

The BogHunter

the newsletter of the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog

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BANDITS OF THE BOG

Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) are common throughout the wetlands and uplands of the Cedarburg Bog. Their name comes from a Powhatan word "*aroughcun*" whose root means "*one who rubs, scrubs and scratches with its hands.*" Originally classified in the bear family (they were called "washer bears" and "long-tailed bears"), they are now in their own family, the Procyonidae.

The word "*lotor*" in *Procyon lotor* means "*washer.*" Raccoons are often pictured dipping their food in the water, but they don't dunk it to make up for a lack of saliva, as was once thought. They catch much of their food in shallow water, and they often manipulate it. Water enhances their tactile senses by softening the tough skin layer that protects their paws.

The average measurements of these short-legged, pear-shaped, masked animals are 10 to 30 pounds and 15 to 21 inches long, without the ringed, bushy tail, though they occasionally top 50 pounds. Their top running speed is 10 to 15 mph; they are good swimmers and great climbers. They prefer to scramble up a tree when they're alarmed, though they don't like climbing the smooth bark of beech trees. They descend a tree head first, gripping with feet that are swiveled backwards.



Raccoon tracks look like human hands and feet.

Raccoon ancestors probably originated in Central America and southeastern North America and moved north along river valleys. Reports by early explorers in the upper Midwest didn't mention them, and their populations may have boomed here only in the last century. They got a helping hand from the expansion of agriculture and the elimination of the cougars and bobcats that preyed on them. Today, they can be found from Alaska through Central America.

In both habitat selection and diet, raccoons are remarkably adaptable. They live in wooded areas and wetland edges, and they're at home on both urban and suburban landscapes. Raccoons make dens in rock piles and old trees, in chimneys and attics and under decks, and they will use a burrow made by another animal. They make frequent appearances on trail cams around the Bog.



Visiting a deer carcass

One of the reasons they're so successful is that they eat practically anything – they're the Omnivore's Omnivore. A typical diet, which changes seasonally, includes about 40% invertebrates 33% plants, and 27% vertebrates, and they'll also feed on carrion and raid garbage cans. They help to control rodent populations, but they're also important predators of ground-nesting birds in the Bog. I once saw one chasing a woodcock through a prairie at the Field

Station, and they prowl the Sandhill Crane nesting area at the south end of the Bog in search of eggs and chicks. One research project at the Field Station that involved sinking empty yogurt cups into the ground to trap insects had to be rethought after a raccoon pulled up all the still-fragrant containers. They usually feed at night.



Raccoon kits explore a swamp

Their combination of intelligence and dexterity makes them worthy competitors as they move into cities. Though they don't have opposable thumbs, they are able to figure out and open an array of doors and latches. Studies of raccoon intelligence show that they can recall the solution up to three years later.

Raccoons put on a layer of fat as winter approaches. Their undercoat insulates them well, but when food becomes scarce, raccoons sleep. They aren't true hibernators, but they'll bed down, often in family groups, during the worst of winter, sometimes losing half their body weight before the weather warms up again. In the wild, raccoons live for only a few years; Great Horned Owls, hunting, and cars take their toll, as do disease and parasites.

They make a variety of hisses, purrs, growls, chatters, and screams.

Raccoons do **not** make good pets – they are wild animals that can go from friendly to fierce in seconds.

BOARD TALK

Dear Friends,

As I'm writing this, we are in the season that my 4-year old says is "A little bit of winter and a little bit of spring". As you step outside you can just feel the battle between the sun that is getting higher in the sky and the cold air that dares you to step into the shade. Just as we are saying goodbye to winter and hello to Spring, the Friends are saying goodbye and hello to staff.

Jamie Sue Beaupré, who has taken on several roles for the organization, most recently Project Manager for the Bog Guardians Program, has decided to cut back on her work for the Friends and focus her efforts on her new landscaping business, Native Niche. We are grateful for all that she's done and we wish her the best of luck in the future. At the same time we are thrilled to welcome Tyler Betry as the new Project Manager – we are confident that he will carry the baton (or pruning shears) and help move the program forward with aplomb. We are also absolutely grateful for the work that Caitlin Reinartz has done as Administrative Assistant. Her skills and knowledge (especially having grown up in the Bog) are invaluable to this organization.

