



WETLAND'S GAZETTE

Volume 5, Issue 1

April 2009

Message from our New President Article by Doug Aziz

At our inaugural Board of Director's meeting of 2009, Tom Meier advised us of a state mandated minimum 10% budget reduction which will effect operations at Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas (MMWA) in many different ways. As Friend's of the Mead/McMillan Association, Inc. we believe it is up to us to fill the void which will be created by the budget shortfall. Obviously, one of the ways we can do that is to continue providing funds to supplement the education program. For example, we will, for the second year in a row, donate \$5,000 to pay the salary of an LTE to assist Pam Stange with educational programming in the coming months. It is worth mentioning here that all of the slots are already filled for the upcoming spring environmental education season.

Another need we were apprised of is that MWA will lose one of the three vehicles presently in use there. The one that has been chosen is the Chevy Blazer which also happens to be the most efficient one to operate. It will be sent to an auction later this year, along with numerous other vehicles from around the state, to be sold to raise funds to offset the state's budget deficit and reduce ongoing state expenditures. The question was raised by Tom as to whether the Friend's would be willing to consider buying the vehicle in question or replacing it in kind. Fortunately, we have the funds to do that if it becomes necessary.

Additional equipment needs have been identified which, at the time, were placed on a wish list for the Friend's to consider based on the likelihood it would be difficult to procure them through the DNR operating budget; specifically, the ATV/Ranger replacement, a 15 passenger van, a wood splitter and surveillance camera(s).

Also under discussion is another major fund raising campaign to underwrite the development of a rainy day classroom to handle large groups of students when inclement weather forces them inside. It would be combined with additional storage for the many items related to our environmental educational programming as it has become apparent that our existing facility is not capable of meeting our needs under certain conditions.

The bottom line is that continued high intensity fund raising will be required to enable us to fulfill our mission of assisting with wildlife, interpretive and management activities at the Mead & McMillan State Wildlife Areas. Members of the Friend's

Friends of Mead-McMillan

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Mosinee 693-3491*
- *Vice-President—Kent Hall
Stevens Point 344-8081*
- *Secretary—Jim Yulga
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- *Don Furo*
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- *John Shippy*
- *Bob Tremi*
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- *Jim Yulga*

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Message from the President (continued from front page)

organization have always stepped-up when needed to help with fund raising either with monetary contributions of their own or with help staffing events organized to raise funds. We sincerely appreciate your past efforts and encourage your continued support of our fund raising efforts, for that aspect of our activity will play an even greater role in our support of MWA during the stressful economic times we currently find ourselves in.

Because of the shortfall in funding described above, it will also be difficult to obtain funding for the LTE positions customarily employed to work in the field to accomplish the myriad of activities required to keep the wild-life areas both user friendly and in good working order. Accordingly, this represents another opportunity for member involvement in organized work days and/or special projects which, otherwise may not get done due to the priority of other work determined to be of greater importance by the staff.

Under consideration is the establishment of a member contact system by which we would approach individual members by phone to solicit your help in accomplishing the tasks described above. Can we count on you to be there in this time of need and thereby insure the continued appeal and smooth functioning of the Mead-McMillan Wildlife Areas?

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the important work which will fall to FMMWA please call me at: 715/693-3491 (H) or 715/297-2620 (C) or email az54455@yahoo.com and, I will take your contact information so you can be informed when we are planning to work on a specific project.

From the Manager Article by Tom Meier

We have been gearing up for spring, setting priorities and plans. Some of these plans include grassland management work, invasive plant control, boundary posting, selection of new forest management areas (timber sales) and the completion of the ruffed grouse and timber management auto tour route. Because of our ownership on the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir and proximity to the flowage, we took over the responsibility of operating and maintaining the aerator for this system.

We are being hit hard by the economic conditions as well; reduced budgets and no funds for acquisition. Many properties that we have desired to acquire are now for sale but we cannot pursue acquisition and may be lost forever. We also lost one of our vehicles due to state wide reduction of vehicles to save dollars.

