

april/may
2015

friends



The eastern newt, in its reddish-brown juvenile stage, can be spotted in moist woods after a rainfall.

of the cache river watershed

Field Notes

Four Questions for Tony Gerard
Biology Instructor,
Shawnee Community College

Tell us about your project on iNaturalist.

The best way to describe iNaturalist is “Facebook for nature geeks.” Anybody can post a photo observation on this site, making it available to scientists and the public all over the world. **Biodiversity of the Cache River Watershed** is a project I’ve set up within iNaturalist that focuses on all living creatures of the Cache. We’ve posted photos documenting more than 800 species so far, ranging from bobcats to slime molds. This is a drop in the bucket, compared with the amazing diversity that exists in the Cache, so we need lots more volunteers to participate.

Why is the site important?

As Susan Post puts it, if you record something once, it’s an observation; twice, it’s a trend; three times, it’s data. When enough observations are made, you can begin to see where, when and how often species, such as a small mouth salamander or a spadefoot toad, have been sighted, and how this data is changing

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

may 9
naturefest

THE CACHE RIVER WETLANDS

Nature Fest 2015 is scheduled for Saturday, May 9, with lots of fun, educational and FREE activities planned for nature lovers of all ages! Come out to the Cache River Wetlands Center, 10am-4pm, rain or shine, for live wildlife exhibits, nature games, butterfly crafts, guided hikes, canoe and bike tours, fried Asian carp tasting, the ever-popular Cache Challenge and much more. Mother Nature is calling you home, and the experience is one you won’t soon forget!

Canoe tours on Saturday morning are first-come, first-served, with a special tour slot available at noon for Friends of the Cache members only. Reserve your seat in advance, beginning **April 13**: call 618-634-2231. Volunteers are still needed to help with exhibits, craft tables, hikes and canoe tours on May 9, and event set-up on May 6. To volunteer, contact Melissa Alexander at melissa_alexander@fws.gov.

Nature Fest t-shirts will be sold at the event. Bring your current Friends of the Cache membership card and receive a 10 percent discount!

For more details on NatureFest, visit cacherivernaturefest.com



over time. Through the Global Amphibian Bio-Blitz, another iNaturalist project I'm involved with, we've rediscovered four different species that were believed to be extinct.

Is it difficult to participate?

You don't have to be an expert to get involved. If you can't identify the organism in your photo, just say something like "plant," or "mushroom, I think," and click "ID please." It might take several months; but, someone will respond with an identification. You don't even have to take a great photo – just clear enough to see what it is. Posting pictures is easy: you can share them from your Facebook page or download the iNaturalist app, which allows you to post photos instantly from your smartphone.

What's the future of survey sites?

As funding for scientific research continues to shrink, ordinary folks can help fill the gap as "citizen scientists" by putting

their observations in usable form. I would encourage people to participate in a variety of online survey sites, many of which are interconnected. Other good sites include HerpMapper, Bug-Guide, eBird and Encyclopedia of Life. Don't just take cool nature shots – share them on one or more of these sites, and your photographs can serve a very real, scientific purpose!

See pages 3-4 for Tony's tips on spotting and photographing wildlife in the Cache!

You can access the "Biodiversity of the Cache" survey site at: <http://www.inaturalist.org/projects/biodiversity-of-the-cache-river-watershed>



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

by Susan Post

April and May in the Cache

Early April wildflowers include spring beauty, fumitory, anemones, trout lily, spicebush and budding tulip trees. Listen for the calls of Cope's gray tree frog and Louisiana water thrushes. Green tiger beetles keep one step ahead of hikers, and falcate orange tip butterflies flit about on cresses. By mid-April, resident birds have returned. Listen for blue-gray gnatcatchers, northern parulas and prothonotary warblers, and scan above the cypress trees for chimney swifts.

In late April, the first generation of zebra, tiger, pipevine and spicebush swallowtail butterflies flutters about, and gemmed satyrs (small brown butterflies) dance across the trail. At night, listen for whip-

poor-wills and chuck-will's-widows. Hunt bright lights to spot luna and cecropia moths. In May, look for migrant butterflies from the south—snout, buckeye, cloudless sulphur, dainty dwarf and checkered white. The Heron Pond trail is scattered with orange and yellow blossoms from cross vines blooming high in the trees.

Participate in a NatureFest canoe paddle or hike a trail, and see what you encounter. We have been surprised by a hooded merganser with 10 chicks, a hissing Bessie beetle, an Appalachian eyed brown butterfly (fairly rare in Illinois) – and, perhaps best of all, an anhinga sunning in a tree near Heron Pond.



Movie Night

*Thursday, April 2, 6-8pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Enjoy the free film, "Leave It To Beavers."
Questions, call 618-634-2231.

Birding at Wolff Wetland

*Saturday, April 11, 9-11am
Meet at Marshall Ridge Access,
Belknap, IL*

Join a birding walk led by Master Naturalist Anne Parmley. Binoculars recommended.

Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Van Tours

*Friday, April 17, various times
Meet at Cache River Wetlands Center*

Senior citizens and those with limited mobility can explore the Cache River Wetlands on one of three guided van tours along the Tunnel Hill State Trail.

Advance registration required:
call 618-657-2064.