The Board of Directors right now is in the middle of working on a longer-term strategic plan that will allow us to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the organization while continuing to offer outstanding public programs. I hope to see you this spring in the Bog!

Tim Vargo, Board President

WISCONSIN BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

The Wisconsin's Breeding Bird Atlas II (WBBAIL) is an extensive five-year field survey that documents the distribution and abundance of bird breeding in the state. As we enter the fourth year of the WBBAIL, the Cedarburg Bog has produced a large variety of breeding bird species, thanks in large part to the dedication of atlas reports from John O'Donnell. On a paddle on Long Lake, he documented a pair of Black-and-white Warblers, a species of bird more commonly found breeding in Northern Wisconsin, carrying food to a nest site. In the Upland Woods area, an Acadian

Flycatcher was seen catching a moth and carrying it off to its nest. Acadian Flycatchers are noted as priority species for this Atlas due to their unique habitat requirements.



Indigo Bunting Photo by Freda van den Broek

The efforts of several WBBAIL volunteers have led to a total of 70 confirmed breeding bird species found in the Cedarburg Bog area. In addition, there are 36 other species that could possibly be confirmed in the remaining years of the Atlas. A total of 106 bird species just in the Cedarburg Bog area!

Just as they were in the first atlas, the public is invited to take part in the field work. There are two years remaining of this project, plenty of time to get involved in any fashion you can. For more information about the WBBAIL and how to get involved, see <http://wsobirds.org/atlas>.

Dani Baumann, Ozaukee County Coordinator

BOG GUARDIAN UPDATE

Hello, fellow Bog enthusiasts! My name is Tyler Betry and I am the new Bog Guardian Program Manager. I was brought aboard this February to replace the original Program Manager, Jamie Sue Beaupré, and I'm excited to be a part of the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog. On behalf of the Bog Guardians, I would like to thank Jamie for all that she has contributed to the program. Her efforts truly helped progress the program over the last year to the successful program that it is today. We wish her the best in her new endeavors!

Here's a little blurb about myself: I currently work full time for Washington County as a Planning and Parks Analyst, and in a previous role I was the Shoreland Protection Specialist for Marathon County. Both of these jobs have given me experience on how to

educate landowners on better land management practices including invasive species removal. I'm thrilled to be a part of the Bog Guardians, and I hope to use my skills to grow the program even further! I look forward to working with volunteers and private landowners so that we can protect a true gem, the Cedarburg Bog.

The Bog Guardian Program is currently gearing up for spring. A huge accomplishment for the program was that a list of all landowners within the 28 square mile target area surrounding the Bog has been compiled. We sent a letter to everyone on that list so that I can personally start conversations regarding invasives in our area. My hope is that some landowners will step forward in the fight against invasives and join the Bog Guardians.

Moving forward, I hope to continue recruiting local volunteers along with performing invasive species surveys along the roadsides within the target area. The next step is to personally contact local businesses and Friends of the Cedarburg Bog members that reside within the target area. Our intent is to continue to grow this volunteer-based program so that it will last forever.

Let's work together to grow this program, and ultimately stop the spread of invasive species from reaching the Bog and surrounding natural areas!



Tyler Betry, Bog Guardians Coordinator

To learn more about the Bog Guardian Program and possible volunteer opportunities please contact Tyler Betry, Program Manager, (414) 303-1670 or by email: bogguardian@bogfriends.org.

WELCOME ABOARD!

“Many hands make light work,” goes the old saying, and if that’s true, the Board’s load just got easier. Since the start of the year, three new members have begun their terms on the Board.

Terri Haas has been active in her local community, volunteering and serving on boards of foundations and organizations like the United Way, the Ozaukee County Jail Literacy Program, the American Cancer Society, and the Cedarburg Art Museum. After 30 years at Ozaukee Bank, she began her own small landscape maintenance business. She is an avid bow hunter who is looking forward to being part of preserving this incredible wetland.

