

CAPITAL SPRINGS NEWSLETTER



The Capital Springs Newsletter is published by the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc. For membership information, please contact Linda Mittnacht at 608-224-3604 or by e-mail at Mittnacht@co.dane.wi.us.

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Mittnacht@co.dane.wi.us

Spring 2009 - Come And Enjoy Capital Springs!!

Welcome to another exciting year at Capital Springs Recreation Area that will be full of opportunities to enjoy a wide variety of fun, educational and volunteer activities! The **Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area (Friends)** invite you and your families and friends to come to Capital Springs and explore and enjoy the hiking, biking, boating, camping and bird-watching opportunities, as well as the chance to sit and quietly reflect on the park's natural beauty - almost all of which is available within view of the Capitol Dome. The **Friends** continue to work along with State and County officials to conserve and promote the natural beauty of Capital Springs, as well as to provide a multitude of recreational activities and assist in the continued development of park infrastructure - but we need your help! As described on **pages 3 and 5**, there are a number of upcoming opportunities for individuals and groups to volunteer to help with projects aimed at improving the park experience. A particularly exciting upcoming event is the **National Trails Day** celebration the **Friends** are hosting on **Saturday, June 6th - make sure to read more about this great event on page 5**. We encourage you, your families, and your friends to come out and pitch in and help us make Capital Springs a place that can be enjoyed by all!

The **Friends** also want to provide an early reminder that the fifth annual **Harvest Moon Festival** will be **Friday, October 2nd** at the Lussier Family Heritage Center located at Capital Springs. As described in this issue, the **Harvest Moon Festival** continues to grow in popularity and has become an important event for raising funds to support park infrastructure projects sponsored by the **Friends**.

The **Friends** continue to look for ways to improve the park experience and we encourage you to come out, get involved, and have some fun! Make sure to read the excellent articles in this issue detailing the current park news, upcoming events and always informative Nature Notes regarding the opportunities available right in the middle of the Madison Metropolitan area for observing the magic of Spring. We look forward to seeing you soon!

— Board of the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc.



Springtime photos on this page include the Jenni & Kyle Preserve (upper left), and the observation platform overlooking Nine Springs Creek (lower right) at Capital Springs Recreation Area.

A Letter from the Friends

Harvest Moon Festival 2008 and Much More to Come

By Matt Carlson, President of the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc. Please feel free to contact Matt at mccarlson@michaelbest.com with any questions regarding the Friends.

While Spring is in the air and last Fall's **Harvest Moon Festival** seems like a long time ago, the **Friends** want to again thank all of the attendees and generous sponsors of the 2008 event. **With your help, we made the 2008 festival the best to date. Attendance topped 750 people**, including a certain famous bear (pictured to left), and we were able to increase the number of outdoor and indoor educational stations that truly make this a unique event.

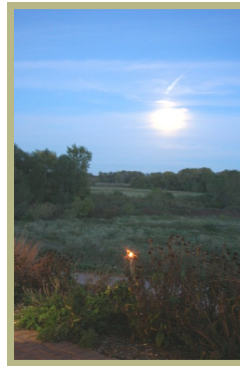


A Special Thanks to Our Sponsors

We would like to send out a sincere thank-you to all those individuals and groups who supported our annual park fundraiser. Your generosity is indispensable to us.

- ◆ A to Z Rentals
- ◆ Bill Lunney & Judie Pfeifer
- ◆ Copps
- ◆ Carla & Mike DiIoio
- ◆ Friends Group Members
- ◆ JoAnn Swenson
- ◆ Liz & Nancy Howard
- ◆ Matt & Clare Carlson
- ◆ Michael Best & Friedrich LLP
- ◆ Percy Mather
- ◆ Whole Foods

While the primary purpose of the event is to provide a fun and educational night for park visitors of all ages, the **Harvest Moon Festival** has become a very important fundraising event for the **Friends**. Proceeds of past festivals have been used by the **Friends** to provide funds for capital improvement projects at Capital Springs - including the design and installation of updated interpretive trail signs and the purchase of video



equipment for the Lussier Family Heritage Center that allows educational and informative programming to be readily available to park visitors. A portion of the proceeds from the 2008 event will be used to design and install native plant gardens surrounding the Lussier Family Heritage Center, with the balance being preserved for several exciting capital improvement projects and partnerships that we look forward to announcing in the near future.

