



WETLAND'S GAZETTE

Volume 8, Issue 1

March 2012

A Few Words from the New President

Article by Don Fox

Photo by Patrice Evers

It is an honor and a privilege to be the newly elected Friends President. I've been a member of the Friends since 2006, a Wildlife Assistant (Wednesday work group) and Greeter since 2008 and have been on the Board of Directors since 2009. I have always been impressed by all that the Friends



group has accomplished since its 1995 formation as a grass roots volunteer based organization. From its inception, the Friends group has been dedicated to protecting and promoting the Mead and McMillan Marsh Wildlife Areas as well as assisting with education, wildlife, interpretive and habitat management activities. Over the past sixteen years the Friends' mission has remained unchanged.

The success of the Friends is due to the strength of the many partnerships that have been formed with other groups/organizations and the invaluable contributions of funds, time, energy and ideas that many Friends member and non-member volunteers have made and continue to make.

I wish to thank outgoing Board members John Crawly and Michael Gross for their years of service and especially thank outgoing President Doug Aziz for his leadership of the Friends' organization. We also welcome two new Board members, Susan Ford-Hoffert and Lorraine Michalski.

We are pleased that the Wisconsin DNR has begun the interview process to hire an onsite replacement for retired Project Manager, Tom Meier. The Friends are anticipating a continued good working relationship with the new Project Manager.

I look forward to working with the Board of Directors, DNR Staff, Friends members and non-members in 2012 as we all work to increase public understanding, appreciation, support and enjoyment of the Mead and McMillan Marsh Wildlife Areas. I know we will have another successful and exciting year of completed projects and special events.

Friends of the Mead/McMillan

Officers

- President—Don Fox
Marshfield 676-3115
- Vice-President—Mark Lewandoski
Marshfield 676-3115
- Secretary—Jim Peterson
Auburndale 652-3143
- Treasurer – John Shippy
Junction City 457-2575

Directors:

- Doug Aziz
- Don Ebbers
- Susan Ford-Hoffert
- Don Fox
- Don Furo
- Marlene Furo
- Sue Hall
- Jerry Harvey
- Ellie Kafka
- Mark Lewandoski
- Lorraine Michalski
- Jim Peterson
- John Shippy
- Jeremiah Smith

DNR Staff on board:

- Brian Peters
- Bill Hirt
- Pam Resech, Educator
Office 457-6771

Webmaster:

- Malcolm Gold

Newsletter Editor:

- Dave Grabski
dgrabski@charter.net



Volunteering @ Mead

Article by Lorraine Michalski

Photo by Pam Resech

Two and a half years ago I became a volunteer at Mead Wildlife Area Education and Visitor Center. The Greeter position appealed to me, I especially liked that various resources were available to aid in performing effectively in this position.

A greeter can sign up for only one four hour shift or many Saturday and/or Sunday shifts from April through the end of October. Some visitors will come to ask questions or to satisfy their curiosity because of the Mead Wildlife sign they saw posted along the highway or county road. Others are returning to enjoy the quiet beauty of the area.

I have met many interesting volunteers and visitors. One of my most remembered days was when a UW student brought his parents to visit the Center; they were from the state of Maine. That same day we had a visitor from Spain. I call that my Maine to Spain day. Comments from other volunteers are: Greeter Diane Wolf of Marshfield, *"As a volunteer, I have learned so much from other volunteers. It is not just about donating time. It is about the educational experience."* John Callahan of Marshfield, *"I worked intensely with many people during my working career and after retiring I missed that. I feel great when I am volunteering as a Greeter explaining something to visitors, selling souvenirs to the school children, flipping pancakes or just interacting with visitors, staff and other volunteers."* Vlasta Blaha of Colby, *"During my volunteer time at the Mead I've met others with similar interests and appreciated their warmth and willingness to help me learn more. I especially appreciated the extensive and well written volunteer Greeter manual which really was helpful in getting me to know and understand more about the Mead. My most special memory of volunteering at the Mead is being able to soak in the outstanding, expansive view from the Education Center windows."*

Last year nearly 3,000 hours were recorded by Mead volunteers. There are many volunteer opportunities in education, office, indoor and grounds maintenance, wildlife area, and special events. Two upcoming special events are the Spring Cleaning for Earth Day on Saturday April 28 and the Pancake Breakfast on Saturday May 19. Both events have no minimum time for volunteering. If you are interested in being a Greeter or Assistant Educator there is an orientation opportunity offered each year in March, before the Spring Education and Greeter programs start, for both current and new volunteers. Others interested in volunteering can sign-up any time by contacting Pam or Lorraine.

