

sept/oct
2015

friends

of the cache river watershed



photo: Michael Jeffords

The Cache River Wetlands are a relatively rare example of a swamp that experiences all four seasons. Enjoy the sights and sounds of autumn in the Cache!

Field Notes

*Four Questions for Mark Guetersloh,
Natural Heritage Biologist, IDNR*

What is a natural heritage biologist?

My job involves preservation, restoration and management of the high-quality character that would have been present in natural areas before human disturbance. Since 1996, I've been stationed in the Cache River State Natural Area as one of the Illinois Department of Natural Resource's (IDNR) contributions to the Joint Venture Partnership. My specialty is wetland ecology; but, in this role, I get to be an old-fashioned naturalist, who has to know as much as I can about as many things as I can.

What are some key restoration projects in the Cache?

The construction of 28 riffle weirs along the Upper Cache has significantly slowed the river's incision (i.e., the process of cutting a wider and deeper channel), in an effort to save parched wetlands like Heron Pond and Little Black Slough. Dredging within the Lower Cache is another key effort, because it helps restore traditional

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photo: Tony Gerard

The Friends' first annual meeting in recent years was a resounding success! More than 70 attendees gathered at the Carbondale Civic Center on August 27 for dessert, networking and a presentation by Dr. Michael Jeffords, chair of the Friends' board of directors. Jeffords provided an overview of the organization's accomplishments in 2015 and previewed an exciting new project, the Pollinator Interpretive Trail to be established at the Cache River Wetlands Center—see page three for more details.

If you missed the chance to purchase a Friends of Cache "Swamp Geek" t-shirt at the annual meeting, we'll be ordering more shirts this fall. Look for them at the Friends Store kiosk in the lobby of the Wetlands Center—coming soon!



For more information, see

www.friendsofthecache.org

e-mail friendsofthecacheriver@gmail.com

or like "Friends of the Cache River Watershed" on FACEBOOK.

Field Notes *continued*

pockets of deep-water aquatic habitat that support rare species of fish and amphibians. Currently, we are poised to begin the selective removal of button bush, a wetland native that historically would have grown along the swamp's edge and on islands, but has now become invasive in the swamp itself.

What are your biggest challenges?

The Cache is a very complex system, and it can be difficult to explain why we do what we do, both to the public and internally. For example, the riffle weir construction looked pretty ugly while it was underway; but, ten years later, I couldn't be prouder of the results. All restoration efforts have the end goal of working towards a self-regulating system. We humans are always

trying to push the limits, when we should be looking for a happy medium. As my grandpa used to say, "When there is no more room for wildlife, there'll be no more room for us."

What keeps you going?

Working with great people to support a unique natural area has been the most rewarding experience of my life. I was privileged to have Max Hutchinson as a mentor, and now I get to work with the Joint Venture Partnership, a group of people with diverse skills, each of whom views the Cache through a different lens. And I appreciate the work of our volunteers, who help us tell the story of why the Cache is so special, what is being done to restore, enhance and protect it, and the rationale behind those efforts.



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

by Susan Post

With the cooler weather of September and October, it's time to hit the trails in the Cache. Here are some fall favorites. Make sure you take time to hike the **Tupelo Trail** in October to witness one of Illinois' finest wildflower displays—the blooming of *Bidens cernua*, commonly known as nodding bur marigold. This yellow composite, a fall-blooming annual, can carpet the area under the dead trees, creating a blaze of color. The best views are either at swamp's edge or above the swamp from the Boss Island trail.

At the **Section 8 Woods** boardwalk, look for the odd overcup oak acorns or the night-sky-colored and star-dotted

fruits of the water tupelo, both of which will litter your path. Thread-legged assassin bugs (Emesinae), which resemble miniature walking sticks, have finally matured and are looking for prey and a mate.

A night hike along the **Marshall Ridge** road to look at stars may also yield "glow worms," a type of beetle larva (Family Phengodidae). This particular species likes damp areas and is a predator of snails. To spot glow worms, don't use a flashlight; just look down—soon you should see spots of light moving along the edge of the road.



What's Next

Cache River Days

*Saturday, September 5, All Day
City Park in Ullin, Illinois*

Enjoy this full day of food, music, exhibits and family activities. Questions, call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231.

Pollinator Interpretive Trail Volunteer Meeting

*Wednesday, September 9, 10:30-noon
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Get involved in this exciting Friends of Cache project! For more information, contact Lorie Allen at touchingpaws@gmail.com

Monarch Migration

*Saturday, September 19
Program at 10am; tag monarchs
11am-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

Learn more about monarchs and their epic annual migration to Mexico; then help capture, identify and tag butterflies for the Monarch Watch Association. Questions, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Owls and What They Eat

*Saturday, October 17, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center*

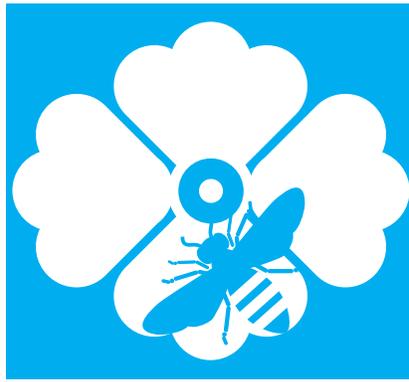
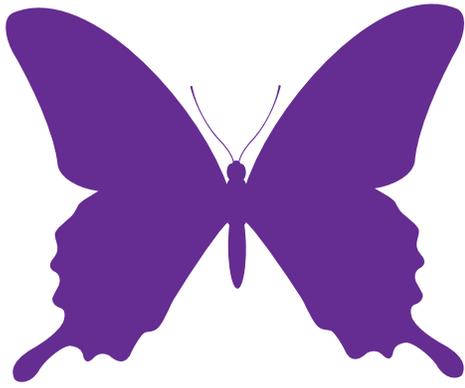
Dissect an owl pellet and learn some interesting facts about this "wise" bird. Questions, call 618-657-2064.