We are looking at changes to our waterfowl hunting approach in the future. New rules developed by waterfowl hunters that use the Mead will be voted on at the 2009 Spring Rule Hearings held in each county on April 13th at 7:00 p.m. These changes include: 1) no early goose season before regular opening of duck season on the Mead; 2) increasing the size of two refuges; 3. closing of duck season daily at 1 p.m. for first 16 days after opening day of season; 4) potential control of hunter numbers for the opening weekend only (managed hunt). If voted for approval, these rules will go into effect in 2010.

All new donor tiles have been installed as well as repair of expansion cracks and affected tiles that resulted from initial construction.

We are looking forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary of the Mead Wildlife Area with you all. Keep watching for updates for our August 29th celebration.



Mark Your Calendars!!

Saturday August 29, 2009

The Mead Will Be Celebrating Its 50th Anniversary!

More information about the coming event will be
in the next Wetland Gazette.

For now, we would like people to bring us their photos of the Mead

Winter Fun at The Mead **Article by Beth Clouse**

The fourth graders from Auburndale Elementary recently visited the Mead Wildlife Center for a day of winter fun and learning. The students started the day off with a bog walk discovering animal tracks, identifying different types of trees and enjoying the crisp winter air. After lunch, the kids were introduced to lumbering in Wisconsin using artifacts from the era and even recreating a lumber camp dance! Finally, the students strapped on a pair of snowshoes and trekked around the grounds finding signs of wildlife and identifying more animal tracks. "Snowshoeing was cool," was heard by more than one student. "I'm going to make my mom buy me a pair of snowshoes," was another common saying from the kids. The quiet bus ride home was enough to tell that the fourth graders enjoyed a day full of learning and exercise!



Fourth Grade class from Auburndale
Photo by Ann Rozner



Spotlight on Board Members

Article by Sue Hall

Photos by Sue Hall



RETIRING BOARD MEMBER

Sally Overholt - Retired and refocusing: Sally contributed to our board with her expertise and help with the library. She and her family contributed to our Mead Trust in memory of her husband, Tom, who was an avid bird watcher and explored many areas on the Mead for over 10 years. Sally was co-chairperson of the "Family Art Festival at the Mead" which helped raise funds for our educator position and helped to establish the Mead store. Thank you, Sally for your four years on the board and continuing to serve as a volunteer.

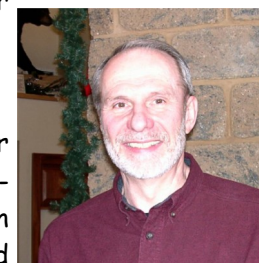
NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Sally Furo - "It is both an honor and privilege to be a board member" said Sally when asked to join the board. She is currently the asst. vice president of Credit Adm. at the Pioneer Bank in Auburndale where she is an Internal and loan officer and has been employed there for 43 years. She also helps on the financial counsel of St. Kilan's Church in Blenker where she has been a member for 25 years.



Stephanie Haka - After serving as the Volunteer Coordinator at the Mead, Stephanie has decided to join the Friends Board to continue facilitating educational programs. We received several grants thanks to her efforts while being the coordinator including the winter ecology programming involving snowshoeing, animal tracks and winter plant ecology. She is a UWSP resource management graduate and presently is the district director for Junior Achievement of Portage and Wood Counties.

Don Fox - Serves as a volunteer Wildlife Assistant at the Mead and enjoys working with other volunteers and the Mead staff on wildlife management projects. Don was the Social Work Supervisor of the Adult Services Unit for Wood County and served in the U.S. Army Reserves in an engineering battalion for 10 years. He is also active in the Central Chamber Chorale and foundation member of the Rocky Mountain Elk group.



Visit The George W. Mead Wildlife Area Online

<http://meadwildlife.org/>



Tracks, Trails and Snowshoe Tales

Article and Photos by Pam Stange

Let it snow, Let it snow, Let it snow! was the phrase that was running through children's heads as they were on their way to the Mead Wildlife Area for their winter environmental education day. Students from Rudolph, Stratford, and Auburndale Elementary schools along with St. Peter Lutheran School from Schofield came to enjoy a fun filled day outdoors snowshoeing through the prairie and forest surrounding the Center.