I am sure you will derive personal satisfaction during your volunteering at the Mead. To show their appreciation for your volunteering efforts and dedication, the Mead staff holds an annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in December for the volunteers and their spouses. In 2011, 85 people attended the event. This event also gives the volunteers a chance to mingle and share their experiences with the other Mead volunteers and staff.

Visit the www.meadwildlife.org website for more information about volunteering and be sure to check the calendar for other upcoming events/activities to volunteer for.





Bring Your Family & Friends
to the

All-You-Can-Eat!!

Pancake Breakfast

Saturday May 19, 2012

8:00am-Noon

Menu: Pancakes: Blueberry & Buttermilk, Pork Sausage,
Wisconsin Cheese, Milk/Coffee, Cranberry Juice,
Pure Maple Syrup, Applesauce & Ice Cream Cups.

Adults:\$7.00

6-12:\$3.00

Under 6:Free



While You are at the Mead Take Time to:

- ♦ Hike or Bike the Trails
- ♦ See the Albino Deer Display
- ♦ Walk the Audubon Prairie Nature Trail
- ♦ View the Historical Exhibit
- ♦ Tour the Mead Visitor Center
- ♦ Catch a Wagon Tour into the "Interior" of the property



Berkhahn Bike Trail Opens: May 15th



*****Remember to bring your bikes, binoculars, and cameras to help enjoy your day.**

If you would like to help with the Pancake Breakfast,
Contact Don Furo at (715) 457-6770 or dfuro@tds.net



Location: Mead Wildlife Area Education and Visitor Center

S2148 County Hwy S, Milladore WI

Sponsored by Friends of the Mead/McMillan Association, Inc.

and the Mead Staff

All Proceeds Benefit the Mead's Educational Programs



Nature's Niches

Article & Photos by Luke Fara



Wood ducks, *Aix sponsa*, are world renowned for their beautiful and stunning colors. They are also one of the two cavity nesting species of waterfowl that occur at the Mead Wildlife Area, the other being hooded mergansers. During the late 1800's and early 1900's wood ducks were nearly decimated in Wisconsin due to the large and expansive logging practices. By the 1930's the majority of mature hardwood forests, and nesting locations of these birds, were lost to economic purposes.

Conservation and sportsman's groups, in order to preserve the birds, designed and erected the first artificial nesting structures, or wood duck boxes, in 1937. The boxes helped restore the population and today both species are doing very well. Wood

ducks are doing especially good and since 1968 have been the second most harvested species in Wisconsin. The large mature hardwood forests are returning, but the wood duck box is still used by many to help maintain and evaluate the local populations.

Mead is a particular area of interest due to the large area of mature hardwoods that are encompassed by the property boundary. Estimates based on studies by Greg Soulliere (USFWS) suggest that Mead has some of the best area for natural cavities in not only Wisconsin, but within the Upper Midwest. This being said, the Mead still has a significant wood duck box program that was started sometime in the early 1970's. The program lost steam in the 1990's but was regained in the 2000's thanks to many groups.

Students from UW-Stevens Point help collect data, maintain boxes, and present findings at their undergraduate research symposium. Students represent many organizations, but most notable are The Wildlife Society and Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA). The Bill Cook Chapter of the IWLA is also supportive by providing new boxes.

Mark Cournoyer and his wildlife class from the Auburndale High School maintain a run of houses that they erected. Many Boy Scout troops, Ducks Unlimited-Greenwings, and Wisconsin Waterfowl Association

groups throughout Central Wisconsin have also contributed. Our wildlife assistant volunteers as well help by repairing old houses. Thanks to these collaborative efforts, the program maintains over 125 wood duck boxes on the property.

This data has been analyzed each year to determine how the local population is doing. Data from 2001 to present shows that Mead has around 35% use for all species (10% wood ducks and 25% hooded mergansers). Success rates for used houses averages 60%. With an average clutch size of 9-12 eggs per nest, and 125 houses, our program produces roughly 90 wood duck ducklings and 186 hooded merganser ducklings per year. This information is counted and tallied during our winter checks. Other wildlife is seen using the boxes, including squirrels, mice, hornets and owls.

