



BIG OAKS

Newsletter of Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge & Big Oaks Conservation Society

A Word From the President

Spring 2012

By Jim Leveille

With the smell of smoke in the air from controlled burns on Big Oaks NWR, frogs sending out mating calls, and woodcock pairing off in the meadows, it's obvious that spring is upon us. In this Spring Edition of the Big Oaks Conservation Society (BOCS) newsletter, our new editor, Laura Lake, has implemented several changes. We're trying to minimize "repeat" articles from past years and implement new ideas. We hope you like the changes.

With our two busiest public events, Outdoor Women at Big Oaks (OWBO) and Take A Kid Fishing Day (TKFD) coming up in June and July, BOCS remains busy. I'd like to thank our new OWBO Chairperson, Denise Leiske, for taking on the large and complex task of coordinating the event. Both of these events are great opportunities for BOCS members to get friends, neighbors and family members out to the Refuge. In addition, our OTL committee continues work on our next major Lodge goal: replacing the existing asphalt shingles and copper gutters with new. This involves approvals from various government agencies as well as significant fundraising (upwards of \$250,000). With warm weather here, it's our time to enjoy our Refuge and to assist Refuge Manager, Joe Robb, and the diminished refuge staff during their most hectic time of year. I hope to see you all somewhere on the Refuge these next few months.



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Who's New in BOCS

Dr. James Jackson—Vice President

James Jackson (shown in the photo above) was recently elected to the office of BOCS vice-president. Jim has been a BOCS member for four years; he is a life member. Jim was born in Michigan and grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He graduated from Indiana University with BA in Medical Arts and MD degrees. Dr. Jackson practiced cardiology in Fort Wayne briefly, then in the Black Hills of South Dakota (Rapid City), where he met his wife Alice Carlson Jackson, who is also a BOCS member. Alice and Jim came to Madison fourteen years ago. Alice is a nurse practitioner at

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“Who’s New in BOCS” *Continued from pg. 1*

King's Daughters' Hospital, and Jim recently retired from his full-time cardiology practice there.

Dr. Jackson is a Vietnam veteran. He flew 35 combat missions with the 421st Tactical Fighter Squadron in DaNang, and later served in the Indiana Air National Guard in Fort Wayne. He is currently chaplain for the Hanover VFW Post. Jim also currently is a volunteer at the Madison Juvenile Corrections Facility for Prince of Peace Catholic Church and enjoys being a certified KCBS Barbecue Judge. Jim and Alice enjoy horse-back trail riding with friends and caring for their horses, Dakota and Domino.

Jim's interests relating to BOCS and the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge are nature conservancy and Indiana non-game wildlife and habitat preservation. Jim and Alice reside in Hanover.



Chimney Work at Old Timbers Lodge

Chimney Work Completed at OTL

By Jim Leveille

Indianapolis contractor Broady Campbell Inc. has completed the chimney restoration work funded by a \$19,100 grant from the Rising Sun Regional Foundation. In addition to mortar and tuck-pointing work, Broady Campbell installed new cement caps and water-shedding flue covers and repaired defective flashing at the roof/chimney intersections. Visitors will also notice that the exteriors of the chimneys were thoroughly cleaned as well. Inside, repairs were made to the fireplace masonry and on the rock hearth at the chimney base. BOCS is exceptionally grateful for the fine work done by Broady Campbell and for the generosity of the Rising Sun Regional Foundation.

Who’s New in the Refuge Office...

Ben Walker - Wildlife Biologist

Ben moved to Madison in January from La Crosse, Wisconsin where he worked at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. There he spent three years investigating anything from aquatic invertebrates to monitoring bald eagle nests to prescribed fire. Growing up as an “Army Brat,” Ben has lived throughout the eastern United States, but never in Indiana. Ben received a M.S. degree in Biology from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse investigating an exotic disease that is killing migrating waterfowl. When he is not tracking crawfish frogs at the Refuge, Ben enjoys all things outdoors including birding, backpacking, and downhill skiing. Although the mild winter has been a drastic change to what he has been used to, he feels that Madison already feels like home.



