



# WETLAND'S GAZETTE

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## New Mead Education/Office Building Dedication Ceremony

About 170 of the major donors for "Project Mead" gathered at the Mead Wildlife Area on Wednesday morning to dedicate the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center. Upon arrival, the donors were directed to a tent next to the building overlooking the Berkhahn Flowage where they heard comments from major donors including Ruth and Marv Schuette, George Mead and Susan Feith. Members of the Friends of Mead/McMillan Board of Directors, neighbors of the Mead, WDNR Administrators, and the staff of the Mead were introduced. Retired Senator Kevin Shibilski, who was instrumental in sparking the idea of an education center, spoke as well as Kent Hall, who was the major fund raiser for Project Mead for the Friends of Mead/McMillan group. Tom Meier, superintendent of the Mead Wildlife Area expressed appreciation to neighbors who have been supportive of the Mead for many years as well as the many donors who have made this facility a reality.



Following presentations, the participants were directed to the front of the building where George Mead, Susan Feith, Ruth and Marv Schuette, Bart Hobson, president of the Friends group, and Kent Hall, vice-president of the Friends group, cut the ribbons at the front of the building and around the large sign naming the building for Stanton W. Mead.

## Mead had big ideas for Little Eau Pleine

**By Dave Engel (reprinted from the Daily Journal with permission)**

I am pretty sure it will be now or never," George W. Mead "the first" told the Daily Tribune. In September 1954, a little more than 50 years ago, Consolidated Water Power & Paper co. president Mead wrote an open letter published in this newspaper. The state Public Service Commission and Conservation Commission were considering his proposed reservoir on the Little Eau Pleine River and Mead wanted to make his case to the public. Mead's letter suggested a two-hour drive up "Road O" north from near Junction City "through the heart of the vast low area of the Little Eau Pleine Valley." At the "old bridge" crossing the Little Eau Pleine, the water would stand 20 feet deep under a new bridge, he said, after the reservoir was developed. Pausing at the hill where Highway O met Highway C, Mead described a scenic view of the Big Eau Pleine reservoir, the prototype for the Little Eau Pleine version being considered. "This is our largest reservoir, built about 15 years ago by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. and sold to Wisconsin Valley Improvement Co." According to Mead, it had paid for itself several times by producing electric power. Not only that, before the Big Eau Pleine dam, both the Big and Little Eau Pleine rivers poured a vast amount of water into the Wisconsin, unrecognized by Wausau authorities who monitored river flow. In Wisconsin Rapids, "Water stood in the Congregational Church basement two to three feet deep, Elk's basement also. One night we had to get boats out and save several families living along 2nd St. S. who were marooned and severely frightened in the black night with deep water all around their homes." "Besides the general flooding of streets and the general fear here, our paper mills suffered the flooding of their basements which were filled with motors and machinery so the mills had to close at a heavy loss to the companies and an interruption of the important payrolls of those days or even weeks." The same thing happened to the Nepco mills. "Do you remember the low road between Port Edwards and Nekoosa was flooded three feet deep and do you realize it doesn't happen any more?" The solution was the Big Eau Pleine reservoir.

(see Mead Ideas, page 2)

### Friends of Mead- McMillan

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#### Editor:

- *Dave Grabski*



## **PJ Jacobs Junior High Students Visit Mead Center** **By Patty McGibbon and Dave Grabski**

The buses turn onto county S, the final leg of our journey to the Mead Wildlife Area. The hum of the wheels and the background chatter have lulled a few “late to bed” teens to sleep. The day is bright and clear with a crisp wind out of the northwest. And then we see it, the new wind generator. It stands within a backdrop of turquoise sky, capturing the wind and turning it into moving electrons for use in the new building. A smile breaks on a face; this is going to be a good day away from the routine of the normal school day!

On Thursday, Sept. 29th and Friday, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> approximately 140 ninth grade students (70 per day) from PJ Jacobs Jr. High in Stevens Point arrived at the Mead in the cold chill of the morning. As a part of their Environmental Science curriculum, they enjoyed the day rotating through 4 sessions: Biodiversity & the Greater Prairie Chicken, Renewable Energy, Wildlife Management, and Wetlands Study.

