

Volume 21 Issue 2 ~ Spring 2025

In this Issue

President's message	1
Upcoming meetings and events 2025	2
Award winning photograph	2
Upcoming public education programs	3
Upcoming paddling events	3
WAV program looking for volunteers	3
Burgau shares salmon fishing adventure	4
Brauner presents beekeeper program	5
2025 Winter Fest photos	6
Supporting FBR's mission	7

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What's happening here?



For the answer to what's happening in the photo, see page 2

President's Greetings

Spring is either coming or here. Our winters are becoming shorter all the time. Winter sports fans are looking at less time to participate in them now. Some businesses are facing hard times due to the lack of snow.

So with spring, we face the mud season and I always hope that it is short.

With warmer weather the ticks will be coming especially if it doesn't freeze overnight.

We can look forward to such activities as raking the remaining leaves and starting to prepare the garden if you have one.

Of course now we have hiking, biking and canoeing with the snow gone.

Friends will have their clean-up again this year and a wildflower walk in May. Some paddles will also be scheduled. Enjoy all the seasons we have...

Steve Rake
FBR President

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 meetings and events for 2025

Wednesday, April 9: Program: History of the Black River, La Crosse historian Robert Taunt presenter, 6:30 p.m., The Hub, Lunda Community Center (see **April Meeting** page 3)

Saturday, April 26: Earth Day Cleanup, 8 a.m., Castle Mound State Park

Tuesday, April 29: Spring clean up of County Highway K, 9 a.m., meet at intersection of CTH K and State Highway 54 East

Saturday, May 10: Spring wildflower walk, 10 a.m. To caravan or carpool, meet at Black River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce parking lot 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, May 14: Program: Wisconsin Rock Art program Robert and Danielle Boszhardt of Driftless Pathways, 6:30 p.m., The Hub, Lunda Community Center (See **May Meeting** page 3)

Wednesday, June 11: Program to be determined

Saturday, July 5: Paddle in the Park, Lunda Community Park Kids Fishing Pond, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m

Tuesday, July 15: Prairie flower walk, 6 p.m., site to be determined. Meet at Thiesen's parking lot at 5:30 p.m. to carpool or caravan to the site. Rain date: Wednesday, July 16,

Saturday, August 23: Annual River Cleanup, 8 a.m. to noon

Wednesday, September 10: Program to be determined

Tuesday, September 23: Fall Highway K Cleanup, 9 a.m., meet at intersection of CTH K and State Highway 54 East

Wednesday, October 15: Annual meeting, yearend reports and election of board members, program to be determined

Wednesday, November 12: Program to be determined

Tuesday, December 2: Annual movie night, film to be determined.

Monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Programs subject to change. Unless otherwise indicated, the Wednesday evening programs are held at 6:30 p.m. in The Hub meeting room at the Lunda Community Center. The community center is located at 405 State Highway 54, Black River Falls.

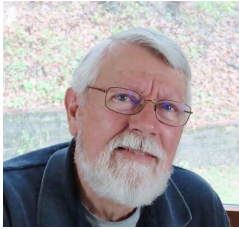
Announcements about FBR activities are also posted on FBR's Facebook page and website, Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events, broadcasted on WWIS and WCCN Radio and published in the Banner Journal and Clark County Press.



The Black River at flood stage was captured by photographer Mary Cooley. Mary received a reserve champion placing at last year's Jackson County Fair for her entry. FBR sponsors a photography class at the fair.

Upcoming public education programs

April Meeting



Robert Taunt, river historian from La Crosse will present “Logs, Ice & Steam on the Black River.” He has given local history presentations for more than 30 years about the Upper Mississippi and the Black.

“We will look at some of the product, people and the ways they traveled on the river,” says Taunt. “The program will also re-live some of the major events that took place on the lower Black. There are many good stories to tell.”

May Meeting

Robert and Danielle Boszhardt of Driftless Pathways will presents a talk on Wisconsin Rock Art. The couple offers tours of archaeological sites, develop interpretive exhibits and provide professional development training in curation and collections management. Their PowerPoint slide program will emphasize sites in the Jackson County area. They will have copies of their book, Hidden Thunder: Rock Art of the Upper Midwest for sale at the meeting.



