

THE BOGHAUNTER

the newsletter of the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog

Volume 18, Number 2 Spring 2023



Skunk Cabbage- photo by Michael Lynch



Skunk Cabbage- photo by Katy Chayka



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

APRIL 2023 - SPRING ARRIVES (LAST AND FIRST?) IN THE BOG

It seems odd that the earliest blooming plant in our area, skunk cabbage, grows in the place and the habitat that warms up last in the spring. Take a walk into the Bog on a warm, sunny, early spring day and you will be surprised by the cold wall that hits you as you descend to the level of the wetland.

Water has a very high heat capacity, a physical property of matter, defined as the amount of heat energy required to produce a change in temperature. The frozen, saturated, organic soils of the wetland have an exceptionally high heat capacity, which means a great deal of time and energy is needed to thaw them, as compared to well-drained mineral soils of uplands.

In addition to the high heat capacity of its saturated peat and muck, the Bog is a low spot where the coldest and densest air of the night settles out and adds to the wetland's chill. Cold air flows downhill at night just like water does (a.k.a. cold air drainage).

So, it seems ironic that this place where the temperature tells us that spring arrives last is where skunk cabbage (and marsh marigolds

for that matter) proclaim vividly that spring has arrived first. Skunk cabbage are by far the first flowers to emerge, usually during February and as early as January. By the time this newsletter is published, skunk cabbage's flowers are still visible, but long past their peak of reproductive receptiveness.

Skunk cabbage is a member of the Araceae family and related to the Jack-in-the-pulpit. The skunk cabbage's small petal-less flowers grow densely from a thick thumb-like spadix that is enveloped and protected by a fleshy, brownish to maroon-mottled hood-like sheath called a spathe. The spathe emits an offensive foul-smelling odor, somewhat like the essence sprayed by a disturbed skunk; this odor is especially strong if the spathe is bruised or damaged. The foul-smelling aroma of the flowers attracts insect pollinators, primarily flesh flies and carrion beetles that are active on warm days in the very early spring, looking to lay their eggs on the carcass of an animal who died over the winter.

Skunk cabbage's exuberant, fleshy, reproductive passion play takes place long before the Bog thaws. In fact, skunk cabbage (a.k.a. swamp cabbage, clump-foot cabbage, meadow cabbage, or, my favorite, polecat weed) is famous for its flower spathes melting their way through snow and ice in late winter to bloom. Polecat weed is one of the very few

plants capable of thermogenesis (of creating heat). Burning carbohydrates that were stored as starch solely for the purpose of generating heat, polecat weed can generate temperatures within its hood-like spathe that are 20°C (36°F) higher than their surroundings for weeks at a time. No other plant knows how to do that.

The warm temperatures help to intensify the odor that attracts fly and carrion beetle pollinators and also attracts bees and other insects that are just looking for a respite from a bitter cold spring night.

Skunk cabbage's very large bright green leaves are produced in mid-spring after the plants have already finished flowering. The giant leaves, reaching up to three feet and resembling rhubarb for their size, die back and begin to rot before mid-summer, long before their fruits are ripe in late summer.

After the flowers are pollinated, and the fleshy leaves have disappeared into black mush, the flower head swells into a chubby, bumpy, 2-inch diameter fruit head on a very elongated stalk lying on the soil surface. The fruits start out green to dark purple and change to dark brown and black before they shatter into hard, pea-sized seeds that fall into the mud to germinate or be dispersed by animals or water.

Now is a great time to visit our Bog where spring arrives first (and last) to see all of this

drama playing out. Come join one of FOCB's events in the Bog; or come and explore on your own or with your family.

-Jim Reinartz



Skunk Cabbage - photo by Katy Chayka

NEST BOXES FOR DUCKS AND OWLS IN THE CEDARBURG BOG

Beginning in 2011 and continuing to the present, 23 nest boxes for cavity-nesting ducks (e.g., Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers) have been installed with predator guards in and around the Cedarburg Bog, along with four boxes for small owl nesting or roosting, and two large nest boxes for Barred Owls. Duck and owl nest boxes are now installed around all of the perimeter of the Bog. As an adjunct to this effort, the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog have also facilitated the installation of nine additional duck boxes on private properties in or near the Bog.

