

feb/mar
2015

friends

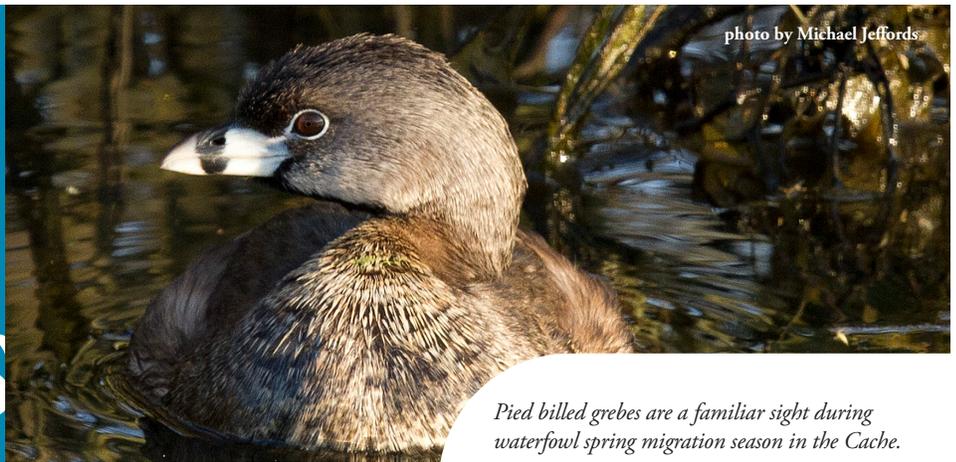


photo by Michael Jeffords

Pied billed grebes are a familiar sight during waterfowl spring migration season in the Cache.

of the cache river watershed

Field Notes

*Five questions for Dr. Michael Jeffords
Chair, Board of Directors
Friends of the Cache River Watershed*

What is your background and connection to the Cache?

I grew up in Brookport, and spent much of my youth roaming the wild lands of southern Illinois, including the swamps along the Cache. I attended Paducah Community College, Murray State University and the University of Illinois. I have a PhD in entomology and am retired from the U of I's Prairie Research Institute, Illinois Natural History Survey. I live in Champaign, IL, but many of my creative enterprises are centered on the Cache River watershed.

What makes the Cache so special?

The Cache sits at the junction of four U.S. physiographic regions and is extremely biologically diverse for a landscape in a temperate climate. Visitors here can have a truly wild, yet easily accessible, experience. A short walk can lead to a lifetime's worth of exploration.

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



Friends of Cache board members include: (Front, L to R) Jean Hinkle, Dongola; Jodie Delaney, Anna; Susan Post, Champaign; Kenzie Bradshaw, Vienna; Paula Havlik, Vienna; (Back, L to R) Terry Wachter, Creal Springs; Tony Gerard, Vienna; Michael Jeffords, Champaign; and John Havlik, Vienna. Not pictured are Charlie Proctor, Paducah, KY; Jesse Riechman, Makanda; and Monte Russell, Villa Ridge.

New members were elected to the Friends' expanded Board of Directors in January, and new committees were launched, as part of a comprehensive reorganization plan. All board members will serve as committee and/or project leaders, and the membership-at-large will have the opportunity to play a more active role. As new board chair Michael Jeffords explains, "Past leaders and board members have established a great foundation and we hope to 'stand on the shoulders' of those folks to move forward with new and innovative programs."

In the coming months, Friends of the Cache members with skills they can share will be asked to step up and help populate various committees. Specific opportunities will be announced throughout the year, and we hope many members will want to become more involved in projects directly benefiting the landscape we all love.

Michael Jeffords, cont.

What challenges does the Cache face?

Like all natural landscapes today, the Cache faces internal and external pressure to justify its existence in economic terms. I try to take a broader perspective, since so much of what makes us human and brings us joy is far removed from mere monetary value. What would the world be without art, without music, and, perhaps most importantly, without wild places where we can visit, enjoy, study and perceive what the landscape has to tell us? Natural lands and wild places are not only our legacy; they tell the story of how the landscape developed and serve as templates for how we, as humans, can live in harmony with nature.

