

mar/apr
2016

photo: Michael Jeffords

friends



of the cache river watershed

Field Notes

*Four questions for Chris Evans
Extension Forester & Research Specialist
University of Illinois Extension Service*

What is your new role?

I'll be based at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, where I'll conduct research and public outreach on various aspects of forest health and management. This will include lots of hands-on programs, as well as publications, webinars, Facebook pages, etc. One of our most exciting projects is development of a "teaching forest" that will illustrate the impact of various levels of management such as thinning, or Timber Stand Improvement (TSI), and prescribed burning.

What kind of research will you conduct?

I'll be researching the two major components of healthy woods: 1) safe and effective control of invasives; and, 2) benefits of various techniques to promote the growth of desirable species like oak and hickory. A third area of focus is agroforestry, which involves ways to combine trees with production agriculture. For example, we are currently

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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.

Save the date

2016 Nature Fest is scheduled for **Saturday, May 7, 10am to 4pm** at the Cache River Wetlands Center. This free event for nature lovers of all ages will feature exhibits, live wildlife demonstrations, nature games and crafts, the Cache Challenge, hikes and canoe tours, and the return of the popular "Swamp Geek" t-shirt. Plus, we've got a few special surprises in store; so, plan to attend and bring the whole family!

This year, we're giving local businesses and organizations the opportunity to

play an integral role by participating in our new Nature Fest corporate sponsorship program. We invite you to support this community event as a "Snowy Egret" contributor (\$100), a "Great Blue Heron" patron (\$250) or a "Bald Eagle" co-sponsor (\$500). Or, help us reach for the sky by joining the Shawnee Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society as a "Southern Sky" official event sponsor (\$750). For more details on the promotional benefits available at each level, please contact Paula Havlik at phavlik@illinois.edu.



Become a Nature Fest Corporate Sponsor

- \$100 Snowy Egret (contributor)
- \$250 Great Blue Heron (patron)
- \$500 Bald Eagle (co-sponsor).
- \$750 Southern Sky (sponsor)
- Please send me information about promotional benefits available at each level.

Name of Business or Organization

Contact Person

Address

City State ZIP

Phone Email

All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to **Friends of the Cache River Watershed** and mail to: ATTN: Paula Havlik, Friends of the Cache, 70 Shelby Road, Vienna, IL 62995.



What's Next

For questions about Movie Night, call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231.

For questions about all other programs, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Movie Night

Thursday, March 3, 6-8pm
Cache River Wetlands Center.

Free nature movie: *The Secret World of Bats*. Light refreshments served.

In Search of Waterfowl

Saturday, March 5, 9-11am
Meet at Cache River Wetlands Center

Dale Foll will lead a hike to spot and identify ducks and other waterfowl.

Butterfly Conservation

Saturday, March 5, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Bill and Anne Parmley will present a program on butterflies and how we can help them thrive.

CCC in the Cache River Watershed

Sunday, March 13, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Kay Rippelmeyer-Tippy will provide an illustrated history of the Civilian Conservation Corps in southern Illinois from 1933 to 1941.

Hummingbirds: Jewels in the Sky

Saturday, March 19, 11am-noon
Cache River Wetlands Center

Learn how to make your yard and garden a welcoming habitat for migrating hummingbirds.

Wildlife of Mermet Lake

Sunday, March 20, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

John Schwegman will present wildlife photos taken over 50 years at Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, including many rarely-seen species.

Those That Are Passing Through

Saturday, April 2, 9-11am
Meet at Cache River Wetlands Center

Dale Foll will lead a hike to spot and identify migratory birds passing through on their way to northern breeding grounds.

Movie Night

Thursday, April 7, 6-8pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Free nature movie: *Venom, Nature's Killer*. Light refreshments served.

Birding Walk at Heron Pond

Saturday, April 9, 9-11am
Meet at Heron Pond Trail Access Parking Lot

Join Anne Parmley for a guided birding walk along Heron Pond Trail. Binoculars are recommended.

Guided Van Tours

Thursday, April 21, various times
Meet at Tunnel Hill State Trail office in Vienna, Illinois

Senior citizens and those with limited mobility can explore a section of the Tunnel Hill State Trail on one of four guided van tours. **Advance reservation required.**



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

by Susan Post

March and April, with their unpredictable weather, are my favorite months for night hikes. Armed with my handy glow-in-the-dark pen, I never know what I might see or hear. During a night hike behind the Cache River Wetland Center last March, I was serenaded by two barred owls, one of them using the "crazed monkey call."

Spring peepers, southern leopard frogs and chorus frogs trilled, and the paved path was littered with snails, spiders, fresh coyote dung and something that looked like the largest earthworm I had ever seen. Closer inspection with a flashlight revealed this to be a smallmouth salamander, which lives in poorly drained woodlands and

migrates to breeding ponds during prolonged rains in late winter. I would see two during my hike, along with a bevy of frogs hopping one step ahead.

