



Spring/Summer 2023 Newsletter



From my 3x5 Notebook by Susan Post — April 27, 2023

Like the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, as I drove south on I-57 I kept thinking I'm late. Spring appears to be early this year; the redbud has bloomed and I am late for my spring sojourn in the Cache. For some, spring might mean the first Red-winged Blackbird or warbler sighting, for others a snake crossing the road. For me, it is the fluttery flight of a Falcate Orangetip butterfly. This species is one of the true harbingers of spring in southern Illinois as it visits the blooms of spring ephemerals.

I was in luck, as Wildcat Bluff offered a population. I saw several males patrolling their low patch of ground, back and forth, nectaring at wild garlic and on the lookout for a female. I saw only one female this day and when a male spotted her as well there was a prolonged air dance. Males emerge at least a week earlier than females. For butterfly listers this is a wanted species. We had a butterfly trip guide ask us to show him this species. Here was someone familiar with the butterflies of Peru, yet wanted to see something we take for granted in the Cache. The Cache never disappoints. *(Photo by Michael Jeffords)*



Upcoming Events at the Cache River State Natural Area

Cypress Firefly. Friday, May 26, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Todd Fink - Heron Pond Trail

The cypress firefly or lightning bug, (*Photuris walldoxeyi*) was first documented in early 2019 in high-quality cypress swamps in Mississippi, Tennessee and Indiana. A confirmed Illinois sighting was recorded at the Heron Pond boardwalk in June 2019. Natural heritage biologist Christina Feng will tell us about fireflies of Illinois while leading a night hike on the Todd Fink-Heron Pond Trail to the Heron Pond boardwalk in search of the cypress firefly. Meet in parking lot for the trail.



The Art of Bonsai. Saturday, June 10, 10:00 a.m. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center

The Art of Bonsai and the rugged beauty of the Cache River wetland trees come together in this presentation of *Bonsai, Past and Present*, featuring a 40 year-old Bald Cypress that is only 24" tall! Other trees will be on display as well, along with plenty of answers to your questions.

Make a Fishing Lure. Saturday, June 17, 10:00 a.m. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center

June 16-19 are Free Fishing Days. Join us Saturday to learn how to make an inline spinner lure, then use it fishing at Egret Slough at the Cache River Wetlands Center, no fishing license required. All supplies for the lure are provided and, as needed, instructions on how to fish. Some fishing poles are available for your use. Please call 618-657-2064 on Wednesday through Sunday to register for one of the 15 spots.

Magnificent Moths. Friday, July 28, 9:00 a.m. - noon; come and go. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center



Join University of Illinois Extension and Illinois Department of Natural Resources at a Magnificent Moths event during National Moth Week. *Did you know there are over 150,000 species of moths in the world?* Moths play an important role in the food web but are often ignored. A variety of educational activities and resources will be offered for the young and young at heart.

Reptiles of Southern Illinois. Saturday, August 26, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center and Heron Pond Trail



Join reptile enthusiast Tony Gerard for an up-close look at snakes, skinks, lizards, and turtles, highlighting characteristics of reptiles found in southern Illinois at the Wetlands Center. The program concludes with an optional hike on the Todd Fink- Heron Pond Trail to look for cold-blooded creatures of the Cache. Come for the 1:00 p.m. indoor presentation at Wetlands Center, then after 2:00 p.m., saunter to Heron Pond.

Identifying Aquatic Plants: a Framework for Choosing Aquatic Plants for Garden Ponds and Water Features. Saturday, September 16, 1:00 p.m. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center

Master Gardener Karen Glynn will present why aquatic plants are important; how to identify appropriate aquatic plants; and where best to locate aquatic plants in garden ponds and water features.

Monarch's Incredible Journey. Saturday, September 23, 10:00 a.m. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center

Each year the fourth generation of the magnificent monarch butterfly may migrate up to 2,500 miles in North America to central Mexico for the winter.

Monarch Watch Association, a citizen science project, has tagged and monitored migrating monarchs since 1992. Join us for a program on the natural history of monarchs. The rest of the day will be spent

capturing, identifying butterflies, tagging the monarchs for Monarch Watch, and releasing butterflies. Contact the Site Interpreter at 618-657-2064.



Who Am I? (Answer on page 7)

You may have seen me floating on the backwaters of the Cache or in still ponds around the watershed....or you may have seen me growing on the moist soil alongside the water. If you had seen me in both places, I bet you didn't recognize me as the same guy! Do you know me?

Invaders! by Tony Gerard

Amur Honeysuckle

Although it may be pretty, Amur honeysuckle is one tough invasive! Imported as an ornamental into New York in 1898 through the New York Botanical Garden, it has since spread across most of the continental United States. Locally it is found throughout the Cache watershed but is especially abundant in the upper Cache area.