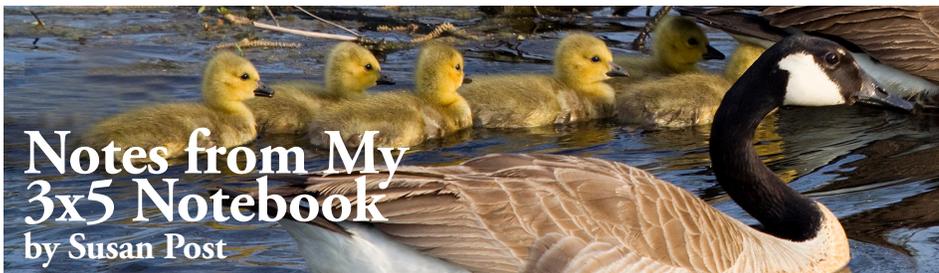
What role do you see for the Friends?

The Friends of the Cache can have many roles, but I see a primary function to educate citizens at the local, state and global levels about

the uniqueness of this place. I have traveled extensively across the U.S. and throughout much of the world, and I can unequivocally state that the Cache is as special as any landscape on earth. It must be preserved, protected and managed for future generations to enjoy.

What are your short and long-term goals?

We have several projects underway that will be revealed soon, but also long-term goals that we hope will lead to increased support from the formal federal and state entities that make up the Cache River Ecosystem, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Ideally, I want the Cache to receive more recognition on the local, state, national and international levels. It deserves no less.



February and March in the Cache

Canada geese have started to pair up, and red-shouldered hawks are *kerring* (calling) and sunning in open areas. Listen for the familiar calls of optimistic male red-winged blackbirds. Hike to Heron Pond, where you can see the “blueprint” of the swamp before leaves and underbrush hide its mystery. Look for American featherfoil under the water on the edge of Heron Pond boardwalk or along the trail. Hundreds of mallards may be found at the Wetlands Center, and hooded mergansers are visible, especially the males, whose

heads stand out like lighthouse beacons. Foraging flocks of rusty blackbirds probe and pick leaves along the edges of the swamp. Maple buds provide a glint of red during gray winter days, and daffodils may begin to bloom as early as Valentine’s Day.

Cruise the back roads of the Cache at dusk with windows open and listen for “*Peent Peent*.” Even if it’s still cold, the woodcocks know spring is here. By mid-March, flowering crabs are in bloom, the nasal call of the fish crow can be heard again, and male phoebes are defending their territories.

What’s Next

Birds of a Feather

Sunday, February 22, 2-3:30pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Learn how feathers help birds fly, stay warm and dry, and more. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Waterfowl Birding at Mermet Lake

Saturday, February 28, 9-11am

Meet at Bluebird Trail parking lot, Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area

We’ll drive around the lake, with several stops for bird identification. Binoculars are recommended. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Movie Night

Thursday, March 5, 6-8pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Enjoy light refreshments and the film, “Venom: Nature’s Killer.” Please be advised this video contains graphic images and content. Questions, call 618-634-2231.

Gems of Blue

Saturday, March 14, 1-2:30pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Learn more about the eastern bluebird and build your own nesting box. **Reservations required:** call Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Aquatic Wonders

Saturday, March 28, 1-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Explore the world of aquatic invertebrates. Participants will view live specimens and net for these amazing critters. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Save the Date!

14th Annual Nature Fest
Saturday, May 9, 9am-4pm
Cache River Wetlands Center



The Cache River and You

Nature Activities by Michael Jeffords and Susan Post



Wood Frog



Green Frog



Chorus Frog

Spring Peeper

American Toad

As winter transitions to early spring, it's time to listen closely for the frogs and toads of the Cache. There are 21 different species in Illinois, and many people learn to identify them by their distinctive songs or calls. As volunteers training at the Wetlands Center to conduct Frog and Toad Surveys discovered, an effective way to learn these calls is to listen to recordings, and then try to mimic them, either by voice or by some mechanical device. Here are several techniques you can try.

Western Chorus Frog and Upland

Chorus Frog Run your finger over the teeth of a comb, preferably hard plastic rather than nylon, although either will work.

Cricket Frog Hold two marbles in one hand and click them together by moving your fingers rapidly. Make sure the marbles click and scrape against each other.

Wood Frog Quickly move your wet fingertips over the surface of an inflated balloon with a motion similar to picking a banjo or guitar.

Spring Peeper Scrape your finger nail or a piece of chalk on a blackboard

until it squeaks to mimic a single frog, or shake a string of sleigh bells to sound like a chorus.

