



WETLAND'S GAZETTE

Volume 13, Issue 3

December 2017

2017 Was a Successful Year Article by President Jere Smith

2017 has been a successful year for the Friends of the Mead/McMillian Association. The purpose of our organization is to support the DNR with interpretive and management activities at the George W. Mead and McMillian Marsh State Wildlife Areas. Management of our resources, fundraising, and community events are some of the key activities that we accomplished to support this purpose and that have helped make 2017 such a success.

Our Annual Membership meeting is on Saturday January 13th at 9 AM at the Mead property. The purpose of this meeting is for the board to report, to you the members, about the previous years activities and to tell you about upcoming planned activities. The annual meeting is also the time for the membership, to vote in the board members. This is an opportunity to hear from our members and for the members to be involved. If you have any interest in understanding more about the organization or an interest in being more involved this meeting is a great opportunity to do that. I ask that all members make an attempt to join us at this meeting. It is for you and if you are reading this you are a member.

At this year's Annual Membership meeting we will be having our 2nd annual Soup Contest. Our board members will be competing on who can make the best soup. The members will be the judge. The Soup Contest is put on by the board for our members at no cost to our members. An Annual Membership meeting notice will be sent with more details.

Here is a quote from Theodore Roosevelt:

"To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed."

I really like this quote because I believe that we have an obligation to do are part in protecting our natural resources for future generations. The Mead/McMillian properties are tremendous resources right here in our backyards. I would encourage you to use and enjoy these properties with this quote in mind. Also if you too feel a sense of obligation to our future generations the Friends of the Mead/McMillian Association is a very simple and easy way to help fulfill this obligation and I encourage you to reach out and get involved.

All the Best,

Jere

Click this link to access the [Mead Wildlife Area Facebook Page](#) or search "Mead Wildlife Area" on Facebook.

Friends of the Mead/McMillan

Officers:

- *President—Jeremiah Smith
Wausau: 715-572-6372
Email: jere1683@gmail.com*
- *V-President-Justin Guthman
Mosinee: 715-650-3032 Email:
Justin.Guthman@ascension.org*
- *Secretary—Jim Peterson
Auburndale: 715-652-3143*
- *Treasurer—Matt Ahles
Mosinee: 920-991-2209*

Directors:

- *Joan Dickrell*
- *Marlene Furo*
- *Lorraine Michalski*
- *Connie Milz*
- *Eileen Riehle*
- *Arne Ruha*
- *Dick Shepherd*
- *John Shippy*

Please Note: We are currently looking for people to fill the vacancies on the Board. If interested please contact VP—Justin Guthman for an application.

DNR Staff on board:

- *Brian Peters,
Project Manager*
- *Pam Resech, Educator
Office 457-6771 ext. 2*

Webmaster:

- *Justin Guthman*

Newsletter Editor:

- *Dave Grabski
dgrabski99@gmail.com*



From the Field

Article and Photo by Property Supervisor-Brian Peters

We finally experienced a drier weather pattern after July that allowed us to work on dike repair projects. We rented a small excavator and skid-steer loader that were used for repairing holes and cave-ins on the dikes at McMillan and at Mead. While those machines were running we were also using our larger fleet equipment to work on other major dike renovations. North American Wetland Conservation Act grant funds were obtained for a second major project on Smoky Hill flowage dike. Work is underway on that dike. The first NAWCA project on Teal flowage dike has been completed. Thank you to the Friends of Mead / McMillan for donating to both projects! A recently completed wetlands project was the installation of a new water control structure for Honey Island flowage.



Waterfowl production this year was excellent with many young mallards and wood ducks observed and banded during our banding efforts in August. We banded over 500 mallards and over 100 wood ducks. Our surveys indicated many ducks using the properties before the opening of the north zone waterfowl season. Opening weekend weather was hot but hunter success was high and remained so for hunters who scouted the flight patterns of the birds.

Toward the end of August, we mowed several grass fields where goldenrod had become dominant. Mowing will stress the goldenrod and encourage grass growth for better quality grassland habitat.

Forest management has begun for the fall and winter season. Several timber harvesting contracts have been active or will be active later this season.