In addition to the goal of the **Friends** to provide financial assistance to the State and County for capital improvements to the park, we also plan to continue to work to initiate periodic conservation-themed educational programming at the park. We believe that the more opportunities we all have to learn about the natural world, the more we will value and work to protect the resources that exist around us. We look forward to announcing several naturalist programs for this summer in the near future - stay tuned for more details!

All of the above would not be possible without the generous support that we have received from the sponsors and attendees of our **Harvest Moon Festivals**. **We hope that you and your families and friends will be able to join us this this Fall on Friday, October 2nd for our Fifth annual Harvest Moon Festival.** Mark the date on your calendars now, as though it seems far away, we all know how quickly the beautiful Spring and Summer seasons in Wisconsin melt away. In the meantime, please come out and enjoy the park - and if you have some time, and are looking for a way to make an impact close to home, pitch-in at one of the many upcoming volunteer events that are described later in this newsletter.

As a final bit of business, **we want to welcome Bruce Lindsay of Johnson Controls to the Board of the Friends group.**



The above are scenes from the Harvest Moon Festival. Smokey the Bear was a special guest at last year's event!

Bruce's enthusiasm, as well as his ability to look good in a certain bear suit, make him a wonderful addition to the Board. Thanks again to Bruce and all of our Board members and volunteers for their continued efforts on behalf of the **Friends** and Capital Springs!

Kevin's Corner: Capital Springs News

By Kevin Swenson, Park Manager

Spring Is In The Air!

Signs of spring are abundant around Capital Springs State Recreation Area! Several residents of the park are waking up from their deep winter slumber and others are migrating back, including Sandhill Cranes, Canadian Geese, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Robins and Wood Ducks. We also welcome back park visitors as the weather begins to warm. The Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District boardwalk and lagoons are already seeing a large number of bird watchers as birds return to the area.



The **campground is set to open on April 14th**, just in time for the "Mid-west Horse Show". The new online Dane County Campground Reservation System debuted last year and works nicely. In case you didn't know, **you can also reserve shelters all over the county with the site**, including sites at Capital Springs. Need a dog or trail pass too? It can all be done online! Take a peek at www.reservedane.com.

Trail Construction Progress

The Baxter Park spur trail off of the Capital City State Trail is progressing nicely. Located off of Clayton Drive connecting to Baxter Park in Madison, the trail consists of limestone screening and boardwalks. **Once completed, the Baxter Park spur trail will open a number of recreational opportunities—including linked bike trails—to connected neighborhoods.** Staff recently installed a elevated boardwalk on the east side of the Nine Springs Creek this winter. Now, preparations are in the works to make the final connection to Baxter Park when the ground dries.



If you bike the Capital City State Trail, keep an eye out for workers on the trail this spring. Staff will be working on removing invasive species and a contractor will be crack sealing as well. This will involve having some vehicles and equipment along the trail. Please slow down and use caution so we can keep the trail as safe as possible during this time. Thank you!

The bridge that will take the Capital City State Trail over Fish Hatchery Road is also moving forward. Its completion date has been pushed back from the fall of 2008 to this summer or late fall.

Trail Pass Information

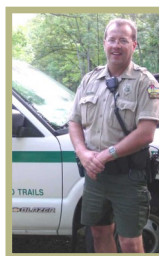
Need a trail pass for the state trails? **At the National Trails Day Event on June 6th, you can purchase a trail pass from the Friends - and a portion of the proceeds will go to support the Friends!** If you cannot make Trails Day, please take advantage of the state trails self-registration station along the Capital City State Trail or stop in at the Lussier Family Heritage Center during normal working hours.

Volunteering At Capital Springs

We have quite a number of volunteer activities scheduled this spring at the park. As a way to involve more people in our community with the park, we welcome school and church groups who will assist in plantings, wood chipping, and prairie seeding. Below is a list of scheduled activities. Please browse through the detailed Events List on page 5 of this newsletter for specific volunteer information open to everyone. **There are many ways to help and we are so happy to have you join us!**



- April 9 – Prescribed burn at the E-Way
- April 21 – The Shabazz School will be planting Oak Trees in a prairie restoration area.
- April 23 – Prescribed burn at Lake Farm
- May 3 – The Blackhawk Church will be working on the Indian Springs wood chipping.
- May 27 – Shabazz School will be working at Lake Farm on invasive species removal.
- June 6 – National Trails Days. We will have a rest stop on the Capital City State Trail and a work day removing brush along the side of the trail with Fonatana Sports.



