

winter2019

friends

of the cache river watershed



Spring is just around the corner for the Cache!

Henry N. Barkhausen 1914-2018



The Cache River Wetlands lost a great friend and advocate with the passing of Henry Noyes Barkhausen on October 3, just two months shy of his 104th birthday. Mr. Barkhausen was former director of the Illinois Department of Conservation (now IDNR) and served for 18 years as secretary of the Citizens Committee to Save the Cache River, working to encourage government agencies, organizations and residents to protect and

restore the natural character of the wetlands. As an Illinois Life Trustee of The Nature Conservancy, he was actively involved in conservation issues throughout his long life, supporting the Henry Barkhausen Fund for Southern Illinois and the Cache. The Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center was named in his honor. “We are all saddened by Henry’s passing,” said Friends of Cache chair Michael Jeffords. “He and all that he stood for will be

greatly missed, and his influence and passion for the Cache, and all things natural, wild and free, are irreplaceable.” Mr. Barkhausen, who was a businessman, World War II naval officer, avid sailor and maritime historian as well as a conservationist, is survived by his wife of 77 years, Alice, his five children, 13 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

For more information, e-mail friendsofthecacheriver@gmail.com or like “Friends of the Cache River Watershed” on FACEBOOK.



What's Next

Free Nature Movies

*Matinee 2-3pm, evening showing 6-7pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

February 14, learn about the structure and function of ant colonies in *Ants: Little Creatures Who Run the World*.

March 14, *Armadillo Hotel* will help us better understand one of Illinois' newest resident fauna. **April 11**, *Flight School* tells the story of efforts to start a new flock of the rare and endangered whooping crane.

Slide Tour: Newfoundland and Gaspé Peninsula

*Saturday, February 16, 10-11am
Cache River Wetlands Center*

John Schwegman will be our travel guide to explore the west coast of Newfoundland, including coastal tundra, rare orchids, icebergs and more, plus the sea bird nesting island of Bonaventure.

Slide Tour: Great Smoky Mountains

*Saturday, March 16, 10-11am
Cache River Wetlands Center*

John Schwegman will showcase the stunning diversity of spring wildflowers in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, along with a variety of nesting and migrating birds, including the rare Swainson's warbler.

Hummingbirds – Winged Jewels

*Saturday, March 23, 1-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Get ready for the spring migration of hummingbirds by learning how to create food and nesting opportunities in your yard or garden.

Beginning Birding Basics

*Saturday, March 30, 9-11am
Cache River Wetlands Center*

This program by Master Naturalist Anne Parmley will concentrate on the field marks and sounds of common southern Illinois birds. An optional hike will follow, weather permitting.

For questions on the above programs, contact the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064. All programs are free and open to the public.

Photo: Michael Jeffords



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook By Susan Post

Listed as a rare stray in *Butterflies of Illinois* (Jeffords, Post and Wiker), the **gulf fritillary** is one butterfly species that Michael and I had yet to see in

Illinois. This bright orange butterfly is common in the southern U.S., particularly Florida, but Illinois sightings are few and far between. In early October 2018, while on a trip to Zambia, we were alerted to the gulf fritillary's presence in southern Illinois by two Master Naturalists – sightings at Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge by Judy Groskind and in eastern Pope County by Karen Frailey.

When we finally headed for the Cache on October 17, the weather had been cool, but no killing frost had yet occurred. At the Cache River Wetlands Center we met another Master Naturalist, Anne Parmley, who said that a friend in Karnak had spotted some gulf fritillaries in her garden recently. However, if we wanted to see one right away, Anne advised us to head down to the levee, where she had just seen the elusive butterfly herself a few minutes earlier. Armed with cameras, we headed out. There, nectaring on blooming swamp marigold, was a gulf fritillary.

The prize admired and documented, we continued our hike and soon encountered a second fritillary nectaring on tartarian aster. (This aster, which was blooming in the Friends of Cache Pollinator Gardens at Egret Slough, was culled from the original stock planted by legendary Illinois Natural History Survey ornithologist Jean Graber on her farm near Golconda, which is now War Bluff Audubon Sanctuary.)