Ben Walker holding a Crawfish Frog

Native Americans on Big Oaks

By Ken Knouf

Much emphasis has been made of the early Hoosier farm families who were forced to leave when Jefferson Proving Ground was established. And obviously much attention has been given to the closure of JPG and establishment of Big Oaks NWR, but what about those times and people who inhabited the land before white settlement occurred?

What is known about Native American use of the area? In 1941, Jefferson County Historical Society Director Charles Heberhart inventoried various historic assets on that area to become JPG and listed “two doubtful Indian mounds” and “two former Indian camps definitely located.” Southern Indiana is within the mound-building culture that was prominent hundreds of years ago so it seems possible that there were ceremonial or burial mounds. When I started work at JPG in 1982, old timers remembered flattening some small mounds in clearing impact areas, but they could not remember locations. No archeology had been on JPG for obvious reasons, but every explosive ordnance demolition technician had Indian artifacts that had been picked up on impact areas. You would think given the creeks, attractive terrain features, and abundant game, there would be evidence of extensive occupation. Yet most historians and archeologists are in agreement that southern Indiana reflected a neutral hunting area traveled over by many tribes.

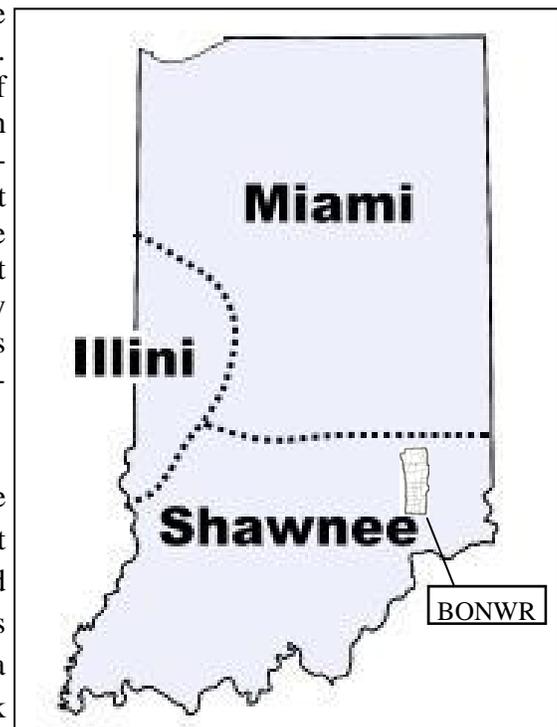
Research suggests that the powerful Shawnee nation resided primarily south of the Ohio River although their territory and range extended well north. Further north lived the Miami's, Delaware's, and Pottawatomie's. An early *North Vernon Plain Dealer* article describes the alleged location of a large Delaware burial ground between Otter and Little Otter Creeks. Perhaps as a visitor to Big Oaks, you have noticed deposits of chert (a lower grade flint) that exist within limestone bands. In the early 1990's, a limited archeological surface reconnaissance was funded to determine if there was evidence of chert quarrying by Native Americans for tools and weapons. There was nothing conclusive but again the archeologists wrote that although there was no evidence of permanent occupation by Native Americans, transient use by hunters and gatherers seemed frequent. Fire may have been used to maintain openings.

As the forests mature and you see the effects of today's fire management program, the landscape today interestingly is not that different from those days when Native Americans used stealth to hunt deer, turkey, and bear and gather edible plants and other materials. In a sense, the Refuge today exists as a neutral hunting ground and offers the same experience---think about those ancient people as you hunt, fish, or gather and realize these activities have been conducted for centuries.

This map is a reconstruction of the of pre-European Native American Tribes in Indiana. It is not exact because most traditional native American borders were extremely fluid, the tribes and their borders changed when Europeans arrived, and no one was drawing accurate maps of tribal lands in North America until after these changes were already in motion.

-Orrin and Laura Wado, as cited from Google Maps.