Upcoming Paddling Events

Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m., Robinson Creek paddle

Sunday, April 6, 9 a.m., Halls Creek, Morrison Creek or Black River paddle

Saturday, July 5, 4 p.m.— 6 p.m., Kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding on the Lunda Community Park fishing pond



Efforts are underway to arrange whitewater releases at the Hatfield dam. Will send out updates as arrangements are made.

Contact Jeff Polzin at 715-896-5534 for more information

**DUE TO VARIABLE STREAM CONDITIONS,
ALL DATES AND TIMES ARE TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

FBR looking for stream monitoring volunteers



Volunteers are needed to monitor streams in Jackson and Clark counties as part of the Water Action Volunteers program.

Stream monitors collect data on the long-term trends of water quality in the Black River watershed.

Volunteers work in pairs to collect data about the water quality of streams in the watershed. Data collected by volunteers is then entered into the statewide water-quality database.

Monitoring takes about two hours per month from May through October. Training and sampling equipment are provided.

The activity is a family-friendly project that benefits the environment.

Anyone interested in volunteering in the program is encouraged to contact Pete Segerson at 715-333-2033 or email ps205v@hotmail.com.

BRF man shares his adventure working on a salmon fishing boat

Ever ready for an outdoor adventure, Black River Falls' resident Jackson Burgau, spent the 2023 summer as a deckhand on board a commercial salmon fishing boat.

He shared the story of his Alaskan adventure at the Friends of the Black River Feb. 12 meeting. The meeting was held in The Hub in the Lunda Community Center.

Heading to an experience of a lifetime, Burgau flew into Anchorage and then travelled to Whittier, a fishing village with a population of 272. All the residents of the fishing village live in a single a 14-story apartment building. He stayed in the complex for a few days, but it wasn't to his liking. He was eager to get on board the fishing boat and head out into Prince William Sound to begin the salmon harvest.

Burgau talked about the challenges and rewards of working on the open water, helping to haul in one of the region's most valuable resources. He learned about the techniques and teamwork that go into supplying the world market.

The annual salmon harvest is strictly regulated to ensure the sustainability of the industry.

"Biologists determine the length of the fishing season by fish population," said Burgau. "The biologists can shut down fishing if they think there isn't enough fish."

Burgau signed on with five others to make up the crew. The work day started at 8 a.m. and shifts could run 12, 24 or even 36 hours.

"Those got to be some long days," said Burgau.

Despite the demands of the job, Burgau says it can be attractive to college students. If they enjoy working in the outdoors, the students can spend summers getting paid while taking in scenic Alaska. They also have few expenses as boat owners supply the provisions for their crews.

There are five salmon species in the Pacific. Sockeye salmon is the most valued. The other four species are chinook



Black River Falls' resident Jackson Burgau (right) talked with Dakota Tennent (left) at the Feb. 12 Friends of the Black River meeting about working as a deckhand in Alaska on a commercial salmon fishing boat

or king; coho; and chum; and pink, also known as "humpies."

"Coho run a bit later in the year," said Burgau. "Chinook have been hurt by warming water due to climate change."

The crew would set their nets in lengths of 50 to 100 fathoms. The nets would then drop down to depths of 12 to 14 feet. The salmon would get caught in the nets and then get pulled on board the boat by a roller mechanism. As the nets are pulled across the boat, crew members remove and separate the salmon according to species.

When the boat was full, the boat rendezvous with a tender to off-load the catch.

When not on fishing duty, Burgau would do some camping and fly fishing on Alaskan lakes. His presentation included photos and videos of the scenery as well as of others engaged in the outdoor activities the Alaskan wilderness offers.

He also showed some photos of a friend who hosts young students instructing them in skills for living in the wild areas - camping, fishing, processing the catch, harvesting blueberries and other edibles.

Burgau is a FBR Board member. He's also active with the Black River Falls Lions Club and the Jackson County Little League Board.

Mike Brauner shared his life with honeybees at March meeting

Those engaged in agriculture often point out, "Our existence depends on six inches of soil and rain." The quote should also include "the sun shining and pollinators." Honey bees are significant pollinators for fruit and vegetable crops as well as making honey.

The insect species was the topic of a presentation by local beekeeper Mike Brauner at the March 12 Friends of the Black River meeting. The meeting was held in The Hub at the Lunda Community Center.

Mike Brauner detailed how he raised honey bees professionally for 15 years. He still keeps a few colonies as a hobby at his home in rural Black River Falls.

