



WETLAND'S GAZETTE

Volume 18, Issue 2

Winter 2022

Supervisor's Minute by Craig Ziolkowski

As we approach the end of 2022 and begin 2023, I am excited about many, great things going on at Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas. Beginning with bringing on 2 new Visitor Service Associates, Ally and Ryan, to infrastructure improvements, such as the new boardwalk at McMillan Marsh, to a variety of habitat management accomplishments, to significantly expanded educational program offerings there is a lot going on. You can learn more about all of this as you read this issue of the Wetlands Gazette, take a trip to the visitor center, or a walk out the property.

With all of the exciting activities and events going on at both properties, I'd like to encourage members of the Friends of Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas to get involved on any number of teams, committees, or projects necessary for us to continue to be at the forefront of wildlife conservation and education in Wisconsin, the Midwest and even the nation. If you are interested in getting more involved with projects or opportunities at Mead and/or McMillan, please feel free to contact me at: craig.ziolkowski@wisconsin.gov. In closing, thank you all for your continued support, we really appreciate everything you do to help make Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas, truly special places in Wisconsin.

Happy Holidays,
Craig



Pileated Woodpecker by Marguerite Timmerman

Friends of Mead-McMillan

Officers

- *President—Matt Ahles*
- *VP—Doug Aziz*
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- *Tim Collins*
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DNR Staff:

- *Craig Ziolkowski, Property Supervisor*
- *Sam De Roche, Mead Educator*

Newsletter Editor

- *Doug Urban*



WELCOME NEW STAFF

Ally Noll is a new hire at the Mead/McMillan Wildlife Areas, working as a Visitor Services Associate. In May of 2022, Ally received her Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry: Recreation at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. As a new graduate, she began work as a seasonal Parks and Recreation Specialist at Rib Mountain State Park, fell in love with the parks and the people that frequent them, and is now excited to continue exploring options within the Wisconsin DNR.

Ally has always felt a strong connection to the outdoors. Growing up in a small town about 30 minutes north of Rochester, MN, she could be found spending much of her time biking, running, and hiking in the many local forests and trails. Every summer, Ally would split her time between working on her Grandparent's farm in northern Minnesota and spending long days on the lake with her family in Wisconsin's Northwoods. Growing up in a family where the natural world was deeply valued helped fuel her passion for outdoor recreation, education, and conservation.

In her spare time, Ally can (still) be found somewhere in the forest, nose deep in a good book, starting yet another art project, or playing video games with her partner and friends. She lives in Stevens Point with her partner, Drew, and their cat, Meelo. Ally is excited to continue her journey after college at "The Mead", and is looking forward to working, learning, and making connections with her peers and visitors alike.



Ally Noll



Ryan VanLanduyt

Ryan VanLanduyt is a newly hired Visitors Services Associate at the Mead Wildlife Area. Ryan and his family recently moved to Wisconsin Rapids from Birchwood, the self-proclaimed Bluegill Capitol of Wisconsin! Growing up outside of Whitewater, Ryan has always enjoyed fishing and exploring the great outdoors. Ryan received a Bachelor of Science degree in communications at the University of Wisconsin – Superior and shortly after took over as the Executive Director of Rice Lake Community Media in the City of Rice Lake where he ran a TV station and expanded the studio's broadcasting opportunities by establishing a radio station. While Ryan was able to interview all sorts of people and explore many different topics, his interest in the outdoors was rejuvenated as he always looked forward to the days when he would discuss anything wildlife related.

Needing a change of scenery from constant cameras and computer screens, Ryan took a position with a monthly guest, the State Senator from the 25th Senate District of Wisconsin as their District Coordinator. While working as boots on the ground in the far Northwestern district of the state he enjoyed interacting with constituents. Ryan took the lead on many issues within the district and especially enjoyed work that focused on natural resources topics and the Senator's work on the state forestry council. When Ryan's wife, Katherine, was offered the opportunity to take over as the Director of the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids, Ryan encouraged the new adventure and was eager to get better acquainted with the central region of the state.

