

What is the Mead?

Nestled in the valley of the Little Eau Pleine River, the George W. Mead Wildlife Area encompasses over 33,000 acres of open marshes, hardwood and aspen forests, and grasslands. It is the largest wildlife area in Wisconsin. Centrally located, the property lies within the following three counties Marathon, Portage and Wood. Mead's diverse habitats harbor an abundance of wildlife species such as deer, turkey, bear, otter, herons, prairie chickens, and foxes. It is an important resting, feeding, and nesting site for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. Mead is managed by the Department of Natural Resources to maintain and enhance habitats that support wildlife.

A Brief History

Prior to European settlement, the valley of the Little Eau Pleine was carpeted with conifer and hardwood swamps. In the late 1800s, loggers cut the forests for timber. Early developers then attempted to drain the swamps of the valley with massive dredges. Farming failed, and Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company began to purchase land for a reservoir in 1935. When the reservoir plan was abandoned in 1959, Stanton W. Mead, President of Consolidated Papers, presented 20,000 acres of land to the State of Wisconsin for wildlife conservation purposes. The area was named after his father, George W. Mead. In October 2005, the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center was dedicated to the state. The Center serves as the starting point for exploring the wildlife area.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Mead Wildlife Area is to ensure plant and wildlife habitat diversity through sound resource management; allowing compatible recreational activities, and fostering an appreciation and understanding of natural resource values and issues through education.

Goals:

1. To maintain and enhance wetland, grassland, and forest habitats on the property
2. To provide an environment that maximizes the production potential of key harvestable wildlife species including waterfowl, upland game, big game, and furbearers.
3. To provide an environment that maximizes the production and survival of non-game species groups including small birds, hawks, owls, eagles, herons, cormorants, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals.
4. To place special management emphasis on indigenous endangered, threatened or rare plant and animal species.
5. To provide wildlife and environmental educational programs, including tours, presentations, and activity based programs, for children and adults.
6. To provide an opportunity for the public to participate in compatible recreational activities.
7. Partnering with private individuals and groups to achieve the established goals and objectives of the wildlife area.