

Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative

A not-for-profit organization and land trust

Working across state boundaries to enhance the Wolf Lake watershed

Dec. 21, 2017

Report on mudpuppy research at Wolf Lake
Part of AWLI's winter festival Jan. 13

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For Immediate Release

Phase three of the mudpuppy research at Wolf Lake will be explained at the 17th annual Winter Wonderland at Wolf Lake festival on Jan. 13, 2018.

The event, sponsored by the Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative (AWLI), is free to the public. The morning session will be held at the Environmental Education Center, 2405 Calumet Ave., Hammond. The afternoon session will be held at the visitor's center at William W. Powers State Recreation Area, 126th Place and Avenue O, Chicago.

Jared Bilak, a doctoral student at Southern Illinois University, will discuss progress to date on his study of mudpuppy, an aquatic salamander. He is in his second year of the multi-year research project.

Alicia Beattie described the initial year of the study at the 2016 festival. Her work gathered such baseline information as the diets, population structure, and seasonal activity patterns of mudpuppies.

Bilak is focusing in on movement patterns of the mudpuppy during warmer months when the salamander is least active. Initial study results were published as an article in the February 2017 issue of the *Journal of Great Lakes Research* with co-authors Phil Willink of Chicago's Shedd Aquarium and Matt Whiles of Southern Illinois University..

The multi-year research project was launched in 2014 by Willink, senior research biologist at the Shedd Aquarium. The project began over growing concern about the declining population of mudpuppies throughout the Great Lakes area.

A mudpuppy is a large aquatic salamander and a long-time resident of Wolf Lake. Featuring colorful gills, it grows to 11 to 18 inches long and remains in the water.

At the afternoon session, Bilak will demonstrate how he is conducting his research at Wolf Lake.

Other speakers and guides at the festival include author Larry McClellan, archaeologist Les Marszalek, Racine Kovach of Lake County Solid Waste Management District, John Pastirik of Calumet Ecological Park Association and Michel Boos of AWLI.

A speaker at past festivals, McClellan will discuss the Underground Railroad in Illinois. He currently is completing book manuscripts entitled "To the River, the Remarkable Journey of Caroline Quarlls" (freedom seeker from St. Louis), "*Freedom Seekers and the Underground Railroad in Northeastern Illinois*"; and on regional history south of Chicago. After graduate work at the University of Chicago in 1970, McClellan helped found Governors State University and served with the University for 30 years.

For many years, he was University Professor of Sociology and Community Studies, and was for six years Executive Director of the South Metropolitan Regional Leadership Center. In the mid-70s, he was mayor of University Park (then Park Forest South).

Also speaking in the morning, Marszalek will talk about his more than 40 years of archeological work conducted in the Chicago metropolitan area, where he has discovered more than 100 Native American sites. Most of the sites are located in the south suburbs of Chicago.

The discoveries have been recorded with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. His work has been noted by historian Mark Lawrence Mattson and cited in publications at Chicago's Newberry Library for Indian Studies and the

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Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

A resident of Calumet City, Marszalek is president of Gold Earth Science Club and Museum. He has spoken to numerous historical societies, museums, universities and libraries in Northwest Indiana and the Chicago metropolitan area.

In the afternoon, Boos, executive director of AWLI, will talk about the results of the Wolf Lake Watershed Advisory Committee, which met Nov. 3 at Calumet College of St. Joseph. The all-day event attracted some 40 scientists, land managers and environmental groups..

A meeting to discuss the progress of the projects discussed is scheduled to be held in November 2018 You may register for it on AWLI's website.

Also on the website is the final report on this year's Wolf Lake Watershed Advisory Committee.

Outdoor activities at the festival, weather permitting, will include skating and a tree-identification walk.

AWLI is a bi-state not-for-profit organization and land trust headquartered at Calumet College of St. Joseph. Its mission is to work across state boundaries to protect and enhance the Wolf Lake watershed.

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