

spring2019

friends

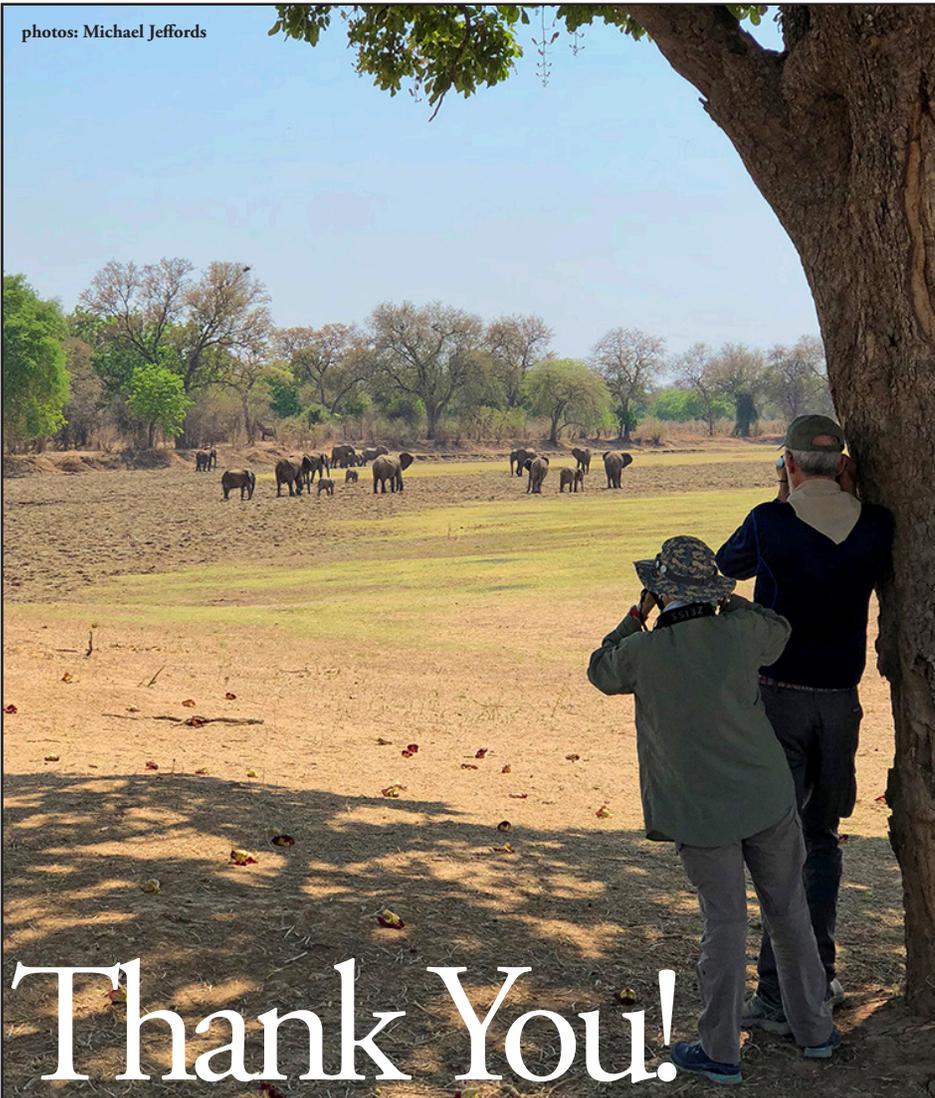
of the cache river watershed



Like what you see here?

Learn more about the Cache and upcoming events when you like us on FaceBook.

photos: Michael Jeffords



from their home in Champaign to attend meetings and events. They also spearheaded a number of key projects, including creation of the Pollinator Gardens at Egret Slough and the Friends' ongoing efforts to update and refurbish interpretive signage throughout the Cache River Wetlands.

New Friends chair Tony Gerard recalls that he'd known about the pair long before he met them: "Michael and Sue's beautiful nature photography made me, a budding nature photographer who still shoots everything on auto focus, envious many times. What an honor to get to work with them and become friends serving on the Friends of Cache board together!"

