

may/june2018

of the
cache river
watershed

friends



Left to right, Cache board members Michael Jeffords, John Havlik, Lori Armstrong and Susan Post with new interpretive signage at Cache River Wetlands Center.

Interpretive signage welcoming visitors to the Cache River Wetlands Center got a major facelift this spring.

Supported by a grant from The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Cache board members worked closely with staff from the Cache River State Natural Area and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge to develop updated content for the signs, which were designed and printed by ArtFX in Ullin, Illinois.

This latest effort was the second phase of a Friends' initiative that began several years ago with new trail signs for Heron Pond. In keeping with our education and outreach mission, we plan to continue working with agency partners in the coming year to replace other weathered/outdated interpretive signage in the Cache.

Summer is coming
to the Cache—
and it's time
for the ever-popular
Annual Moonlight
Paddle!



This fascinating moonlight canoe tour

of Buttonland Swamp will be led by Tony Gerard, with assistance from Chelsea DeVivo. Listen for green tree frogs, bird-voiced tree frogs, barred owls and whip-poor-wills as you glide by ancient cypress trees under the light of the full moon. Participants will meet at Lower Cache Access (south on 37 past the Wetlands Center, then west on Perks Road) at 7:30pm on **Friday, June 29** for an unforgettable experience. Due to limited seating, advance registration is required. Beginning on

Friday, June 1, you can reserve your space by calling Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231. Kayakers are also welcome to bring their own craft and join the group.

The Annual Moonlight Paddle is a members-only event for Friends of the Cache.

To join or renew your membership, please use the mail-in form in this newsletter. Or, you can join quickly and conveniently online: visit www.friendsofthecache.org and click JOIN.

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 19, 10am-noon
Cache River State Natural Area,
Cave Creek Glade Access*

Join botanist Erin Medvecz for a wild-flower walk at Cave Creek Glade. Meet at parking lot near glade, off State Highway 45. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Illinois Milkweed and Milkweed Pollination

*Saturday, June 9, 10-11am
Cache River Wetlands Center*

John Schwegman will discuss the natural history of the many varieties of milkweeds found in Illinois. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Natural Areas of Illinois

*Saturday, June 23, 10-11:30am
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Natural heritage biologist Mark Guetersloh will share his knowledge of some of the most interesting natural areas and nature preserves in southern Illinois. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Annual Moonlight Paddle

*Friday, June 29, 7:30-10pm
Lower Cache Access*

A magical members-only moonlight canoe tour through Buttonland Swamp. **Limited seats, advance registration required:** call 618-634-2231.

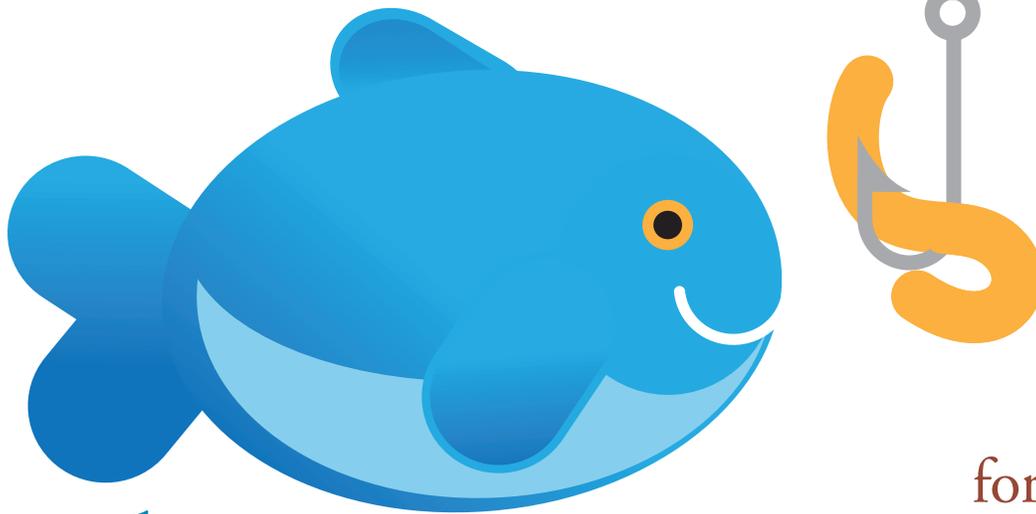
Registration opens June 1.

