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The Cherokee Marsh News

Oct / Nov 2019



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Save the date!

The special presenter for our annual meeting will be
Elliot Funmaker of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Saturday, January 11, 2020, 10 am - 12 noon
Warner Park Community Recreation Center

More details to come!



DINE OUT
FUNDRAISER!

Dine at Benvenuto's to support environmental ed

All day, one day only! Dine in, carry out, order delivery, or buy a gift card and mention the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Benvenutos will donate 20% of your tab to bring schoolchildren to Cherokee Marsh for environmental education.

Remember **you MUST mention the Friends of Cherokee Marsh** or "fundraiser" for us to receive the donation.

Monday, Oct 21, 11 am – 9 pm

[Benvenuto's Italian Grill](#), Northside Town Center, 1849 Northport Dr, next to True Value Hardware.

ALSO

Dine with the Friends directors

Members of the Friends board of directors will be dining at Benvenuto's at **6:30 pm**. All are welcome to join us.

Big thanks to Benvenuto's for providing this opportunity.



Northside waters surveyed for aquatic invasive species

Sheila Leary

Nineteen citizen scientists assembled on August 15 to survey rivers, streams and lakeshores of Cherokee Marsh and beyond for aquatic invasive species on “Snapshot Day.”

Armed with rakes, nets, waders, plastic bags and cameras, the volunteers fanned out to search for problem plants and invertebrates at ten sites: the Cherokee Park neighborhood canoe launch, School Road boat launch, North Cherokee boathouse pier, Governor's Island shore, Token Creek boat launch and boardwalk, Governor Nelson State Park beach and boat launch, Yahara Heights Park canoe launch and Dorn Creek at North Shore Road.

About the survey

The annual statewide event is coordinated by the River Alliance of Wisconsin, in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and University of Wisconsin — Extension. Volunteers investigated 26 locations throughout Wisconsin. Madison’s Northside and nearby waters were selected as the survey site for Dane County. The local partner for the event was the

Friends of Cherokee Marsh. Our members helped recruit volunteers and provided refreshments and general assistance.

Participants gathered at the North Unit of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park for training by Shelby Adler, an aquatic invasive species and lake management specialist with the DNR. The volunteers then visited pre-selected monitoring sites, collected samples, disinfected their gear and boots and returned to the training site to turn in the specimens.

Specimens gathered by citizen scientists around the state on Snapshot Day are sent on to the DNR and shared on the Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System (SWIMS) database.

The findings

Among the verified findings of invasive species were zebra mussels in Lake Mendota off Governor's Island and at the boat launch at Governor Nelson State Park. At the Yahara Heights County Park canoe launch, nets captured a pair of exotic Chinese mystery snails, a species assumed to have been dumped into the river from a home aquarium. These invasives had been confirmed in the past by the DNR at these sites. Volunteers also found curly leaf pondweed in Dorn Creek, where it had been reported informally before but never officially verified prior to Snapshot Day.

"The results from Dorn Creek are a wonderful example of how Snapshot Day volunteers help in verifying the presence (or absence) of a previously reported but unverified invasive species, in addition to completely new findings," Adler commented.

"These exotic plants and animals negatively affect habitat, wildlife, recreation and public health," noted Natalie Dutack, statewide coordinator of the effort by the River Alliance of Wisconsin. "Early detection by Snapshot Day volunteers helps professionals in the state manage species of developing or ongoing concern. One day of volunteering can have years of impact."

To learn more about identifying and preventing these harmful organisms, search on "aquatic invasive species" at dnr.wi.gov.

A version of this article appeared in the Northside News.



Volunteers complete plant surveys at North and South Cherokee

Jan Axelson

Last spring, Madison Parks put out a call for volunteers to survey plants in conservation parks. Mary Binkley, Tamara Hill, and I answered the call to survey at Cherokee Marsh.

Survey locations and protocols

Parks staff selected survey locations in areas where restoration efforts have been focused in the past five years. According to City Parks Conservation Resources Supervisor Paul Quinlan, the goal of the surveys is to “monitor trends in species composition, richness and diversity over time. This data will quantify the results of restoration and management efforts, and provide an objective basis for determining whether those efforts are successful or practices need to be modified.”

In June, Parks staff held a training session in Cherokee Marsh’s South Unit

where we learned and practiced the surveying protocol. Over the next three months, we surveyed a prairie and savanna in the South Unit, and two woodlands and two prairies in the North Unit.

To limit the time needed for the surveys to a reasonable amount, in each area of interest, Parks staff identified a single transect, or line, to focus on. The transects ranged from around 500 to 750 ft. Parks crew member Brandon Mann marked the endpoints with blue-topped posts. (You may see some of the posts as you walk the trails.) Before surveying, we placed ribbons along the transect route to mark the way.



