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The Cherokee Marsh News

Oct / Nov 2020



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COVID-19 update

Bird and nature outings

Our monthly bird and nature outings have resumed, *limited to the first 10 participants* on site, no advance signups. Because past outings have drawn large crowds, we are limiting the publicity for these outings. Madison Parks is not sponsoring or promoting the outings, and they aren't being announced in other local media. See the Events calendar below for details.

You are also encouraged to visit our natural areas on your own for "self-guided" walks. See the signage at the entrances to the North Unit for ideas on what to look for each month.

Board meetings

Our board meetings may continue to be held virtually. If you are interested in attending a virtual board meeting, contact Sheila Leary at smleary@charter.net for details.

Latest updates on COVID-19 openings, closures, and more

[COVID-19 update from Madison Parks](#)

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

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



Volunteers remove phragmites to make room for native plants

This September, volunteers worked in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's North and South Units to remove patches of phragmites, also called common reed grass, which can take over an area and choke out diverse, native wetland plants.

Volunteers used the bundle, cut, and treat method, which is effective in late summer and early fall: gather and tie together a bundle of stems, cut the bundle above the twine, and treat the tops of the cut stems with herbicide, which then works its way down into the plant's root system.

Friends volunteers this year also continued their work to remove phragmites in the [Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area](#).

[Learn more about phragmites](#)



Study to measure street sweeping's contribution to clean water

Have you noticed the new monitoring boxes installed at the inlets and outlets of the Wheeler Road ponds in Cherokee Marsh - South Unit? They are part of a study to measure the effects of leaf collection and street sweeping on water quality downstream.

The study is a cooperative effort of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and City of Madison Streets and Engineering Divisions. The League of Wisconsin Municipalities provided funding for the project.

The monitoring boxes are on the shorelines of the ponds just north of Ilene Ln and Delaware Blvd. [The ponds were dug in 2012](#). The inlets of the ponds capture stormwater that flows into storm sewers in the neighborhoods south of the ponds. The outlets feed into a canal that flows into the upper Yahara River. The ponds slow the flow of stormwater, allowing pollutants to settle in the ponds instead of entering the river and downstream lakes.

The study will monitor phosphorous, chloride, solids, temperature, and water levels. Phosphorus is the main nutrient that feeds algae blooms in the Yahara lakes. [A previous study on Madison's west side](#) showed that leaves are a significant source of phosphorus to urban stormwater and that timely removal of leaf litter from streets can reduce the phosphorus load by 80 percent.

Chloride, which is present in road salt, is being measured to study its effect on the amount of dissolved phosphorus from sediments in the ponds.

The study will last two years. Starting next year, the the neighborhoods upstream from each pond will receive different treatment. One pond's neighborhoods will have bi-weekly street sweeping while the others will have no street sweeping. Comparing the data at the two ponds will help to show the effectiveness of street sweeping in reducing phosphorus in downstream waters. Engineering will send a letter explaining the project to those in affected neighborhoods.

The instruments use wireless communications for sending data and for controlling the system. The data captured will be posted on a website.



Bluebird numbers down in the North Unit

Jim Mand monitors the bluebird boxes in Cherokee Marsh - North Unit. Here is his report for this year.

Overall, 2020 was not the best year for bluebirds in Cherokee Marsh North Unit. Even with the increase of total nest boxes from 14 to 20 in the last 4 years. There is stiff competition in the spring with tree swallows, and mid-

summer with house wrens.

In 2017, bluebirds used 5 of 14 nest boxes, laying 25 eggs, hatching 15, and fledging 10.

In 2018, bluebirds used 5 of 17 nest boxes, laying 24 eggs, hatching 21, and fledging 18. This is in spite of a late snowstorm on 4/18/18, with a snowfall of 7.1 inches. And finding 5 adult bluebirds frozen to death in one box just before the start of nesting season.

In 2019, bluebirds used 3 of 19 nest boxes, laying 12 eggs, hatching 10, and fledging 10.

In 2020, bluebirds used 2 of 20 nest boxes, laying 8 eggs, hatching 8, and fledging 6.

Box #10 has been the most successful, having bluebirds every year and double broods some years.



In our Aug / Sept newsletter, we introduced you to the Prairie Partners interns. The interns also worked with Groundswell Conservancy at Westport Prairie, located on Bong Rd just west of Cherokee Marsh. Here is Groundswell's report on the interns.

The Prairie Partners Crew Returns!

BJ Byers, Groundswell Conservancy

Every Monday and Tuesday this summer you'll find me in the field with a hard working crew of 5 interns, who are part of our 9th annual Prairie Partners crew.

In collaboration with these Prairie Partners - Madison Audubon, Friends of Cherokee Marsh, and Pheasant Branch Conservancy - we're able to hire the crew to work full-time, Monday-Friday (May 18th and through August 14th). Each day the crew is doing restoration work with a different partner on their protected land.

As part of the Prairie Partners program, Groundswell has the interns working at Westport Prairie and Patrick Marsh. The crew has pulled countless weeds including: garlic mustard, wild parsnip, sweet clover, thistle, and burdock. In addition to weed management, they also focus heavily on invasive woody plants including sumac, honeysuckle, and buckthorn.

Without the control of some of these invasive species, the quality of our native prairie and oak savanna habitats at Patrick Marsh and Westport Prairie would decline. Native flowering plants would get shaded out and the understory would become significantly less diverse. Thanks to the Prairie Partners Crew, we don't have to worry about that, and we get to enjoy these habitats at their best.



Upcoming events

Check the listed contact information to verify that events are still on.

[See the full calendar](#) for latest information or [sign up](#) to receive notices about events and volunteer opportunities.

Bird and nature outings

Limited to the first 10 participants on site, no advance signups.

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.

Sun, Oct 4, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, fall tree walk with arborist Sean Gere
AND

Sun, Nov 1, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, Ice Age geology with naturalist guide Paul
Noeldner
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

Intro to kayak clinic

Tuesday, Oct 13, 4 pm - 6 pm

Cherokee Park, 1000 Burning Wood Way

\$15.00 (Resident)

\$22.50 (Non-resident)

Ages: 12 and up

Madison School & Recreation (MSCR) instructors provide introductory information on equipment, basic paddling strokes, and then let you hit the water

to enjoy the lakes. All PFDs, paddles, boats and equipment are sanitized for your safety and left untouched for at least 24 hours between participant usage. You are welcome to bring your own Coast Guard approved Type III PFD. If you weigh less than 90 lbs, you must bring your own PFD. Best suited for ages 12+, if under 16 you must register with an adult unless otherwise noted.

Learn the basics to start paddling safely. These courses give introductory information about boats, safety equipment, water safety and paddling techniques. If you've never been in a boat before, this is a great place to start!

[Learn more and sign up](#)

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.

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