in 2022 covered a major share of the funds needed for the Prairie Partners interns. Member contributions and \$466 raised from Natural Resource Foundations field trips in the marsh went into the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund. Previously donated monies covered transportation costs for hands-on environmental education last year. With demand picking up, contributions from 2022 will support field trips to the marsh this year.

Thanks so much for your continued generous support of the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

Lesleigh Luttrell, Treasurer



Help sew bags for seed collecting

Do you like to sew? Again this year we're looking for volunteers to help make bags for seed collecting. Starting in mid-summer each year, volunteers (and Prairie Partner interns) from the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Dane County Parks, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Natural Areas team, Groundswell Conservancy, and other groups collect seeds from natural areas for use in future restorations.

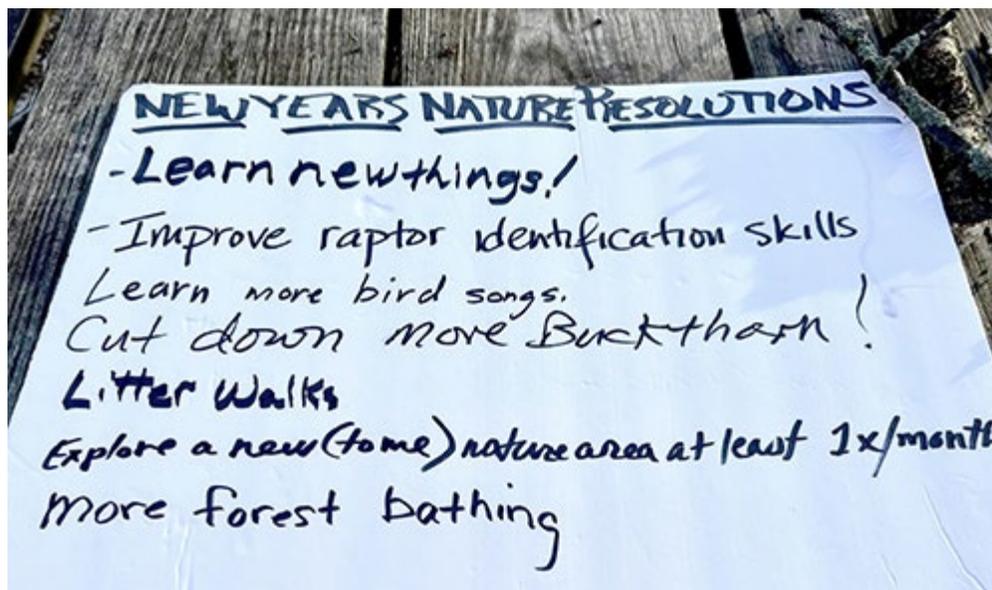
Originally designed by volunteer Rumi O'Brien of the Prairie Enthusiasts, the bags are very popular. The bags we use are donated chicken feed and bird seed bags. To make a bag functional and durable for seed collecting, we sew on an adjustable shoulder strap and reinforce the top and bottom by sewing bias tape along the edges.

Sewing takes about 30 minutes per bag and doesn't require any special thread or needles. The stitching just needs to be functional, not pretty. We provide the bags, bias tape, strapping, instructions, and an example bag as a model. This year's bags will go to Cherokee Marsh interns and volunteers, Dane County Parks, and the DNR's State Natural Areas program..

If you have access to a sewing machine and are interested in sewing at least 5 bags, contact Jan at janaxelson@gmail.com or 608-215-0426 for details.



Feb 2 is World Wetlands Day. [Learn more.](#)



Events and volunteering

Join us for any or all of these upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. Events are free with no registration required unless otherwise indicated.

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, Feb 5, 1:30 - 3 pm, Pushups, dreys, and cavities with Master Naturalist Alex Singer

AND

Sunday, March 5, 1:30 - 3 pm, Let it be an oak with Master Naturalist Kathleen Wolf

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 burn brush piles

Wed, Feb 1, 9 am - 12 noon

Meadow Ridge Park, 4002 Meadow Valley Dr, park on street near the kiosk and playground. From central Madison, take HWY 113 / Northport Dr north. Just past Warner Park, turn left onto Troy Dr, which becomes Green Ave. Turn left onto Meadow Ridge Ln, which dead ends at Meadow Valley Dr.

We finally have the snow we need to allow burning the brush piles we made on previous work days. We'll be lighting a few piles and piling brush from nearby piles onto the fires.

Wear old clothes in case of burn holes. Natural fibers are best as synthetics melt.

We'll have hot cocoa, cider, and tea.

Signup recommended so you can be contacted of any changes or cancellations. To sign up, respond to this email or text 608-215-0426.

Sunset Snowshoe

Fee, registration required.

Tues, February 14, 4:30pm – 6:30pm

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

Sponsored by Madison School and Community Recreation (MSCR)

Enjoy an outdoor winter walk at Cherokee Marsh, a great place to view winter wildlife. MSCR provides snowshoes, or you're welcome to bring your own, and learn basic snowshoe instruction. These programs are weather/snow dependent. All participants must register and an adult over 18 must register and participate with youth participants.

\$5

Event #35241. Register (join waitlist) at:

mscr.org

Brush cutting and hauling

Fri, February 17, 9am – 12pm

Yahara Heights County Park, 5128-5198 Caton Ln., Waunakee WI 53597
([map](#))

Brush cutting and hauling with Dane County Parks

[More information and sign up](#)

Winter bird walk

Fee, registration required.

Wed, February 22, 12:30pm – 2:00pm

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

Sponsored by Madison School and Community Recreation

Join an MSCR Naturalist for an afternoon of birding adventure and identifying year-round residents. Learn about using binoculars, identifying species visually and by ear and recognizing bird habitat.

\$10, Ages 50+

Event # 35124. More information and register at:

mscr.org

Volunteer as a Stream Monitor

Looking for a way to protect your local waterways? Become a volunteer stream monitor with the Rock River Coalition! From April to October, their 180+ stream monitors collect data vital to understanding the health of our streams and rivers across the Rock River Basin.

Rock River Coalition is hosting a workshop on **Saturday, April 29th, 9 AM – 2:30 PM, in Waunakee** for anyone interested in volunteering or just learning more about streams. By the end of this workshop, you'll know how to measure water quality and be ready to adopt your own stream monitoring site. No experience is needed, and all equipment is provided. Register [here](#) or contact addie@rockrivercoalition.org for more information.

Board Meetings

Wednesday, Feb 15, 5:30 - 7 pm

AND

Wednesday, March 15, 5:30 - 7 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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