Our multiple encounters proved we had not just a single stray, but a mini-outbreak of gulf fritillaries, as the first one we encountered was freshly emerged while the second was worn. These southern butterflies likely enter Illinois from the gulf coast after hurricanes from the Gulf of Mexico make their way north, often touching Illinois. The butterflies persist until winter as their food plant, passion vine, is quite common in southern Illinois.

Boo at the Slough



Cache River SNA Site Interpreter, Molie Oliver, greeted guests as a garden spider (*Argiope aurantia*) and crafted sweetgum spiderlings.

On Halloween weekend, trick-or-treaters and their families trekked the Egret Slough Trail and explored the Cache River Wetlands Center, meeting a variety of swamp creatures along the way. Costumed volunteers portrayed 15 different critters of the Cache, providing natural history education while leading crafts, games and other activities. The new event, led by Cache River State Natural Area conservation education

representative Kimberly Rohling and co-sponsored by Friends of the Cache, attracted more than 70 participants. Special thanks to the “Boo Crew” who donned or donated costumes, manned stations and planned activities to make this magical afternoon possible. To see more photos, check out Friends of the Cache on Facebook. Mark your calendar for 2019 Boo at the Slough, Sunday, October 27!

Photos: Lorie Allen



Giant City State Park’s conservation education representative Alex Holmes taught kids about the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) invading southern Illinois.



Master Naturalist Lisa Barnes provided bat conservation education while sporting a creative costume made from recycled materials.



L to R, Lyle Smith, Rhonda Rothrock and Vicki Lang-Mendenhal record birds seen and heard at North Cypress Access during October 7 mini sit.

Fall Migration Mini Sit Recap

By Kimberly Rohling

Seventeen birdwatchers formed seven count circles within the Cache River State Natural Area on October 7 to see how many different birds they could identify between 9am and noon. Their concentrated efforts resulted in a final count of 336 individual birds of 53 species. Noteworthy migrants included black-billed cuckoos at Section 8 Woods Nature Preserve, rose-breasted grosbeaks at Wildcat Bluff, early greater white-fronted geese at North Cypress Access, eastern wood pewee at Big Cypress and a Tennessee warbler at Perks Road. Seven other warbler species were also identified – black-throated green, common yellowthroat, magnolia, ovenbird, palm, pine and yellow-rumped. Many birders were thrilled to hear the “yank-yank” song of red-breasted nuthatches irrupting through their count circles.

The mini sit event launched 19 new hotspots on **eBird**, a citizen science platform that documents the abundance and distribution of species via user-submitted electronic checklists. This data helps biologists understand bird populations at a global scale. By using eBird while you explore the Cache, you are contributing to science and may help others see “life birds” with your real-time submissions. To find the Cache hotspots, check out the Cache River SNA site map on IDNR’s website: all public parking access points (black square) and dedicated nature preserves are now eBird hotspots. If you plan to participate in the Christmas Bird Count, Backyard Bird Count or Birding Blitz, please target a hotspot in the Cache to collect much-needed data.



Photo: CCWR

As part of our on-going efforts

to update and refurbish educational signage in the Cache River Wetlands, Friends of the Cache funded the replacement of interpretive panels for three kiosks on Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. “Interpretive signs are an integral part of the Refuge’s outreach program, and many of our signs were badly weathered,” says Cypress Creek’s deputy director, Liz Jones. “We appreciate the support of the Friends, and the design work by ArtFX, and hope the new panels will enhance your experience while visiting Refuge trailheads and boat ramps.”

The image shows a wooden interpretive sign for Hickory Bottoms at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The sign features a map, text about the area's significance for wildlife and people, and information about wetlands. The background is a dark green gradient.

Mad about Monarchs

photo: Ayn West



More than 80 monarch butterflies were tagged at the Cache River Wetlands Center for Monarch Watch's

citizen science project this past fall, and then released to continue their 1,800-mile journey to the mountains of southern Mexico. For a wealth of information about how you can participate in monarch conservation efforts, check out monarchwatch.org. And, mark your calendar now for the next monarch tagging program at the Wetlands Center: Saturday, September 21.



photo: IDNR



photo: Dave & Kathy Wagner

Monarchs are on the rise! The World Wildlife Federation reported in January that the area of forest occupied by hibernating monarchs in Mexico has increased by 144 percent in relation to last year's survey, the biggest growth in the past 12 years. While monarch populations are still far smaller than they were 20 years ago, this is encouraging news for the many organizations and individuals working to plant milkweed and other native wildflowers to help sustain the monarchs during their annual migration.



