



Spring/Summer 2022 Newsletter



Please go to friendsofthecache.org for past newsletters and more information about the Cache River Watershed.

Heron Pond - Wildcat Bluff, A Nature Preserve Since 1971

By Christina Feng, District Heritage Biologist, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Heron Pond – Wildcat Bluff Nature Preserve took place on April 9, 2022. Hosted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in conjunction with the Friends of the Cache River Watershed, Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves, and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, the main event at the Barkhausen Wetlands Center was attended by over 100 people from across the state. The three featured speakers – Max Hutchison, John Schwegman, and Andy West – were all key figures in the initial recognition, protection, and management of the Nature Preserve and treated the audience with tales of the site’s human history. Local musician Curt Carter closed out the ceremony with his inspiring original song about the Cache River.



Following the ceremony, attendees had the opportunity to join in on additional programming including a video presentation featuring the Nature Preserve’s first site interpreter and guided hikes of Heron Pond and Wildcat Bluff. The biologists and researchers leading these tours discussed interesting facets of the Cache River including its native species and natural communities, unique ecology, hydrological restoration, and upland management. *Photo by William A. Parmley*

Note: There are Heron Pond t-shirts available at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, Illinois. The Center is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday.

Save the Date: Thursday, August 25, 6:30 to 8 pm., Friends of the Cache River Watershed Annual Meeting, Carbondale Civic Center, 200 S. Illinois Avenue, Carbondale, Illinois.

The speaker will be Tony Gerard, Friends of the Cache River Watershed President and Shawnee College Science Instructor. His topic will be *Amphibians of the Cache Watershed*. He will talk about the various amphibian species found within the watershed, how and where to look for them, and a bit about the lifestyles of each.

What's Next

Thursdays June 30 and July 7, 10 a.m. to noon: Free Fishing Clinics

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources will offer a series of FREE youth catch-and-release clinics at Cache River State Natural Area, Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 St. Rt. 37 South, Cypress, Illinois, on Thursdays, from 10 a.m. until noon, June 30 and July 7, 2022. Instructors will present information on fish and other aquatic life; fishing rules and regulations; and basic instructions on baiting a hook, tying a knot, and casting, tactics for catching fish, and how to handle and return fish to the water. Participants may bring their own equipment or will be provided with rods, reels, bait, and tackle for 90 minutes of catch-and-release fishing. The clinics are targeted towards children 16 and younger, but anyone interested in learning basic fishing techniques can attend. Parents and other adults are not required to have a fishing license to assist during this program. Please register in advance by calling the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Note: The waters of Cache River State Natural Area are open for fishing all year long in areas where hunting, and gathering is allowed. Dedicated Nature Preserves are closed to hunting, gathering, and fishing.

Friday, July 29, 10 a.m. to noon, Magnificent Moths (see flyer on page 3)

Saturday, August 13, 10-11 a.m.: Johnson County Went to War 1861-1865

Mr. Ed Annable's presentation will include selected information and quotes from his most recent book, *Some Came Marching Home Again—Johnson County Illinois Went to War 1861-1862*. In recent years Ed and Diane Annable have published several award-winning books on the history of Southern Illinois. Please join us for an educational program that all will enjoy at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center.

Saturday, August 27, 1-4pm: Reptiles in the Neighborhood

Join reptile enthusiast Tony Gerard for an up-close look at snakes, skinks, lizards, and turtles, highlighting characteristics of reptiles found in southern Illinois. The indoor presentation will be at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center from 1 to 2 p.m. The program concludes with an optional hike on Todd Fink- Heron Pond Trail to look for cold-blooded creatures of the Cache.

Photo by William Parmley



Saturday, September 17, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Monarch Phenomenon

The magnificent monarch butterfly migrates up to 2,500 miles from North America to central Mexico for the winter. Monarch Watch Association has been tagging and monitoring migrating monarchs since 1992. Join us at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center, for a program at 10:00 a.m. to learn natural history of monarchs, and then spend the rest of the day capturing, tagging monarchs, and releasing butterflies. Call 618-657-2064 for more information.



Photo by William A. Parmley

Note: Throughout the month of September, one may capture butterflies, tagging monarchs, at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center from Wednesday through Sunday. Nets will be provided.

Saturday, October 8, 10am -noon: Glass Hill Hike, Cypress, IL

Take a guided nature/history tour of Glass Hill in the Cache River State Natural Area with natural heritage biologist Mark Guetersloh. Glass Hill (also known as Cypress Citadel and Round Bluff) is a sandstone knob covered by upland wood and home to Woodland Indians for many years. Meet at IDNR parking lot on Pendleton Road off Dongola-Cypress Road. Call 618-657-2064 for more information.