Ryan is excited to begin his position with the DNR at the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitors Center, ready to familiarize himself with the Mead/McMillan Wildlife Areas and the abundance of opportunities and enjoyment that they have to offer the public.



McMillan Marsh Boardwalk Project Complete

In recent years when Pool 2 is at full pool and water is being released through the overflow spillway, it has caused problems for hikers, bikers and hunters using the McMillan Marsh Wildlife Area trail. In February 2022 DNR Staff met with Wildlife Assistant Volunteers to plan the installation of a boardwalk next to this spillway to provide users a way to avoid having to walk or ride bicycles through water. It was estimated that a 120 foot boardwalk with angled sections on each end would be needed.

Friends of The Mead/McMillan Association funded the \$6,585 cost for the lumber for this project, and the DNR covered the \$2,933 cost for the 26 support pans and brackets. The DNR also contributed to additional staff labor, equipment, and fill material costs.

In February and March 2022 six Wildlife Assistant Volunteers designed the boardwalk, selected the site, and ordered and took delivery of the lumber and hardware. They also built 12 five by ten foot deck frames, cut and predrilled 240 deck boards and attached 26 posts to the support pans. These volunteers spent 232 hours completing these tasks.

In September 2022, Wildlife Assistant Volunteers spent 104 hours installing the 100 foot boardwalk. It was not necessary to use 20 feet of the estimated 120 feet of boardwalk originally planned for this project. DNR Wildlife Technician Bill Hirt spent several days clearing brush for the boardwalk path, setting the elevations, and placing the fill and rip rap rocks to both ends of the boardwalk approaches. He also cleaned out the spillway to return it to the correct elevation needed to maintain the desired flowage level.

Along with Bill Hirt, the Wildlife Assistant Volunteers who worked on this project were Warren Austin, Don Fox, Tim Kaiser, Chuck Schlafke, Dick Shepherd and Steve Stageman. Thank you to all who were involved with this project!





What Is Happening In Education at the Mead? By Sam De Roche

The vision of the education program is to create contemporary, educational opportunities for Wisconsin citizens across every demographic. With a focus on current science, conservation, the arts, and recreation, our mission is to be viewed as a leader in environmental education, wildlife conservation excellence. Every day we make progress in the rebuilding of the education program at the Mead with an eye on our mission and vision. From the process of scheduling field trips, writing lesson plans, procuring needed materials, to building relationships, efforts have been fruitful. When you visit, you cannot help but notice the engaging, educational atmosphere.

Since the last newsletter, we have had a few new activities to engage guests at the Education and Visitor Center. Topics have been ground water, impact of wetlands for Water Quality, CWD, Wild Turkeys, and Keep Wildlife Wild.

We have outdoor lessons for guests to learn and have fun with on their own. In the outdoor classroom, we had a frog lesson and a lesson on mushrooms. The self-guided lesson stationed along the boardwalk trail is now challenging folks to identify animal tracks and will remain up until spring. While roaming around the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitor Center, you may also get engrossed in a Lovin' Learnin' video, a series of nature-based videos that start at the top of the hour during hours of operation.

The YMCA along with several home and charter schools have come through for environmental education and the master calendar is filling up for the remainder of the 2023 school year.

The Mead became one of the primary locations for Hunter Education Online Field Day, required by the state of Wisconsin for new licensees, under 18. With a whopping 463 students that attending this year. Building on that success, the 2023 winter calendar is already marked for lots more Hunter Education courses.

Expanding adult education has also been a priority. We were happy to support the DNR R3 program by hosting guests for the "Wanna Go Hunting" series. Some of the folks that came for those events also came to the "onX and PALS: BASICS", a hands-on class to learn how to use these mapping tools.

Mondays at Mead has returned! With the option to attend in-person or virtually, guests have learned about CWD in Wisconsin and about the Wisconsin black bear population. Upcoming topics include: Astronomy, Pollinators and Native Plants, Wetland Habitat and the Impact of Invasives, History of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes, and Keep Wildlife Wild.