IDing plants

To survey a transect, every 50 feet we set down a 1-meter-square open frame, called a quadrat, made from PVC pipe. We then attempted to identify every species growing within the quadrat. As you can imagine, doing so was at times challenging, especially when all we had were small seedlings or plants not yet in flower.

I was thankful that Mary and Tamara have excellent plant ID skills. Even so, for a few species, especially grasses and sedges, the best we could do is “unknown grass” or “unknown sedge.” Some of the blooming asters and

goldenrods also required some detailed study for a confident ID. We puzzled for a while over a plant that turned out to be a common but inconspicuous and easily overlooked species with the odd name of 3-seeded mercury.

To help in identifying, we used the books *Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region* and the *Peterson Field Guide to Wildflowers*.



The main focus was inside the quadrats, but the protocol also asked us to note any other species we happened to see outside the quadrats.

The number of species we found on each transect ranged from 36 to an astounding 85. The number of species within a quadrat ranged from 7 to 22. We noted that quadrats dominated by aggressive plants such as reed canary grass and raspberries had much less diversity.

My favorite sighting on the surveys was the lily-leaved twayblade orchid, which we discovered in two quadrats. Typically found in open woods and savannas, the plants we found were in open prairie, though shaded by taller plants. The blooming period was long over so all we had for ID was basal leaves and a stalk with seedpods. Fortunately, Mary had observed the plant on her property and knew what it was.

Other nice sightings were patches of American figwort, a nectar-rich plant favored by bees and other pollinators, and several ferns, including maidenhair and sensitive ferns.

Surveyors needed!

Ideally, Parks would like to see surveys performed in spring, summer, and fall, but for a single survey, our mid-summer timing was probably ideal. We could still see remnants of spring-flowering plants and many other plants were in flower, making them easier to ID. Parks staff hope this year's surveys will be the first in a series of annual or at least occasional surveys to measure changes in species composition in the target areas.

Also surveyed this year were Owen and Edna Taylor Conservation Parks, and Parks hopes to add Turville and Prairie Ridge next year. If you have good basic plant ID skills and are interested in helping with this project, contact Paul Quinlan at PQuinlan@cityofmadison.com or (608) 267-4918.





Help lead the Friends

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh board of directors are volunteers elected by the members to plan and manage the activities of the group. We are always on the lookout for new directors who have an interest in helping with our mission to protect, preserve, and restore Cherokee Marsh.

We're especially interested in folks who have skills or interest in any of these areas: working with volunteers, member communications and social media, working with children and schools, fundraising, public advocacy, and grant writing. But most important is enthusiasm and a willingness to help work toward our goals.

The members elect directors at our annual meeting each January.

If you are interested in joining our board or finding out more about it, contact me at janaxelson@gmail.com, (608) 215-0426, or contact any other board member or come to one of our monthly meetings. We usually meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 pm at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr. Contact us to confirm the time and location. All of our meetings are open to the public.

Jan Axelson, President



Thanks to our volunteers

In September, our volunteers completed our annual campaign to keep a high quality area of the Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area free from invasive phragmites (giant reed grass). Big thanks to all who came out to help on our workdays. To be notified about volunteer workdays at Cherokee Marsh, sign up at Cherokeemarsh.org.



Bike rack installed in new parking area at North Cherokee

Thanks to Parks staff for quickly responding to our request for a bike rack in the new lower parking area at Cherokee Marsh - North Unit. The new lot is perfect for accessing the trails in the North Unit without having to bike on the gravel road.

Board comments on dogs in parks and F-35 jets at Truax

The Friends board recently submitted comments to the Madison Board of Park Commissioners on a proposed ordinance to allow dogs in most City of Madison parks (but not conservation parks). We asked for improved "no dogs" signage and increased enforcement of the no-dogs rule in conservation parks. [Read our statement.](#)

We also submitted comments to the National Guard Bureau on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed addition of F-35 jets at Truax Field in Madison. Our concern was that the draft statement didn't consider effects on the wetlands to the north and west of the airport. [Read our statement.](#)



Keep streets leaf-free for clean waters

Did you know leaves that collect on our streets every fall can harm our waters?

More than 50% of the annual amount of phosphorus in urban stormwater can come from leaves in the street. When it rains, stormwater flows through leaf piles in streets creating a leaf tea rich in dissolved phosphorus.

The leaf tea travels through storm sewers making its way to our lakes, rivers and streams. Too much phosphorus can lead to toxic algae blooms, low oxygen levels and green, murky waters, none of which are good for animals living in the water or those of us who use it for recreation.

In the fall, timely removal of street leaf litter can reduce the amount of phosphorus in urban stormwater by 80% compared to no leaf removal. Communities across Dane County are working hard to reduce stormwater pollution to protect our waters, but they can't do it alone.

