

may/jun
2016

friends

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cacherivernaturefest.com



naturefest

THE CACHE RIVER WATERSHED

of the cache river watershed

Field Notes

*Fran Wachter's Wetland Warriors
Adams School, Creal Springs, IL*

“When will we be going to the Cache?” is the first question Fran Wachter’s students always ask on opening day of school. Through the Wetland Warriors program, Wachter has channeled that enthusiasm to create valuable learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom.

Wachter says the inspiration for Wetland Warriors came from her 2009 sixth grade science class, a highly motivated group who wanted to learn more about the wetlands and help with restoration efforts. Over the next few years, the students transplanted pickerel weed at Grassy Slough, dug giant cane rhizomes and grew them in a classroom nursery for planting at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, built prothonotary warbler nest boxes, planted hundreds of seedlings, helped maintain trails, presented at SIU science symposiums and much, much more.

In 2011, the Wetland Warriors won the \$20,000 grand prize for middle schools in Disney’s Planet Challenge. They devoted most of the funds to restoring

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For more information, see

www.friendsofthecache.org

e-mail friendsofthecacheriver@gmail.com

or like “Friends of the Cache River Watershed” on FACEBOOK.



Swamp Geek t-shirts are back – get yours on May 7!

Nature Fest 2016 is scheduled for Saturday, May 7, with lots of fun, educational and FREE activities planned for nature lovers of all ages! Come out to the Cache River Wetlands Center, 10am-4pm, rain or shine, for live wildlife exhibits, nature activities and programs, guided hikes and canoe tours, the ever-popular Cache Challenge and much more.

Special features this year include a first look at two major Friends of Cache projects: the Pollinator Interpretive Trail at the Wetlands Center and all-

new interpretive signage for the Heron Pond Trail. And, get ready to place your bids in the **Friends of Cache Silent Photo Auction**, featuring some of the area’s finest nature photographers. All proceeds will help fund educational programs in the Cache.

A few seats are still open for the popular canoe tours, including a special members-only tour at 1:30pm for current Friends of the Cache. To reserve your spot, call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231. For more information on the day’s festivities, visit www.cacherivernaturefest.com

Landscaping with Native Plants

Sunday, June 5, 2-3pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Get tips on selecting native plants for a garden or prairie restoration. Questions, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Cretaceous Hills of Southern Illinois

Saturday, June 25, 1-2pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Learn more about the natural communities of the Cache River basin's Cretaceous Hills. Questions, call 618-657-2064.



What's Next

TWO Members-Only Events in June!

Night Critters of the Cache

Tuesday, June 14, 8:30-10:00pm
Cache River Wetlands Center

Join Michael Jeffords and Susan Post to experience the sights and sounds of the Cache after dark. Please register in advance by calling 618-657-2064.

Annual Moonlight Paddle on the Cache

Saturday, June 18, 7:30-10pm
Lower Cache Access

Seating is limited for this fascinating moonlight canoe tour of Buttonland Swamp. Registration begins May 23: call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231.

“Night Critters” and the Moonlight Paddle are members-only events for Friends of the Cache. To join or renew your membership, please use the mail-in form in this newsletter. Or, visit www.friendsofthecache.org and click JOIN.

photo by Jan Sundberg



Notes from My 3x5 Notebook

by Susan Post

While birds are a major highlight

of March and April in the Cache, May and June feature different organisms with wings—insects, especially butterflies and dragonflies. Mention the word “migration” and birds again may come to mind. However, in May, begin looking for the state’s migrant butterflies, which come up from the south as they cannot survive our winters and must recolonize each spring. The most familiar is the monarch: be sure to check the Wetlands Center, where Molie Oliver is usually rearing caterpillars. Other migrant butterflies to look for are the snout, buckeye, little yellow and cloudless sulphur. June is when hairstreaks (tiny, usually gray-brown butterflies)

emerge. Most live in the canopy of oak trees, so a hairstreak sighting is often something to celebrate. In the evenings, check mercury vapor lights for giant silkmoths—luna, cercropia and polyphemus.