Lastly, implementation of the wildlife program realignment has begun, along with that of the entire DNR. The goal is to have the new organizational structure in place beginning January 1. The workload for the wildlife program was analyzed and high priority work identified. For many years, the workload has been exceeding accomplishment capability. Budgets and staff numbers have decreased over time. Part of the plan includes filling vacant positions and placing staff where the greatest needs exist. The plan also identified the need for an additional biologist position on the Mead/McMillan team. These changes are meant to increase efficiency and enable the highest priority work to be accomplished.

A Great Christmas Idea **Article by Lorraine Michalski**

Friends of the Mead/McMillan Membership would be a unique gift for a family member or a friend. Your gift to them will be a yearlong valuable reminder of support to promote environmental education for youth and adults who come to the Mead Wildlife Area.

In addition to receiving three issues of Wetlands Gazette next year we will also send the recipient a copy of Mead Wildlife Area Pocket Field Guide which sells for \$7.00 in our Friends Souvenir Showcase.

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.

Please use the renewal form in this issue and submit with a check for \$30.00 and your name and address.

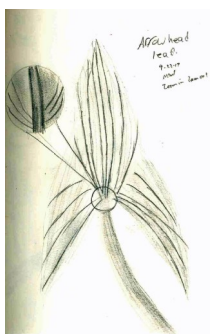


Mead Field Trip

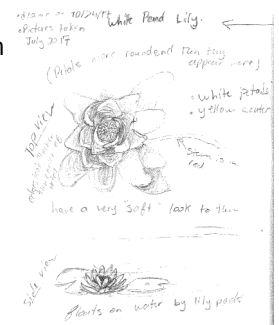
Article by Bruce Matta Sketches by Wausau West students

On Friday September 22 I brought my Wausau East Field Biology and Bio Art classes to the Mead Wildlife Area for an early fall field day. My Field Biology class consists of 11-12th grade students. In this course, we study applied ecology topics covering forests, water, wildlife, and soil resources. As part of the curriculum for this course I use a nature journal assignment that requires students to observe and document aspects of nature in a sketchbook. My Bio Art class is a general biology class of 9-10th grade students. In this course, we use drawing, illustrating and sketching as tools for learning biology related content.

The emphasis for our trip to Mead was three-fold. First, I wanted to introduce my students to the topic of wild edible plants...both how to identify them and locate them by foraging in the field. The second part of the trip was to utilize the unique Mead ecosystem to complete a nature journaling activity. The final topic for the day was to learn about owl biology/ecology through a presentation with live owls by Rex Runke, Zach Runke, and Pam Resech.



Our day was awesome, though very hot. Temperatures were in the low 90's with high humidity. That said, the students embraced the opportunity and had a great experience learning about the wide variety of edible plants available in central WI. Brandi began this portion of the day with an educational presentation on the wide variety of edible plants on the Mead property and tips for identification. Pam and Brandi (LTE Naturalist) devised a "Survivor" competition format for this portion of the experience which the students had a lot of fun with. Their task was to forage for as many edibles as they could find with a certain minimum number required for survival. Before consuming their finds, there were positive identifications made. The friendly competition added incentive to the experience. They also enjoyed the "snacks" they sampled along the way. There were only a couple of groups that "died" due to non-edible plant choices.



While one group was doing the edibles hike and activity, I took the other group to do the nature journaling activity around Dragonfly pond. For this we worked on an activity called "Zoom in - Zoom out". This journal activity incorporates sketches and written observations of the ecosystem from afar and then zooms in on some aspect of the system with close-up written observations and illustrations. I have included a couple student journal examples. The activity encourages students to view all members (plants, insects, animals, abiotic factors) of the larger natural community as a system. It then encourages students to examine an individual member (plant, insect, abiotic factor) more closely in order to appreciate its unique characteristics and contributions to the wider system. Throughout, students are encouraged to question what they see and later to seek answers to those questions. It proved to be a great way for students to experience the Mead ecosystem first hand and in a hands-on way.

