

winter2020

friends

of the cache river watershed



Photo: Jessica Van Pelt

Conservation Conversations at Shawnee Community College



A Biologist Looks at Bigfoot



Photo: Paula Havlik

“Conservation Conversations” is a new quarterly speaker series featuring various Cache-related topics of interest, cosponsored by Shawnee Community College and Friends of the Cache River Watershed. The series kicked off on October 22, with district wildlife biologist Adam Phillips discussing Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), two devastating illnesses currently impacting the white tail deer population in Illinois. On January 25, biology

instructor and Friends chair Tony Gerard presented “A Biologist Looks at Bigfoot,” taking an objective look at physical evidence and witness accounts shared by those claiming to have seen a Yeti, Sasquatch, or, locally, the Big Muddy Monster. More than 120 attendees enjoyed this program, which also featured door prizes, merchandise sales and a brief “appearance” by Bigfoot himself, pictured at left. We are working on finalizing speakers and topics for the rest of the year, with the next program tentatively planned for April – more details coming soon.

To learn more about the Friends, like “Friends of the Cache River Watershed” on Facebook, or email friendsofthecacheriver@gmail.com



What's Next

Frog & Toad Survey Volunteer Orientation

Saturday, Feb 1, 1-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Citizen scientists needed to conduct listening surveys of frogs and toads in the Cache for the Illinois Natural History Survey. Materials and instructions provided for the surveys to be conducted four times between February and June. Questions, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Native Plants for Pollinators

Saturday, Feb 8, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Join Metropolis Garden Club President and Master Naturalist Anne Parmley and her husband William to learn how they planted 15 acres for pollinators.

Nature Movie: Alligators

Thursday, Feb 13, 2-3pm and 6-7pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Come and learn more about the natural history of an iconic wetland species, the alligator.

Hummingbirds of the World

Saturday, Feb 15, 10-11am
Cache River Wetlands Center

Prepare to “ooh” and “ahh” as John Schwegman shares photos of 77 of the 345 or so known hummingbird species of the Americas.

Calling All Owls

Friday, Feb 28, 6-8pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Swoop on in to learn about owls of southern Illinois, then join natural heritage biologist Mark Guetersloh to hear the familiar calls on a guided owl prowl.

Nature Movie: Manatee

Thursday, March 12, 2-3pm and 6-7pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Explore the natural history of this peaceful, slow-moving aquatic creature often called the “gentle giant.”

Butterflies and the Plants They Need

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

Anne Parmley will show photos of common southern Illinois butterflies and discuss necessary larval food plants and preferred nectar plants.

Oh
what a little
moonlight
can do.



Save the Date for Two Special Spring Events!

Annual Moonlight Paddle

Wednesday, May 6

Moonlight canoe tour of Buttonland Swamp for current Friends of Cache members – new Friends welcome! Registration opens April 6, more details coming soon.

New Firefly Species in the Cache

Friday, May 29

Program on fireflies of Illinois, followed by guided night hike to Heron Pond boardwalk in search of the newly-discovered cypress firefly (*Photuris walldoxeyi*).

Sunday Story Hour is back!

On the second to last Sunday of each month, from 2-3pm at the Cache River Wetlands Center, a naturalist will read a nature-themed storybook aloud. Each story will be paired with a game, hands-on activity or outside nature walk. Stories are geared toward families with children ages 3 to 6, although older children are welcome to participate. Please pre-register by calling 618-657-2064, so activities can be prepared for each child. Dates and themes for upcoming Sunday Story Hours are:

- February 16, river otter
- March 22, frogs and toads
- April 19, wild turkey
- May 24, wildflowers
- June 21, fish
- July 19, white tail deer
- August 23, dragonflies
- September 20, butterflies
- Oct 18, snakes
- Nov 22, owls



KIDS TO THE CACHE

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 costs for field trips to the Cache River State Natural Area and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The formal deadline to apply for spring semester grants is **January 30**, but educators can still contact Fran Wachter in early February to see if funds are available: franceswachter@gmail.com.