Winter will not slow us down. In fact, the calendar is packed until June 2023 when we will be gearing up for summer education opportunities. On December 11th, the Mead presented the UWSP Herpetology Society event where the public got hands-on opportunities to learn about amphibians and reptiles, including presentations on frog indicators of habitat health, the role that snakes play in the ecosystem, and fun with exotic reptiles.

In January we will launch many events for 2023. The Mead Book Club kick off and begin reviewing David Attenborough's latest book, [A Life on Our Planet](#), over a 3-event series. Family and Senior Snowshoeing will also begin for the season and we're pleased to offer a guided, casual-paced activity with popcorn and hot chocolate to enjoy when returning to the visitor center. There will also be open snowshoeing throughout the week and periodically on Saturdays. We will also meet for our first moonlight snowshoe and watch for opportunities to learn ATV and snowmobile safety.

Come February, we will welcome Amberle Schwartz, President of Wild Ones, who will share with guests a little bit about Wild Ones, the how-to in seed saving, and germination (cold moist stratification) of native perennial seed. Participants will go home with a pot of seeds gifted by Wild Ones.

The various snowshoeing, ATV and snowmobile safety opportunities, and the book club will continue to meet into April when we share the very first Science Symposium held at the Mead. With a visitor center filled with academic poster presentations, the indoor classroom audience will have the opportunity to learn about the various research projects happening at the Mead and throughout the state.

The calendar for May is filled with every birding opportunity you can think of. Hosting birding groups and bringing in the public for birding opportunities will be our main focus. Speaking of focus, do not be surprised if you learn more about nature photography, group opportunities at the Mead. We have more up our sleeves. As we finish up the details, you will be the first to know. We have been sending out "What is Happening at the Mead" at the beginning of the month. The brief newsletter simply lets you know everything that is on the agenda for the month so you can mark your calendars and plan to join us. If you are not on that email and would like to be, please email Ryan at ryan.vanlanduyt@wisconsin.gov. Your information will not be shared with anyone.

We are excited about the expansion of the education program. Visitor Center numbers are up. We have gotten a lot of positive feedback and have enjoyed folks coming to us with proposals for hosting nature-based clubs. If you would like to make suggestions. Please do not hesitate to reach out: Sandra.DeRoche@wisconsin.gov.



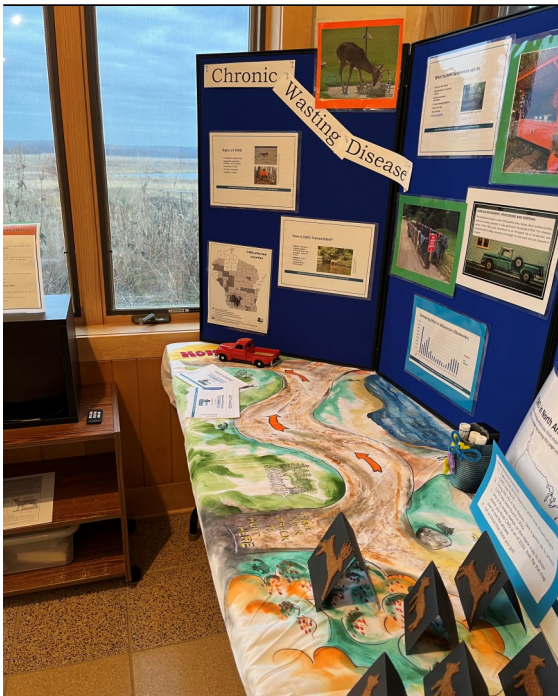
What Is Happening in Education at the Mead?



Clean Water Act display



Wild Turkey Calls



Chronic Wasting Disease display



Hunters Education at the Mead



Mead/McMillan Marsh Wildlife Areas Book Club 2023

Join us as we take a deep dive into David Attenborough's "A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future".

In this scientifically informed account of the changes in nature over the last century, award-winning broadcaster and natural historian David Attenborough shares a lifetime of wisdom and a hopeful vision for the future.

Goodreads Choice Award Winner for Best Science & Technology Book of the Year

See the world. Then make it better.

I am 93. I've had an extraordinary life. It's only now that I appreciate how extraordinary.