In conclusion, the staff would like to thank those involved in helping out with this great project. We hope to continue to grow the program through continued support and effort.



Checking natural cavities with Greg Soulliere, to determine cavity abundance at Mead





Winter Education

Article & Photos by Kaylee Zalewski



This winter posed interesting opportunities for groups visiting the Mead. With the minimal snow fall that the Mead received this year, the popular winter activity of snowshoeing was not an option. New activities were developed that focused on Winter Survival at the Mead to get groups outdoors and enjoying nature.

Winter Survival Tag: Students got to experience what animals have to go through to survive winter by playing a tag game. In this game they became animals who needed to gather certain items in order to survive (food, water, shelter, and space) while trying to dodge their fellow students who were threats (predators, starvation, bad weather, and habitat destruction). They learned that the more threats to an area the harder it is for animals to survive as well as certain adaptations animals have developed to enhance their survival in the wild.

Building Winter Shelters: Students also learned how they and animals can find shelter here on the Mead. Groups were taken into the woods and were asked to work together to develop some type of shelter that either they or an animal could use by using the resources that they could find around them. Then groups shared their thoughts and tried out the shelters. These new activities were greatly accepted and enjoyed by all who participated.

School groups weren't the only groups visiting



the Mead. Cub Scouts came out to help with our Cormorant project. They helped the wildlife technicians and assistants to build nesting platforms for the expansion of rookeries on the property. The boys got to use power drills and work as a team to get 14 platforms put together. The boys thoroughly enjoyed getting to use their hands and tools as well as learn why the platforms they were building were so important.

Though this winter has been a gentle one so far there was still a lot going on at the Mead to keep groups entertained and get into the outdoors.



A McMillan Marsh Interview

Article by Dennis Dieringer

I had the pleasure of interviewing Bob Machtan about the changes he has witnessed in McMillan over the years. Bob started hunting with his father in the early 70's and has hunted in the McMillan marsh every year since. Bob has hunted deer, small game, waterfowl, trapped some and he is one of the few who truly gets deep into the marsh with waders and canoe to reach the hard to get to "hot spots."

I asked Bob to respond to the question "How has the McMillan changed both good and bad over the years in your opinion?"



"The Marsh has changed a lot in 35 years. In the 70's through the 90's you could hunt deer, small game and waterfowl and maybe not always fill your bag limit, but you would see wildlife. In the last 10 years the wildlife has pretty much disappeared. As a young man I would see 40 deer on opening day of deer hunting but after that only 10 to 15 per day. This past year I hunted every day in McMillan and I saw a total of 2 deer. In the past 10 years small game is just about non-existent. To see a rabbit is rare when years ago they were very plentiful, like snowshoe and cottontail. If you see a track in the snow today consider yourself lucky. It's the same for grouse."

Bob feels there are three main reasons for this change. "First, the marsh is just way too wet. Years ago, I could access many areas with just a walking boot. Now you need waders or a canoe. There've always been some wet years and some dry but the last 10 to 15 years, I have seen much more flooding of the reservoir. I don't know if this is because of the need for water for Marshfield or why. The marsh has turned into a swamp with limited access. Now this might be okay for the ducks and geese but not everything else. There definitely are more geese. I'm not sure about the duck population."

Second, he said there are many more predators than years ago. This past fall Bob trapped his 2nd fisher out of the Marsh! Coyotes, fishers, hawks and owls all need to eat. Rabbits and mice are their supper. So are grouse and squirrels and other small birds. Bob has seen many a duck feather on top of muskrat homes. Whether they have been caught or are wounded birds that were not retrieved he doesn't know but the evidence is clear; the predators are around and in full force. Coyotes and fishers were never seen years ago, or very rarely. Today it's not uncommon to see their sign regularly.

A McMillan Marsh Interview (continued on page 7)



A McMillan Marsh Interview (continued from page 6)

And finally, visibility for hunting is limited in the bog areas as the tag elders are just too large. There do not seem to be many cut over areas with young poplar trees and due to the wetness of the soil many of the larger trees are not able to keep root and are falling. Many of the open spots in the swampy areas are now long gone, with grown up tag alders and brush. The larger trees that you could climb into are gone and have not been replaced by young trees. I don't believe they can take the water levels.