Green Frog Cut a hole in the top of a small cardboard box and stretch a rubber band across it. Attach the rubber band to one end of the box by hooking it over a pushpin. Pluck the rubber band like a banjo string. You can vary the sound by stretching or relaxing the rubber band or by using different thicknesses of rubber bands.

American Toad Make a trilling sound with your voice and tongue.

Wood frogs are the only North American amphibian species found north of the Arctic Circle. They are one of the earliest frogs to breed in Illinois, starting as early as February in the Cache. After a warm rain, the distinctive clucking of amorous males can be heard from temporary woodland pools and shallow ponds that lack fish. The species normally lives alone and hidden in mature, moist forests; but during breeding season a pond can be a churning mass of wood frogs! Females typically lay 300-900 eggs forming large, intermingled masses. Eggs hatch within two weeks, tadpoles grow rapidly, and by mid-May the tiny adults will begin dispersing into the woods of far southern Illinois. Unfortunately, their breeding season only lasts a few days to a week; if you procrastinate, you will have to wait until 2016 for the next cycle of wood frog love.



Volunteers at the Wetlands Center prepare to assist with monitoring frogs and toads throughout the Cache River watershed.

The Cache needs lots of helping hands this spring!

At **Cypress Creek Refuge**, the tractor and tree planters are ready to roll. This year's goal is to begin reforesting 230 acres of retired agricultural land, which will involve planting more than 80,000 seedlings and 14 species of trees. We are always looking for volunteers to join us on a tree planter, and can also use assistance with school programs and field trips. In addition, the Refuge works with local colleges and universities to provide internships, which are typically associated with resource management and/or education careers. For more information, call the Refuge office Mon-Fri at 618-634-2231.

The Cache River State Natural Area (IDNR) can use help in several areas:

Cache River Wetlands Center – greet visitors, perform office work and assist with outreach programs

Landscape Steward – help with wetlands and prairie maintenance

Hiking Trail Steward – help maintain hiking trails

Bluebird Trail Steward – help maintain trail and monitor bluebirds

If interested, contact Molie Oliver, Natural Resource Coordinator, Wed-Sun at 618-657-2064 or Molie.Oliver@illinois.gov

2015 Cache River Nature Fest Saturday, May 9, Cache River Wetlands Center

Volunteers are needed to help with exhibits, craft tables, hikes and canoe tours throughout the day on May 9, and to assist with set-up on May 6. If interested, contact Melissa Alexander at melissa_alexander@fws.gov For more information about the event, visit www.cacherivernaturefest.net



Photo: Cypress Creek

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge welcomes AmeriCorps members **Sara Stoneski** and **Lindsay Shupert** (pictured, L to R). Lindsay holds a Bachelor of Science in Plant Biology from Southern Illinois University and is currently finishing her thesis for her Master's degree. Her research has centered on invasive species ecology and restoration. Sara recently graduated from SIU with a zoology degree. Lindsay and Sara will assist staff with resource management, biology and education programs. For more information about AmeriCorps, see our "Get Involved" page at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/cypress_creek/

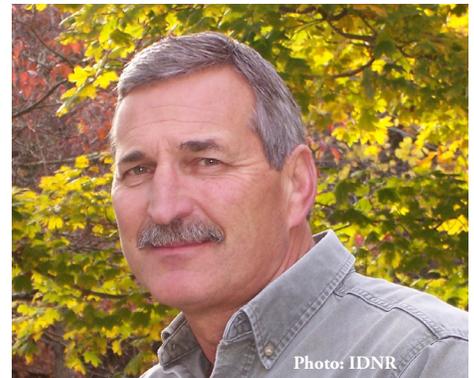


Photo: IDNR

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has big shoes to fill after the December 31 retirement of Bill Reynolds, site superintendent for Ferne Clyffe State Park, the Tunnel Hill State Trail and the Cache River State Natural Area. Managing more than 20,000 acres over five counties, Bill was also instrumental in developing many Cache River facilities, including the Barkhausen Wetlands Center. Friends of the Cache thank Bill for his many years of service and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Become a Friend

- \$10 Individual
- \$20 Family
- New Member
- \$35 Contributing
- \$50 Supporting
- Current Member
- \$100 Sustaining
- \$1,000 Lifetime

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All contributions are tax deductible.
Please make checks payable to **Friends of the Cache River Watershed**.
Mail membership dues to:
8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress, IL 62923