As a young man, I felt I was out there in the wild, experiencing the untouched natural world - but it was an illusion. The tragedy of our time has been happening all around us, barely noticeable from day to day -- the loss of our planet's wild places, its biodiversity.

I have been witness to this decline. A Life on Our Planet is my witness statement, and my vision for the future. It is the story of how we came to make this, our greatest mistake -- and how, if we act now, we can yet put it right.

We have one final chance to create the perfect home for ourselves and restore the wonderful world we inherited.

All we need is the will to do so.

We will meet monthly to answer these questions together:

What is something new that you learned from this book?

What feelings did this book evoke for you?

What is the most impactful moment in this part of the book/overall?

Will you act upon it?

If you could ask David one question, what would it be?

January 28, 2023, Saturday, 9-10:30am

Intro and Part 1: My Witness Statement

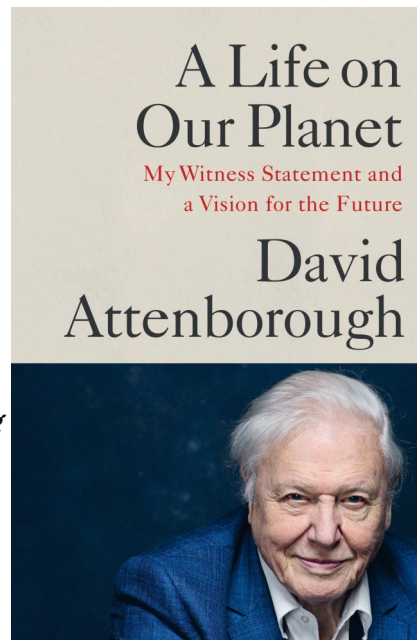
February 25, 2023, Saturday, 9-10:30am

Part 2: What Lies Ahead

March 25, 2023, Saturday, 9-10:30am

Part 3: A Vision for the Future: How to Rewild the World and Conclusion

Coffee and snacks will be served. Please RSVP at Sandra.DeRoche@wisconsin.gov or call, (715) 540-6013.





Fall Family Festival 2022

Aldo Leopold Audubon members joined forces with the Friends of Mead Wildlife for the Fall Family Festival in September. It was the first time it was hosted with a live program and nature activities for the past three years due to Covid. Students from Dr. Perry Cook's Science Methods class helped teach the children how to hammer and construct a suet feeder, frogs getting their food and several other nature activities. The university students remarked that it was great to see the enthusiasm of young people interacting with nature. They also enjoyed watching them roam the vast area of the Mead Wildlife area. Participants also enjoyed a wildflower walk.

A highlight of the day was the live bird presentation by Rex Runke and his son. Participants especially enjoyed the live education birds as they brought them out into the audience for a close up and person view.

This was the 11th year that Audubon and the Friends groups have collaborated to participate in the Fall Festival and members plan to hold it again in the future.





Wetland Maintenance Update- Fall 2022

Bill Hirt

Anyone who has spent any time exploring Mead Wildlife Area's managed wetland habitat supported by earthen dikes knows that staff spend a significant amount of time performing maintenance activities on these structures. In fact, every month of the year you can find our staff and equipment working on dike maintenance projects somewhere along the 40+ miles of dikes contained in the Mead/McMillan Work Unit. Projects come in many forms and include repairing smaller isolated cave-in holes, responding to emergency dike breaches, performing mechanical brush removal projects, and conducting large scale dike reconstructions $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile in length. Though time consuming and costly, maintenance projects supporting these wetland dike systems help to provide great value to the wetland habitat base across the Mead/McMillan Work Unit in terms of wetland quantity and diversity. Staff at the work unit know this and appreciate this. That is why they work tirelessly all year long to maintain these dike systems and preserve the resulting wetland communities.

This year much time and effort has been focused on four key locations. Those are Berkahn Flowage dike (river section), Honey Island Flowage dike, Little Birch Flowage dike (E/W section), and Pool 10 Flowage dike. All projects are completed to some degree, and all will have more work completed on them throughout the Winter of 2023.