An interesting note is that in the mid 70's there was quite a large marsh fire in the McMillan Marsh. The fire was put out but the peat bogs continued to smolder all winter long until the spring filled the area with water. That has not happened since. Did this provide better habitat for small game and deer? Some of the local farms surrounding the Marsh have been sold and their land developed. This could be a partial explanation for the lower deer populations.

Now this might seem like doom and gloom but there is also some good news. The negative impact of people has clearly improved. The garbage dumped off on the side of the roads and parking lots has decreased by a substantial amount. The dikes and area roads are kept in better repair so access is easier for non-hunters and hunters alike. Having the information kiosk on Meadow is like a welcome mat for visitors. Walking along the bike trail almost always has you crossing paths with someone else using the trail; either biking, walking or running.

The McMillan Marsh is used a lot more than people realize Bob said. This past fall Bob counted 26 boats of one kind or another used for water fowl hunting or just for wildlife viewing at the end of Frey Road. The number of deer hunters has grown over the years also which either means there's a lack of other hunting areas available or that the private land owners are not allowing as many hunters to hunt their land as in the past. Whatever the reason, Bob feels very fortunate to have the marsh available to enjoy. We all are.





From the Field

Article & Photos by Patrice Evers

While the winter weather has not been good for snowmobiling, it has been good for field work. The lack of snow has not only made work a lot easier, but the time saved on snow removal has been time spent in the field. Here are some of the projects we have worked on this winter.



Highway S and Pool 10 Cattail Removal

This was an experimental project conducted on Pool 10 and on the Highway S flowage. The purpose was to remove floating cattail mat and restore open water areas in an effort to enhance the flowage for wildlife use. These floating mats cause major problems during the year - clogging water control structures or becoming stuck on the dike during high water. All together, approximately 3200 cubic yards of material was removed.

West Rice Lake Dike

The West Rice Lake refurbishment is part of a Waterfowl Stamp Project written last year. The project was designed to restore the functionality of the West Rice Lake Dike. This included restoring the spillway and creating a secondary spillway. The dike was leveled and widened in some places, and riprap was placed along the east side of the dike to combat further erosion.

We have also been working with WVIC to maintain the Big Eau Pleine Aerator. The aerator opens large areas allowing atmospheric oxygen to enter the potentially oxygen depleted water. This process aids in the decomposition of organic material, and increases oxygen levels critical for fish survival.



On February 8th, we held our annual "Post Waterfowl Season Meeting". Waterfowl hunters from around Central Wisconsin attended to discuss the waterfowl regulation three year trial. Data collected over the past several years indicates that the new regulations are providing a higher quality hunting experience. At the meeting, the overwhelming majority of hunters agreed and voted 32-1 in favor of moving forward to make these rules permanent.



Annual Meeting Highlights

Article by Pam Resech

The Friends group held their annual meeting on Saturday January 21st. The morning meeting was enjoyed by 33 members and their families. After the meeting, Jim Peterson, a board member and local scout leader, gave a cooking demonstration about Dutch Oven Cooking. All attendees were then able to experience the delicious food that was prepared in this manner. While they were eating, the DVD "Secrets of a Winter Swamp" by Gerard Fuehrer was played. Unfortunately, there was not enough snow to take a group snowshoeing, but the weather was nice enough to take an adventurous group on a hike through the forest and across the new boardwalk.



Visit The George W. Mead
Wildlife Area Online
<http://meadwildlife.org/>

Photo by Tom Brown





Friends Board Welcomes New Board Members

Article by Sue Hall

Photos by Pam Resech

Lorraine Michalski

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". Our Friends' board is privileged to have a person join us who enjoys sharing her dream of nature with others. Lorraine and her husband have lived for almost 50 years near the east entrance of McMillan and have walked every trail dozens of times enjoying the birds, animals and changing seasons and sharing this appreciation with others. Mead has become her "home away from home" as she has taken on the Volunteer Coordinator duties, organized the library, and schedules and trains the greeters. With her computer skills and friendly personality, Lorraine will continue to be an asset to our board and we are pleased to have her expertise on our board of directors.



