



WETLAND'S GAZETTE

Volume 1, Issue 2

June 2005

Update from the Mead

By Tomas I. Meier—Mead/McMillan Project Supervisor.

The Mead Education and Visitor Center is progressing well. The outside looks fantastic and is proving to be quite the attention getter. More and more people are stopping in just to take a look and inquire about the mission of the new facility. The drywall is all completed within the building and spraying of the walls should start the week of May 16th. It will not be too long and the interior will really begin to pull together. We are already booked for several meetings during the summer and fall. The pictures give you an idea of what the facility looks like and the stage of construction. Completion of the building is planned for mid June.

Educational activities are in full swing, with all day programming for school students occurring almost every day. With the cold spring, it has been difficult to hold sessions out doors so we have unofficially used the new classroom facility for some activities. Although full of dust and debris, the classroom has worked out well and provided a place out of the elements. What a treat it will be when it is finished and totally useable.



On the Mead and McMillan in general, litter has become a major problem this year. It has always been an extra workload in the spring, but this year it has been especially bad. It appears that true stewardship, of our public lands, is not a priority at the current time. The biggest problem is the dumping of household debris in our parking areas. Cleanup takes a lot of our time and often requires costly disposal. If you are using the property and see anyone in the act of dumping materials or items, please get a license number and record the time and date. So often, individuals see this kind of activity and just do not take the time to jot down pertinent information. Any information you can get will hopefully help us reduce this misuse of the property.

Summer birds of the MMWA

By Dan Belter

Birding during the summer months at both the Mead and McMillan State Wildlife Areas can be a rewarding experience. With all the water type birds nesting in the marshes, both wildlife areas also have many grassland and woodlands birds that nest as well. June is the best month for birding both areas, and getting out early in the morning will offer a nice variety of marsh, grassland, and woodland birds. Many neo-tropical migrants stay to nest at the Mead and McMillan during June and July, but then as August arrives, they start their southward migration. Most of the water type birds will stay all summer long and don't migrate until September and October. Grassland birds will depart at various times throughout the summer, but most stay throughout August. In late July and into August, if there are any good shallow marshes, or drawn down marshes, shorebirds will present. Most shorebirds species nest in the arctic regions of the world and they begin to migrate in late June. The Mead can be a very good place to see shorebirds, providing there is good habitat for them.

Here is a list of some of the more interesting, unusual and rare birds that can be found at the Mead and McMillan State Wildlife Areas during the summer months. Common Loon, American White Pelican, Least Bittern, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White Ibis (first state record from the Mead), Swainson's Hawk, King Rail, Common Moorhen, Red-necked Phalarope, Forster's Tern, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Long-eared Owl, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Veery, Wood Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, Cerulean Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Henslow's Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Again, these are just some of the more interesting, unusual, and rare birds that can be found at both wildlife areas. Of course many of the more normal species that you can expect to see will be found in a day for birding, but both wildlife areas always has something interesting to see, if you can find it.

Friends of Mead- McMillan

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DNR Staff on Board:

- *Tom Meier—Project Manager—Mosinee 693-7336*
- *Brian Peters—Stevens Point 344-7924*

Editor:

- *Dave Grabski*
dgrabski@charter.net



Auburndale Students Visit Mead Center

By Beth Clouse

On Monday, May 9th forty-six fourth graders from Auburndale Elementary arrived for an educational day at the Mead. Tom Meier, along with two other staff members, provided us with an entertaining, fun filled day, which the students will remember for a long time.

The day consisted of four sessions. They were the following: 1) an introduction to the Mead Wildlife Area, 2) Mobly the Owl, 3) Energy, and 4) Heritage. During the introduction, students were inspired to learn the many reasons that wildlife areas are needed, the numerous jobs of a wildlife biologist, that predators kill only to survive, that the habitats of animals are disappearing, how Consolidated papers donated 20,000 acres of land, and 10,000 more acres have been added, and that it is owned by all of us.

With amazement in his eyes, Jacob Schneider stated, "That's pretty cool that all us kids own 30,000 acres!"