<http://www.native-languages.org.maps.htm>



Map of the Miami, Illini, and Shawnee Tribe Borders
<http://www.native-languages.org.maps.htm>

Refuge Manager's Spotlight Mushrooms at Big Oaks NWR

By Joe Robb

A popular activity during spring at the Refuge is morel hunting. We determined that mushroom hunting was an appropriate and compatible activity for the refuge by examining the effects on wildlife, sustainability of the use and ensuring that the use was non-commercial (collected mushrooms are for personal use only). Mushrooms are sustainable, because visitors only select the fruiting body of the fungus (the part that produces the spores) and the main portion of the fungus remains below ground in the soil. We also require the use of mesh bags to allow mushroom spores to disperse as the mushroom hunter walks thru the woods. This technique is debated among the experts on effectiveness, but we decided to err on the side of the mushroom. Be sure to correctly identify any mushroom before eating.

The timing of mushroom season usually benefits turkey hunters most because days dedicated to turkey hunting at the refuge coincide with morel season. Also more areas of the refuge are available for turkey hunting (approximately 25,000 acres) and thus, turkey hunters have more areas available to turkey hunt (and mushroom hunt). This policy of public use was originally set up with our Public Access Plan that was coordinated with the Army when the Refuge was established. But, don't despair, there's more than 8,500 acres available for mushroom hunting on public use days.



Black Morel



Sulphur Shelf

Morel hunting is at its peak at the Refuge from mid-April (when the Refuge opens for public use) until the first or second week of May. The season begins with black morels which are found in the rich forested areas. They start appearing in early April; this year it might be in March because of the unseasonable warmth. Good spots are typically on slight slopes with mushrooms appearing on southern slopes or areas where the ground warms earliest, and later sites on cooler exposures. Black morels come up in dense patches where there has been a wildfire or prescribed fire the preceding year. Relatives of our black mushrooms in the western US, fire morels, are harvested in large quantities on burned areas and a small army of professional mushroom hunters make bids to the Forest Service and other public and private land holders for the

right to exclusively pick mushrooms on these areas. Fortunately, our prescribed fire areas are public information, and knowledgeable visitors simply inquire the refuge staff before they pick their spot. Sometimes I have heard complaints of intestinal cramping when individuals eat black morels, especially when they drink alcohol with the meal; I have not had that issue.

The next mushroom that appears is the half-free morel (nicknamed the cow's head and other off color

names) which I find in many areas, but commonly in young tulip poplar stands. This species is not as sought after by foodies because it is not as flavorful and it tends to fall apart quickly in the refrigerator and in the frying pan. I was glad to find these on many occasions, because that was the only thing in the woods. They still tasted good to me with some sautéed asparagus and some freshly fried blue-gills.

The small white morels, known as common morels are highly sought after, but are the least common at Big Oaks. They show up in various odd locations and visitors tell me of a wide variety of places they have found them: I find them in the woods associated and at the base of ash trees, sometimes growing in the moss next to the trunk of the tree. At the right time of year (early turkey season), if I see ash trees, I generally take a stroll to see if there are any lurking about.

The yellow or thick-footed morel is an interesting, variable mushroom. I have found them on small islands in the middle of streams, in open grassy fields, stream bottomland, underneath dying elm trees, under apple trees, and along roadsides. At Big Oaks good numbers of yellow morels appear the same year as a prescribed fire, and often an area burned produces morels where no one has found them previously. The strangest places at Big Oaks for yellow morels are in eastern red cedar groves, where clubmoss covers the ground. Clubmoss, occasionally appears yellow, so it is very challenging to spot the mushroom. My wife teases me because I wear my binoculars when we go mushroom hunting, so I can look at a promising “shroom” to make sure it’s not a yellow clubmoss.



Yellow Morels



Carolina False Morel— Not Recommended, but commonly confused with edible morels

I remember one time my wife and I were at Muscatatuck NWR (which also allows mushroom hunting) looking for a morel spot that I found back in 1984. We started to find nice bunches of yellow morels in a cedar grove in an old field (that’s about as close as I can say, otherwise you would know my spot), and she found a nice clump. She started hollering, and I quickly ran over to see what the fuss was about, and told her that before long we would have company. Her squeals of joy were quickly extinguished as a couple other mushroom hunters descended on our spot. It pays to be quiet when you are mushroom hunting.