Susan Ford-Hoffert

Experience and expertise in communications, public relations and her creativity with being the vice president of marketing for UMR for the past 21 years will make Susan an asset to our board of directors. Conservation, wildlife and conservancy are passions of hers as she developed a love for the environment and outdoors as a child canoeing, camping and fishing with her parents out west. She has visited the Mead regularly with the Wausau Bird Club and has hiked the paths as well as enjoying bird watching. Our board looks forward to working with Susan and sharing her experience with non-profit organizations she has worked with in the past.

Mike Gross Retires from Friends Board

Article by Sue Hall

Photo by Pam Resech

One of the unique aspects of the Mead Wildlife area is the interpretive signage that helps the visitors know which areas, plants, and wildlife they are viewing. Mike Gross has been instrumental in helping to design these panels, making the area more visitor friendly. He was also instrumental in helping collect artifacts and design the panels for the historical display located in the lobby of the center. This gives the history of the area from the Native Americans, through the fur trade and the logging industry until it became the public wildlife area it is today. Mike has also helped with many of the Friends' events such as the Annual Pancake breakfast and Grandparent's Day. The board thanks Mike for his service and appreciates his many contributions. We look forward to his volunteering with our many projects in the future.





Friends of the Mead/McMillan Assn. Inc. Membership

Members of the Friends of the Mead/McMillan know the value of membership! Great gift for birthdays, Christmas, anniversary or special person who loves the environment! We will send a letter to the recipient letting them know you gave this gift in their name.

Please check the label on the front cover of this newsletter as your membership might have expired. If there is no date on it, you are receiving this newsletter free for now. If your membership is up for renewal or you would like to become a member and help us with our environmental efforts, fill out this form.

If you would like to purchase a membership for your family or friends you can do so by filling out this form. We appreciate your support of our efforts to promote environmental education for youth and adults who come to the Mead Wildlife Area.

The annual membership fee is \$30. Make Check payable to: Friends of the Mead/McMillan. Mail to: Mead Wildlife Area, S2148 Cty Hwy S, Milladore, WI, 54454.

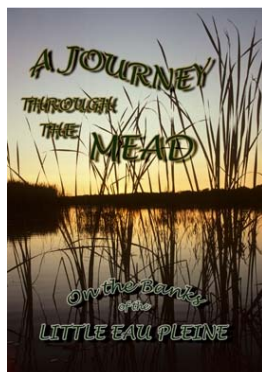
Renewal _____

New Member _____

Gift for New Member _____

Name	
Address	
City	
State	
Zip	
Phone	
Email	

Thank you for your support with our environmental endeavors!



When you are visiting the Mead Wildlife Education Center please stop by our souvenir showcase.

All proceeds go toward education programs at the Mead.

A video is also available showcasing the management of the diverse landscape and wildlife found in the Mead Wildlife Area.

\$12.00 each Or 2 for \$20.00



**Friends of the
Mead/McMillan**
Association, Inc.
S2148 County S
Milladore, WI 54454

NON PROFIT
U.S. Postage
PAID
Stevens Point, WI
Permit # 225

Mailing Address Label

Please check the label of this newsletter as your membership might have expired. If there is no date on it, you are receiving this newsletter free for now. If your membership is up for renewal or you would like to become a member visit our website; www.meadwildlife.org or stop by the Center.

Wetland's Gazette

Annual Clean Up Day at Mead

Saturday, April 28th 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Come celebrate Earth Week by helping with our annual spring clean-up day. We hope you will take advantage of this great opportunity to join us in the fun of enjoying nature and helping "spruce-up" the wildlife area. Your efforts will be rewarded with a lunch!!

Meet at the Visitor Center to get your assigned area. We will be working on the following tasks:

- ♦ Picking up trash in parking lots and along roadsides at Mead & McMillan
- ♦ Cleaning around the outside of the Center; window sills, bricks, kiosks
- ♦ Gardening activities: raking, weeding, and mulching



Volunteers should bring their own leather gloves. We will provide rubber gloves, safety vests & garbage bags. Following the clean up, we will provide a lunch of BBQ's on a bun, chips, and soda. If you would like to contribute a dish to pass, it is welcome, but not necessary. Please let us know though, if you plan to bring something!

Volunteers should RSVP by Monday, April 16th at 715-457-6771 or by emailing pamela.resech@wisconsin.gov. This will help us to coordinate activities.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!