Families Entertained at the Mead Festival

Article by Sue Hall

Over 150 families enjoyed a unique experience to "walk on the wild side" and enjoy nature while attending the Fall Family Festival at the Mead Wildlife Area on Sunday. One of the highlights was the raptor presentation by Elise, educator of the Raptor Education Group from Antigo. During her presentation of several live Education birds, she demonstrated the differences of the wing flapping of different raptors. One boy in the audience remarked that it "sounded like a motorcycle taking off". Following her presentation, she released a rehabilitated Merlin into the woods behind the Mead Wildlife area.

Prior to the raptor performance, the participants enjoyed a scavenger hunt, various "hands on" nature crafts, and a Wild Flower and Butterfly walk through the Mead's grasslands.

Several UWSP students from Dr. Perry Cook's Science Methods classes helped teach the various craft activities. Some of the comments from their experience were: "I loved having this opportunity to work with kids. I also enjoyed seeing families get out and spend time together"; "This was a great way to get families to connect with nature"; "It was cool seeing how excited the kids got during the different activities"; "The kids' faces lit up after they created their animal mold and one said, "Whoa, that's cool!"; "All of the activities were really hands on so all the kids could participate no matter what age".

The festival was co-sponsored by the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society and the Friends of the Mead/McMillan Assn.



Spooktacular

Article by Marlene Furo

Photos by Zachary Stange

SPOOKTACULAR! What a great event! There were games to play, like Go Fish, pick a Lucky Duck, Spin the Wheel and Bean Bag Tosses, plus more. You could test your skills at a hunting game. Crafts to make, pumpkins and cookies to decorate. A Safari Scavenger hunt was available to those who wanted to venture outside. EENA (Environmental Education & Naturalist Association) students from UWSP dressed as wildlife creatures assisted the participants in the Safari Hunt, craft area and games. Smokey the Bear was present along with our resident Mr. Bones.

A special thanks to Pam Resech and her assistant Brandi Tempel and the Planning Committee, plus the forty volunteers. Also thanks to the special people who donate cookies; Rhonda Reigel,



pumpkins-Harvey Cherney & Don Fox, popcorn-Terri Hamus, and apples. Three hundred and fifty two people participated in this year's event. The food collected was distributed to two local food pantries; Community Center of Hope-Mosinee and St. Vincent De Paul Food Pantry - Marshfield.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone again next October 20th for the 2018 Spooktacular and Food Drive.





Not Your Average Turkey

Article by Brandi Tempel Photo's by Belvin Bulgrin & John Becker

The Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), was giving its' common name because of the resemblance of the male wild turkey while standing in a field with dark toned feathers and red on their heads. The turkey vulture itself however is very different from your average turkey.

You can identify the turkey vulture as it is seen soaring high in the sky effortlessly like he is simply floating. His wings are bent slightly into a v-formation and have dark brown feathers on the leading edge of the wing and grey on the trailing edge and tip. Males and females look identical, but you know they have found something to eat as they start circling around and around in the sky.

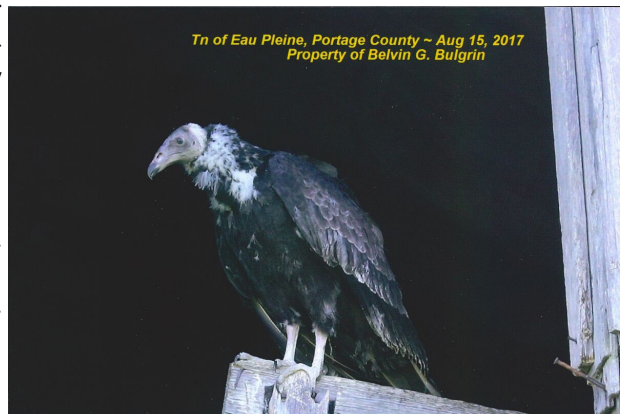
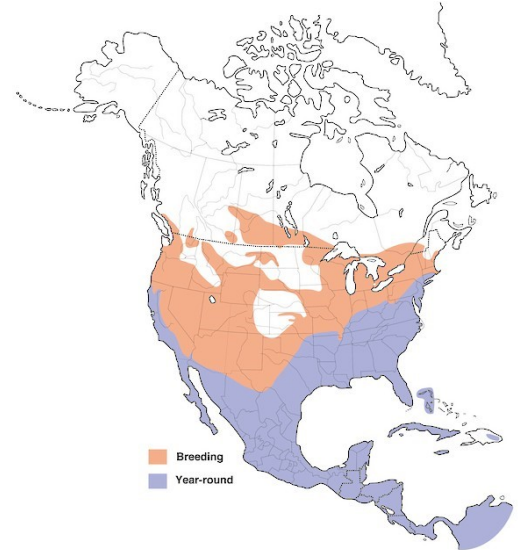
This bird is very unique because it has an excellent sense of smell. Unlike most birds that hardly smell at all, the turkey vulture can smell over a mile away. *Cathartes* is Latin for "purifier" a suitable name since the vulture feeds on carrion that could otherwise be a breeding ground for disease. It is well adapted to this important job by having a bald head that is much easier to keep clean while feeding than a feathered head where bacteria can hide.