School groups visiting the Mead WLA this winter were the first to take advantage of our new winter program. Last year we borrowed snowshoes from Wausau School Forest to see if the students would enjoy and learn from the experience. This year, thanks to Stephanie Haka, who wrote and was awarded a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant, the groups were able to explore the Mead via our own snowshoes.

After instructions and help strapping on their snowshoes students and adults broke trail and explored the winter wonderland looking for signs of animal activity. All the groups were led either by a Mead staff person or a volunteer with a track guide through the fresh snow to look for and identify animal tracks. Some groups were even fortunate to observe the animals that were making the tracks.

Some of the groups learned about the history of snowshoeing in Wisconsin. They learned about 3 different types of snowshoes (Beaver Tail, Bear Paw and Ojibwa) utilized by Native Americans who lived or traveled throughout the different habitats at the Mead. Students and adults gained knowledge of the anatomy of snowshoes and snowshoeing techniques along with the appropriate dress needed for this outdoor activity.

Comments from Rudolph students about snowshoeing at the Mead: "We found a golden rod gall which had a worm in it. We learned the worm stays in there all winter and eats what is around it. In the woods we saw all kinds of different tracks and scat—mink, weasel, cottontail rabbits and ruffed grouse. We saw where the ruffed grouse had nested under a pine tree. Best of all we saw a Pileated Woodpecker fly by above our heads and saw where it had made big holes in an old dead tree".



Whose tracks are they and where do they go?



Students discover Ruffed Grouse scat under pine tree



Volunteers in Action

Article by Patrice Eyers and Pam Stange

This past year has been another successful year with regards to our unbelievable wildlife assistants. Doug Aziz, Don Fox, Don Furo and John Shippy have gone above and beyond the call of duty. These four men have dedicated numerous hours to field projects that the staff often does not have time to do. These men are also involved with other aspects of the facility (education, greeters, and grounds) as well as many other community organizations. Some of the projects they worked on this past year include:

- Bike trail maintenance
- Dike brushing
- Brood Surveys
- Duck Banding
- Wood duck box monitoring
- Checking oxygen levels in the flowages
- Seeding and mulching areas where dike repair was preformed and at the new Berkhahn dike
- Gate repair
- Parking lot clean-up
- Oak release
- Fence construction and monitoring around the Little Eau Pleine Aerator system
- Dike patching
- Building a display case for a educational wet-land soil profile



Don Fox installing a Dog Trail sign



John Shippy & Doug Aziz hanging Berkhahn Bike Trailhead Sign



Doug Aziz checking a Wood Duck box



Marlene Furo & John Shippy hanging Christmas decorations



Marv & Lori Clark staining bike trail signs

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Volunteers in Action (continued from Page 6)

These guys have definitely become part of the Mead family. We appreciate all the time, effort and hard work they have displayed and we know how fortunate we are to have them. We also appreciate (and really enjoy) the treats their wives send out with them. We are looking forward to another successful year this year and hope that they are too.

As mentioned above, some of our volunteers overlap in their volunteer positions at the Mead. Another volunteer position that was very instrumental this past year was the grounds maintenance volunteers. This group consisted of men, women, and children who were active in maintaining the public use facilities on the wildlife area. Some of the jobs they helped the staff perform were:

- Weeding and mulching the prairie and butterfly gardens
- Mowing the Center and Old Office lawns
- Using a leaf blower to clean off Kiosks
- Wiping down the cobwebs from the Center's bricks
- Cleaning the outside windows and glass doors
- Using a weed trimmer to cut grass around the interpretive signs on the Audubon Trail, Berkhahn Bike Trail and Dragonfly Pond
- Weeding and leaf blowing the paved walkways and Amphitheater
- Help to refurbish interpretive signs by painting and staining
- Signs that were given new life were the Berkhahn Bike trailhead and posts along with it's the donation cylinder, Little Birch sign and posts, Dog Trial sign and donation cylinder, Bike Trail open signs, Smoky Hill sign and post, Pool 16, Pool 15, Teal Flowage, and Honey Island.
- Picking rocks in the Educational Prairie Garden
- Staining the Smoky Hill observation deck
- Decorating the Center for Christmas

A cooperative effort by the Staff and volunteers moved and refurbished the George W. Mead Wildlife Area sign and posts; its new home is north of the main entrance in an old parking lot.