The Old Feed Store/photo:Paula Havlik

The village of Cobden in Union County is located near the summit of the Shawnee Hills, at the southern end of an ancient valley cut into rock by water, known to geologists as “Cobden Col.” Legend has it that the town, originally called South Pass, was renamed in honor of Richard Cobden, a British politician and free-trade advocate who impressed the townspeople during his 1859 visit to help promote the Illinois Central Railroad.

The advent of the railroad provided a major boost for Cobden’s thriving fruit and vegetable business. Before the days of refrigerated trucks and competition from California, trains from Cobden ran multiple times a day to deliver fresh produce directly to the markets in

Chicago. For years, Cobden was the largest shipping point in the U.S. for tomatoes, and farmers would line up their wagons for blocks each day, waiting to load their goods onto railroad cars. An Illinois Central agent who kept a record of peaches shipped from Cobden during one summer estimated that, with 300 bushels on each car, the total number of railroad cars would stretch 15 miles.

The Cobden Peach Festival has been held continuously since 1938, through wars, recessions, floods, droughts and even lost crops. In years when the peach crop was frozen out, the Lions’ Club organizers would drive to neighboring states to buy peaches and keep the festival alive. Another source of civic pride is the “Amazing Appleknock-

ers,” the 1964 high school basketball team that made it all the way to the state championship game, a stunning feat for a small school in the days when Illinois had a single-class tournament.

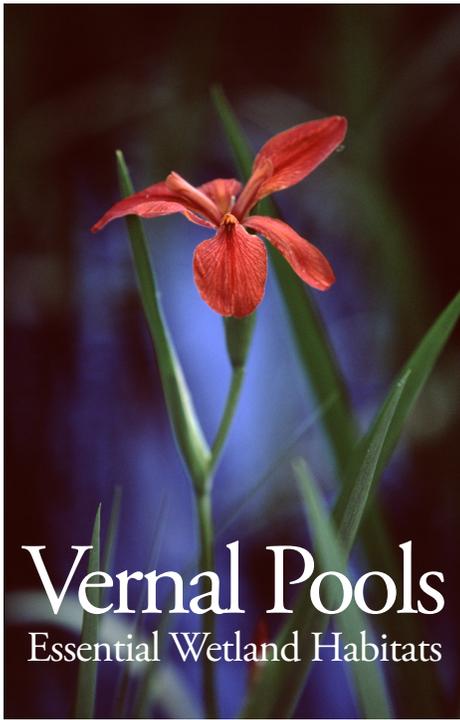
Today, Cobden is an eclectic community that includes farmers, artists, business owners and retired faculty from nearby Southern Illinois University. The Union County Museum, located in the historic Dubois building downtown, is a popular tourist attraction with an impressive collection of Native American and other historical artifacts.

“Communities of the Cache” will highlight a different town in each issue. If you’d like to share historical photos and tidbits about your community, please contact newsletter editor Paula Havlik at phavlik@illinois.edu.



Kids to the Cache, a grant program sponsored by Friends of the Cache, awarded a record number of grants over the fall and winter to help local schools bring their students on field trips to the Cache. Participating schools included Elverado Elementary (pictured), Vienna High School, Vienna Grade School, DeSoto Grade School, Cobden High School and Cypress Elementary. For more information about Kids to the Cache, please contact Fran Wachter at franceswachter@gmail.com





A Three-Part Series by Paula Havlik

Part I: What, Why and Where

If you own land, whether it's a farm, a woods lot or just a rustic backyard, late winter is a great time to learn more about the vital aquatic habitats known as vernal pools. These seasonal bodies of water form when rain, snowmelt or high groundwater collect in natural or man-made depressions, usually in late winter or early spring. Because vernal pools are relatively shallow and dry out in the summer, they cannot support fish, which makes them an ideal reproductive environment for many reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

Certain frogs, salamanders and crustaceans, known by scientists as obligate species, reproduce exclusively in vernal pools. Facultative species, those that don't solely depend on vernal pools but use them extensively for foraging and sometimes breeding, include a variety of amphibians, birds, turtles, snakes, predatory insects and small mammals. Vernal pools also support a diversity of spring ephemerals and other native

Photo: Michael Jeffords

vegetation. Unfortunately, because these habitats are often small and isolated, they are easily overlooked in wetland inventories, and frequently destroyed by development, road building and re-grading of land. Private landowners can make a big difference by conserving and even creating vernal pools on their property.