Sometimes referred to as *bush honeysuckle*, it is one of several species

often called by that name, and beware, there are native species that go by the common name of *bush honeysuckle* also. Amur honeysuckles are large, upright, spreading shrubs reaching up to 15–20 feet in height with flowers that change from white to yellow; juicy red berries; and opposite, simple leaves that green up much earlier than surrounding native vegetation. In the Cache watershed, Amur honeysuckle begins flowering in April. Petals change from white or pink to yellowish as they age.

Amur honeysuckle is adaptable to a variety of habitat types. In a woodland environment it often forms a dense, interwoven understory layer, blocking sunlight from the floor and eliminating forest dwelling native species. It may also secrete a chemical into the soil that hinders native trees. While the carbohydrate-rich fruits of



the exotic honeysuckle provide some nutrition for birds and rodents in winter, they do not compare to the lipid-rich fruits of native species that provide greater energy to sustain migrating birds.

These invaders are hard to control! They readily resprout from the roots after a burn or cutting. Cutting along with applied chemical treatment seems the most effective control method. Sadly, these invasive exotics are still often sold as decorative yard plants.



New Board Member Adrian Macedo

Adrian Macedo is in his third year as a PhD student at Southern Illinois University. He grew up in the mountains of northern California and moved to southern Illinois in 2020 to work on his degree. In his free time, he enjoys hunting/fishing, gathering, gardening, and playing banjo. He has recently joined the Friends of the Cache River board and looks forward to furthering the appreciation and conservation of the Cache River watershed. Below is a description of his research.



Research on Amphibians of Floodplain Ponds in Buttonland Swamp

Floodplain ponds are a dynamic and biodiverse habitat, often overlooked by those focused on recreation and hunting and fishing. However, they provide an excellent system to study how changing water levels in the swamp may influence amphibian populations. Adrian is studying the amphibian populations of these ponds to try to understand how habitat features such as hydrology, fish and insect predators, and canopy cover influence Amphibian communities.

Findings of Research in Buttonland Swamp

Adrian's research has indicated that salamanders, spring peepers, and chorus frogs are mostly associated with ephemeral and semi-permanent sites, whereas green frogs and lesser siren are more associated with permanent sites. Southern leopard frogs and Blanchard's cricket frogs were associated with all the pond types. He also found that the amphibians that live in ephemeral waterbodies also are not associated with fish presence. Green frogs were also associated with deeper water bodies and the state endangered bird-voiced tree frog tadpoles were associated with ponds that have high tree canopy cover. These results are important because under different water management scenarios, such as high-water elevations, flooding events could lead to colonization of fish into previously ephemeral ponds. According to his research, this can dramatically change the amphibian species composition from mostly salamanders to mostly green frogs. However, if water level remains too low all year-round, they could dry completely and species like green frogs and lesser siren could disappear. It seems a natural pulse-flood cycle would be best to preserve biodiversity in this system.

Some of the amphibian species found in floodplain ponds of Buttonland Swamp. 1) Salamanders including Tadpole Salamanders, Small-mouth Salamanders. 2) Southern Leopard Frogs, Chorus Frogs and Spring Peepers. 3) Blanchard's Cricket Frog. 4) Green Frog and 5) Lesser Siren.



Future and Continuing Research in the Cache River

Adrian will continue to study the floodplain ponds until the end of 2023 to document changes across time in the amphibian community. He is also researching cottonmouth snakes in the upper Cache River in relation to hibernation and snake fungal disease. Snake fungal disease is currently threatening snake species; however, little is known about the influence of disease with hibernation. It is thought that snake immune systems are weak during hibernation, and most deaths occur during that time. The cottonmouth work is ongoing and will continue into 2025. In Adrian's continuing work, he hopes to answer these questions and inform current and future conservation of reptiles and amphibians in the Cache River.

Answer to Who Am I? (From page 3.)

I'm Fringed Heartwort (*Ricciocarpos natans*). I'm a liverwort, one of the more primitive land plants, maybe very similar to the first land plants on Earth. I come in two body



forms, a terrestrial form and a floating, aquatic form. They're different enough that scientists initially thought I was two

different species. My scientific species name *natans* means swimming, after my aquatic form.

(Photos by Tony Gerard.)



Thank you to those who donated to the Friends of the Cache River Watershed in memory of Gary Marx. After living in Kansas for 15 years, Gary's path led him and his wife Pam back to Southern Illinois because he wanted to be a better steward to the land. *My body knows this place, he wrote. My soul is at rest here... these woods in Southern Illinois bring to me a peace I've felt nowhere else. They smell like home.*

As a Friend of the Cache, you'll receive our newsletter, invitations to members-only events, such as the popular annual Moonlight Paddle, a 10-percent discount on all Friends Store items at the Wetlands Center, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Become a Friend of the Cache River Watershed

\$15 Individual

\$50 Contributing

\$250 Sustaining

\$25 Family

\$100 Supporting

\$1000 Lifetime

New Member

Current Member

Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

To remain budget and environmentally friendly, most communications are by e-mail.

Check here if you need to receive information by U. S. Mail.

All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to Friends of the Cache River Watershed and mail to 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL 62923.

OR go to our website: friendsofthecache.org and click "join" to become a friend online.