Save the date!

Nature Fest at
Cache River Days

Saturday, September 8

More details coming soon!



Fishing Clinics

Come fish with us this summer at 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 14** and **21**, and **July 12** and **19**.

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. Fishing equipment and bait will be supplied by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. **Please register in advance** by calling 618-657-2064.

Looking for a short-term volunteer opportunity? Know basic upholstery techniques? A bench in the Wetlands Center's bird viewing area needs to be reupholstered – material provided. If interested, please contact site interpreter Mollie Oliver at 618-657-2064.

photo: Michael Jeffords



Do you know who I am?

Answer on pg 4

photo: Michael Jeffords

Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

April 6, 2018
By Susan Post

Michael and I are tour guides this weekend; our guests are a father and son team from Maryland. The father (Iain), happens to own a birding/nature tour company, has lived on four continents and traveled the world. They are here to experience the Cache and its wonders, especially its herptiles. The weather does not cooperate, as temperatures fall throughout the day and snow is predicted for the evening. With fellow Cache board member Tony Gerard as our “snake tour guide” for the afternoon, we begin our hunt. Instead of the popular Snake Road, we spend our time in the Cache. We hike around Wildcat Bluff and its environs and are rewarded with a dozen cottonmouths by the end of the day. The snakes, coiled for concealment, blend into their surroundings. Several



times we walk right past them – at one point, Iain discovers a cottonmouth flanking both feet! We end our tour of the Cache with a spin around Mermet Lake, scoping out rafts of coots, scaups and cormorants. It’s almost dusk as we head back to our base in Belknap. We make a sudden stop to photograph a barred owl perched on a power line, not realizing that we will encounter four more owls during our short drive home. That evening, Iain regales his fellow guides with our Cache adventures, exclaiming about the snakes and the close-up views of barred owls. Never before has he had an experience like that. While we were worried at the beginning of the trip, we shouldn’t have been. The Cache never disappoints.

photo: Cypress Creek NWR



Nurturing Pollinators in the Cache

The Cache is doing its part to provide quality habitat for pollinators. Check out the **Bellrose Overlook** where Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge staff and volunteers have planted 1,500 native forb seedlings. Special thanks to Southernwood Gardens in Alto Pass for designing a plan and providing plants for this site. Some of the pollinator-friendly species you can expect to see at the overlook this year are black-eyed Susan, butterfly and swamp milkweed, beardtongue, cone-flower, bee balm and many more! For volunteer opportunities at Bellrose, call Liz Jones at 618-634-2231.

Meanwhile, at the Cache River Wetlands Center, the **Pollinator Gardens at Egret Slough** are entering their third growing season. This project, sponsored by Friends of the Cache and The Nature Conservancy, was featured in the Winter 2017 issue of *Illinois Audubon* magazine. The demonstration gardens, which showcase a mix of native and horticultural plants, are attracting a wide variety of pollinators and also capturing the interest and appreciation of Wetlands Center visitors. In the words of volunteer Benieta Powell, who created the mason bee garden, “the path of garden plots is a wonderful way for people to see, learn and use some of this knowledge in their own gardens for wildlife.” If you’d like to volunteer to help maintain the pollinator gardens, please contact Molie Oliver at 618-657-2064.



Photo: CCWR

State Champion Swamp Chestnut Oak

We are proud to announce that Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge is home to the new State Champion Swamp Chestnut Oak. The mighty oak will be added to the Illinois Big Tree Register, which was established in 1962 to recognize the largest native tree species in the state. Chris Evans, University of Illinois Extension Forester, scored the tree using a point system devised by American Forests and based on circumference (18.5 feet), height (83 feet) and average crown spread (102 feet). The chestnut oak champion is located at Wood Duck Slough, a popular spot on the Refuge for hunting and birdwatching.

Answer *from page three*

Do you know who I am?

American Featherfoil

(Hottonia inflata): I'm an aquatic plant with unique, floating flower stalks. My populations have decreased in many places, due to loss of habitat. I prefer shallow, stable ponds, ditches and swamps. Beaver ponds are a special favorite. I don't show up every year, but when I do, Heron Pond is often a great place to see me.



*Jill
Pearce Bell*

Members of the Anna Yoga Girls group planted a red bud tree at the Cache River Wetlands Center this spring in memory of Jill Pearce Bell.