Half-gallon milk or juice cartons are needed for an Earth Day in the Park program at the Cache River State Natural Area. Students will use the cartons to construct nesting boxes. Please bring your clean cartons by the Cache River Wetlands Center, which is located on State Route 37 South, about four miles south of Cypress. The Wetlands Center is open Wednesday through Sunday, 9am to 4pm.

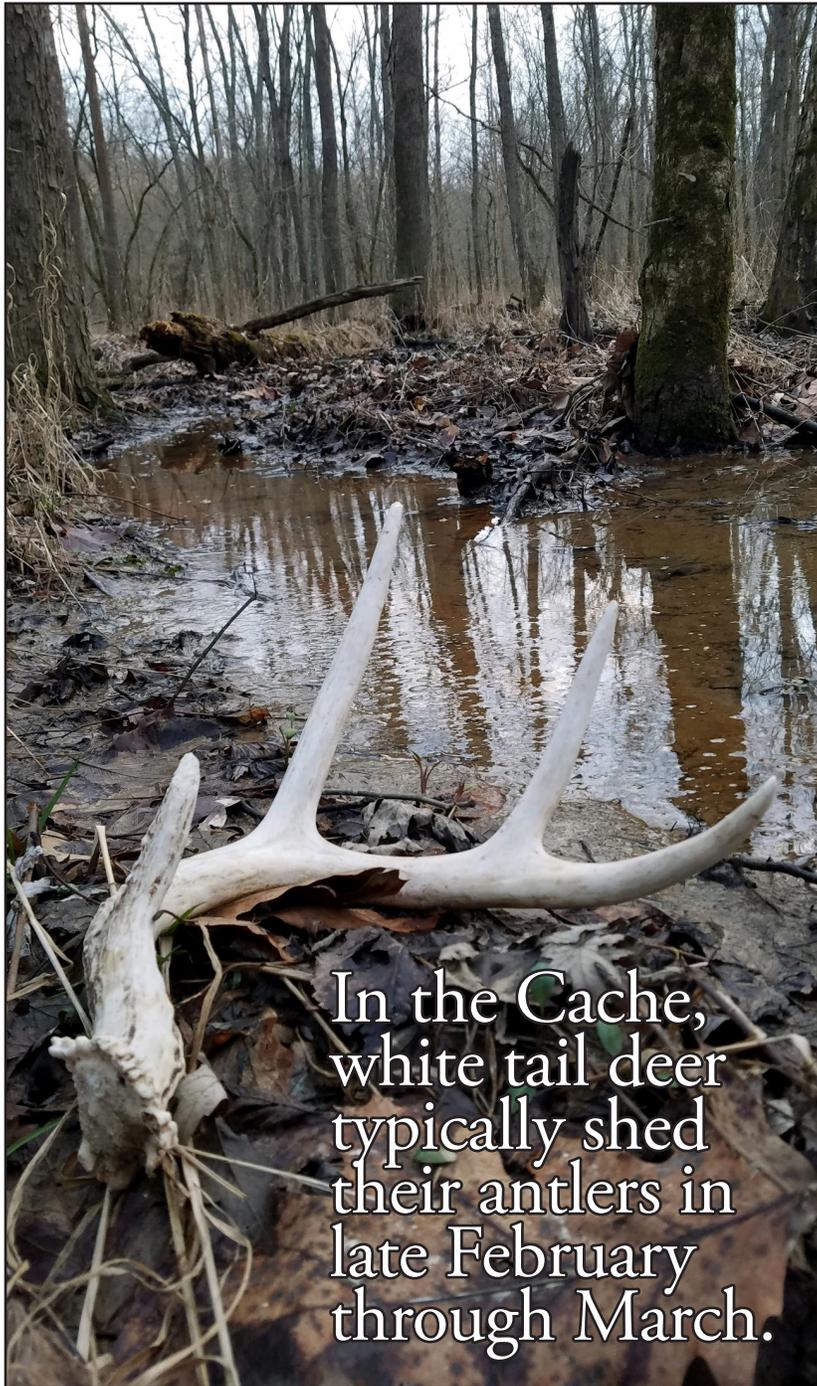


Cache River Wetlands Center site interpreter Molie Oliver interacts with fourth graders from 2019 Kids to the Cache grant recipient Trico Elementary, Campbell Hill, Illinois.