Another interesting encounter was with blister beetles in the genus *Meloe*. Most members of this family are active during the day, but these metallic-blue females, heavy with eggs, were crawling across the trail at night. As I headed back to the Wetlands Center, a convention of coyotes yipped and yapped, while an opossum with wet, matted, dirty fur bared its teeth at me. Perhaps that was a grin for a night well spent?



The Cache River and You

Spring is a great time to volunteer

in the Cache River Wetlands, and there are many opportunities to get involved.

It's almost planting time for the new **Pollinator Interpretive Trail** at the Cache River Wetlands Center! Garden plots were laid out along the existing concrete path behind the center in November, and the soil treated to remove grass and weeds. Over the winter, volunteers developed plans for various pollinator-themed gardens, and planting is expected to begin in late March or early April, as weather permits. If you or your organization would like to

participate, please contact Lorie Allen at touchingpaws@gmail.com.

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge invites all visitors to contribute to the **Spring Photo Bioblitz!** We are specifically looking for photos taken in the local area during Spring 2016, which can include, but are not limited to, images of birds, bald cypress trees, spring wildflowers and the Cache River. Please send your photos to cypresscreek@fws.gov

Friends of the Cache newsletter editor Paula Havlik is seeking stories and photos that illustrate the **human history of the Cache**. Do you have a family story about growing up in the area, or a little-known historical tidbit to share?

How about a photo depicting local life "back in the day"? If we can gather enough information, we'll include a regular feature in upcoming newsletters. Please send potential photos and stories to phavlik@illinois.edu.

Nature Fest, scheduled for Saturday, May 7 at the Cache River Wetlands Center, is our biggest event of the year. Many volunteers are needed to set up, greet visitors and help with exhibits, kids' activities, hikes and canoe tours throughout the day. If interested, contact Chelsea Devivo at chelseadevivo@gmail.com. For more information about the event, visit www.cacherivernaturefest.com



SIPBA • CWMA

FRST

The Forest Restoration Support Team (FRST) is a new and growing group of volunteers dedicated to conservation of forests in southern Illinois. If you own wooded land, are working towards a career in land management, or are just interested in making the Cache River Watershed a better habitat for wildlife, this group may be exactly what you are looking for. Beginning and advanced conservationists are welcome, and individuals of all physical capabilities.

FRST is a joint project of the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (RTRCWMA) and the Southern

Illinois Prescribed Burn Association (SIPBA). The group will host a series of training events and volunteer workdays in 2016 that are free and open to the public, focusing on the restoration of high-quality oak and hickory forests by implementing both invasive species management and prescribed fire. The next training session, Integrated Pest Management, will be held at the Giant City State Park Visitors Center from 12:30 to 4:30pm on March 31 and repeated on April 24. Volunteer workdays will be held at different SIPBA properties every second and fourth Saturday throughout the year, allowing volunteers the opportunity to use their training to help private landowners control invasives and improve the health of their woods.

For more information, visit www.rtrcma.org or contact Kevin Rohling at rtrcwma@gmail.com.



Photo: Tony Gerard

Do you know who I am?

Answer on pg 4

Photo:
Tara Gracer
Deer observed at
Bellrose during the browse
survey

Cypress Creek Updates

Deer abundance

and related environmental impacts are the focus of a deer browse survey currently underway at the Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve, a 1,000-acre closed area within Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The survey is being conducted in response to concerns about the status of forest regeneration and health of the deer population within the Bellrose reserve, as well as complaints of crop damage on adjacent private lands.

When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired Bellrose in 1991, the area was designated as a waterfowl sanctuary

and closed to public deer hunting. Over the past 25 years, deer populations have noticeably increased; however, without formal monitoring, we do not have an accurate estimate of numbers or the potential impact on the habitat within this closed area. The best known effects of deer on woodland ecosystems are caused by browsing on young trees, shrubs, and herbs, which alters both structure and composition, and may hinder forest development and health.

Chris Evans continued from pg 1

looking at the economic potential of maple syrup production in southern Illinois; and, on May 21, I'll present a program on how to cultivate shiitake mushrooms in your woods.

Will Dixon Springs remain open?

Yes, contrary to what you may have heard, the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center is not shutting down, just changing its focus. While the UI Department of Crop Sciences is refocusing its research to the Urbana campus, the Department of Animal Sciences and local extension units will maintain a strong presence. We'll still host the Sustainable Living Expo and other popular programs. Plus, you're going to see a lot more activity from my home unit, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. There hasn't been much forestry research done at Dixon Springs in recent years, but that's about to change!

What's your best advice for landowners?

Simple as it sounds, my advice is to get out in your woods and learn as much as you can about them. The more observant you become, the more you'll be able to recognize and understand what needs to be done. And, feel free to call me at 618-695-3383 or e-mail cwevans@illinois.edu with your questions. Talking to property owners who care about healthy and productive woods, and helping connect them with local and regional resources, is what I enjoy most about my job!

Become a Friend

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Contributing | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustaining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Supporting | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Lifetime |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Current Member | |

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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.

Answer

Do you know who I am?

Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*): I am native to both North America and Europe. My name comes from the foul odor I produce, which attracts insects to disperse my spores.