Terry D. Rindt is a CPA who has worked with a law firm and for private clients. He was a Fox Point Village Trustee and Treasurer for Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative, and he presently serves on the Board of the North Shore Library. He enjoys reading, music (playing it as well as listening to it), traveling, hiking, and nature. Terry is looking forward to being a part of an excellent Board as we support the beautiful Cedarburg Bog and its outreach and education activities.

Julia Robson has worked for local government and environmental non-profit organizations. She recently accepted a position as Conservation Biologist for the Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use, where she’ll be developing and implementing natural areas restoration and research efforts and community engagement initiatives. A visit to the Bog in her college years inspired her curiosity as a young naturalist. Julia has presented two programs for the Friends about mammals of the area, and she’s looking forward to educating the public about the Bog.

Board terms are three years, and a board member may serve three consecutive terms. Welcome, Julia, Terri and Terry, and thanks for volunteering to share your many talents with the Friends!

TREASURES OF OZ ECO-TOUR

Join us on June 16 to celebrate Ozaukee County’s “Other Coast” – the Milwaukee River. Discover the fish passage, learn about raising monarch butterflies,

visit natural areas staffed with volunteers, and more.

Download a passport and get more information at <https://treasuresofoz.org/>. Get your passport stamped at each destination between the hours of 9 AM and 3 PM, and turn it in for raffle tickets at Forest Beach Migratory Preserve (FBMP). Forest Beach will feature displays, activities, music, and food, and will be open from 9 AM to 4:30 PM.

BRACKEN FERN

Bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is probably the most common fern on the globe, but botanists don’t agree about its classification. Some say that it’s a single species divided into as many as 12 varieties, and others separate it into seven or eight species.



A mature bracken fern

The nickname “umbrella fern” describes its appearance – a single stipe (stem) supports a frond consisting of three wide triangular blades that grow horizontally. In the woods at the north end of the Bog, most bracken fern plants are a foot or two tall, but in Oregon, bracken may be six feet tall, and in the Andes, fourteen feet. A dense clump of bracken forms a canopy over the ground, making shade and discouraging smaller plants.

Bracken is sometimes called the “weed” of the fern family. Because its main means of spreading is an underground stem called a rhizome, and because it is tolerant of dry, sandy, moist, and low-nutrient soils, and of sun, shade, and cold, it is poised to colonize after a fire or other disturbance. The perennial rhizomes are so persistent that some bracken colonies are thought to be more than 1,000 years old.

Humans have long made use of the plant for livestock bedding and food, for thatch, baskets, and as a source of potash, medicine, food and beer. Native

Americans ate the cooked rhizomes or pounded them into flour. The fiddleheads, which are said to taste like asparagus, are still eaten today. According to Ferns and Allies of the North Woods, “In the 17th century, they burned it to bring rain to dry farm fields. In myth, smoke from the burning fronds also drove away snakes, gnats, and other ‘noisome creatures.’”

Consume with caution! Bracken contains ptaquiloside, a carcinogen, but its concentrations are greatly reduced by soaking and cooking. It also contains thiaminase, which destroys Vitamin B1 in livestock that eat a lot of it, and it contains substances that cause insects that eat it to molt uncontrollably. Young leaves that are grazed defend themselves by making hydrogen cyanide, and older leaves produce bitter tannins. Plants that chemically discourage competing plants are called allelopathic, and bracken may have that property -- the substances that discourage grazing may affect other vegetation.

About 4,000 plant species worldwide, including bracken, have small, non-flower structures called extrafloral nectaries that make nectar and attract ants and ladybugs in spring. These predatory insects aren’t there to pollinate the plant, but they might be protecting it by feeding on plant-grazing insects.

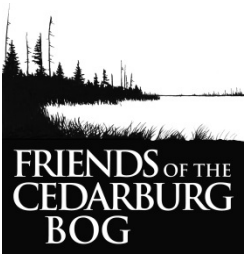


Ants search a fiddlehead for nectar

The Friends will be scheduling a Fern Walk in September; check the website and our mailings for date and time.