Michael and Susan, who are both entomologists and have co-authored a number of books, including the popular "Butterflies of Illinois," will continue to visit and conduct field work in the Cache, as they have for many years. And, their wonderful photography will continue to appear in the Friends' newsletter and on our Facebook page. So, we won't say goodbye – but we, their fellow board members, do want to say THANKS to Mike and Sue for all their time and hard work, and wish them safe travels as they explore nature, in the Cache and all around the world!

Our heartfelt thanks go out to two icons of the Cache, Michael Jeffords and Susan Post,

who retired from the Friends board of directors this spring. Michael and Susan – who served as board chair and secretary, respectively – played a leading role in restructuring the Friends organization in 2015, and have made countless trips to southern Illinois

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



What's Next

Exploring Cave Creek Glade

*Saturday, May 25, 10am-noon
Cache River State Natural Area, Cave
Creek Glade Access*

Join botanist Erin Medvez for a wildflower hike at Cave Creek Glade. Hike the short but steep trail to the top of the glade to see a spectacular display of purple coneflowers in bloom. Meet at parking lot near glade; for directions, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Introduction to Orienteering

*Saturday, June 8, 1-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Learn basic orienteering concepts such as how to use a compass, measure distances with paces and traverse an

orienteering course. Participants will be provided with the use of a compass and a course map, and practice new-found skills along a predetermined course adjacent to the Wetlands Center.

Invasive Species: Identification & Management

*Saturday, June 22, 9:30-noon
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Erin Medvez, University of Illinois Extension, and Nick Seaton, River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area, will share tips and tricks for identifying and managing invasive species found in southern Illinois. The program will include both indoor and outdoor components.

Nature Note Cards

*Saturday, July 13, 10am-noon
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Learn how to use pressed flowers and other natural items to create personal note cards. Each participant will have the opportunity to create two note cards with envelopes.

Six Years in the Illinois Territory, 1812-1818

*Saturday, August 10, 10-11am
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Regional historians Ed and Diane Anable have published an award-winning book about the events and colorful characters of the years leading up to Illinois statehood, when Johnson County spanned the entire southern end of the Illinois Territory. Ed will offer a video presentation featuring some of the most interesting stories from the book.

Reptiles in the Neighborhood

*Saturday, August 24, 1-4pm
Cache River Wetlands Center/Heron
Pond Trail*

Join us for an up close and personal interaction with snakes, skinks, turtles and other reptiles native to southernmost Illinois. The one-hour indoor program concludes with an optional hike to look for cold-blooded creatures at Heron Pond.

Cache Annual Meeting Aug 29

**Thursday, August 29, 6:30-8:30pm
Carbondale Civic Center**

Food, fun, armadillos and lots of Cache camaraderie! Join us for this year's Cache Annual Meeting, where our featured speaker will be Carly Haywood, a graduate student in SIU's Cooperative Wildlife Research Lab, who will share current research on the movement and distribution of armadillos in southern Illinois. The evening will also include dessert and beverages, door prizes and sales of Cache merchandise, updates on Friends activities, and presentation of the 2019 Cache Champion Award. Advance registration is requested; to RSVP, contact Paula Havlik at phavlik@illinois.edu or 217-649-4326.



Calling All Volunteers!

Mark your calendar now for this year's Nature Fest at Cache River Days, Saturday, September 7, 9am-4pm at Ullin Ball Park. This full day of festivities includes live wildlife exhibits, nature activities, free canoe tours and much more. Volunteers are needed to help with nature arts and crafts in "Kids' Corner." This popular area is always busy, so 5-9 volunteers will be needed for the full day. If interested, please contact the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge office at 618-634-2231.

Come Fish with Us!

For the second summer, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will offer a series of FREE youth catch-and-release fishing clinics at the Cache River Wetlands Center. The clinics will be held Thursdays, 9-11am, on June 13 and 20, and July 11 and 18. 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. They will also offer important tactics for catching fish, and how to handle and return fish to the water. Participants will be provided with rods, reels, bait and tackle for 90 minutes of catch-and-release fishing during each session. These free fishing 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.