During the Biodiversity session (taught by their teacher, Patty McGibbon), students learned about the importance of the diversity of living things in an area. The Mead offers incredible biodiversity within the upland woods, wetlands, and prairie ecosystems. They then did an activity that simulated the detrimental effects of a loss of diversity within a population’s gene pool. The Greater Prairie Chicken was used as an example of this problem. Students were amazed to hear about this once plentiful bird. The Greater Prairie Chicken used to be so abundant in Wisconsin that when flushed by tractors tilling the land, it looked like waves of smoke roiling up into the sky. Now, they are isolated in small pockets throughout Central Wisconsin, including here at Mead. They learned that the more diverse your gene pool, the better “equipped” you’ll be for survival, and the only way to keep that diverse gene pool is to have many individuals within yours and neighboring populations.

Students rode a hay wagon to view various wetland types and learned how to manage a wetlands area. They visited the new Education and Visitor Center to learn about the new zero-energy building and other Renewable Energy techniques. While learning about Wildlife Management students used a radio collar tracking device to locate a “hidden animal” in the Mead forest area.



### **Mead Ideas**

(continued from page 1)

Now, Mead directed his attention to the Little Eau Pleine. According to plans, at a cost of \$6 million, it would flood 27,500 acres, of which 20,000 were “low and worthless” farm land. The farmers tried to improve their prospects 20 years previous, said Mead, by forming a drainage district, and digging miles of ditches, then planting crops, but the crops failed because the land was heavy muck, sour, and cold. When the drainage district went bankrupt, Consolidated bought the defaulted bonds from Milwaukee banks and became the owner of the 20,000 acres. Like that on the Big, a reservoir on the Little would abate floods and furnish a large amount of low-cost electric power at no cost to the taxpayers. “Wherever there is cheap power, the population increases just as it ahs all along the Wisconsin River,” wrote Mead. Otherwise, the paper mills could expand their businesses by going to the South for cheap natural gas and fast-growing timber for pulp. Many had done that “and it is now a great boon to our Southern states,” Mead said. The mills in Wisconsin would continue to operate, he assured the readers, but they could not expand without additional cheap electric power. “We have no oil wells, no coal mines in Wisconsin. Railroad transportation is expensive and sometimes uncertain, so of course we ought to use our natural resources to the utmost. A reservoir would be vastly more attractive to sportsmen than this impenetrable thicket of small trees and brush. This summer I have driven across Moon Road Bridge 20 times. There are always fishermen there, smiling and catching fish, which cannot be said of most of our natural lakes in northern Wisconsin. It would take two or three years to build the dam, lift the roads and place bridges “so we ought to get started at once.” The lakes and surrounding areas can be developed into the best wildlife propagation in the entire state and will prove a great attraction and valuable benefit to Marathon, Wood and Portage Counties,” Mead wrote, with a touch of ironic and unintentional prophecy.

*Dave Engel is a Wisconsin Rapids native, local historian and author of nine books in his “River City Memoirs” series. His column is a Monday feature in the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune.*



## 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.



## Inspirational Visit to the Mead

**By Randy Korb**

At a class reunion several years ago a classmate from Clintonville High School, Rod Korth, approached me late in the evening. Rod lived in Madison and worked for the Wisconsin DNR in natural resources. He evidently had heard about my presentations and activities in wildlife education.

After chatting a few moments about our work, Rod asked me, "When you are giving your talks around the state, does anyone ask you what inspired your interest in nature?"

"Yes, I am often asked that question."

"What do you tell them?"

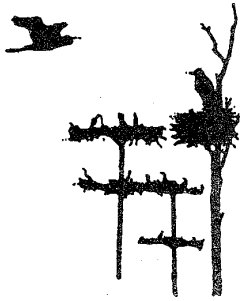
I told Rod that one event clearly inspired a deep love of nature. That in ninth grade I remember riding a bus to Mead Wildlife Area on a birding field trip led by the high school biology teacher. I also remember being the only freshman; all the other students were upper grades, including my brother, a senior.

I was familiar with very few birds at the time. I went on to describe seeing an amazing array of birds that day, of all shapes and sizes. I was awed by the incredible colors, especially the waterfowl, of birds I had never seen before.

Rod smiled, "You know what Randy, there were two freshmen on the bus that day. I sat next to you. When people ask me that question, I give them the same answer."