Although most often associated with forest settings, vernal pools can be found or created almost anywhere that water collects seasonally, ranging from a clay pot, plastic bin or horse trough buried in the ground and lined with leaf litter to a more elaborate wetland dug with earth-moving equipment. Even the deep ruts created by farm equipment can serve as very effective vernal pools. Take a walk around your property and look for matted leaves covering a depression in the ground – chances are this is a vernal pool in its dry stage. In the ideal scenario, a variety of small vernal pools would be scattered

across the landscape, helping wildlife migrate and disperse.

Choosing and Preparing a Site for Your Vernal Pool

My husband, John, and I are currently working with Rob Stroh and Jeremy Schumacher of Ozark Koala Ecosystem Services to construct a vernal pool on our wooded property near Vienna, Illinois. Our first step was to find a spot with a gentle slope or natural depression. The ideal slope for a vernal pool is 1:10, or a drop of one foot per every ten feet. More than 85 percent of obligate amphibians spend their adult lives near the vernal pool where they were born and return to it to lay their own eggs; so, when selecting your site, think of the area around it as potential habitat. We chose a clearing surrounded by woods with a semi-open canopy, so the pool will have some sun and some shade. Nearby are plenty of fallen logs; thickets; trees with good bark for

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photo: Tony Gerard





photo:
Cypress Creek NWR

Cypress Creek Update

Watch Our Greenhouse Grow!

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and the Agricultural Club at Shawnee Community College are working together to grow native flowers that support bees, butterflies and other pollinators. AmeriCorps member and former SCC student Brett Casper is coordinating the project, with assistance from fellow AmeriCorps member Daniel Morales. “We got the project started by the college providing their greenhouse and the Refuge buying and collecting native seed,” explains Casper,

who is excited about getting other SCC students involved. The greenhouse has been cleaned up and flats set up to grow native flowers such as blazing star, butterfly weed, black-eyed susan, royal catch-fly and purple coneflower. New plants will be used to enhance existing habitat on the Refuge while also contributing to future pollinator plantings at Shawnee College. The hope is that this partnership will lead to more interest locally in growing and planting native wildflowers, which will benefit a host of pollinators – and people, too!

Vernal Pool *cont.*

hiding, such as oak, hickory and box elder; and cavity trees.

Our next step was to test the soil, by digging a couple of small holes the maximum depth of a vernal pool, 18 inches. Look for a layer of clay or silty loam; if the site is sandy or gravelly, your pool will not hold water without an artificial liner. Test the permeability of the clay by filling the holes with water. Ours drained slowly but steadily, indicating that we’ll need to tamp down the clay layer once the pool is dug out.

Next, Jeremy and Rob ran a plumb line from the highest to the lowest end of the slope, to determine how high we’d need to build the retaining dam at the low end. Then, using stakes and string, they laid out the perimeter of the pool, while checking for tree roots and other potential obstacles. (A good rule of thumb: tree roots usually extend about as far as the tree’s canopy.) Our finished pool will be approximately 42 feet long and 35 feet across, which is close to the upper limit for a vernal pool.

In summary, when choosing and preparing your site:

- Look for a natural depression or gentle slope.
- Consider surrounding habitat.
- Test soil – clay or silty loam is best.
- Check for roots or other obstacles.
- Find high spot for retaining dam.
- Lay out perimeter.
- Don’t forget to check with local utilities before you dig!

Next issue will feature **Part II: Building Your Vernal Pool.**

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To remain budget and environment-friendly, most communications are sent via e-mail.

Please let us know if you need to receive information via U.S. mail.

All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to Friends of the Cache River Watershed and mail to: 8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress, IL 62923.