Grantsburg Swamp Cleanup Day

Grantsburg Swamp Ecological Area is a unique and beautiful site that has accumulated quite a bit of litter and trash in recent years. Please join us on **Saturday, February 22** for a swamp clean-up hosted by Illinois Extension and cosponsored by Friends of the Cache, the U.S. Forest Service, the Shawnee Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. We will meet at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center (354 State Highway 145N, Simpson, IL) at 12:30pm for hot cocoa and coffee, then carpool to the Grantsburg Swamp site along Flat Woods Road at 1pm. We'll return to Dixon Springs around 4pm, with more cocoa and coffee for those who would like a warm-up! Trash bags, gloves and grabbers will be provided. Participants should dress appropriately for the weather, but will have the option of working on dry ground or in wetter areas where rubber boots would be advised. Pre-registration is appreciated: please contact Kevin Rohling at 618-695-3383 or krohling@illinois.edu. To carpool from Carbondale, contact Patty Weyhrich at pweyhrich711@hotmail.com.





In the Cache, white tail deer typically shed their antlers in late February through March.

Antler shed hunting is a great excuse to head out to the woods and enjoy nature at a time of year when few other traditional outdoor activities are conducted, and potentially come home with some cool souvenirs! In the Cache, white tail deer typically shed their antlers in late February through March, although shed antlers, such as the one pictured at left, can sometimes be found in January. Antler shedding is triggered by the drop in testosterone levels that occurs after rutting season. It is a natural process that does not hurt the deer; in fact, a healthy buck's antlers will grow back bigger and stronger each year. No special licenses are necessary to hunt shed antlers, but there are various rules and regulations, depending on where you plan to hunt. On private property, you'll need the landowner's permission. It's always best to get this in writing and carry a copy with you while hunting, just in case. In the Cache River State Natural Area, shed hunting is allowed in any areas that are public access, with a limit of four antlers per day. Antlers must be sheds; they cannot be collected if attached to a skull or piece of skull. On Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, shed hunting is permitted in public access areas and there is no limit on the number of antlers collected. Antler shed hunting is not permitted in any areas designated as nature preserves, such as Heron Pond or Wildcat Bluff, or in Illinois state parks, such as Ferne Clyffe or Fort Massac.

The 2020 Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois has been set for **Saturday, April 25**. Sponsored by the Southern Illinois Audubon Society, birding teams compete to see and hear the most species over a 24-hour period, while raising money for conservation programs. Teams can search for birds throughout southernmost Illinois, in Jackson, Williamson, Saline, Gallatin,

Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski and Massac counties. After the competition, each team submits a list of birds documented, and the winning teams are recognized during the Birding Blitz Awards Brunch. Teams gather pledges in advance for each bird species recorded, and are responsible for collecting the donations

afterwards. Friends of the Cache River Watershed is extremely grateful to be a major beneficiary of the Birding Blitz. Over the years, thousands of dollars have been allocated to support wetland restoration efforts in the Cache River Watershed. For more information and to register your team, contact Rhonda Rothrock at 618-684-6605, or email woodthrusheola@hotmail.com.



Looking for unique gift items with a nature connection? Come and check out the Friends' Store kiosk at the Cache River Wetlands Center! In addition to an array of Cache t-shirts (including a new blue-winged teal design), sweatshirts, hoodies and caps, the Friends' Store currently offers nature prints and notecards by DeKalb artist Heather Baker Marshall, books, backyard bird feeders and much more. Pictured above are some of the latest items created by Women of the Cloud Forest, including balsa wood ornaments, luminaries and field bags hand-embroidered with a variety of Cache critters. The Wetlands Center is open Wednesday through Sunday, 9am-4pm. Net proceeds from the Friends Store are used to support educational programs in the Cache River Wetlands.



