



A Citizens' watershed  
conservation organization

# Reading the River



Volume 12, Issue 2~ Spring 2015

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## Springtime hike along the trail



In May, a group of FBR members and guests took part in a FBR sponsored event. To learn more, see page 4. Photo by Pat McKnight

## Greetings from the President

Summer is here. The recent rains have kept the water levels in the river and the creeks at great levels for paddling. Hope you have been able to get out and enjoy some outdoor activities.

We are working on a complete revamping of the website and it should be more user friendly. Fortunately for us, we

have a new member who has stepped up to help assist the board with this project. We thank Shaun Lescher for his assistance in getting the job done.

Next month we are planning another prairie hike at one of the restored prairies in the county. These hikes are very interesting

*Greetings, continued on page 2*

## Vision

The Friends of the Black River is a citizen-led organization that is a well-informed, respected, active contributor to projects and decision-making enhancing the river and its watershed.

## Mission

The Friends of the Black River will foster community appreciation, understanding, and sustainable use of the river and its watershed by hosting educational and enjoyable programs, events and conservation projects and by promoting wise decision-making when issues affect the health of the Black River Basin.

## Upcoming events for 2015

The following are the dates and programs of upcoming meetings and events:

**July 4** — Paddle in the Park, Lunda Community Park kids' fishing pond, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

**July 15** — Prairie wildflower walk, 6:30 p.m.

**July 18**—Lake Wazee paddle, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**August 29** — Annual river cleanup, begins at 8 a.m. at Al Young Park

**September 9** — Monthly meeting, program on land conservancy process

**September 12** — GreenLifeXpo

**October 14** — Annual meeting, program on the project to reintroduce elk to Jackson County

**November 11**— Monthly meeting, program about effort leading to the banning of DDT

**December 7**— Annual holiday party, TBD

Unless otherwise noted, regular monthly meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the lower level community room of the Jackson County Bank.

## Topics of future meeting presentations

**September 9**—Abbie Church of Mississippi Valley Conservancy will give a program on putting private lands into conservancy in response to possible frac sand mining.

**October 14**—Scott Roepke will give a presentation about trapping elk in Kentucky for the reintroduction project in the Black River State Forest.

## FBR to host upcoming paddles

**July 4**—Annual Paddle on the Pond at the Lunda Community Park held in conjunction with the Festival in the Park. The public will be allowed to try kayaking for a donation to the park's maintenance fund. Kayaks and equipment will be available 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

**July 18**- Lake Wazee paddle, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. the public will be able to try kayaking and receive instruction on advanced methods such as the roll. Admission fee needed to enter county park.

**Hatfield releases** - The Hatfield dam will have releases July 11 and August 8. The releases provide whitewater paddling experiences and will take place from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Dates are subject to change. To confirm date and time, contact Jeff Polzin at (715) 896-5534.



## Greetings from the president, *continued from page 1*

and give people a chance to learn a variety of native prairie plants. I recommend sturdy shoes and long pants for these hikes. I'm unsure of the location at this time so more information will be coming out in a week or two.

Also on the 4th of July we will bring our kayaks to Lunda Park for people to paddle in the pond. We will be there from 3:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. Previously kids have had a

great time playing in the pond. Then, later in the month we will bring the kayaks to Lake Wazee on July 18th for people to paddle around the lake and try kayaking.

August of course is time for our river clean-up on August 29th. You can either canoe the river looking for trash or do pick-up at some of the landings on the river. Have a great summer!!!

~ Steve Rake





## Volunteers turn out for annual Earth Day Cleanup



Volunteers provided with cleanup supplies and assignments. Photo by Jim Zahasky.



Volunteers on the hunt for trash. Photo by Tom Teeples.

About 25 people volunteered to help with the Earth Day Cleanup held April 18. This year, FBR partnered with the Jackson County Forestry and Parks Department to clean up illegal dump sites on county land.

The volunteers met at Wazee County Park early in the morning to get supplies and assignments.

In addition to cleaning up sites found on county forest land, volunteers also picked up trash along County Highway K. FBR has adopted the stretch of County Highway K from State Highway 54 to Hryz Road in the Adopt-A-Highway program. A crew also cleaned up along State Highway 12 in front of Castle Mound State Park.



A trailer full of trash was the result of this spring's cleanup. Photo by Shaun Lescher.

## FBR website undergoes makeover

The FBR website has undergone a makeover. The board was informed last year the webmaster handling our website would no longer be providing the service.

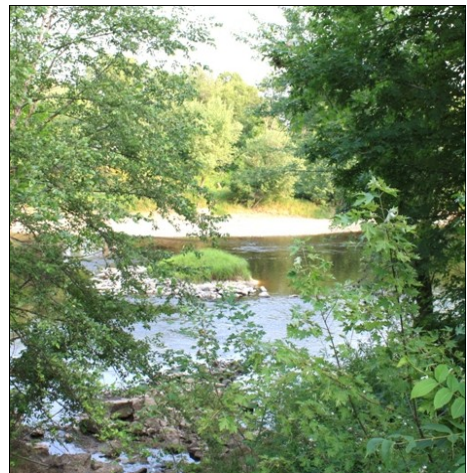
Despite transferring the website to a new hosting service at the end of last year, we have had difficulties entering new content on the site.