Cache River Wetlands Van Tours

*Thursday, October 29, Various Times
Tunnel Hill State Trail; meet at Cache River Wetlands Center*

Three guided van tours for seniors and those with limited mobility will explore a section of the Tunnel Hill State Trail.

Limited seating, advance registration required: call 618-657-2064.



The Social Butterfly

AT THE WETLANDS CENTER

Local volunteers are about to experience first-hand how pollinators, plants and people can be a winning combination!

Assisted by a grant from The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Cache River Watershed is overseeing the creation of a Pollinator Interpretive Trail at the Cache River Wetlands Center. The concrete path and interpretative kiosks already located behind the center will be transformed by the addition of 12 garden plots featuring plants beneficial to bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

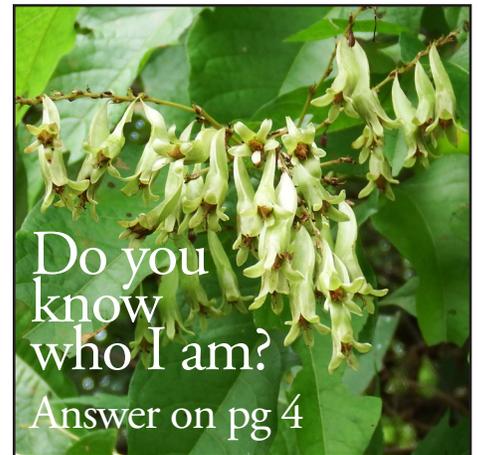
Each of the eight-by-four-foot, semi-circular gardens will illustrate a single concept that can be duplicated by educators or in home gardens. For example, one plot might showcase different types of milkweed, another

could feature plants that attract hummingbirds, and yet another might demonstrate how different flower shapes attract different pollinators. The 12 existing kiosks will be updated with new information and graphics, and materials will be developed to help site interpreter Molie Oliver educate the public about the gardens. A black-light insect trap will also be installed as part of the project, and visitors will be able to view the previous night's catch each day.

The project will be supervised by entomologist Michael Jeffords, who envisions that the gardens will be designed, implemented and maintained by volunteers. "We're keeping the plots a manageable size so that individuals and organizations can take ownership for planting and upkeep," says Jeffords. "If

a particular garden isn't working, it can be dug up and replanted." Plants native to southern Illinois will be utilized as much as possible, although non-native garden plants that are beneficial to pollinators and non-invasive may also be incorporated. Local and regional sources will be used for plants.

Volunteers from Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, regional garden clubs and native plant organizations such as Wild Ones attended an initial planning meeting on August 12. The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, September 9, 10:30am to noon at the Wetlands Center**. A workday will be scheduled later in the fall to begin establishing the garden plots, with the goal of completing at least half of the gardens by the spring of 2016. More volunteers are still needed: if interested, contact Lorie Allen at touchingpaws@gmail.com.



Tips for Attracting Pollinators to Your Garden

- Provide a diversity of flowering plants, preferably natives, that bloom at different times in sunny areas.
- Provide sources of moisture, such as shallow birdbaths, a pile of rotting fruit, or even a flat rock placed under a slowly-dripping faucet.
- Provide over-wintering sites, such as brush piles, dead leaves or trees with flaky bark.
- Provide food plants for larvae, such as milkweed for monarchs or parsley and dill for black swallowtails.
- Avoid pesticides.
- Consider leaving a small area of your yard "wild."
- Record when pollinators appear and which plants attract them.

Happy 25th anniversary to Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge!

Established in 1990 under the Emergency Wetland Reserve Act, Cypress Creek now includes more than 16,000 acres of cypress-tupelo swamp, bottomland forest and upland hardwood forest. The refuge is part of the largest remaining swampland in the Midwest and includes some of the oldest living

trees east of the Mississippi. It is fitting that the area is recognized as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

Most people visit Cypress Creek to see wildlife, canoe the cypress-tupelo swamp or hike through the bottomland hardwood forest. Fall and spring migration provide an opportunity to view more than 230 species of waterfowl. The bottomland forests are home to prothonotary warblers and a variety of other songbirds. If you're lucky, you may even see anhingas and Mississippi kites.

Change is part of the Cache River's history. From the earliest European

settlement, humans have tried to alter the area by cutting trees, plowing soil and draining swamps. Today, our focus is to return to a natural ebb and flow of past natural systems, providing habitat as well as opportunities for people to enjoy the area. As we mark 25 years of protecting this watershed, it's important to remember how far we have come. Learn more about research, recreation and how you can get involved at

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/cypress_creek/



Cypress Creek welcomes two AmeriCorps members, Sara Stoneski and Matt McClanahan.

We're happy to have Sara, who received her bachelor's in zoology from SIU, returning for her second year. Matt, who recently completed his master's in wildlife and fisheries science at the University of Tennessee, is joining us for the first time. Both members will assist with swamp ecology tours and habitat management and restoration projects.

It's not too late to enter the second annual "Prettiest Box Turtle Contest"! Remember to post your box turtle photos on the Friends of the Cache River Watershed Facebook page by September 20. Photographer with the most likes wins a Cache hat and t-shirt.



submitted by Travis Koopman

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, 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?

American Buckwheat Vine (*Brunnichia ovata*) also known as Redvine and Ladies' Eardrops. A perennial wetland vine of the southeastern US.

Photo—Tony Gerard, Lower Cache