Next, Mobly and Tom entertained the students. Mobly hooted, while the students learned: what she eats, that she molts in July and August, she likes to be with Tom, and she has laid eggs (one year as many as thirteen). Mobly even waved good-bye to the students before she was put back into her cage!

The Energy unit was another treat for the students. For this we got to go up by the new building! A peek inside of the new building showed us the massive fireplace! Outside, we saw how much less energy a fluorescent bulb uses compared to an incandescent. Everyone was amazed how the meter slowed way up when the fluorescent bulb was used! An activity of eating popcorn helped us to see if you use small amounts of energy, it will last much longer. Another activity had the students spellbound when they saw how solar energy could pump water. We walked around the new building to view the geo-thermal field, where a lot of the heat and cooling for the building will come from. We also saw the site of the solar hot water heater, the solar panel, and the huge wind tower.

Our last part of the day was the Heritage session. Staff members Kyle and Bill told us the story of the Chippewa that lived in the area, and how they had won a battle to control Smokey Hill. We learned that this was a very important battle, because it determined who would control this area that was full of wildlife, and wild rice for the Native Americans. They showed us pelts of different animals that live in the area. We learned the differences in the size of a fox, a coyote, and a wolf. Did you know that to tell the difference between a coyote and a wolf is very easy if they are running? A Coyote runs with its tail down and a wolf runs with its tail up! Traps were also demonstrated, with the favorite one being the live beaver trap. It was a strange contraption, but certainly had the attention of all students!

Students enjoyed the entire day! It was outside of school! It was fun! And they learned so much! They can't wait to go back and visit those 30,000 acres that they own!



Annual WSO Trip

By Dan Belter

At 7:30 a.m. on April 9, 2005, the annual George W. Mead State Wildlife Area field trip, sponsored by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, was held. About 45 participants from across Wisconsin came to take part in this year's field trip, which was lead by Kent Hall and Dan Belter. Shortly after 7:30, the group took off from the WDNR headquarters building and car pooled to several areas within the Mead for a nice morning of birding. Some of the areas we stopped at included; South Rice Lake, County Line Road (back by the old yellow barn), the Rangeline Flowage, the river walk east of the Rangeline Flowage, and finally back to some areas just north of the headquarters building.

The morning was filled with early spring migrants that included lots of waterfowl, blackbirds, sparrows, lingering winter visitors that haven't left for their northern breeding grounds yet, and many more. Some of the more interesting species of birds we found (both seen and heard) included; Virginia Rail, Trumpeter Swan, Osprey, Greater Prairie Chicken, Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Eastern Meadowlark.

After the field trip ended, most of the participants stayed for a tour of the new Mead Visitor and Education building that Kent Hall led. The building was still under construction, but we did get access to the inside to see what the layout and design was like. Kent also talked about the energy savings that this one of a kind building will offer, and how the building will be creating its own heat and energy and be selling back to the power company any excess power it creates. Many of us can't wait until this new building is finished to see the potential it will offer the Mead staff, visitors and educators alike.



Mead / McMillan T-shirt

The Friends group have T-shirts available for sale. They can be purchased at the Mead headquarters after the dedication ceremony for the Mead Education and Visitor Center.

Youth sizes: Medium (10-12) Large (14-16)

\$10.00 each

Adult sizes: Medium, Large, X large and XX large

\$12.00 each

T-shirts come in light blue, white, ash and azalea.



Who are the Friends of Mead-McMillan

By Bart Hobson, President of The Friends of Mead/McMillan

We're a diverse group - birders, hunters, conservationists - with a common goal, ensuring the preservation and improvement of the Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas. We live in different communities - Stevens Point, Marshfield, Wausau, Milladore and others - but share a dedication to these magnificent natural lands.

For years the Friends have helped the staff of the MMWA with clean-up and fund-raising, but our involvement grew dramatically with the proposal to build a new education and administration building at the Mead. The original proposal asked the Friends to raise \$75,000 to supplement the state of Wisconsin's \$611,000. Ultimately, the community response to our fund-raising efforts produced over one and one-half million in cash and in-kind donations and the resulting building is a custom-designed, energy efficient masterpiece. So many people have given so much to this project in time, money and materials - clearly the Friends are not alone in our love of the MMWA.