This spring, a new member, Shaun Lescher, has offered to work on the website to recreate it so it will be easier to upload new content to keep the information up-to-date.

While the site was being recreated, FBR members and the public were directed to visit the FBR Facebook page for current information.

We apologize to those who visited the site looking for information only to find outdated information.

## Along the Black





## FBR members and guests take spring wildflower hike



Leroy Latham (front) points out a wildflower to hikers joining him on the spring walk in the Morrison Creek bottoms area. Photo by Pat McKnight



Trisha Wagner and her son Anders look up a plant in a wildflower guide when the two took part in the spring wildflower walk. Photo by Tom Teeple

About 16 hikers joined Leroy Latham on the annual spring wildflower hike. The hike traveled along the trail on the hillside above Morrison Creek.

FBR has been hosting the spring hike for several years to introduce nature enthusiasts to the wildflowers growing in the Black River watershed.

Among the wild plants identified during the hike were trailing arbutus, marsh marigolds, spring beauties, club moss and bloodwort.

Each plant species plays a role in the well-being of the environment and some are beneficial for humans.

## FBR's policy regarding charitable contributions

Charitable contributions received by the Friends of the Black River will be used solely to support the goals outlined in the FBR bylaws.

The goals are:

- Educate members and the public about the ecology of the Black River watershed and threats to its health
- Promote sustainable use and recreation on the Black River and its watershed
- Increase public awareness and membership
- Promote sound decision-making when issues affect the health of the river and watershed
- Support the protection and improvement of the Black River and its watershed for the benefit of the general public
- Develop a working relationship with local officials and collaborate with conservation organizations
- Promote improved health of the river and watershed through conservation projects and education
- Purchase land or easements for conservation purposes

Information about how to help FBR with its mission can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

## Speaker talks about Karner blue butterfly recovery program

Information any Karner blue butterfly (KBB) supporter would need to know about the endangered species was presented at the June 10 Friends of the Black River meeting.

Robert Hess, the Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Program coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources, presented the program about the KBB and what his team has discovered about the insect. A former DNR forest administrator in Jackson County, Hess has been the program's coordinator since 2006, working part-time since retiring.

The KBB has been on the Federal Endangered Species list since 1992. A concerted effort is being made to preserve the species because the insect is an important indicator of the barrens habitat. The habitat known as the barrens has sandy soil that supports a scattering of pine and oaks along with open areas of wildflowers.

"The barrens are nature's cleaning mechanism for the water we use every day," said Hess. "They are very important for our groundwater, now and into the future."

Since the KBB only lives in the barrens habitat where wild lupine grows, their presence is an indicator of the health of that environment.

"If there's something wrong with the Karner blue butterfly, it indicates something's wrong with the barrens," said Hess. "We try to save both the Karner blues and the barrens."

Wisconsin has one of the world's largest populations of the KBB, and there are three sites in the Black River watershed being monitored for the butterfly's presence. Over the years, the KBB population has fluctuated from a high of 38,648 in 2011 to a low of 5,581 in 2014.

Hess believes the low count last year resulted from the drought late in the summer that killed the wildflowers on which the adult butterflies depend.

According to Hess, the lifespan of an adult Karner blue butterfly is between 5 and 7 days. Generally there are two "flights" occurring during a summer. Flights are the lifespan of the butterfly from egg hatching to larvae to pupae to egg-laying by the adults. While the larvae feed on the leaves and blossoms of the wild lupine, the adults need to feed on the nectar of other wildflowers for their nutrition needs.

"The adults (KBB) are less fussy about what they feed on," said Hess. "There are about 16 different wildflower species they will feed on. I'm seeing more Karner blues in the areas we survey than any year since we started."

To keep the environment welcoming for wild-

flowers, various measures are taken to keep woody plants from taking over the barrens habitat. Those measures include using mechanical removal, chemical use and controlled burns.

Researchers have found the stamp-sized adult butterflies have a symbiotic relationship with bison. At a bison-raising operation, the researchers found wild lupine tends to grow around the edges of the bison wallows. The wallows are bare patches of land in which the bison roll. The study of the bison/ KBB relationship found the adult butterflies also feed off bison droppings.

"Bison activity can support Karner blues," said Hess. "The male butterflies seek minerals and they find them in the manure."

The butterfly recovery program is looking for volunteers to help report sightings of Karners anywhere they are found in Wisconsin. Volunteers can report sightings to Hess at [Robert.hess@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Robert.hess@wisconsin.gov). Staff from the KBB Recovery Program plan to have a presence at this summer's Karner Blue Butterfly Festival in Black River Falls.