If you are hiking the trail behind the Wetlands Center, watch for dragonflies. The Eastern pondhawk is quite abundant on the sidewalk, with both males (blue body) and females (green body) sunning themselves. Other common species include widow skimmer, twelve-spot, white-tail, blue dasher, green darner and jade clubtail. Where there are dragonflies, there may be a Mississippi kite overhead, so don't forget to look high in the sky while chasing these flying jewels.



Photo: Tony Gerard

Do you know who I am?

Answer on pg 4

The Cache River and You

Excitement is building for the new Pollinator Interpretive Trail, currently under development on the grounds of the Cache River Wetlands Center! Many of the demonstration garden plots were planted in April and should be ready for preliminary viewing on May 7 at Nature Fest. Project supervisor Michael Jeffords credits funding from The Nature Conservancy and the dedicated efforts of many volunteers for making the pollinator gardens a reality after almost a year of planning. “A walk along the trail behind the Wetlands Center will yield ideas for the home gardener about becoming a ‘pollinator positive’ influence on the southern Illinois landscape,” says Jeffords.

According to Lorie Allen, who coordinated volunteers for the project, the pollinator plots are designed to show the home gardener what can be achieved with minimal effort and expense. Some aim to attract a specific type of pollinator, including hummingbirds, mason bees, leaf cutter bees, sphinx moths and monarch butterflies. Others are organized around themes such as low-maintenance plants or later blooming flowers that provide sustenance for pollinators migrating south in the fall. One garden will showcase nectar and seed-producing ancestral flowers, while yet another, called “The

Queen,” features queen-of-the-meadow as its centerpiece. When complete, the trail will include a total of 12 demonstration gardens with interpretive signage and educational materials.

The Pollinator Interpretive Trail is a project of Friends of the Cache River Watershed. Other organizations designing and/or planting and maintaining garden plots include the Metropolis Garden Club, Southern Illinois Master Naturalists, Tupelo Wild Ones, Fort Massac Naturalists and Southernwood Gardens of Alto Pass, Illinois. Volunteers will be on site during Nature Fest to answer questions and provide information about the plantings. Come and learn first-hand about the ease and beauty of landscaping for pollinators!

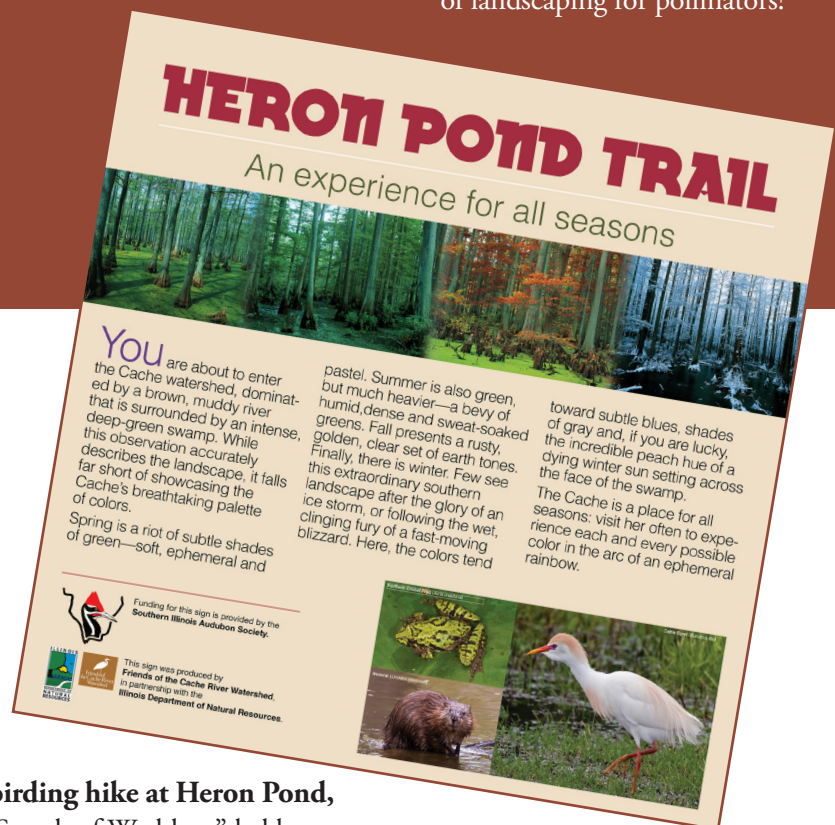
Heron Pond State Natural Area, which features one of the country’s finest bald cypress swamps, is a “destination site” for anyone visiting the Cache River Wetlands. This spring, the Friends of the Cache are proud to present 12 new interpretative signs along the Heron Pond Trail. The signs were created and produced by the Friends in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, with content and photographs provided by Michael Jeffords and Susan Post and graphic design by John Havlik. Special thanks go to the Southern Illinois Audubon Society, which provided funding for the project.