The following is a repair project status update for these four projects sites:

Berkahn Flowage River Dike – This dike system has needed emergency repair action over the past year to address one breach and several severe erosion issues caused by under-cutting from high river flows. Currently this dike is partially stabilized, but more aggressive repair will need to be undertaken next spring or summer.

Little Birch Dike – The Little Birch Dike Renovation project, while in its third year, is nearing completion. As of now, the earth-work and rip-rapping phases are complete. This winter gravel surfacing material will be hauled in across the entire 1-mile project site. The final grading on this project is set to occur in the Spring of 2023.

Honey Island Flowage Dike – On Honey Island Flowage dike, staff have completed excavating and refilling 90 erosion-based cave-in holes. Each hole encompasses 15-20 ft. of dike. This winter, each repair location will get a rip-rap layer applied to them to minimize future erosion caused by wave action or rodent tunneling.

Pool 10 Flowage Dike – The Pool 10 Flowage project is in the same phase of completion as the Honey Island Flowage project and is also scheduled for rip-rap this winter to address 20 erosion-based cave-in holes.

If you have any questions regarding the status of dike infrastructure projects at the Mead/McMillan Work Unit, please contact staff at our Headquarters (Ph. 715-457-6771).



Hi-Track Truck moving Rip –Rap



Rip-Rap in place



Pool 10



Honey Island

McMillan Marsh Boardwalk



2022 Waterfowl Banding Summary By Patrice Eysers

The 2022 waterfowl banding program at Mead Wildlife Area (MWA) was a huge success. Not only did we meet our quota for the season, but we assisted other wildlife agencies and university researchers with meeting their quotas as well.

Banding preparations begin in early July with site preparation and baiting and banding got underway the first week in August. We use cannon netting as our method for capturing birds, and our set up includes three cannons with a 30' X 50' net. We typically fire the net 6-7 times to capture our quota of 500 mallards and 125 wood ducks.

Total banding effort for the 2022 season resulted in 780 birds banded:

628 Mallards	149 Wood Duck
249 Male	130 Male
33 after hatch year	118 after hatch year
216 hatch year	12 hatch year
379 Female	18 Female
98 after hatch year	11 after hatch year
281 hatch year	7 hatch year
3 Northern Pintail, 3 hatch year females	

This year we had 49 re-captures, meaning we caught 49 birds that had already been banded. Thirty-six of those were birds we had banded at MWA this year. One Mallard was banded at Sandhill Wildlife Area 3 weeks prior to arriving at MWA, while the remaining 11 were banded prior to this year and/or at a different location.

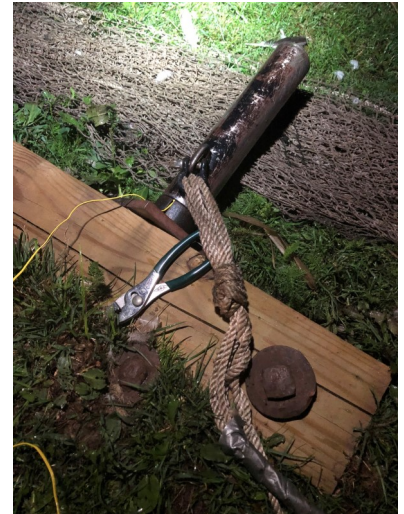
Noteworthy re-caps:

Hen Mallard banded at MWA (same site) in 2018 as an adult bird, making her at least 5 years old.

Hen Mallard banded at Navarino Wildlife Area in 2019

Drake Wood Duck banded at MWA in 2020 as an adult, making him at least 3 years old.

One drake Wood Duck banded previously in Mississippi and one banded previously in Louisiana.