2022 was a good year for use of duck nest boxes in the Bog area. Cavity nesting ducks used 14 of our 18 duck boxes -- a 78% usage rate (5 of the original 23 have been removed). Ten of the used boxes produced fledged ducklings -- a relatively high 56% fledgling success rate. Eight boxes fledged Wood Ducks; one box fledged only Hooded Mergansers; and one box fledged both Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser ducklings -- a fairly common occurrence when a Wood Duck or Hooded Merganser hen "dumps" some of her eggs into another hen's nest when she is out of the box feeding herself.

Thus far, there has never been evidence of Barred Owls using either of the two large owl boxes even though these owls are sometimes seen in close proximity to the boxes. There is also

no evidence that any of the small owl boxes have been used for nesting; however, several Eastern Screech Owls were again documented as roosting inside two of the duck boxes and one of the small owl boxes.

One small owl box also contained a recently used Great-crested Flycatcher nest.

What does the future hold for the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog duck and owl nest box program? Eleven of the 23 boxes in the Cedarburg Bog were installed on black ash trees, a common tree in the Bog. All of these ash trees have been

killed by the Emerald Ash Borer. Five of these boxes have already been decommissioned due to toppled or soon to topple dead trees. In the next few years, it is imperative that nest boxes be removed from dead ash trees and repositioned on iron pipes away from dead ash woodlands. This is an undertaking of some urgency which will require a volunteer work crew.

Might you have a half day or two of time to donate to a worthy cause??? Note that



Wood Duck box installation at Watts Lake - photo by Kate Redmond

carpentry skills are appreciated but not essential. Note also that volunteers are not allowed to climb tall ladders. Should you volunteer, not only will you have the personal satisfaction of making a major contribution to an important conservation project, you will also have the opportunity to experience parts of the Bbog seldom visited by humankind (and maybe see some wildlife too!!!)

-John O'Donnell

Interested? Questions? Excited? Please contact John O'Donnell at: johnodonnell132@gmail.com



Barred Owl

GRETCHEN MEYER HAS RETIRED FROM THE UWM FIELD STATION

Dr. Gretchen Meyer, former Director of the UWM Field Station, retired in February of this year. Gretchen began working at the Field Station in 1999 and has been involved in supporting the Friend's mission and activities since the inception of our organization. She ran the Field Station's Natural History Workshops program and taught a UWM class at the Field Station titled Field Methods in Conservation.

UWM has not yet hired a replacement for Dr. Meyer. Paul Engenvold, Manager of the Greenhouses at UWM, is currently serving as Interim Field Station

*The Cedarburg Bog is a Wetland Gem
and an Important Bird Area*

Manager. UWM hopes to have a new Field Station Manager in place by January of 2024.

GRANT AWARDED FOR LISTENING TO THE BOG

In the Spring 2022 issue of the BogHaunter, Gary Casper described the first season, 2021, of "bioacoustic monitoring" in the heart of the Cedarburg Bog. That is, recorders set up to document sounds of the Bog over a long period. This method of listening to our vocal wildlife tells us what frogs and, most notably, birds are breeding within the "ear-shot" of the recorders. This sound record of breeding is more extensive, covering a longer period, than any human ear could afford the time to listen. The digital recordings themselves are a permanent archive of the birds breeding at that location in the year.

The Cedarburg Bog is an Important Bird Area (IBA) supporting regionally rare birds associated with wetland habitats. Many birds reach either the southern or northern limit of their breeding range limits here. The Friends began this project to survey and monitor breeding in remote and hard to access portions of the Bog in 2021; that effort was repeated in 2022 (recordings not yet analyzed). Continuation of this monitoring will provide measures of avian species richness, duration of species on their breeding grounds, and relative abundance of breeders.