A bald head is not the only interesting adaptation of this above average bird. The Turkey Vulture is most closely related to the Stork family. Like other storks, they will defecate on their own legs to cool themselves while the moisture evaporates off the blood vessels just below the skin on the feet and legs. The feces and urine are completely free of pathogens after traveling through the vultures' digestive system. Their main method of defense is vomiting partly digested meat with a smell foul enough to keep predators away from their nesting spots.

Turkey Vultures rarely spend much effort creating a nest, but will throw some nesting materials together on a cliff, in a cave, a hollow tree or in a barn. The male and female will mate for life.

If met with turkey vultures nesting in your barn, like Belvin G. Bulgrin a landowner near the Mead Wildlife Area, welcome the birds for their extended stay. Only

two eggs are laid and both adults care for the young for 10 to 11 weeks. Turkey vultures are quiet neighbors because they lack a syrinx, but are able to hiss if they are threatened. These birds are common, but have faced threats from DDT in the past and are still currently threatened by lead poisoning from unrecovered animals hunted with lead shot or by landowners who perceive these birds as carrying diseases. However, we have learned that the turkey vulture is clearly not your average turkey, but a unique bird with an important job of helping to keep our environment clean.





McMillan March Matters Article by Kyle Christianson



A lot has happened the last 6 months. The DNR is going through a realignment and this has brought about many changes and some challenges. As you read this a lot of hunting seasons have come and gone. For the most part, our trapping seasons will still be in full swing. It's been a wet year overall. We passed a lot of water early, became dry for a month and half and then started passing water right up to freeze up. During the dry period, we utilized rental equipment to repair a lot of infrastructure damage.

We finally replaced a culvert along the bike/snowmobile trail near Marsh Road. The culvert was rotten on the bottom and began to cave in this spring. Activities can now proceed as normal through this area.

Frey/Karau timber sales finished up last winter. Another timber sale is planned for this winter along the snowmobile trail between the dam and Frey Rd.

I wanted to pass on that we had a successful pair of swans this year. After being unsuccessful last year, they were able to raise 5 young to fledge. Lastly Troop 385, Adopt A Wildlife Area group, is continuing to do great work. This winter they are going to inventory and standardize a survey route for wood duck boxes on the marsh. As always, if you have questions or comments for McMillan Marsh, call 715-457-6771 ex3 or email kyle.christianson@wisconsin.gov

Friends of the Mead/McMillan Membership

PLEASE CHECK RENEWAL DATE ON YOUR NEWSLETTER LABEL

The Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas are dedicated to preserving and enhancing areas in Central Wisconsin for many to enjoy and to learn about their wildlife heritage. Friends of the Mead/McMillan Association partner with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to promote this mission by volunteering and also offering financial support through membership in the Association.

Annual individual/family membership is \$30. Sponsor is \$100.00 per year, two additional Sponsor renewals becomes Lifetime. One time \$300.00 is Lifetime

Make Check payable to Friends of the Mead/McMillan. Please enter amount: Renewal _____

You can also use the form below to renew or upgrade your membership.