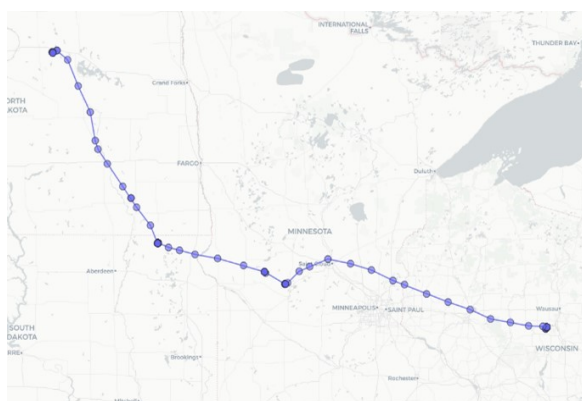




From 1965 – 2020 approximately 6,628 birds that were banded here at MWA have been reported to the United States Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL). The BBL collects, curates, archives, and disseminates information from banded and marked birds in North America.

Collaborative Efforts

With the outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), it was important for the USDA to sample populations of wild ducks around the state. MWA has historically participated in HPAI sampling, and this year was no different. A collaborative effort of USDA and WDNR staff along with UWSP student volunteers worked well to obtain two separate samples from 40 mallards for HPAI.



Hen mallard fitted with GPS tracker on Aug 9th left MWA on Aug 12th and arrived in N Dakota on Aug 14th.

Researchers at Michigan State University are coordinating with researchers in Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio to take blood samples from hundreds of hen mallards and fit the birds with GPS transmitters to track their movements. The main goal of the research is to determine what factors are limiting abundance of Great Lakes mallards. DNR staff took blood samples and fitted 9 mallards with transmitters during MWA's banding operation. It has been interesting to see some of the GPS tracks and what these birds have been doing.

A special thanks to all those that volunteered their time and helped make 2022 a successful year.

Adam Toboyak, Amanda Kamps, Andrew Greenawalt, Anna Schneider, Avery Haffele

Ben Hanten, Carrie Ziolkowski, Charlie Stefanski, Chuck Schlafke, Connor Stefanski, Debbie Hirt, Don Fox, Don Silloway, Gina Reed, Joy Schuller, Joyce Fox, Kaleia Knappe, Katiya Gorski, Kevin Olsen, Korey Trowbridge, Logan Planer, Mary Schlafke, Ryan Haffele, Susan Schuller, Trevor Trowbridge, and Victoria Fasbender.



Fall Prescribed Burn Summary

by Brandon Stefanski and Kaleb Bolder

On October 21, DNR Wildlife and Forestry staff completed a 310 acre prescribed burn on the Smokey Hill burn unit at Mead Wildlife Area. The unit is located east of Smokey Hill Road where the observation tower is located. This area provides incredibly valuable habitat for grassland nesting waterfowl and other grassland dependent birds.

The goal of this burn was to improve the grassland habitat by setting back encroaching brush, stimulating the native warm season grasses, killing invasive plant species, and reducing the matted grass component. The entire unit did not burn due to some wet conditions and green vegetation, but we did meet our goals and objectives throughout most of the unit. DNR staff will likely burn it again in 4-5 years when the habitat becomes degraded again.

On November 2, 2022 Forestry, NHC, and Wildlife staff, collaborating DNR bureaus, executed a prescribed burn of 64 acres on Martin Lane just south of the Mead visitor center. This unit was getting overtaken by dogwood, willow, alder, and aspen. The burn hopefully knocked back the brush and rejuvenated the native grasses. This will provide better habitat for grassland species like the greater prairie chicken.





Friends of Mead/McMillan Event Planner

2023

JANUARY

- January 6 Guided Full Moon/Evening Hike, 7:00-8:30 pm, snowshoes provided pending snow
Please RSVP at Allyn.Noll@wisconsin.gov
- January 7 Open Snowshoeing, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- January 12 & 13 Snowmobile Safety, 4:30-8:30 pm
- January 14 Guided Senior Snowshoeing, 9:30-11:00 am
- January 14 Guided Family Snowshoeing, 1:00-2:30 pm, *first come first served*
- January 14 Friends of Mead/McMillan Wildlife Areas Annual Meeting, 10:00 am-12:00 pm
- January 19 & 20 Snowmobile Safety, 4:30-8:30 pm
- January 21 Open Snowshoeing, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- January 23 Mondays at Mead: Astronomy with Dr. Zamfir, UWSP, 6:30-7:30 pm, in-person and virtual presentation, Q&A
Virtual option available, for Zoom link register here: <https://bit.ly/3yMvFwc>
- January 28 Mead Book Club, 9-10:30 am. Join us as we take a deep dive into David Attenborough's "A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future". Intro and Part 1: My Witness Statement. *Coffee and light snacks provided.*
Please RSVP at Sandra.DeRoche@wisconsin.gov
- January 28 Open Senior Snowshoeing, 9:30-12:00 am, *first come first served*
- January 28 Open Family Snowshoeing, 1:00-3:00 pm, *first come first served*