The Friends of Cache Annual Moonlight Paddle

on May 18 was a memorable event led by Friends' board chair Tony Gerard and assisted by AmeriCorps members Brett Casper (also on the Friends board) and Daniel Morales. Participants enjoyed cool and breezy weather, lots of night critters and the breathtaking

sight of the "Flower Moon" (traditional Native American name for the May full moon) rising over Eagle Pond. A big thanks goes out to Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge for making this popular annual event possible!

This new interpretive sign for the Cache River State Natural Area's Michael Wolff Wetlands

was recently produced and funded by Friends of the Cache, as part of a multi-year effort that also included new signage for the Heron Pond Trail, the Cache River Wetlands Center and Hickory Bottoms at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The Wolff Wetlands site is located at Marshall Ridge Access just outside Belknap.



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

By Susan Post

Spring in southern Illinois is standing at the end of Heron Pond Boardwalk, near dusk, and having a male prothonotary warbler buzz my head—dashing and darting from branch to branch. Briefly perching, the prothonotary puffs up its yellow-orange breast and throws back its head —like Pavarotti hitting a high note—as it belts out “sweet, sweet, sweet.” Territory claimed, it goes about gleaning insects from the feathery foliage of cypress. Swamp sunshine at dusk.



Photo: Michael Jeffords



DID YOU KNOW... May is American Wetlands Month

Especially for Educators

The Cache River Wetlands Center will host three ENTICE (Environment and Nature Training Institute for Conservation Education) workshops this year. Sponsored by IDNR, these workshops are open to teachers, homeschool educators, youth group leaders, non-formal educators and environmental education volunteers in Illinois. The three workshops are: “Wetland Wonders, Exploring the Organisms of Illinois’ Wetland Ecosystems” (Tuesday, June 18, 9am-3pm), “Illinois Bats” (Friday, August 5, 5-9pm) and “Illinois Spiders” (Tuesday, September 17, 9am-3pm).

All sessions will include a mix of classroom, outdoor and hands-on activities. Numerous supplemental materials will be provided, and Professional Development Hours are available. Cost is \$10 per workshop. Online registration is required: to register, visit <http://www.enticeworkshops.com>

American Wetlands Month was created in 1991 by the Environmental Protection Agency and its federal, state, tribal, local, non-profit and private sector partners to “celebrate the importance of wetlands for our Nation’s ecological, economic and social health and to educate Americans

about the value of wetlands as a natural resource.” Today, more than ever, we need to keep educating ourselves, our fellow citizens and our government leaders about the vital importance of protecting and maintaining this irreplaceable resource!



Kids to the Cache, sponsored by Friends of the Cache River Watershed, provides \$250 grants in the spring and fall to help local schools cover transportation costs for field trips to the Cache River State Natural Area and Cypress Creek Wildlife Refuge. The deadline to apply for Fall 2019 is September 30. For more information, please contact Fran Wachter at franceswachter@gmail.com.

Communities of the Cache

Tunnel Hill

Tunnel Hill, an unincorporated community in northwestern Johnson County, owes its existence, as well as its name, to the iconic railroad tunnel that now serves as a centerpiece of the Tunnel Hill State Trail. It all began in 1869 as a construction camp for men driving the tunnel and laying the track for the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad (later the Big Four). W. L. Nipper, better known as “Fate” Nipper, opened a general store at the south end of the tunnel and established a post office, naming the new community Sanburn. Nipper was soon joined by other

merchants, such as jeweler and watchmaker David Verble, who expected Sanburn to be a prominent railroad stop. However, a dispute arose among those controlling the location, and escalated into a bitter argument. As a result, the depot and station were located at the north end of the tunnel, where a second village quickly sprang up named Tunnel Hill. Businesses and residents soon picked up stakes and moved to the new community.