Volunteers are a very important part of the Mead operations. We appreciate their efforts no matter how big or small their contributions. If you have some time or know someone who would like to become part of our volunteer team, please give us a call or visit our website www.meadwildlife.org for a listing of the volunteer opportunities available at the Mead.

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A “Sky Dance” Inspiration

Article by Ken Blomberg

Photos by Cheri Gessner

*“The drama of the sky dance is enacted nightly on hundreds of farms, the owners of which sigh for entertainment, but harbor the illusion that it is to be sought in theaters. They live on the land, but not by the land.”**

For those of you that have not witnessed the spring sky dance of the American woodcock, you may be surprised to learn they may sometimes perform right under your nose. The males strut their stuff at dusk on select singing grounds - sometimes entering the grounds undetected - and a nasal “peent” is the only thing that gives them away.

*“Suddenly the peenting ceases and the bird flutters skyward in a series of wide spirals, emitting a musical twitter. Up and up he goes, the spirals steeper and smaller, the twittering louder and louder, until the performer is only a speck in the sky. Then, without warning, he tumbles like a crippled plane, giving voice in a soft liquid warble that a March bluebird might envy.”**



The Mead Wildlife Area is a stopover for hundreds of woodcock each spring and fall as they migrate north and south. It is home for scores of breeding pairs - as suitable young forest habitat abounds throughout the property boundaries. Case in point is the fields and woods immediately to the south of the Stanton W. Mead Education & Visitor Center. Two

spring ago, as part of a Leopold Education Project (LEP) workshop, I banded a male within a hundred yards of the Center's front door.

As the workshop group stood on the entrance road, the woodcock danced and sang for us twice before it flew into a mist net set strategically in its flight path. My son Karl and his girlfriend Cheri ran to the net from a hiding place in the brush and slowly untangled the bird from the nylon netting. Once freed, a small aluminum band was placed on his leg, followed by measurements of its beak and outer primary feathers. After finishing the necessary banding duties, we gave everyone a good look, then pointed it away from the net and released it into the twilight.

*“It is soon too dark to see the bird on the ground, but you can see his flights against the sky for an hour, which is the usual duration of the show.”**

A “Sky Dance” Inspiration (continued next page)



A "Sky Dance" Inspiration (continued from Page 8)

In the early seventies, as a freshman natural resources student at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP), I was introduced to "A Sand County Almanac". I didn't realize it at the time, but several of Aldo Leopold's essays were influencing my life forever.

Leopold's description of the American woodcock's "Sky Dance" was spell-binding. The essay eloquently described the courtship display, and left this reader with several unanswered questions. How long does the male display during the nesting period? Is the male's musical twitter in flight vocal, or mechanical? Are the males polygamists? If there's two birds on the singing ground, is the second a female, or a rival male? Leopold's habit of asking his readers questions, worked on me. The spell was cast.



I obtained a federal permit and for nearly thirty years have banded woodcock with the help of my wife Lynda and sons, Erik and Karl. Mist netting male woodcock on their singing grounds and capturing hens and their chicks with my German Shorthaired Pointers has transported me into a world few people know - and in the process, I discovered the bird's world and mine weren't very far apart. In the field behind our house, males and females were courting each spring. In early May, hens walked their chicks within a stone's throw of our bird dog kennels. Each fall, at dusk,

birds flew above the alders bordering the edge of our woods. The sky dancer was helping me "live by the land".

One fall, a hunter in central Louisiana reported shooting a banded male mist netted near our home earlier that spring. Another was recovered in a neighbor's garden, an apparent victim of a cat. I had banded it as a chick the previous spring a quarter mile from the garden. Others fell to the gun in central Wisconsin, some near the Mead. Several springs ago, my son and I banded a peenting male in the field behind the house. Seven months later, it was shot near Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

My son Erik, has since earned his Masters in wildlife management and is now working on a PhD from the University of Nevada. As an undergraduate at UWSP, he spent his summers trapping, banding and radio-tagging woodcock with graduate student Jed Meunier, the great-grandson of Aldo Leopold. Today, Erik traps, bands and radio-tags sage grouse in Nevada. Karl and I continue to band woodcock here in central Wisconsin.