Please contact me, Kevin Swenson, at (608) 224-3606 or Rhea Stangel-Meier at (608) 224-3601 (stangel-maier@co.dane.wi.us) if you would like to participate in any of the volunteer activities. All activities will have a lead volunteer, tools provided, and instruction.

I welcome your input and comments. If you have a suggestion or question, please feel free to contact me at (608) 224-3606 or Kevin.Swenson@Wisconsin.gov.

Nature Notes

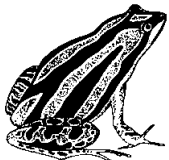
Leap into Spring with Wisconsin's Frogs!

By Anna Thomas Bates, Friends Group Member

After a cold and quiet winter, **nothing is a more welcome harbinger of spring than the merry call of frogs and toads.** Wisconsin is home to many different kinds and sizes, from the tiny spring peeper to the big bullfrog.

Frogs and toads are members of the zoological class amphibians. They may remind you a bit of their reptile cousins (snakes and turtles), but amphibians don't have scales, and they are typically born in the water. They have smooth, moist skin that absorbs moisture and oxygen.

Frogs and toads have distinct calls, and are most vocal during their breeding seasons (early spring through summer). **Take a walk around the Capital Spring Recreation Area, and you will hear some of Dane County's most famous amphibians.**



Chorus Frog

Chorus Frogs are one of the earliest frogs you will hear in the area. They are tiny (3/4"-1.5"), grayish green frogs that call with a long 'creeaakkk'. It sounds a bit like when you run your finger along a comb.

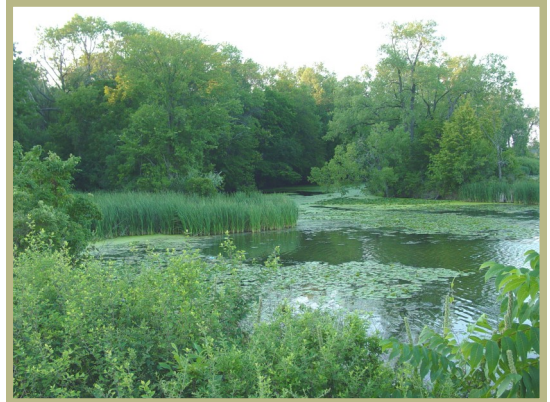


American Toad

The **American Toad** is another amphibian you can hear at the park. Toads have tougher, drier skin that allows them to venture further from water than their frog cousins. Many people hear the toad's song, and have no idea that the musical creature they are listening to is a small bumpy amphibian! The toad has a variable trill or whistle, which can last up to 30 seconds.

Amphibians frequent wetlands and are very sensitive to chemicals, so their habitat is dwindling due to development and environmental pollution. **That's why places like the Capital Spring Recreation Area are so important** – they provide safe homes for our amphibian friends.

You can help out by learning more about frogs and toads. The best way is to explore the park and listen and look for these little creatures.



Upper Mud Lake at Capital Springs Recreation Area provides important habitat for Wisconsin frogs and toads.

Want to Learn More About Frogs?

Here are some resources to help you on your amphibian adventure:

- ◆ The WI DNR has a great publication called "Amphibians of Wisconsin". It has photographs, range maps, and descriptions of each species in the state. To order, visit the DNR's website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/publications/herpbook.htm> or call a DNR service center.
- ◆ The DNR's Environmental Education for Kids web site introduces you to each of Wisconsin's frogs and toads, and you can even listen to their calls! Go to <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/ee/critter/amphibian/index.htm>.
- ◆ You can help scientists learn more about frogs and help save frog habitat by participating in Frogwatch USA. Find out more online at: <http://www.nwf.org/frogwatchUSA/>.

I welcome your input and comments. If you have a suggestion or question, please feel free to contact me at (608) 224-3606. I'll see you out in the park.

Upcoming Events:

Activities for the Entire Family this Spring and Summer

We have numerous activities and volunteer opportunities scheduled this spring at Capital Springs Recreation Area. Take a look at the list below for events that may interest you. *We thank you for volunteering your time!*