Proximity to U.S. Route 45, which opened in 1915, made Tunnel Hill an even more desirable location. The town

experienced a boom between 1910 and 1918, with many businesses moving there from nearby Reynoldsburg and Parker City. At its height, Tunnel Hill boasted two hotels, four grocery stores, a doctor and a pharmacy, and a large granary. Surrounding orchards, such as Beauman’s “Top o’ the World,” made the town an important shipping center for fruit, with as many as 14 railroad car loads of apples, peaches and berries transported daily.

The railroad tunnel that started it all was completed in 1872 and was originally 800 feet long. After a partial collapse in 1929, the tunnel was shortened to 543 feet. Today, the railroad is gone and in its place is the 45-mile Tunnel Hill State Trail, developed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and opened in 1998. The tunnel is located a quarter-mile south of Tunnel Hill, on the trail towards Vienna.

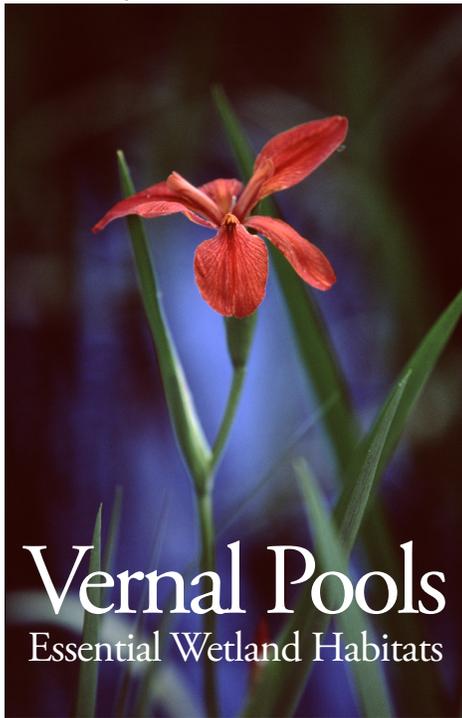
“Communities of the Cache” will highlight a different town in each issue. If you’d like to share historical photos and tidbits about your community, please contact newsletter editor Paula Havlik at phavlik@illinois.edu.

Cypress Creek Update



Congratulations to Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge for the culmination of a 25-year goal: the restoration of more than 7,000 acres of marginal agricultural land to upland and bottomland forest. Refuge assistant manager Liz Jones reports that final efforts in 2019 included reforesting 100 acres of the remaining agricultural ground with 16 species of oak, hickory, and cypress and tupelo seedlings. Jones and her staff extend their thanks to the many volunteers and partners who have supported this effort, including Land of Lincoln AmeriCorps, Ducks Unlimited and the Friends of the Cache River Watershed.

Photo: Cypress Creek NWR



A Three-Part Series by Paula Havlik
Part II: *Building a Vernal Pool*

In the Friends Winter Newsletter, we discussed why vernal (shallow and ephemeral) pools are essential wetland habitats and how to select and prepare a site for establishing a vernal pool on your property. Now, let's talk about the actual construction.

Ideally, a vernal pool will hold water for three months in late winter/spring, dry out by mid-summer, and hold water for three more months in the fall. This wet-dry cycle prevents fish from becoming established and provides critical breeding habitat for amphibians, crustaceans and insects. The stress of water loss in summer actually helps encourage metamorphosis, as long as the pool doesn't dry up too fast.

While a small vernal pool can be dug with hand tools and a willing crew of volunteers, a bobcat, backhoe and/or mechanical tamper are probably a better bet, because any of these can be used for the all-important task of compacting the soil. For our vernal pool, we chose to work with the professionals at Ozark Koala, Jeremy Schumacher and Rob Stroh. For best results, build the

pool in late winter before the spring rains, or in late summer before the fall rains. Do it when the ground is not too mucky, since soggy ground is difficult to compact properly.

Jeremy and Rob laid out the perimeter for our pool in January (see Part I); but, due to heavy rainfall, we had to wait until March before a five-man crew arrived to construct the pool. The first step was to remove native leaf litter, twigs, branches and rocks from the site, saving this material so that it could be added back later to provide a four-inch layer of sediment on the bottom of the pool.