Spring Wildflower Hike

*Sunday, April 19, 1-3pm
Limekiln Springs Trail, West Access,
Cache Chapel Road*

Take a guided hike to enjoy spring wildflowers in all of their glory!
Questions, call 618-634-2231.

Native Milkweeds of Southern Illinois

*Sunday, April 19, 2-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Learn more about milkweed and how to build a butterfly holding cage.

Advance registration required:
call 618-657-2064.

Movie Night

*Thursday, May 7, 6-8pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Enjoy the free film, "Earth Flight."
Questions, call 618-634-2231.



The Cache River and You

“In its chartreuse tuxedo trimmed in pencil-eraser pink, watermelon red and eggplant purple, with a bow-tie of smooth, creamy yellow, who could resist the amorous intentions of this early spring luna? It’s prom night in the swamp.”

Photo-Journaling by Michael R. Jeffords

As I grow

older, I’ve found endless delight in the creation of new terms; the newest is *photo-journaling*—the creation of a combined visual and verbal image, each made stronger by association with the other. While it’s tempting to assume that every image that pours forth from your camera warrants this treatment, such is not the case. In fact, it happens relatively infrequently, and can never be coaxed or forced. Coincidentally, the verbal imagery should complement the image. Having the photo frees the mind to wander, free from the necessity of describing the obvious.

Believe it or not, current technology—a new, high quality, archival inkjet printer

and a working knowledge of Adobe™ Photoshop— helps fuel my interest in this somewhat arcane pursuit. The printer is capable of creating incredibly detailed renditions of photographs. I can then attach whatever descriptive prose I desire to each image, often in an elegant font far superior to my own gnarly handwriting. These musings might come to mind while taking the image, or sometime later. Be sure to jot them down in a 3” x 5” notebook! In short, photo-journaling can give you a creative outlet for many of those images accumulated over the years. It also provides a useful way of depicting the natural world. Above is one example of photo-journaling. Pick out some of your own images and give it a try!

Spotting and Photographing Wildlife: Tips from the Experts

Susan Post

•**Don’t be afraid** to go out with your flashlight at night, which is the ideal time to spot frogs and salamanders. Some of my best night sightings have been on the Tunnel Hill Trail behind the Wetlands Center: I recently saw my first crawfish frog there – a personal highlight!

Tony Gerard

•**You’ve got to get out there** day after day, and take a lot of bad photos to get one good one. Many of my own best shots have been taken along Belknap Road, which I drive to and from work every day.



Tips continued

• **Dawn and dusk** are prime times to spot wildlife.

• **Periods of light rain** can be good, since animals tend to be on the move then. I've also noticed that I see more mammals when the weather is changing – for example, right before a thunderstorm.

• **Great locations** in the Cache to spot wildlife include Heron Pond and the area behind the Wetlands Center. Mermet Lake is one of the best, particularly

if you have limited mobility. Critters there are used to cars going by, and you'd be amazed what you can spot from your vehicle.

Michael Jeffords

• **Visit sites** over and over at different times of the day and be prepared when you see something good. Don't lose the moment by fumbling around for your camera in a backpack, etc.

• **Use a stable perch**, especially with a long lens. Tripods are good, but often cumbersome, so learn to hold your camera properly. To ensure stability, use your knees and arms to provide three points of contact. A car window with the camera resting on a pillow is ideal, as long as you remember to shut off the engine. The car will also serve as a good photo blind.

• **Remember** to be on the same level as your subject. If you take every photo from your own eye level, they will all look pretty much the same.

• **Try to get parallel** to the narrowest plane of the subject; this can help maximize depth of field and create nice, diffuse backgrounds.



Congratulations to Joe Nelson

who retired in December. He has been on his recent promotion to site superintendent for Ferne Clyffe State Park, the Tunnel Hill State

Trail and the Cache River State Natural Area. Nelson, a 1985 graduate of SIU-Carbondale and current resident of Vienna, IL, replaces Bill Reynolds, who retired in December. He has been with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for 25 years, serving most of that time as assistant superintendent at Ferne Clyffe. Nelson says he looks forward to working with volunteers and staff "to promote understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the many ecosystems and natural resources of this area."

Trail and the Cache River State Natural Area. Nelson, a 1985 graduate of SIU-Carbondale and current resident of Vienna, IL, replaces Bill Reynolds,

Don't miss "Focus on the Cache" on June 6,

8am-noon. Michael Jeffords and Susan Post will lead a hike on Heron Pond Trail and provide more tips for photographing wildlife and natural landscapes. For more information, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Have you noticed the water levels changing in some of our wetlands?

To build up fat and protein reserves for egg-laying, female ducks are switching from a winter diet of plant materials and seeds to a spring diet of the invertebrates that feed on algae and fine organic matter in the water. Some Cypress Creek NWR wetlands are being slowly drawn down to concentrate these invertebrates and provide easier access for foraging birds. Lots of northern shovelers and gadwall have been feeding in the shallows lately. Soon, other waterbirds will appear, including flocks of pectoral sandpipers, greater and lesser yellowlegs, bitterns and rails.

Karen Mangan
Wildlife Biologist,
Cypress Creek NWR

Become a Friend

- \$15 Individual
- \$25 Family
- New Member
- \$50 Contributing
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To remain budget and environment-friendly, all 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.