- ♦ **Prescribed Burn at Lake Farm Park, Thursday, April 23, at 10 a.m.:** Dane County will be performing prescribed burns at Lake Farm Park (4330 Libby Road). Adult volunteers are needed. Equipment and training will be provided. Please bring drinking water, a hat, and wear appropriate clothing (no nylon). Contact Rhea Stangel-Maier at 608-224-3601 or stangel-maier@co.dane.wi.us to sign up and for meeting locations. Remember these prescribed prairie burns need the weather to cooperate! Winds and moisture play a factor so please call 245-6898 (on April 23rd) before you venture out for an updated message on whether the burn will be held. **Please also contact Rhea if you would be interested in additional prairie planting and seed collections events to be hosted at the park later this year!**
- ♦ **Take a Stake in the Lake Days, June 7 - June 21st:** Volunteers adopt a shoreline, beach, river, or park by picking up litter and raking aquatic debris. Groups and individuals are welcome! For more details, including sponsorship opportunities, please Rhea Stangel-Maier at 608-224-3601 or stangel-maier@co.dane.wi.us.
- ♦ **Naturalist Program Events:** The Friends will be hosting several naturalist programs at the park this summer and fall. Stay tuned for more information and please email Rhea Stangel-Maier at 608-224-3601 or stangel-maier@co.dane.wi.us if you would like more information.
- ♦ **National Trails Day 2009, Saturday, June 6, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.:** Take a bike ride or hike a trail around the Capital Springs area and be sure to make a stop at the Lussier Family Heritage Center (3101 Lake Farm Road). The Friends will be hosting a wayside water tent and interpretive trail signs will be posted throughout the park. **A portion of trail pass sales will go to the Friends to support the park!** Fontana Sport Specialties will also be sponsoring a work day event in the park that day. Free giveaways available!
 - **Want to volunteer your time? We need help in the water tent and with trail clean-up.** Please contact Rhea Stangel-Maier at 608-224-3601 or stangel-maier@co.dane.wi.us.
 - For a map of bike trails around the Capital Springs area, go online to the following website: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/specif/capcity/>.
 - **Need a bike? Check out our Dansani Blue Bikes program at the park!** With a \$5 donation, use a bike for 24 hours. To sign up and for more information, go to <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/specific/capsprings/bikes.html> or contact Kevin Swenson at 608-224-3606 or by email at Kevin.Swenson@Wisconsin.gov.



Volunteers cleared brush at Capital Springs on National Trails Day 2008, and other volunteers planted trees. If you are interested in participating this year, please contact Rhea Stangel-Maier at 608-224-3601 or stangel-maier@co.dane.wi.us for more information.

CAPITAL SPRINGS STATE RECREATION AREA INFORMATION

3101 Lake Farm Road
Madison, WI 53711

The Capital Springs Recreation Area just south of Madison encompasses about **3,000 acres** stretching from Fish Hatchery Road east to Lake Waubesa, including most of the Nine Springs E-way. There are many different areas of the park to explore, including the Lake Farm Park, the Jenni & Kyle Preserve, and Capital City State Trail which meanders through the park, connecting to other area bike trails and downtown Madison. Stop by the Lussier Family Heritage Center for additional information and a map.



Capital Springs protects more than three-quarters of a mile of undeveloped Lake Waubesa shoreline.

Hiking and skiing trails, picnic shelters, a boat launch, free bikes, and the Lake Farm Campground are just some of the activities and amenities available. For camping or picnic shelter reservations, contact Dane County Parks at (608) 246-3896, or reserve campsites online at www.reservedane.com. For more information, contact our park manager, Kevin Swenson, at (608) 224-3606 or by e-mail at Kevin.Swenson@Wisconsin.gov.

Your support is vital to the continued growth and success of Capital Springs Recreation Area. Please consider volunteering your time, joining the **Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area**, or sending a donation. All funds received go directly to park improvements and **Friends** initiatives. Thank you for your support and we hope to see you soon at the park!

Park Directions: From Madison or Interstate I-90, take the West Beltline (US Highway 12/18) to the South Towne Drive Exit (exit 264) and go south. Continue for almost one mile and then turn left on Moorland Road, which turns into Lake Farm Road after the road curves. The park is located about 1/4 mile past the curve at 3101 Lake Farm Road. You'll see the Lussier Family Heritage Center and campground on your left.

*The Capital Springs Newsletter is published by volunteers of the **Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc.** as a benefit to its members.*

Friends Board of Directors: Matt Carlson, President; Anna Thomas Bates, Vice-President; Judie Pfeifer, Treasurer; Bill Lunney, Secretary; Bruce Lindsay.

Dane County Liaison: Linda Mittnacht

Park Manager and DNR Liaison: Kevin Swenson

Dane County Volunteer Coordinator: Rhea Stangel-Maier

Newsletter Editor/Designer: Clare L. Carlson



Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc.
3101 Lake Farm Road
Madison, WI 53711