Future recordings will be used to track long-term trends in populations. These data will be compared to records available from the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas project which documented population trends with two studies of the Bog separated by a 20-year period. The Bog's breeding bird populations will undoubtedly change over time with changes in the Bog's plant communities and in regional bird abundance. Knowing how they change may help us manage their habitat.

The C.D. Besadny Conservation Fund of the Natural Resource Foundation (NRF) recently awarded the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog a grant to continue this project in the 2023 season. Dr. Gary Casper and John O'Donnell will continue to advise us on design of this project and analysis of the recordings, and Cory Gritzmacher, our Stewardship Chair, has been managing the field work. FOCB is grateful to all contributors to this enterprise.

-Michelle Inhofer

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

Seasons of the Bog - Spring

Submitted by Chuck Stebelton, Written by Mary Linton

Of Wading in Wetlands

published in Hummingbird Magazine of the Short Poem, 2022

*I wade knee deep in spring's watery soup:
loop of duckweed root, loose muck, turtles
sunning on uncertain terrain of muskrat path,
canary grass, mounds of tussock sedge.
Boot toe catches an edge of surprise –
the sudden whinny of wading birds
or hydroplaning ducks. It is work to stay
upright, distracted as I am. I grab one stem
of dogwood by one hand, just a finger
and thumb – one slender wand
sleeved with tender tongues of leaves.
There is no salvation here, no staunch staff
to take my weight; simply a red-barked
branch as centering point that's worked so far.*

Calling

*I hear it everywhere, the soft
vibrato. When biking, driving
with windows down, lying in bed
and listening to the couple next
door murmuring about their
day. It starts as a low trill.
Another voice, another pitch joins until
an oscillating chorus sweeps by.
The song of toads comes
tumbling as across a dark lake.
Toads. Bufo americanus. Not
exactly the familiar I was looking for.
Sure. It could be the hum of tires, or
wind blowing across my ear. It could
be the background noise of my aging
neurons, synapses slightly out of alignment.*

*Last night, the toads came while I waited
for the washer to stop, trilling barely audible
above the final spin. I turned my head
to locate the noise and the trilling stopped.
As if I had shown disbelief. Why not let
the laundry go? Hunker waist deep
among the bulrush shoots, see what happens?*

Coffee Break

*She leans into the smooth
bark of a red maple,
steam rising from her cup
while boots suck at her
legs from the water
to her calves.
She breathes sleepily;
she is home, after all.*

*The woodland pond stretches
out before her; one week reborn,
Spring new.*

*Oak leaves carpeting its floor
are juicy again after the long
dry winter that tries
to continue but grudgingly
gives way to red maple
blossoms floating
on new water.*

*The water is clear though steeped
with tannin. Late afternoon sun
slants into the amber.*

*A pair of wood ducks
emerge, fly from their cavity
in a pond-side hickory.
She watches, sips, is here,
where past and future are
the sure cycle of life; generations*

*of salamanders and fairy shrimp;
maple replacing hickory replacing oak.*

*The cycle spins without her help.
She is just here with her coffee,
awake and turning,
turning.*

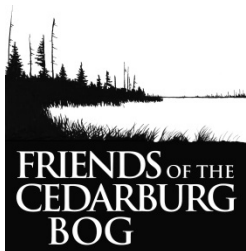


THE FRIENDS OF THE
CEDARBURG BOG PRESENT

Seasons of Change
by Jeff Kunkel

JOIN US FOR AN EXHIBITION
APRIL - JUNE 2023
CEDARBURG CULTURAL CENTER





C/O UWM Field Station
3095 Blue Goose Road
Saukville, WI 53080

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Volume 18, Number 2 SPRING 2023

CEDARBURG BOG FRIENDS EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, walks meet at the UWM Field Station on Blue Goose Rd.

Please register at: www.bogfriends.org (click on Programs & Events).

Walks are free and open to the public; a \$5 donation is appreciated.

Questions? Contact (414) 897-1739 or bogfriends@gmail.com Please, No Pets.