With the opening of the building the Friends will be moving into a new phase of support for the MMWA, helping provide educational opportunities at the Mead. There will be a need for instructors in the classroom and volunteers at the information counter. We are working on a guidebook and Website to tell visitors about the MMWA. And we are looking into funding a naturalist/educator position to supplement the hard work of the MMWA staff.

We welcome new members. Your membership fee helps support our efforts and we invite you to attend our meetings and be involved in our volunteer activities. See you at the Mead!





Private Sector Funding for the Mead SWA Education & Visitor Center: Past, Present & Future

By Kent D. Hall, Ph.D., Chair of Fund Raising for the "Friends"

When fund raising for the Mead SWA Education & Visitor Center started in the fall of 2001, the "Friends" were told we had to raise \$75,000 before state funds totaling \$611,000, would be released for the building. With a key grant of \$55,000 from the Mead-Witter Foundation of Wisconsin Rapids, we were able to raise that amount of money within two months. This amount allowed us to build a structure of about 3,800 sq. ft. But the Friends, Tom Meier (Project Mgr.) & the Mead Staff plus Tom Brown (Project Architect), felt that more could be achieved. Tom Brown was well-known for his interests in "green architecture" and "renewable energy", and argued that we should consider working toward these goals for our building. The Friends and the Mead Staff bought into the idea and we started working toward making the new building qualify for a high-level green rating (LEED) from the U.S. Green Building Council by building design and inclusion of alternate energy technologies. Our current building of approximately 8300 sq. ft. (including kiosks) has the potential to become the first ZNE (Zero Net Energy) building in Wisconsin. We hope to accomplish this goal by generating electricity from a wind turbine & photovoltaic tracking panel, heat water with passive solar panels and heat the building with a geothermal heat exchanger and masonry furnace. On days that we generate more electricity than we use, it will be sold into the grid of Alliant Energy.

In addition to raising money for the building, money has been raised for an amphitheatre and an "Audubon Trail" which will be developed to a nearby wetland complex with the potential to place a boardwalk into the wetland. Moreover, \$50,000 of educational signage for the building and outlying Mead grounds has been purchased (designed by Schmeekle Reserve at UW-Stevens Point).

These remarkable achievements have been made possible by cash contributions totaling \$297,000 (donated by 287 companies, organizations & individuals) and "In-Kind" donations totaling \$1,279,000 for a grand total of **\$1, 576,000** to date. These "In-Kind donations are from 32 different companies with the major contributors being Marv & Ruth Schutte and employees at Wausau Homes (\$1,000,000+ for the building), \$45,000 from Kolbe & Kolbe Milling Company (thermal windows in the building), \$42,000 by Dr. William Quinn (for animal mounts), Wausau Tile Co. (tiling in building) & County Materials Corporation (ready mix for building and brick for amphitheatre). At this time, over 2,000 students are either visiting the Mead grounds or being taught by the Mead Staff. Without doubt, several more thousand could be accommodated if staffing were available to handle them. The potential for this building is remarkable, but will never be realized unless an "Environmental/Wildlife Educator" is added to the Staff. Since the state budget is so restricted, the money for this educator will almost certainly have to be raised in the private sector. For a permanent solution, the Friends are considering the development of a \$1,000,000 endowment for perpetual funding of such a position.

Thanks to everyone who has donated financially in any way to the new building. And keep in mind that ultimately, this new building will help pass on to future generations the respect for stewardship of our natural resources. Your donations have and will make this goal happen.

Primary Business Address
Your Address Line 2
Your Address Line 3
Your Address Line 4

Phone: 555-555-5555

Fax: 555-555-5555

Email: xyz@microsoft.com

Mailing Address Line 1

Mailing Address Line 2

Mailing Address Line 3

Mailing Address Line 4

Mailing Address Line 5

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