Those interested in helping with the effort to preserve the species can get more information by contacting Hess or by stopping and talking with the researchers during the festival.

Hess' presentation was one of the educational programs FBR sponsors as part of its mission to educate the public.

For more information about FBR, e-mail to [info\\_fbr@yahoo.com](mailto:info_fbr@yahoo.com).



Robert Hess, the WDNr Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Program coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources and a former county forest administrator in Jackson County, presented a program about the endangered butterfly.



## Speakers seek birdwatchers' help for breeding bird atlas

Birdwatchers from Jackson County can join their fellow birders throughout Wisconsin in creating an atlas of breeding birds in the state. The opportunity to join the effort to collect data was presented to the members and guests of the Friends of the Black River at the April 8 meeting.

William Mueller, director of the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, and Mike Reese, director of volunteers for the project, gave a history of the publication of the first atlas.

"Agencies doing bird-specific work all have a copy of the first atlas," said Mueller.

The first Breeding Bird Atlas served as a reference for researchers informing them of how well the state's bird population has been doing. With nearly one-third of the state's bird struggling to survive due to habitat loss, climate change and other human-caused pressures, researchers are collecting data about the situation to put into a reference book.

"The whole purpose of this is bird conservation," said Mueller. "One out of three species in the state is stable. One out of three species is increasing and one out of three is declining."

The state's first Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) was published in 2006, representing the largest coordinated effort in the history of Wisconsin ornithology. The push to publish a Breeding Bird Atlas for the state began in 1993 with surveys conducted between 1995 and 2000.

The survey period for the second edition of the atlas will run from 2015 to 2019. The BBA organizers are

anticipating the shorter timeline for publishing the second atlas because volunteers will be able to enter their data electronically, using eBird. E-Bird is a data collection and distribution website that allows bird watchers to post and retrieve information about birds.



Mike Reese is the volunteer coordinator for the state Breeding Bird Atlas II.

By updating and expanding the findings of the first atlas, researchers are hoping the new edition will help researchers who are working to protect the state's bird population.

Data collected and submitted by volunteers will map the changes in the state's bird populations since the previous survey was done. These insights help identify the needs of breeding birds and will be used to make decisions regarding how to manage state lands to conserve birds.

The project is a partnership with the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the Cofrin Center for Biodiversity at UW-Green Bay.

Volunteers can choose a block on a grid that divides the state into sections. Along with spotting birds, those collecting data will be asked about the habitat and when the birds engage in courtship, nesting, breeding, fledging their young and other activities.

The BBA organizers are hoping to have 3,000 volunteers help with the survey. The organizers are also accepting sponsorships to cover the cost of publishing the atlas. Sponsors can choose the bird species they would like to support.

For more information about the BBA, log onto the WSO website at [wsobirds.org](http://wsobirds.org), or to volunteer e-mail to [atlas@wsobirds.org](mailto:atlas@wsobirds.org).



William Mueller is the director of the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory and one of the organizers of the Breeding Bird Atlas II.

## Ways to support FBR's mission

You can help support the mission of the Friends of the Black River by remembering FBR in your will or with memorials or honorariums.

Checks can be made out to Friends of the Black River and contributions should be sent to PO Box 475, Black River Falls, WI 54615. Thank you.

## Memberships always welcome

Memberships help Friends of the Black River continue its mission of preserving and caring for the Black River.

Show your support for that mission by renewing your membership.

If you are renewing your membership, you do not need to send in a membership form unless there has been a change in your contact information.

### Please help us stay current

**Please help us keep in touch by letting us know your new e-mail and/or postal addresses when they change.**  
**Send your e-mail address changes to [info\\_fbr@yahoo.com](mailto:info_fbr@yahoo.com)**

Become a member by filling out the membership form below and mailing it with your membership dues to the mailing address listed on the form.

## Support your watershed - Join the Friends of the Black River

### Enroll me as a member

Membership Categories (check one)

- ☐ \$1.00 Youth (up to age 18)
- ☐ \$15.00 Individual
- ☐ \$20.00 Family
- ☐ \$30.00 Organization or Business
- ☐ \$50.00 Cornerstone Member

- ☐ **I would like to give an additional contribution in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_**

- ☐ **I would like to give this membership as a gift**  
(Card will be sent to recipient)  
Occasion \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of recipient \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here \_\_\_ if you would like to receive a receipt.

Return registration and checks payable to:

**Friends of the Black River**  
PO Box 475  
Black River Falls, WI 54615

I'm interested in serving on a committee:

- ☐ Land Preservation and Advocacy
- ☐ Fundraising and Membership Recruitment
- ☐ Programming
- ☐ Cleanups and Special Events
- ☐ Landings
- ☐ I am Interested in becoming a board member

**Comments/Questions:**

**Memberships are being gratefully  
accepted for 2015!**

We depend on your support to keep Friends  
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We want to keep this newsletter coming to  
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