Photo: Lori Armstrong

Friends board member Chelsea DeVivo working the Friends booth at the 2019 Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair in December

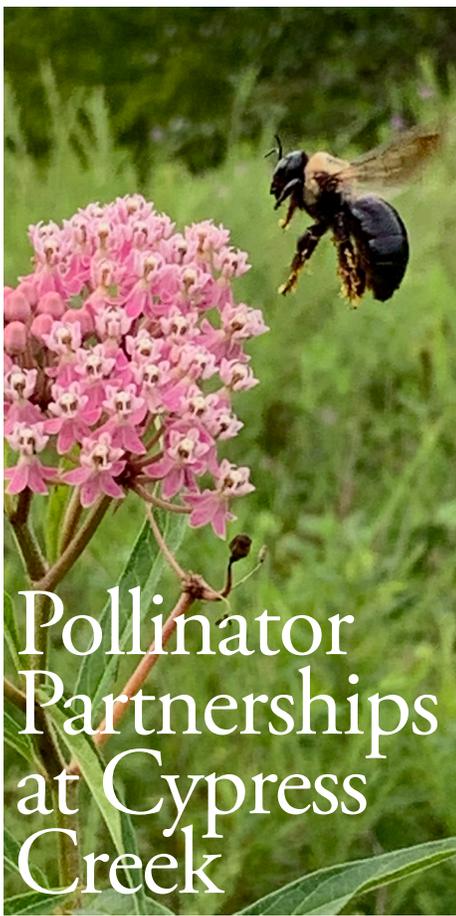


In 1854, John Gore purchased 40 acres of government-owned land on top of a high ridge in the northwest part of Johnson County, where he opened a general store. In 1866, a post office was established and named in honor of Gore, whose family was one of the earliest to settle in southern Illinois. Goreville grew slowly until the Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad started to lay tracks about a mile northeast of town in 1898. Businesses soon began to relocate closer to the railroad, forming a hub known for a few years as “New Goreville.” Unlike other communities that pulled up stakes in those days, the original town did not die; it became a residential area that is still known as “Old Town” today. The Village of Goreville was officially incorporated on April 18, 1900, and soon boasted eight general stores, three blacksmith shops, a bank, three hotels, a tin shop, a drug store, three doctors, a livery stable, a furniture store, a weekly newspaper and the Goreville Telephone Company. A devastating fire destroyed much of the business area (along with a brand-new \$800 fire engine) in 1907, but the village soon rebuilt and has continued to thrive, despite some ups and downs through the decades. Villagers take special pride in the annual “Freedom

Fest” July 4th celebration, which draws more than 3,000 visitors each year.

Ferne Clyffe State Park, just south of town, with its towering cliffs and outstanding rock formations, has been an indelible part of Goreville’s history. Miss Emma Rebman, a local teacher and Johnson County school superintendent, purchased the land from a group in Cairo catering to Chicago sportsmen. She turned the hunting club on the property into her home, hired workmen to create hiking trails and opened the land as a park, charging 25 cents admission for adults, 15 cents for children and an extra 10 cents for the thrilling walk across a wooden bridge between two boulders. Rebman deeded the park to the State of Illinois in 1949, and Ferne Clyffe continues to attract visitors from around the world, both for recreation and nature study. Another nearby attraction is Lake of Egypt, a 2,300-acre reservoir created in 1962 when the Southern Illinois Power Cooperative dammed the south fork of the Saline River to provide cooling water for its coal-burning power plant.

“Communities of the Cache” features a different town in each issue. If you have historical photos or tidbits to share about your community, contact newsletter editor Paula Havlik at phavlik@illinois.edu.



Pollinator Partnerships at Cypress Creek

Thanks to the use of Shawnee Community College's greenhouse, and materials purchased by the Shawnee Agricultural Club and Friends of the Cache River Watershed, 2,000 pollinator plants were successfully raised this past year. Pollinator seedlings were planted on Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and some of the plants were given to the Cache River Wetlands Center to enhance the pollinator gardens at Egret Slough. Refuge staff are also continuing a partnership with Monarch Wings Across the Eastern Broadleaf Forest, with several local volunteers collecting pollinator plant seed in an effort to redistribute the seed across the area. Seeds from seven different species were collected, cleaned and sent to Mason Nursery, where they will be used to grow plugs for planting on the Refuge and surrounding areas. If all goes well and enough plants are available, Friends of the Cache plans to conduct a plant sale for the public later this spring – more details to come!