Friends of Mead/McMillan Event Planner

2023

FEBRUARY

- February 4 Open Snowshoeing, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- February 5 Guided Full Moon/Evening Hike, 7:00-8:30 pm, snowshoes provided pending snow
Please RSVP at Allyn.Noll@wisconsin.gov
- February 11 Guided Senior Snowshoeing, 9:30-11:00 am, *first come first served*
- February 11 Guided Family Snowshoeing, 1:00-2:30 pm, *first come first served*
- February 18 Open Snowshoeing, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- February 18 Wild Ones Presentation, time TBD, Schedule of Events:
Presentations:
Pollinator Gardens, Seed Saving, DNR Seed Collecting Policy, Seed Starting Activity
For more information about Wild Ones Central Wisconsin Chapter visit their website: [here](#).
- February 25 Mead Book Club, 9:00-10:30 am. Join us as we take a deep dive into David Attenborough's "A Life on Our Planet" Sandra.DeRoche@wisconsin.gov
- February 25 Open Senior Snowshoeing, 9:30-12:00 am, *pending snow, first come first served*
- February 25 Open Family Snowshoeing, 1:00-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- February 27 Mondays at Mead: Pollinators and Native Plants, with Dr. Davis-Foust, UWO, 6:30-7:30 pm, virtual presentation and Q&A
Virtual only, for Zoom link register here: <https://bit.ly/3VBr7IQ>

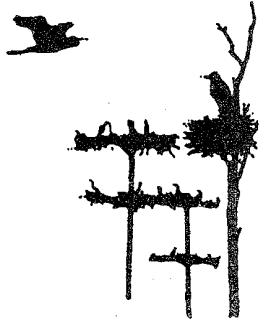


Friends of Mead/McMillan Event Planner

2023

MARCH

- March 4 Open Snowshoeing, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- March 7 Guided Full Moon/Evening Hike, 7:00-8:30 pm, snowshoes provided pending snow
Please RSVP at Allyn.Noll@wisconsin.gov
- March 11 Guided Senior Snowshoeing, 9:30-11:00 am, *first come first served*
- March 11 Guided Family Snowshoeing, 1:00-2:30 pm, *first come first served*
- *March 11 Hunters Education Online Field day 8:00 am-12:00pm and 12:30-4:30 pm*
- March 18 Open Snowshoeing, 10:00 am-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- March 25 Mead Book Club, 9:00-10:30 am. Join us as we take a deep dive into David Attenborough's "A Life on Our Planet". Part 3: A Vision for the Future: How to Rewild the World and Conclusion. *Coffee and light snacks provided.*
Please RSVP at Sandra.DeRoche@wisconsin.gov
- March 25 Open Senior Snowshoeing, 9:30-12:00 am, *pending snow, first come first served*
- March 25 Open Family Snowshoeing, 1:00-3:00 pm, *pending snow, first come first served*
- March 27 Mondays at Mead: Quality Wetland Habitat and Impact of Invasives, with Chris Hamerla, Golden Sands RC&D, 6:30-7:30 pm, in-person and virtual presentation, Q&A
Virtual option available, for Zoom link register here: <https://bit.ly/3Tb2cEb>



**Friends of
Mead/McMillan
Association, Inc.**
201517 Cty Hwy S
Milladore, WI 54454



Friends of the Mead/McMillan Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 14, 2023 10:00 AM

- **Business meeting**
- **Election of Board Members**
- **Report from Mead/McMillan Supervisor**
- **LUNCH**
- **Family Snowshoeing 12:30-3:00 PM**