A bobcat was then used to dig down to the clay pan, following the natural slope of the site. As discussed in Part I, we selected a clearing in our woods with a gentle slope (drop of approximately one foot per ten feet). This

serves to collect run-off from rainfall and also enables us to create different habitats within the pool, ranging from deeper water at the bottom end to shallow water and saturated ground at the top. (See diagram.) The crew had to be careful not to dig too deep and break the clay pan, since a broken pan means a pool that won't hold water.

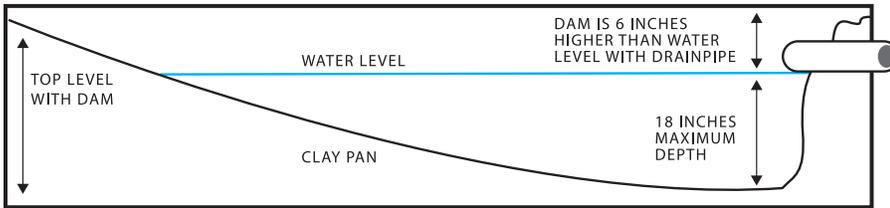
As the crew dug, they used the excavated soil to construct the all-important embankment or dam around the lower end of the pool, which traps run-off. The area underneath the dam was dug down to the clay pan and checked carefully for holes and tree roots. The crew then built the dam, one six-inch layer of soil at a time, compacting each layer as they went. The height of the dam should equal the difference in elevation between the lowest and highest end of the construction site.



Photos: Paula Havlik

The Ozark Koala crew used a bobcat to build and compact our vernal pool. We are currently monitoring the new pool (pictured in early May) to see if its wet-dry cycle will be successful.

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Water was collected from the old pool to bioactivate the new. American toad tadpoles appeared in the pool in mid-April.

A dam with gradual slopes and a wide top is easiest to maintain and blends naturally into the landscape. To prevent erosion caused by water washing over the dam, a PVC drainage pipe was installed just above the 18-inch level, which is the maximum water depth desired for a vernal pool.

As a final step, after the pool's basin had been thoroughly compacted, we "seeded" it with two five-gallon buckets of water saved from the smaller

pool originally onsite, to encourage the growth of beneficial microorganisms.

You can use water from a nearby pond or other natural source to bioactivate your pool. Do NOT use tap water; let the pool fill naturally with rain water.

Because our soil is heavy clay, we're hoping to avoid using an artificial liner for our pool. Currently, we are in "wait and see" mode, monitoring the rise and fall of water levels. The pool filled

nically after the first heavy rain, but also drained pretty quickly, because of numerous small tree roots that popped up through the clay pan.

However, after two months of regular spring rainfall, the pool appears to be holding water adequately. We also check regularly to make sure water is not seeping out from under the dam.

As spring progressed, we heard a succession of anurans singing in and around the pool: western chorus frogs, spring peepers, American toads, Cope's gray tree frogs and cricket frogs. Judging from the variety of tracks, numerous mammals were using the pool as a drinking hole. In mid-April, we noticed hundreds of tiny black American toad tadpoles clustered around the shallow perimeter of the pool. The tadpoles need about six weeks to develop into toadlets and emerge from the water, so we continue to monitor their progress. So far, so good!

Coming next issue, **Part III: Creating Habitat**, will discuss specific native plants and other natural features that can be added to your vernal pool to attract wildlife.



The Cache River Autotour

Exploring the Cache this summer? Don't forget to pick up a free copy of the Cache Auto Tour map and brochure, available at the Cache River Wetlands Center and the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge office. Created by Friends of the Cache, the auto tour features a wealth of historical sites and natural wonders. You can also download a digital version at www.friendsofthecache.org -- just click on PROJECTS and scroll down to CACHE RIVER AUTO TOUR.

Become a Friend

- \$15 Individual
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- New Member
- \$50 Contributing
- \$100 Supporting
- Current Member
- \$250 Sustaining
- \$1,000 Lifetime

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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.