Despite record rainfall in February, Cypress Creek staff (pictured at right) reforested 200 acres of the remaining agricultural ground on the Refuge. This effort included 14 species of upland and bottomland hardwood seedlings, totaling 73,000 trees. Several acres were too wet for the tractor and tree planters; so, many thanks to our AmeriCorps members, student interns, school students and Refuge volunteers who helped get several thousand seedlings in the ground using dibble bars!



Photo: CCWR



beds of brown clay for their distinctive stoneware. The pottery became known for its one-of-a-kind pieces, such as snake jugs, which are still highly prized today. Anna was also the site of the original Bunny Bread bakery, founded by R. J. “Jack” Lewis in 1944. The town’s architectural gem is the Stinson Library (pictured at left), designed in 1912 by Walter Burley Griffin, a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of Anna’s most famous residents was King Neptune, a pig used by a U.S. Navy recruiter to raise more than \$19 million in war bonds during World War II. A memorial to the celebrated porker can be found on I-146, about five miles east of town. Anna and Jonesboro, once fierce rivals, are now closely linked as twin cities. The source of the 92-mile long Cache River can be found just north of Anna.

“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.

When the Illinois Central Railroad decided to run through central Union County in 1854, the county seat, Jonesboro (founded 1818), was asked to submit a survey for the railroad. When Jonesboro failed to comply, local merchant Winstead Davie seized the opportunity to submit a survey of his own that routed the tracks through his property east of town. The railroad established a new community on this site, which Davie named after his wife, Anna.

The village of Anna was platted in 1854 and incorporated as a city in 1865. It served as one of nine rendezvous points for troops in Illinois during the Civil War, and became the site for Anna State Asylum, also known as the Southern Hospital for the Insane, in 1869. Most of the asylum’s rambling structure still stands today, serving as the central complex for the Clyde L. Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center. In 1859, the Kirkpatrick brothers established Anna Pottery, using nearby



Be a turtle advocate as you’re exploring the Cache this spring. Whenever it’s safe to do so, give these fellow creatures a helping hand to cross the

Be a turtle advocate

road. Be sure to move the turtle in the direction it was already headed, so it won’t become disoriented. Do not pick up a turtle by the tail; hold it at the base of its shell. You can also try sliding the turtle gently along with a floor mat from your car, or just stand guard while it crosses on its own. On your next visit to the Cache River Wetlands Center, be sure to pick up your FREE turtle advocate bumper sticker, courtesy of Friends of the Cache River Watershed.



Dream Catchers 4-H Club of Williamson County completed a service project in April, assembling bat houses for installation in the Cache River State Natural Area.



A Black-Necked Stilt and friend at Cypress Creek

More than 52 different bird species – waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds and passerines – were observed during Integrated Waterbird Management and Monitoring surveys conducted in April and May. Notable shorebird species using the Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve and adjacent areas included Baird’s

sandpiper, black-necked stilt (pictured), avocet, dunlin, greater and lesser yellowlegs, solitary sandpiper, spotted sandpiper, pectoral sandpiper, short- and long-billed dowitcher, white-rumped sandpiper, sanderling, semipalmated sandpiper, least sandpiper, American golden plover, semipalmated plover, willet and killdeer.



Congratulations to Mike Brown,

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Manager, on a new career adventure. Mike has accepted a position as District Forest Ranger of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Wisconsin’s north woods. He first came to southern Illinois in 2001 as a wildlife biologist at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, taking on the management role at Cypress Creek in 2008. Friends of the Cache would like to thank Mike for his terrific support, whether it was personally greeting thousands of visitors at Nature Fest or leading the Annual Moonlight Paddle. “Wherever there was work to be done, Mike was there, with a smile and a handshake,” says Friends chair Michael Jeffords. “He will be greatly missed.”

Become a Friend

- \$15 Individual \$50 Contributing \$250 Sustaining
- \$25 Family \$100 Supporting \$1,000 Lifetime
- New Member Current Member

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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.



photo: IDNR

Please welcome two new regional IDNR staff who, in addition to other duties, will be addressing issues in and related to the Cache River State Natural Area. Left to right, **Kevin Sierzega**, natural areas biologist, and **Phil Borsdorf**, natural heritage biologist.