Friends of the Cedarburg Bog

Supporting stewardship and appreciation of the Cedarburg Bog through land management, preservation, research and education.



UWM Field Station
3095 Blue Goose Road
Saukville, WI 53080

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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FRIENDS EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, walks meet at the UWM Field Station on Blue Goose Rd. Space is limited, so please register. To register, visit bogfriends.org (click on Events). Walks are free and open to the public; a \$5 donation is appreciated. Questions? Contact (262) 675-6844 or fieldstn@uwm.edu. Please, No Pets.

Spring Migration at Mud Lake April 7, 7 to 9 AM (rain date April 8)

Search for migratory waterfowl and other wetland birds from canoes and kayaks.

Group limit 12 adults – you must be able to swim and have canoe/kayak experience. We provide canoes, paddles, and flotation devices, or bring your own BUT let us know in advance.

Mud Lake parking lot at Cedar Sauk and Horn's Corners Rds. No restrooms.

Fee: suggested donation \$25 per person.

Quarterly Board Meeting April 19, 6 to 8 PM

Members welcome.

Glacial Geology of the Cedarburg Bog Area April 22, 10 AM to noon

Why is the Cedarburg Bog? Join Bill Kean and explore the glacial landforms that contain and surround the Cedarburg Bog.

Woodcocks & Frogs April 26, 7:30 – 9:30 PM

The annual spring chorus of frogs and the sky dance of woodcocks are unforgettable experiences. Bring a flashlight; boots not needed.

Frogs (and maybe Woodcocks) May 3, 7:30 to 9:30 PM

Most Woodcocks are settled on nests, but we'll listen for the last of the sky-dancers and the late spring species of frogs. Bring a flashlight; boots not needed.

Spring in the Bog May 5, 9:00 AM to noon

Witness the exuberance of spring birds, flowers, fern, frogs and more in this wonderful wetland.

Mother's Day Spring Migrant Bird Walk May 13, 7 - 9 AM

Will migration be early or late? Join Peter Dunn and hike the trails to look for the new spring arrivals. Bring binoculars if you have them.

Ethnobotany in the Bog May 26, 9:00 to noon

The Bog and its uplands provided food, medicine and more for the first human inhabitants. Join Lee Olsen to see what plants they used.

Memorial Day Bird Walk May 28, 6:30 to 9 AM

With migration winding down, look and listen for late migrants and summer residents. Bring binoculars if you have them; special footwear not needed.

Birding the North End of the Bog June 2, 6:30 to 8:30 AM

Some species are still passing through, and others are settling in for the summer. Join John O'Donnell to look for some Bog specialties. Bring binoculars if you have them; special footwear not needed.

Birding by Canoe or Kayak June 9, 7-9 AM (rain date June 10)

Search for nesting bitterns, cranes, rails, herons, waterfowl, Alder and Willow Flycatchers, and other wetland species.

Group limit 12 adults – you must be able to swim and have canoe/kayak experience. We provide canoes, paddles, and flotation devices, or bring your own BUT let us know in advance.

Mud Lake parking lot at Cedar Sauk and Horn's Corners Rds. No restrooms.

What's Up in the Bog

June 17, 9 AM to Noon

As spring turns to summer, we'll enjoy the calls of Sandhill Cranes as we see what's in bloom along the boardwalk

Summer in the Bog

July 1, 9 AM to Noon

We'll look for the birds, flowers and bugs of early summer.

THANKS FOR BEING A FRIEND!

Thanks for your response to our fall membership drive. Our existence depends on our members' support, enabling our learning from--and preservation of--this Wetland Gem.... the Cedarburg Bog.

Our plans for the coming year are to continue the fight against invasive species in and around the Bog, and to continue educating people about the wonder and importance of the Bog, while becoming a more efficient organization.

If you haven't renewed yet, it's never too late. If you have, tell all your friends about us. We hope to see you at one of our events.