Renew online at www.meadwildlife.org This website is also supported by members.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____

Mail to: Friends of Mead/McMillan membership
S2148 County Hwy S, Milladore, WI, 54454



2017 Mead Waterfowl Recap

Article by Bill Hirt Photos by Patrice Eyers

Every fall at the Mead Wildlife Area, one of the most popular activities among property users is the sport of waterfowl hunting. There are a couple of good reasons for this. First, Wisconsin has a very strong waterfowl hunting heritage. We have more licensed waterfowl hunters than almost every other state in the country. With 80,000 total waterfowl hunters, Wisconsin ranked behind only Texas, Arkansas, and Minnesota last year. Second, past and present managers at Mead Wildlife Area have worked, and continue to work, tirelessly to provide some of the very best waterfowl habitat Central Wisconsin has to offer. Wetland restoration and enhancement activities, along with wetland vegetation management through water level manipulation and prescribed burning, allows the Mead WA property to annually yield highly attractive wetland habitat for waterfowl and other marsh birds. And, where waterfowl congregate, so will the sportsmen and sportswomen that pursue them.



A mixed flock of ducks and geese using a refuge field at Mead WA

The Mead WA, as well as McMillan WA for that matter, serves as important breeding habitat in spring and summer primarily for local populations of mallards, wood ducks, blue-wing teal, Canada geese, and trumpeter swans. These properties also serve as important migratory stop-over habitat in spring and fall. In fact, many of the waterfowl species known to exist in North America can be seen on Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas during the spring and fall migration periods.



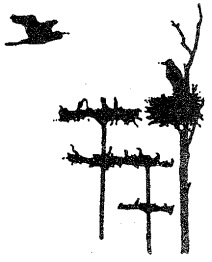
Ring-necked ducks at Mead WA in the spring

2017 seemed to be a very good year for waterfowl in Central Wisconsin and at Mead Wildlife Area. Spring came early and remained predominantly mild. This resulted (by most accounts) in a very good production year for local nesting waterfowl. Good brood numbers remained in observance throughout the summer. By early fall, and right on schedule, waterfowl numbers on Mead WA began climbing, as locally produced ducks and geese began staging on property and migrating birds from further north started settling in. Weekly waterfowl counts by staff showed very strong numbers of waterfowl throughout the fall, with peaks coming just prior to opening weekend of duck season, and then again near the end of October.

Hunter harvest surveys at Mead WA in 2017 showed hunters had a very good year. During the Youth Waterfowl Season (Sept. 16-17), an outstanding average of four ducks harvested per hunter was observed. During opening weekend of Wisconsin's Wild Duck Season (Sept. 23-24), an estimated 450 waterfowl hunters afield at Mead WA averaged an impressive two ducks bagged.

The only significant let down of the 2017 season was that freeze-up came very early. Mead WA reached 90% ice cover by Nov. 8th, a full 7-10 days before the average freeze-up date observed over the past 15 years. This resulted in an early exit for waterfowl staging on property and an abrupt end to most waterfowl hunting activity.

All things considered, however, I think the 2017 season was a pretty fine year for waterfowl and the waterfowl hunting tradition in Central Wisconsin and specifically at the Mead Wildlife Area. Though things can change quickly in the waterfowl world, luck willing,, 2018 will be just as good!



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



Mailing Address Label

Attention Members: Please help keep our records current by providing Friends with changes to your contact information.

*** **Please Note:** the mailing label has your membership date. 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 Mead Visitor Center.

Wetland's Gazette



Annual Membership Meeting

9am Saturday January 13, 2018

Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center

Please plan to attend this Annual Membership meeting. At this meeting we will be:

- 1) Reviewing our activities of the past year, electing officers and board members and discussing our plans for the future.
- 2) Members are welcome to join the discussion of our plans for the future. Reports will be given by the Mead/McMillan Project Manager, Natural Resources Educator, and Chairpersons of the Finance, Communications and Membership Committees.
- 3) Soup Contest: A number of the board members will be testing their culinary skills by bring a soup or stew to share with group. Winner will have bragging rights for all of 2018!!!



We encourage you to attend!!!