*Randy Korb gives free-lance talks on the monarch butterfly, amphibians and other wildlife topics to community groups and schools in Wisconsin and Illinois. He also develops and markets products that connect students and parents to nature. He recently wrote a book and CD on Wisconsin frogs. He is the outreach coordinator for Northeast Wisconsin Audubon Society and current president of the Wisconsin Audubon Council.*

Contact Randy at [randykorb@hotmail.com](mailto:randykorb@hotmail.com) or P.O. Box 1963, Green Bay, WI 54305



**Friends of  
Mead/  
McMillan  
Association, Inc.**

***An Invitation to Membership***

*The Friends of Mead-McMillan Association is a private, non-profit corporation dedicated to the purpose of assisting with wildlife, interpretative and management activities at the Mead-McMillan State Wildlife Area. The organization is composed of individuals from many different backgrounds interested in increasing public understanding, appreciation, support and enjoyment of wildlife.*

*Mead-McMillan is located in Portage, Wood and Marathon counties and comprises over 35,000 acres of varied habitat. The aspen, hardwoods and open marshes are called home by an abundance of waterfowl, songbirds, deer and other wildlife.*

*Your annual membership helps support:*

- *Wildlife education for over 2000 area youth, on an annual basis*
- *The new Education and Visitors' Center*
- *On property Wildlife management*
- *Updated maps and information on Mead-McMillan Wildlife Area*
- *On property Wildlife management*
  - *Maintenance of Mead and McMillan Bike trails*

*If you would like to become a member of the Friends of Mead-McMillan, Please fill in the form below and return it with your tax deductible contribution.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Please check appropriate membership options:*

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Individual-Family - \$20

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Business/Corporate - \$100

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Patron - \$250

*Membership amount \$* \_\_\_\_\_

*Additional Donation \$* \_\_\_\_\_

*Total Enclosed \$* \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to: Friends of Mead-McMillan Assn., Inc.**

**Mail to: Friends of Mead-McMillan Assn., Inc.  
S2148 County S  
Milladore, WI 54454**

*Thanks for your support; your renewal date will be placed on your newsletter label.*



## **Marv and Rudie Schuette Care About the Mead**

**Article contributed by George Rogers (a long time user of the Mead)**

When the Friends of Mead/McMillan approached Marv Schuette of Wausau Homes about doing something for the Mead Wildlife Area, he thought this might be something his wife Ruth (Rudie) would be interested in. How right he was. What it led to was the million dollar gift of a 6,200 square foot building, a Wausau Home, that's called the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center. Stanton Mead was the CEO of Consolidated Papers when it donated 20,000 acres that became the core of the Mead Wildlife Area, so he obviously made a huge impact on the wildlife area. And the Schuette's have placed their indelible mark on the Mead too. They gave the structure and other donors provided the furnishings and extras for what promises to be an unsurpassed environmental education facility. At the groundbreaking last year, Rudie said she grew up on the Peshtigo River and "they never got the woods out of the girl." They still haven't. And as a former teacher, she knows a thing or two about the value of education. Tom Meier, property superintendent/biologist of the Mead, said Rudie's involvement has gone beyond the building donation. "She has been instrumental in approval of the design," he said, "and she has assisted with the education program. She's extremely outdoor and environmentally oriented and tremendously supportive of what we do here."

She even contributed physical labor, helping put in a silt fence to control erosion around the construction site and bailing out water before concrete was laid, Meier said. "She's been wonderful to work with," he said. "Without her involvement I think it would be a much different and less complete effort." Rudie is happy that the Wausau Home gift was a catalyst for other donations, and she looks forward to the environmental learning experiences that will be provided at the building. Even before construction of the Education and Visitor Center, students came to the Mead to learn, but Rudie was distressed that it went on in what amounted to a machine shed. She decided that wasn't the right place. She also saw inadequate quarters for the Mead staff. "The staff was in desperate need of office space," she said, and that's something else that will be provided in the new building. She doesn't see the education part of the building as something just for kids. Other groups will come there to meet and to learn, she said.

When the finishing touches are put on the building, will the job be done? Not in Rudie's opinion. The Mead staff is stretched too thin, she said, to handle all the teaching duties that will come with the Education and Visitor Center. She strongly endorses the next project of the Friends of Mead/McMillan—funding for a full-time educator at the Mead.

## **Friends of Mead/McMillan to Host Open House**

An Open House for the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center at the George W. Mead Wildlife Area will be held on **Saturday, October 22, from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.** The public will have the opportunity to see the newly constructed 6,208 square foot facility which includes staff offices, classroom with full kitchen, small meeting room and library, large lobby for interpretative displays, covered kiosks for outdoor displays and sheltered group seating and an outdoor amphitheater. It also incorporates state-of-the-art sustainable design and construction practices.

Visitors will also be able to hike or bike on the path surrounding the building, enjoy a lunch and visit with friends and neighbors.

The board of directors of the Friends of Mead will be on hand to direct people around the building and you can purchase one of the new unique T-shirts pictured in this newsletter.

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**Wetland's Gazette**