Celebrate National Moth Week *By Erin Garrett*

Did you know that almost 2,000 of the 150,000 species of moths in the world call Illinois their home? Moths play an important role in the food web, but are often ignored. Stop by the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center on Friday July 29 from 10am to noon for Magnificent Moths, an outdoor event celebrating National Moth Week! Come anytime between 10am and noon to walk through stations to learn about moths in southern Illinois, partake in hands-on crafts, activities, and games, plant a flower to take home, learn how to attract moths at night, and more! This program is free and open to the public. Activities will be available for youth ages 5 to 17. Please note that children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

This program is being offered through a partnership between University of Illinois Extension and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

If you will need an accommodation in order to participate, please contact Erin Garrett at 618-524-2270. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.



Join us for

Magnificent Moths

during National Moth Week

Did you know there are over 150,000 species of moths in the world? Moths play an important role in the food web, but are often ignored.

Join us for an outdoor event to:

- Learn about moths in southern Illinois
- Make and take moth crafts
- Plant a flower for visiting moths
- Learn how to attract moths at night
- And more!

Free and open to the public!
Activities for ages 5-17

Friday, July 29 | 10am-12pm
Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center
Cypress, IL



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating. University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact Erin Garrett at 618-524-2270. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.

Hike the Heron Pond

Preserve: *A Hiking with Shawn*
Guide to Hiking the Heron Pond
Swamp Preserve. *By Shawn Gossman*

Looking for a fun family hike this summer? Head over to the Heron Pond Preserve and experience what southern Illinois once looked like long ago. Swamps, wetlands, and sloughs! It is often described as Southern Illinois' own bayou but without the alligators. What is now a protected nature preserve gives you a glimpse of the past markup of the area.



Enjoy signage along the way of this out-and-back trail. The trail is an easy to moderate hiking experience suitable for foot hikers. You can take the short 1.5-mile trail or add the swamp trail and Cherrybark Oak Trail to nearly 3 miles.

The signage along the way will explain what you're seeing, and there is even a boardwalk across the swamp.

Kids and eager hikers can see various wildlife, including squirrels, deer, beaver, otters, snakes, frogs, lizards, and toads. Remember to keep a safe distance from all wildlife and never attempt to handle any animal.



Photos by William A. Parmley

Be sure to bring plenty of water, a snack, and bug spray, as the swamp can get buggy during the warmer seasons.

Bring a camera and make some memories!

Heron Pond is an Illinois Nature Preserve, so remember to stay on the designated trail at all times and pack out what you pack in.

The trailhead has plenty of parking, restrooms, information signage, bike racks, and trash cans.

What will you see on the Heron Pond Hiking Trail!?

Who am I? *By Tony Gerard*

Most folks who see me think I'm a fungus- but I'm not! In the woods you most often see me on old decaying wood- but you may see me in your yard on wood chip mulch after a heavy rain or excessive watering. As I get older I dry out and lose my bright yellow color. I'm actually found worldwide. Do you know me? Answer on page 7.



Removing Trash from the Cache *By Kimberly Rohling*

Todd Dieterle (Master Naturalist in photo at left), Tony Dynek (Friends of the Cache AmeriCorps Member in center photo), Kimberly Sargent (USFWS volunteer in photo at right), and Karen Mangan (USFWS Staff) worked with their local Illinois Extension Program Coordinator, Kimberly Rohling, to collect trash at two locations at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge on March 11. Participants removed over 25 bags of trash and 9 tires which collectively weighed 686 pounds! Most of the trash collected at Cache Bend Access was glass bottles and cigarette butts. However at Cache Levee Access, trash was illegally dumped in multiple locations with clothing, children's toys, tires and an old mattress. This clean-up event was supported by a partnership with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; Friends of the Cache; and University of Illinois Extension. If you see people illegally dumping trash, please report your sightings to USFWS staff by calling (618) 634-2231. A special thanks to all participants who helped keep trash out of the Cache!

Photos by Kimberly Rohling



Visitor Hours at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Office

Visitor hours at the office of Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, 137 Rustic Campus Drive, Ullin, Illinois, are now 8:00 am to 12:00 pm, Tuesday through Thursday. The office will be closed on federal holidays. Visitation to refuge lands is outlined in the Rules and Policies located on our website: <https://www.fws.gov/.../cypress.../visit-us/rules-policies>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>. Connect with our Facebook page at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region, follow our tweets at twitter.com/usfwsmidwest, watch our YouTube Channel at youtube.com/usfws, and download photos from our Flickr page at flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest.

Nutria, The Coming Invasion *By Tony Gerard*

Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) are large, semi-aquatic rodents native to South America. Picture a cross between a beaver and a muskrat and you've pretty well visualized a Nutria. In the late 1800s nutria were introduced into the southern US as part of the fur industry. It wasn't long afterward they became established in the wild here, and they have been spreading ever since. The Invasive Species Specialist Group has named nutria one of the world's top 100 worst invasive species. California is the most recent state to be invaded.



As a rodent nutria have an explosive population growth rate. They reach sexual maturity at only a few months old, can reproduce up to three times a year, and can have litters of up to 13.

Nutria can consume up to 20 percent of their body weight in plant matter and roots each day. Eating up the vegetation that holds together wetland soil causes major erosion. I had a friend in Louisiana once tell me that the nutria eat nearly all the young cypress in his area, changing what was once cypress swamp and marshland into open water.