For many years, folks use to sneak into the property to hunt mushrooms. This caused many safety hazards for the Army and for the Air National Guard. There is simply no reason for folks to sneak in illegally to hunt mushrooms, when they can check-in legally without the repercussions of tickets and fines. Former Jefferson Proving Ground employees tell me of secret maps that contain the best mushroom spots, but I have yet to see any of these treasure maps. If you have one, bring it in and we’ll publish it in the next newsletter.....

Calendar of Events and Information

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge and Big Oaks Conservation Society
2012 Spring and Summer Calendar of Events

April

- 16.....**Public Use Opened.** The Refuge is open most Mondays, Fridays, and the 2nd and 4th Saturdays (Check the Refuge website for an updated schedule).
- 21.....Turkey Youth Hunt Workshop—Noon
- 22..... Turkey Youth Hunt
- 25-30.....Turkey Hunt Dates



May

- 5-7.....Turkey Hunt Dates
- 7..... *Green Fire*, (Film) 7:00pm, Showing at the Ohio Theatre
- 12-13.....Turkey Hunt Dates
- 12-13.....**Old Timbers Lodge Clean-up Weekend**

Members interested in spending Saturday night at the Lodge should contact Carole Poffinbarger before May 4th: (513) 868-7679 or poffin@fuse.net. Bring water, an air mattress or cot, work gloves, and rags. Use Gate 6 from 7:15 - 8:00am on Saturday morning. (To get to Gate 6 take US 421 to 900 S/Michigan Rd. and go West for 1 mile). For other questions contact Bill Hughes (812) 689-5107 or whughes4@yahoo.com



June

- 2.....**8th Annual Outdoor Women at Big Oaks (OWBO)**

Early bird registration due May 1st at \$50.00. After May 1st, registration will be \$60.00. Youth registration (Ages 12-18 with registered adult) is \$35.00. The fee covers classes, instructional materials, a welcome gift, continental breakfast, lunch, drinks, and other refreshments. Volunteers need to be at OTL by 8:00am. Any questions contact Denise Leiske, cell (812) 216-7801.

July

- 21.....**Take a Kid Fishing Day (TKFD)**

7:00am –3:00pm, Safety Briefing at the Refuge Office.

Free lunch and drinks. Casting contests and prize drawings will be at Old Timbers Lake Dam. No licenses required when accompanying a kid. For any questions call (812) 273-0783.



August

- 4.....Butterfly Survey



September

Enjoy the Fall Weather

BOCS Winter Programs: Something Different

By Jim Leveille

Typically, BOCS has hosted speakers at its monthly meetings over the winter months. This year's speakers and activities deviated somewhat from our historical norm. With no January meeting due to the New Year holiday, our first winter speaker was Andy Rowden, director of the Tyson Memorial Library in Versailles. Dressed in uniform, Andy spoke in character as Civil War surgeon, Dr. James Prescott. Andy kept the room enthralled with a discussion of the methods, evolution, and rationale behind the medical practices applied during the War Between the States. Though he offered to demonstrate mid-nineteenth-century tonsil removal techniques and instruments, there were no takers from the wary BOCS crowd.

In March, new Refuge Biologist, Ben Walker, returned meetings to the present day with his presentation of his master's degree studies on the epidemiology of parasite infections in scaup (diving ducks). Though not a subject typically discussed around the dinner table, the crowd came away impressed with Ben's knowledge and presentation of the subject. In April, our meeting was short due to college basketball and the safety briefing was shown. We plan to move from our regular meeting place at the Jefferson County Library down the street to Madison's historic Ohio Theatre in May. A jointly funded effort by BOCS and the Refuge Office will allow us to host the film, *Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time*. This screening will be open, free of charge, to the public and will provide a valuable chance to expand community awareness of the refuge and of what BOCS does to support it. In addition to the primary attraction, BOCS also plans to premier two commercials for its Outdoor Women at Big Oaks event on June 2 and Take A Kid Fishing Day on July 21.



