

oct/nov
2014

friends

of the cache river watershed

Photo by Cathy Wood Jennings



Congratulations to Cathy Wood Jennings, winner of the "Prettiest Box Turtle" contest. More contests coming up – be sure to like us on FACEBOOK!

Field Notes

Three questions for Jeff Hoover and Wendy Schelsky, Avian Ecologists, Illinois Natural History Survey

What accounts for the success of the prothonotary warbler in the Cache wetlands?

Given the right breeding habitat, warblers will return to the same nesting sites year after year, as will their offspring. Since 1993, we've helped give the population a boost by constructing nesting boxes and studying the conditions needed for optimum breeding.

What are your key research findings?

Prothonotaries prefer to nest in trees over water, so they depend on healthy wetlands. The two biggest obstacles are raccoons, who feed on warblers' eggs, and parasitic cowbirds, who destroy the eggs and replace them with their own. We've found that raccoons can be discouraged by keeping water levels of 1-2 feet under the nests during breeding season. Cowbirds and raccoons both thrive in "fragmented" forests broken up by agricultural land. As more land in the Cache watershed has been reforested, we've observed a significant increase in nesting success. Bottom line, management of water

continued on back

The prothonotary warbler, a welcome sight in the swamps and bottomland forests of the Cache watershed, is just one of many direct beneficiaries of the great work being done by scientists in southernmost Illinois. And, now, those scientists have a base of operations. Located in Belknap and maintained by the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS),



Photo by Michael Jeffords

the **Cache River Center for Research, Education and Outreach** (CREO) is a collaborative research, teaching and training facility that also offers visiting scientists a place to stay. INHS entomologist **Michael Jeffords** says the CREO's "unique location, centered in the Cache River State Natural Area, provides easy access to all sites, affordable accommodations, and is a refuge that allows for quiet contemplation after long days in the field." **Jeff Hoover**, an INHS avian ecologist, adds that the CREO serves as a launching point for ecosystem monitoring programs and a regional center for public education and outreach. Rooms are available at the facility for small meetings (10-12 people): for more information, contact Dr. Hoover at j-hoover@illinois.edu.



We have lost a friend and dedicated teacher and conservationist with the passing of **Ed Manier** on August 23, 2014. Ed, 51, a southern Illinois native who lived in Goreville, was a member of the Friends of the Cache River Watershed board of directors and had a long history supporting natural resource management activities in the Cache River Wetlands. He was a graduate of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and taught for 28 years at Anna-Jonesboro High School, where he also coached track, football and basketball. Over the years, Ed developed a strong partnership with the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge to involve his students in hands-on projects that included tree planting, trail development, stewardship clean-up work and restoration planning. Ed also encouraged his students to get involved with hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities through the AJHS Environmental Club. His enthusiasm and dedicated leadership will be greatly missed.



The 20th Annual Cache River Days at Ullin was a resounding success, with all canoe tours provided by Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge booked to capacity. There's still time to book your free canoe tour on October 10: call 618-634-2231.

Field Notes, cont.

levels and restoration of forests have played a critical role in the success story of the prothonotary, and benefited the local bird community in general.

How can Friends of the Cache help?

The Friends have provided research funding, which is terrific. It's also important to advocate for conservation efforts and promote success stories like that of the prothonotary warbler.

What's Next

Cypress Creek Refuge Wild Weekend

Friday, October 10, Various Times
Lower Cache Access
Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week with a free guided canoe tour on the Cache. **Reservations required; call 618-634-2231.**

Wetland Wild Eatables

Saturday, October 18, 10am-12pm
Cache River Wetlands Center
Learn about the many foods that wetlands have historically provided for both animals and humans, and sample some deep woodland delicacies still eaten today.

Greater Prairie Chicken

Saturday, October 25, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center
Bob Gillespie of the Illinois Natural History Survey will discuss efforts to save this once prolific, now endangered, North American bird.

Guided Van Tours

Thursday, October 30, Various Times
Tunnel Hill State Trail
Free guided van tours for seniors and those with physical limitations – explore the Tunnel Hill State Trail between Vienna and Tunnel Hill. **Reservations are required; call 618-657-2064.**

Winter Plant I.D.

Saturday, November 15, 1-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center
Discover the beauty of decaying summer flowers and grasses, and learn to identify plants by their seed pods or striking silhouettes.

Save the Date!

Holiday Open House

Thursday, December 4
Cypress Creek Refuge Office

Alternative Gift Fair

Sunday, December 7
Carbondale Civic Center

Become a Friend

- \$10 Individual
- \$20 Family
- New Member
- \$35 Contributing
- \$50 Supporting
- Current Member
- \$100 Sustaining
- \$1,000 Lifetime

Name _____ Date _____

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All contributions are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to **Friends of the Cache River Watershed**. Mail membership dues to: 8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress, IL 62923.