Students Gain Experience/Give Back at Cypress Creek

Thanks to support from Friends of the Cache and other partner organizations, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge was able to offer numerous opportunities for students to work and learn about natural resource careers. In turn, these dedicated young people provided invaluable assistance to Refuge staff.

Our 2019 Youth Conservation Corps crew hailed from Goreville, Villa Ridge, Dongola and Belknap. Breanna Stout returned as youth crew leader, along with crew members Mark Dover, Briella Henderson and Braydon Coleman, who worked on restoring pollinator habitat, forest inventory, facility repair and trail construction, removing beaver dams and debris, and boundary posting.

In coordination with Shawnee Community College (SCC) and the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), SCC student Malachi Lentz assisted with overall Refuge operations, including biology, resource management, education and outreach.

Internships were provided for Katie Grunwald, who studies animal science at Southeast Missouri University, and



Intern Katelyn Toigo monitoring bat activity at Hickory Bottoms

Katelyn Toigo, a Southern Illinois University student in zoology. Both interns worked with habitat management and restoration, and Katelyn's final project involved helping Cypress Creek staff prioritize wetland restoration on reforested stands on the Refuge.

As always, AmeriCorps members performed a wide variety of tasks, including working with local schools to schedule Swamp Ecology Canoe Tours and stewardship projects such as hand-planting tree seedlings. Our 2019-20 AmeriCorps members are recent SCC graduate Brett Casper and SCC student Callie Mowery, who plans to further her studies in animal science.



AmeriCorps members Brett Casper and Callie Mowery preparing to plant millet at Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve.

Quiet Beauty of Winter in the Cache

All seasons in the Cache River Wetlands are extraordinary in their own way, but winter offers its own unique delights for those who seek them out. The buttress of a massive bald cypress dusted with snow, frost flowers discovered on a frigid morning at Wildcat Bluff and the delicate ice collars left behind as flood waters recede are just a few memorable images captured by area photographers. Spring will return before we know it, so get out there and make some winter memories!



*Snow-dusted bald cypress by Mike Chervinko,
ice collars by Jonathan Voelz, frost flowers by Berna Gerard*



Karen Mangan, biologist at Cypress Creek

National Wildlife Refuge, conducted a workshop on bats for area educators, pictured observing bat roosts at Hickory Bottoms. Refuge staff continue to conduct emergence surveys and collect acoustic data to monitor Indiana bat maternity colonies using artificial and natural roosts on the Refuge. Interested in helping monitor bat roosts? Contact Karen Mangan at karen_mangan@fws.gov or 618-634-2231.



The 27th Annual Cypress Creek Christmas Bird Count

was held on Monday, December 16 at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Despite Mother Nature's attempt to deter us (which we have come to expect), a small but hardy group of enthusiastic birders still showed up on the wet, wintery Monday morning. At the end of the day, participants

counted a total of 75 species and 11,541 birds. This is far below the counts from previous years, but the weather did not make it easy for either the birders or the birds. The Christmas Bird Count provides important data used to document trends in bird populations and migration, and we sincerely thank all participants for their efforts. Birders, mark your calendars now for the 2020 Cypress Creek Christmas Bird Count: Monday, December 14.

Become a Friend

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

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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.

Shawnee National Forest Turns 80!

To celebrate the Shawnee National Forest's 80th anniversary, the Southern Illinois University Museum (1000 Faner Drive, Carbondale, IL) is hosting a special exhibit featuring historic photos taken in the 1930s and 1940s during the popular Ozark Tours hosted by L. O. Trigg. The exhibit runs through February 21, and is free and open to the public. SIU Museum hours are Tuesday through Friday, 10am-4pm, and Saturday, 1-4pm. A number of special evening lectures have been scheduled in February; for more information, please call the museum at 618-453-5388.