A Wish List for The Mead

As we dream of things we would like to have, please look over this list to see if you would like to make an in-kind-donation of any of the following items. Items on this list can be new or used (in good working order).

Educational Supplies:

Flannel or Felt Storyboards
Paper (Photo and Printer)
Clear Plastic totes (Rubbermaid) for storage of Lessons
Plastic Sleds with tow ropes (winter activity)
Children's Nature Books (K-4th grade level)
Hand Puppets- Animals or Birds
Audio Video Cart on Wheels with 20 in or larger TV
DVD or VCR player (rainy day backup)
Teacher's Guide about Nature Journaling
Plaster of Paris for Track molding
Photo Pocket Display 20x30 inches

Center Supplies:

Cosco Folding 2-Step Ladder
8ft. Step Ladder (fiberglass)
Rolling Coat Rack with hangers
Push Lawn Mower with Mulch bag
6ft to 9ft extension cords

Wildlife Management Supplies:

Utility/Terrain Vehicle (2 purposes - hauling equipment and hauling students)
Small Toolboxes (example Stack-On 16 inch)
Hand tools: 16oz. hammers, assorted screwdrivers, assorted pliers, Stanley or Tool Shop 25ft. tape measures, crescent wrenches, and utility knives



For the Birds!

Article by Peter Raschke

Cub Scout Den 9 from St. Anne's Pack 427 in Wausau recently delivered three donated Wood Duck Bird Houses to the George W. Mead Wildlife Area. The boys are 3rd graders from Newman Catholic Elementary School at St. Anne's and Jefferson Elementary Public School in Wausau. The past two years the Cub Scouts have participated in activities at the center lead by Natural Resources Educator Pamela Stange. The boys look forward to this event every year and after their visit this year wanted to show their appreciation by building Wood Duck Bird Houses. All the building material was donated by Bob Sundell from Modern Builders. Den 9 Scout Leaders are Peter Raschke, Brad Raasch, and Chris Wunsch.

Picture Left to Right

Front Row - Nicholas Schmitt, Michael Stanke, Matt Johnson, Bobby McGucken, and Andrew Raschke,

Back Row - Connor Wulf, Yim Leej Vang, Mark Raasch, Sam Sodke, Noah Sauer, and Andrew Wunsch.

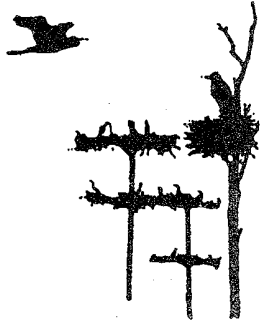
Not in the picture is Devin Kell.



FRIENDS OF THE MEAD-McMILLAN ASSN. INC

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. We appreciate your support of our efforts to promote environmental education for youth and adults who come to the Mead Wildlife Area. If your membership is up for renewal or you would like to help us with our environmental endeavors, you can do so by filling out this form and sending it to Mead Wildlife Area, S2148-S, Milladore, WI, 54454. Annual fee is \$20.

Thank you for your support!



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

Mailing Address Label

Wetland's Gazette

Mead Clean Up Day

Saturday, May 2nd 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

We need your help with our spring clean up day. We hope you can join in the fun of enjoying nature and helping the wildlife area.

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

- Repairing bricks and pavers around the center and amphitheater
- Picking up trash in parking lots and along roadsides at Mead & McMillan
- Cleaning around the outside of the Center; window sills, bricks, kiosks
- Raking lawns and removing gravel from snowplowing
- Repairing split rail fences

Volunteers should bring their own leather gloves. We will provide rubber gloves & garbage bags. Following the clean up, we will provide brats, hamburgers and soda. If you would like to contribute a dish to pass, it is welcome, but not necessary.

Volunteers should RSVP by Monday, April 27th at 715-457-6771 or by emailing

Pamela.stange@Wisconsin.gov. This will help us to coordinate activities.