The animals dig extensive burrow systems that sometimes end up under roads, around bridges, and in canals and levees. They also destroy thousands of dollars worth of crops, like sugarcane and rice, each year in the gulf coast states.

So, we definitely don't want nutria in the Cache watershed! Here's the bad news; they're already here. Chris McGinness, site superintendent at Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, recently told me that a Massac county resident reported seeing a nutria on his property in about 2015 or 16. By the next summer a pair of nutria had set up housekeeping at Mermet. He said they did some damage to the area's levee system before they were eventually trapped.



Mike Brown, superintendent of Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge from 2008 to 2018, got a good look at a nutria as it crossed a field near Perks. He said later duck hunters told him of seeing a nutria near the same area. More recently I found a road-killed nutria on Belknap Road last summer.

The good news, if there is a good side to the story, is that the invasion seems to be moving rather slowly in southern Illinois. The one nutria Mike Brown saw was the only one he saw during his tenure at Cypress Creek. Chris Mc Guinness says no additional nutria have been reported at Mermet since the pair were trapped.

As an exotic, non-native species nutria are not subject to Illinois game laws and can legally be killed year round. Since they are an invasive, problem causing exotic nutria have been promoted as an ethical choice for fur garments. Lastly, nutria are good food! Historically they were marketed as "Swamp Hare" in southern restaurants. If only a taste for nutria could make a comeback!

Photo of live nutria by Michael Jeffords Photo of road-killed nutria by Tony Gerard

New Firefly Species in the Cache By Lucy Walker

According to our speaker IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist Christina Feng (pictured at right), there are about 160-170 species of fireflies in the United States. The actual number of species in Illinois is not known, but there are at least 3-4 types at Heron Pond. Fireflies are also found on every continent except Antarctica.

Cypress Fireflies are only found in high quality Cypress and Tupelo swamps. They have been identified across Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois and Indiana. This species was first collected in 2017, but not described until 2019, the same year they were first documented at Heron Pond.

Many, but not all, firefly species produce light through a chemical reaction inside their body. Their adult phase lasts 1-4 weeks out of a 1-2 year life cycle. Each species that can luminesce has a distinctive flash pattern that differs in its color, the number and length of flashes, and the time between flashes. A few species even do synchronized flashing when large groups flash in unison.



Christina described the Cypress Firefly's yellow flash sequence as "glow-glow-glow-glow-sweep." This beautiful flash pattern consists of 4-9 quick flashes followed by a prolonged glow lasting about 1 second.

The main threats to Cypress Fireflies are habitat loss and degradation plus light pollution. The cypress swamps they inhabit have declined by an estimated 90 percent since European settlement. The remaining suitable habitat is extremely fragmented, and the sites where they have been found are largely restricted to protected Wildlife Refuges, Conservation Areas and State Parks.

For people who want to know more about fireflies, Christina recommended the book *Fireflies, Glow-worms, and Lightning Bugs: Identification and Natural History of the Fireflies of the Eastern and Central United States and Canada* by Lynn Frierson Faust. It was published in March 2017, so it was completed before the Cypress Firefly was identified. The book includes a chart of common firefly flash patterns.

Photo of Christina Feng by Lucy Walker Photo of flash sequence by Suzanne Asaturian

Who am I? Answer By Tony Gerard

(From page 4)

I'm a Dog Vomit Slime Mold. I'm not really a fungus but an aggregate of protists cells. And it gets even weirder than that! The aggregate of cells, called a plasmodium, is a multinucleate mass of undifferentiated cells that may move in an ameboid-like fashion as it looks for food.



From my 3x5 Notebook—April 15, 2022 *By Susan Post*

It is 7 pm as we walk the familiar gravel road to the Michael Wolff Memorial Wetland, and we are remembering the day's top observations. Highpoints of the day were carpets of spring beauty, an Osprey's nest, a pair of Bald Eagles—sentinels in cypress, and three freshly emerged Gemmed Satyr butterflies. We are planning tomorrow's excursions when my flashlight illuminates something on the roadside.



What is that? Is that an armadillo? Yes, a dead road-kill armadillo; all that remains is the shell. I look again.

What is emerging from it? Is that a large fly? A bee? No, it's an Abbott's Sphinx Moth, a fairly rare insect that comes out at dusk. I step in for a closer view and note it is feeding on moisture from the recent rain. While I smell the decay of the unfortunate armadillo, I can hear the moth's wings vibrate, just like the buzzing of a bee. In fact, Abbott's Sphinx is a bee mimic, complete with not only a buzz, but also with hindwings that have a yellow band. During daylight the moth, at rest, resembles tree bark or a bit of broken branch.

Michael had just commented upon seeing a Hummingbird Sphinx the day before, "You know, something I have not seen, is an Abbott's Sphinx." The Cache never disappoints.

Photo by Michael Jeffords

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To remain budget and environmentally friendly, most communications are by e-mail.

Check here if you need to receive information by U. S. Mail.

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

OR go to our website: friendsofthecache.org and click "join" to become a friend online.