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Monday, March 27, 2023

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EXPLORE WITH LENORE



LENORE SOBOTA, FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

Stephanie Bishir, a wildlife biologist for the Illinois River National Wildlife Refuge, describes how the recreated wetlands behind her provide habitat for chorus frogs and other wildlife. The refuge includes a unit in Meredosia where volunteers will be creating shallow wetland areas as part of Save the Frogs Day on April 27 and 28.

SAVE THE FROGS

Meredosia refuge sets two dates to build wetlands

Birds aren't the only things singing in spring. It's time for frogs to break into song, too.

We're not talking about a Muppet named Kermit singing about a rainbow connection. These songsters include chorus frogs and spring peepers. But as Kermit crooned in another tune, "It ain't easy being green."

That's especially true if you are an Illinois chorus frog, a chubby inch to inch-and-a-half frog that is more tan or gray than green, with a white belly and dark brown or black lines on its back. It's a state-threatened species found only in spe-



JACOB CACKOWSKI, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

The Illinois chorus frog, a threatened species in Illinois, spends nearly all its life underground and is only an inch to an inch and a half in size.

cial sand prairie habitats.

One such area is in Morgan County on the Meredosia National Wildlife Refuge. And there's something you can do to help them.

As part of a celebration of Save the Frogs Day, volunteers are being sought to help build what are called vernal or ephemeral wetlands. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to

Stephanie Bishir, a wildlife biologist for the refuge units, said building the wetlands won't be all work.

"We're going to be having a lot of fun events, dip netting for invertebrates and listening for frogs. It should be a good time," she said.

Participants might also see crayfish and salamanders.

Volunteers will help lay an aquatic-safe plastic liner, cover it and seed the area with native vegetation. "A lot of hands-on work," said Bishir.

Kerry Kriger, founder of Save the Frogs, also will attend.

The two-day public event is part of a larger project to create more wetlands suited for Illinois Chorus Frogs on former agricultural land at the Meredosia site and training others to design and develop wetlands.

"Wetlands are fantastic," said Tom Biebighauser, owner of Wetlands Restoration and Training, who led a workshop

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GOVERNMENT

GOP bills pushing cash bail

HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. — Just two days before he drove his SUV through a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee, killing six people and injuring more than 60, Darrell Brooks Jr. posted bail for charges of domestic violence.

He had been accused of using his SUV to run over the mother of his child, and a pretrial assessment found Brooks was at high risk of reoffending. But a court official set that bail at a mere \$1,000 cash at the request of prosecutors, who later called their recommendation a mistake. For the parade killings, Brooks was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Brooks quickly became the poster child for a Republican-backed push to enact tougher bail policies. The Republican-controlled Wisconsin Legislature is asking voters to ratify a constitutional amendment that would make it harder for violent criminals to get out of jail on bail.

GOP lawmakers in other states also are scrambling to make it harder for defendants to get out of jail before trial after branding

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TAXES

A guide to filing your 2022 return

Pandemic-era tax breaks to expire

ROBERT CHANNICK Chicago Tribune

With less than a month to go before the April 18 deadline, the majority of the nation's 168 million tax filers are once again scrambling to download software, organize receipts and call their accountants for last-minute help.

Procrastinators may find what early filers already know: Tax year 2022 is not producing as many happy returns as in previous years due to a number of changes, including the expiration of some pandemic-era tax breaks.

"People will be getting smaller refunds on average because of that," said Dan Rahill, a long-time Chicago tax partner and past chairman of the Illinois

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EDUCATION

Educators tackle media literacy

DAVID KLEPPER AND MANUEL VALDES Associated Press

SEATTLE — Shawn Lee, a high school social studies teacher in Seattle, wants to see lessons on the internet akin to a kind of 21st century driver's education, an essential for modern life.

Lee has tried to bring that kind of education into his classroom, with lessons about the need to double-check online sources, to diversify newsfeeds and to bring

critical thinking to the web. He's also created an organization for other teachers to share resources.

"This technology is so new that no one taught us how to use it," Lee said. "People are like, 'There's nothing we can do,' and they throw their hands in the air. I disagree with that. I would like to think the republic can survive an algorithm."

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MANUEL VALDES, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ballard High School social studies teacher Shawn Lee talks to his students March 14 at MisinfoDay, an event hosted by the University of Washington to help high school students identify and avoid misinformation, in Seattle.

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