"Once you've been stung, you stay stung," said Brauner. "It's an addiction."

Although honey bees aren't native to the western hemisphere, the Americas have come to rely on the insect for the honey it produces as well as for pollination. In addition to its use as a sweetener, honey is used in products from food to medicine to cosmetics. Other products include wax; propolis, a natural resin mixture produced from substances collected from plants; and even the stinger venom.

According to the USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service, the honey the bees produce is worth about \$3.2 million. They pollinate \$15 billion worth of crops in the United States each year, including more than 130 types of fruits, nuts and vegetables.

Brauner said bees have been a part of human existence for 7,000 years before this common era. Women have long been the beekeepers housing the bees in skeps, conical shaped structures made of straw. Developments in beekeeping resulted in the current methods using square shaped wooden boxes.

"You need three-eighths of an inch between the combs to do beekeeping a commercial scale," said Brauner. "This was so you wouldn't have to destroy the hive to get to the honey."

Honeybees make honey from the nectar collected from flowers; they will navigate miles away from the hive. As the worker bees collect nectar from the flowers, they also pick up pollen which they transfer to other flowers. Pollinated flowers then grow fruit and vegetables.

Every hive needs a queen bee. The queen is one-and-a-half the size of worker bees and her sole job is to lay eggs. They can lay as many as 1,500 eggs each day. Drone bees mate with the queen to fertilize the eggs.

When a queen bee decides to leave the hive,



Black River Falls' area beekeeper displays a frame from a honeybee hive during his presentation at the March 12 Friends of the Black River meeting.

worker bees swarm around her wherever she lands. From that swarm, scout bees go out to find another place to make a new hive. The scout bees come back and communicate the site of a new hive with dances and tail waggles.

"The faster the waggle, the closer the new site," said Brauner. "The slower the waggle, the further away."

When a queen leaves, the hive becomes agitated. Worker bees are tasked with tending to special fertilized eggs to make a new queen. Drones mate with the virgin queen who will store the semen as the drones die off. The first queen bee to hatch will sting the other queen larvae killing them. Worker bees will feed the queen royal jelly, a mix of digested pollen and nectar. Queens can live for five or seven years.

In the summer, worker bees will keep the hive cool by painting water on the hive cells and fan it with their wings. The bee larvae take 21 days to

Beekeeper, continued on page 6

FBR partners with JIA to hold Winter Fest

Despite the slightly colder temperatures, the third-annual Winter Fest held Saturday, January 25 at Skyline Golf Course had a good turnout. About 70-80 attendees enjoyed lighted pathways for a candlelight hike, sledding, hot cocoa and s'mores by an outdoor fire. There was just enough snow to sled and several families enjoyed the activity. Volunteers from FBR assisted in the event sponsored by Jackson In Action.



Answer to page 1 photo question:

The torch-lit trails at Skyline Golf Course beckoned participants to the 2025 Jackson County Winter Fest held January 25. The outdoor activity event enticed residents to get out and enjoy season.

Beekeeper, continued from page 5

mature and then live about six weeks.

"Worker bees basically work themselves to death," said Brauner. "Around May, they'll start to raise drones which hatch from unfertilized eggs."

Honey bees don't hibernate in the winter and the hive needs to maintain a temperature of 45 degrees for the bees to survive.

Brauner said the main honey flow is over by July 4. His best year was a crop of 20 tons which was delivered to Sue Bee Cooperative.



Old fashioned skep hives

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 and 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.

FBR sincerely thanks our members and other supporters for their continued dedication to FBR's mission to preserve and enhance the sustainable use of the Black River and its watershed.

New and renewing memberships always welcome

Memberships help Friends of the Black River continue its mission to preserve and care 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's 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**

Become a new member by filling out the membership form below and mailing it with your membership dues to the mailing address listed on the form. Renewing members do not need to submit a membership form

Support your watershed - Join the Friends of the Black River

- Enroll me as a member**
 I would like to give this membership as a gift
(Card will be sent to recipient)

Occasion _____

Your name _____

Membership Categories (check one)

- Free Youth (up to age 18)
 \$20.00 Individual
 \$25.00 Family
 \$30.00 Business
 \$50.00 Cornerstone Member

I would like to make an additional contribution in the amount of \$ _____

I'm interested in serving on a committee:

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

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

___ Jackson County Chapter

___ Clark County Chapter

Return registration form and checks payable to:

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

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