You can help.

Remove leaves from the street in front of your home before it rains. Sign up to receive Leaf-free Streets Rain Alerts this fall (Oct. 1- Nov. 30). Alerts will be issued 1-2 days before a significant rain event reminding you that it's time to remove street leaves.

[Sign up for email or text alerts.](#)



This lovely wetland shrub in full fall color is poison sumac, identified by its red stems and hanging clusters of white berries. Poison sumac contains the same irritant as poison ivy, so feel free to admire, but don't touch!



Photo by Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Association

Buffer strip initiative will protect water quality

From our friends at the Clean Lakes Alliance

Conservation buffer strips are a protective zone of permanent vegetation between a farm field and waterway that protects water quality. Buffer strips slow and filter storm runoff while helping to hold soil in place. As a result, the amount of harmful phosphorus that reaches our lakes may be reduced.

A buffer strip begins at the water's edge and typically extends a minimum of 30 feet inland, providing natural scenic beauty and wildlife habitat. Buffers limit the loss of topsoil and may serve as an additional location for growing plants that can be later harvested and used for animal forage.

Clean Lakes Alliance is raising \$50,000 in 2019 to purchase conservation buffer strip easements on farms north of Lake Mendota, in Columbia County. The buffer strips will run along waterways in agricultural fields in the northern tip of the Yahara Watershed. The protective easement will be included in the farm property deed and must be honored if ownership of the land is transferred.

[Learn more and donate.](#)



Upcoming events

[See full calendar](#)

Bird and nature outings

Sun, Oct 6, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, autumn traces of nature with Tom Murn
AND

Sun, Nov 3, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, tree walk with Sean Gere
AND

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

Family-friendly bird and nature walks led by naturalist guides and other local experts.

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 road.
([map](#))

Sponsored by Madison Parks and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh. Questions?
Contact Paul Noeldner at (608)-698-0104 or paul_noeldner@hotmail.com

[Madison Parks Bird and Nature Outings page](#)

Volunteer at Westport Prairie

Oct 1, 8, 15, 22, AND 29, 4 pm - 6 pm

Our friends at Groundswell Conservancy will be collecting seeds at Westport Prairie each Tuesday in October. If you would like to join in any of these events, please RSVP by contacting:

tony@groundswellwisconsin.org

You don't need to commit to every date or to the whole two hours. With your RSVP Tony will know who to contact if he needs to cancel due to rain or for any other reason.

Groundswell also hosts work parties at Westport Prairie on the second Saturday of most months, 9 am to 12 noon. [Sign up to be notified about Sat. workdays.](#)

Directions: From the intersection of HWY 113 and County HWY M on the northeast side of Madison, go north on 113 for about 1.5 miles. Turn right on Bong Road (Arboretum Dr will be on the left). Travel 3/4 mile on Bong and turn into the farmstead driveway on your left. If you reach the top of the hill on Bong, you've gone too far. [map](#)

The address for navigating is:

5208 Bong Rd, Waunakee, WI 53597

Members walk @South Cherokee with Parks staff

Wed, Oct 16, 9 am – 10:30 am

Learn how the Parks crew is managing the woods and prairies and get your questions answered. Led by Madison Parks Conservation Resources Supervisor Paul Quinlan.

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, South Unit, 802 Wheeler Rd, corner of School Rd and Wheeler Rd. Meet by the waste oil dropoff site. ([map](#))

Benvenuto's fundraiser to support environmental ed

at Cherokee Marsh

Mon, Oct 21, 11 am – 9 pm

Dine in, carry out, or buy a gift card and mention the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Benvenuto's will donate 20% of your tab to bring schoolchildren to Cherokee Marsh for environmental education. See story above for more information.

[Benvenuto's Italian Grill](#), Northside Town Center, 1849 Northport Dr.

Hayrides and Hikes

Sat, Oct 26, 1 pm – 4 pm

Tour Cherokee Marsh on a tractor-pulled hay wagon, take a short guided hike, or do both! Plus enjoy free hot cider and marshmallows to roast on the fire.

Hayrides are \$3/person (age 2 and under free) to offset the cost of Parks staff time. Volunteers from the Friends of Cherokee Marsh will lead free, short nature hikes.

No reservations needed. Show up any time from 1 pm to 3:30 pm for a hayride or a hike. The last hayride leaves at 3:40.

Sponsored by Madison Parks and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh.

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 road.
([map](#))

[More information](#)

Board meetings

Wed, Oct 16, 5:30 pm – 7 pm

Wed, Nov 20, 5:30 pm – 7 pm

Members and the public are welcome at our monthly board meetings. Occasionally we reschedule, so contact us to confirm: (608) 215-0426,

janaxelson@gmail.com

Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr ([map](#))

Receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities

Our newsletter comes out six times / 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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