Be among the first to see the new trail signs during Nature Fest on May 7, when Heron Pond will be the focus of three different programs:

- **A birding hike at Heron Pond,** “In Search of Warblers,” led by Master Naturalist Dale Foll will help participants identify some of the more than 30 species of warblers that spend a portion of each year in the Cache. Meet at the Heron Pond trailhead at 8:00am for this two-hour hike.
- **At noon in the Cache River Wetlands Center auditorium,** John Schwegman and Max Hutchinson will

share the inspiring story of how Heron Pond was acquired as the centerpiece of the Cache River State Natural Area.

- **Naturalists John and Martha Schwegman** will lead a two-hour hike on the Heron Pond Trail. Meet at the Field Trip tent at 1:00pm to depart for Heron Pond.





Cypress Creek Updates

Staff at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge are busy conducting research on several different fronts this spring and summer.

Bats: Temperature loggers have been installed on all eight of the Refuge's artificial bat roosts and some of the natural roosts, in order to compare the microclimate between the two. Acoustic data is also being collected to monitor bat use within different habitats on the Refuge and to locate mist netting sites for the continuation of the Indiana Bat Science Support Project with the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Deer: The deer browse survey conducted this spring at the Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve showed that 82

percent of seedlings surveyed had more than half of their stems browsed, and 37 percent of these were severely hedged. These and other results will be used to evaluate future deer management options within Bellrose, which is currently a closed area.

Bees: Staff are conducting a baseline survey of native bees on the Refuge, as part of a broader research effort underway in the Midwest. In the past year, three species of native bees have been proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act, and information from Cypress Creek's survey will contribute to the science needed to implement management actions protecting these species.

Field Notes *continued*

and creating interpretive signage for the boardwalk at Section 8 Woods. That same year, Fran Wachter was recognized as Illinois' Science Teacher of the Year.

The Wetland Warriors program has continued under Wachter's direction, with older students mentoring their younger peers, and staff at Cypress Creek and the Cache River State Natural Area helping to identify further field opportunities and research projects. "Science is a verb," says Wachter. "My students learn by doing. Their energy and enthusiasm are contagious, and their sincere commitment to help protect this special habitat is inspiring to our entire school and the Creal Springs community."

Wachter will retire this spring after 38 years as a middle-school teacher in southern Illinois, including eight years at Adams School. "My replacement has already indicated his interest in continuing the Wetland Warrior tradition," she says. "I will do everything in my power to assist him and bring more students to the amazing Cache."

Many thanks to Fran Wachter and her intrepid Wetland Warriors for creating a legacy of environmental stewardship that should pay dividends for years to come!

Become a Friend

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- \$50 Contributing
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- \$250 Sustaining
- \$1,000 Lifetime

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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?

Cedar apple rust (*Gymnosporangium juniperi-virginianae*), found where eastern red cedar and apple trees co-exist. Orchard keepers hate me, because I make unsightly spots on apple leaves and fruit. On cedar trees, I form spore-producing orange "tentacles," which usually appear during wet periods in May or June.