Andy Rowden, Winter Speaker for BOCS



Water control device, North Cottrell Bunker

Though the refuge is closed to the public during the winter months, our winter activities and speakers have proven a popular way to keep the refuge in the public eye. Plans for next year's activities are already in progress.

New Honeymoon Suites Now Open to Crawfish Frogs

By Jim Leveille

Last summer's Wilson Trust grant was put to good use this past fall with the construction of breeding ponds for the state-endangered crawfish frog. Refuge maintenance technician, Kerry Brinson, and interns, Chad Springer and Todd Gerardot, installed PVC pipe to maintain optimum water levels at pre-selected sites. The ponds are now full, creating the ultimate mingling spots for the reclusive amphibians.

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New Honeymoon Suites Now Open to Crawfish Frogs....Continued from pg. 1



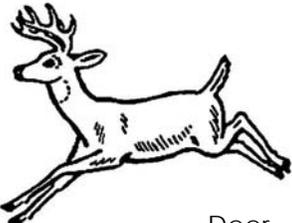
New Breeding Pond for Crawfish Frogs, D Rd. (Left)

Refuge Photo of Crawfish Frog (Below)



KID'S CORNER

Please share the Kid's Corner with a child and take the opportunity to share the love of the outdoors with them this spring and summer too.

	
Bear	Fawn
	
Goose	Cub
	
Dragonfly	Gosling
	
Deer	Nymph

Baby wildlife sometimes have different names than their adult parents. On the left side of this page is an adult wildlife. On the right side of the page are their young, but the pictures are all mixed up! Can you match the young with their parents? Then color the pictures!

Answers: Bear - Cub, Goose - Gosling, Dragonfly - Nymph, Deer - Fawn

Are You Doing Your Part? - by Laura Lake

Several years ago, I was able to listen to Jane Goodall when she spoke at Hanover College. I was inspired to change my ways and make less of a mark on the ecosystem while making more of an effort to change things for the better. I would like to urge all newsletter readers to carefully examine the ways that you are living green (or not) and take one step to improve. If possible, I would like to share at least one idea in each newsletter and would love to hear and share your ideas. This is a great way to help Big Oaks NWR and make a difference for future generations.



Do you know of any good ways to Use, Reuse, and Recycle?

Email me to share your ideas.
laura_lake@fws.gov



Big Oaks Conservation Society

Membership Benefits

-  10% discount on merchandise
-  Opportunities to participate in special refuge events
-  Contribute to the improvement of the refuge for all visitors
-  Big Oaks Newsletter

If you would like to join or rejoin the Big Oaks Conservation Society to support the refuge, please fill out this membership form and send it along with your check to: Big Oaks Conservation Society, P.O. Box 935, Madison, IN 47250

Yearly BOCS Membership (Oct. 1, 2011 to Sept. 30, 2012)

Please select a category:

<input type="checkbox"/> Youth \$5	Name(s) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15	Address _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25	City _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$25	State _____ Zip _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (per Individual) \$150	Phone () _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$500	E-mail _____



Mission Statement: *To support the goals of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration at Big Oaks NWR; develop environmental education programs; enhance public awareness; encourage use and appreciation for the natural and cultural assets unique to Big Oaks.*



Printed on Recycled Paper with a Minimum of 30% Post Consumer Waste



**Big Oaks
Conservation
Society
Newsletter**

**Spring 2012
Volume 10 Issue 1**

Published by
**Big Oaks
Conservation
Society**

in support of

**Big Oaks National
Wildlife Refuge**

**Newsletter Editor
Laura Lake**

**Special Thanks to:
Joe Robb and
Big Oaks Staff
Contributing Members**

**Big Oaks
Conservation Society
P.O. Box 935
Madison, IN 47250**

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Laura Lake - Park Ranger
Chad Springer - Intern
Todd Gerardot - Intern
Abby Burns - Intern

**Big Oaks NWR
1661 West Jpg Niblo Road
Madison, IN 47250**

Phone: 812-273-0783
Fax: 812-273-0786
E-mail: bigoaks@fws.gov
Website: www.fws.gov/midwest/bigoaks