Quarterly Board Meeting

Thursday, April 6, 6:00PM

All members are welcome to join the FOCB board meeting. The April meeting is being held in person and over Zoom. If interested in the agenda and to receive access to the meeting, please contact admin@bogfriends.org.

Frogs and Woodcocks

Thursday, April 13, 7:30PM – 9:30PM

The annual spring chorus of frogs and the sky dance of woodcocks are unforgettable experiences. Join Jim Reinartz for this first of the spring events for FOCB. Bring a flashlight; boots not needed.

Birding by Canoe

Sunday, May 14, 9:30AM – 11:30AM

Mud Lake in the Cedarburg Bog is the largest and least visited lake in Ozaukee County. It is one of the top ten birding areas in the county. During this outing, we will explore Mud Lake and its surroundings in search of a true wilderness experience only 20 miles north of Milwaukee. We will be looking for late migrants and avian residents uncommon to rare in southeastern Wisconsin, e.g., two bittern species, Alder and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, rails, and waterbirds of every ilk. We will do about 1.5 miles of paddling.

Canoes will be provided at a \$10 rental fee payable at the time of the outing. A limited number of personal kayaks and canoes will be allowed, but only by advance permission.

NOTE: There is another OWBC outing from 6:30AM – 8:30AM. You can sign up for one but not both of these outings! Capacity limit of 14 persons per outing, Registration is required. Questions? Contact John O'Donnell at johnodonnell132@gmail.com

Birding the Cedarburg Bog

Saturday, May 27, 6:30AM - 9AM

The Cedarburg Bog Important Bird Area (IBA) is a mosaic of habitats such as cedar swamp, conifer bog, southern hardwood forest, string bog, pine plantation, sedge meadow, restored native grassland, willow-alder-dogwood swamp, and six relict lakes surrounded by emergent vegetation. Three State Natural Areas (SNA) lie within the IBA. The Cedarburg Bog SNA is the largest relict glacial bog in southeastern Wisconsin. As such, it has boreal features and species of birds not typically breeding anywhere else in southern Wisconsin. On this outing, we will sample a number of the different habitats within the Important Bird Area in search of resident species as well as migratory birds on their way north. Capacity: 12 participants, Registration required.



Spring Peeper - photo by Kate Redmond

Ways to Stay Connected with FOCB

 Like us on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/TheFriendsoftheCedarburgBog/>

 Follow us on Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/friends_cedarburgbog/

 Join our Email List
<https://bogfriends.org/mailling-list/>

MNP – Mequon Nature Preserve
Pieper Power Education Center
8200 W County Line Rd, Mequon
mequonnaturepreserve.org

RNC – Riveredge Nature Center
4458 County Hwy Y, Saukville
riveredenaturecenter.org

Ozaukee-Washington Birding Coalition

The Ozaukee-Washington Birding Coalition (OWBC) has scheduled events coming up. The coalition consists of the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog, the Lac Lawrann Conservancy, Mequon Nature Preserve, and Riveredge Nature Center. Each organization will offer events and handle registration for the event. Visit www.bogfriends.org for full event details.

The Adaptation to and Proliferation of Raptors in Urban Environments in Milwaukee and Elsewhere:

What's Happening??? by Dr. Bill Stout

Wednesday, April 5 at 7PM.

Riveredge Nature Center and Zoom

Pike Lake State Park Birding Field Trip with Carl Schwartz

Thursday, April 6, 7AM - Noon

Woodcock Wander through the Mequon Nature Preserve with Dan Panetti.

Wednesday, April 19, 6:30PM

Lions Den County Park Birding Field Trip with Carl Schwartz

Friday, May 5, 7:00AM - Noon

Noel J. Cutright Bird Club (Riveredge) Birdathon!

Saturday, May 13, 4AM (owling) or 6:30AM (birds)

Birding in the Cedarburg Bog by Canoe or Kayak

Sunday, May 14, 6:30AM - 8:30AM

Birding the Northern Kettle Moraine Forest with Jeff Baughman

Friday, June 2, 6AM - 1PM