



Update on Activity at the Mead

Article by Tom Meier—Project Manager, Mead Wildlife Area

This past fall and winter as well as this spring have been exceptionally busy at the Mead with the hunting, educational groups and workshops which have taken place. We are pleased so many surrounding businesses and organizations have had their meetings here to see our new facility with all of its energy components. During April and May over 27 school groups will be visiting to learn about conservation education and help instill a love for the environment. I am proud of the staff at the Mead, who skillfully do their jobs as DNR employees and juggle their schedules to accommodate the numerous school groups who wish to participate in our educational programming.

We have also had many workshops such as the Aldo Leopold Weekend and a recent meeting with Waterfowlers that use the mead. The latter meeting was very successful with local hunters providing many options and recommendations in regard to how seasons and waterfowl numbers might be improved.

We couldn't exist without the many neighbors and business partners who have been supportive through the years. We certainly could not exist without the many volunteers that assist us on programming as well as on the maintenance of the new education center. This commitment is an extension of the personal ownership that many feel toward the place they call Mead. We thank all of you for your support. We hope you will continue to foster friendships with our staff and the Friends of the Mead.

We invite all of you to come out on Sunday, June 3rd, from 11-4 at our "Family Festival at the Mead" where you will be able to bike, hike, tour the building, view the new historical exhibit, and see the albino deer that used to roam around Auburndale. In addition you will also have the opportunity to help support our Mead Education Trust by participating in the silent auction, watch a pottery demonstration, and enjoy a bite to eat at the food tent.

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Family Festival at The Mead Wildlife Area

Article by Nancy Stevenson

Among the many activities to be offered at the Family Festival on June 3 will be a silent auction of nature-inspired art. Featured artists, whose works will be showcased in the main lobby, are Jerry Gadamus, air brush; Pat Ruesch, watercolor; Gerard Fuehrer, photography; and Gene Reineking, woodcarving. In addition, other area artists are being invited to contribute one or more pieces of art to be displayed in the Education room. A Bateman print has already been donated by Tom Meier. A woodcarving demonstration is planned, and Vince Heig will demonstrate pottery-making .

This is an opportunity to see and purchase quality art and at the same time benefit our fund-raising efforts. Bring your family and friends!!

Nancy Stevenson, Sally Overholt, Sue Hall - Auction Committee Members

ROAD LITTER CLEAN UP PROGRAM

Mead staff would like to begin an "Adopt a Road" plan for segments of roads adjacent to Mead and McMillan for litter clean-up. A great need exists to undertake a periodic clean-up of the area and the Mead staff just does not have the time to complete this important task. If you or your group is interested in a $\frac{1}{2}$ or 1 mile segment, please contact the Mead office for details (457-6771).

Visit The George W. Mead Wildlife Area Online

<http://meadwildlife.org/>



Mead Wildlife Area Education Trust Update

Article by Kent Hall, Fund Raising Chair

On December 14, 2006, the Joint Finance Committee of the State Legislature approved a "state position" for a Conservation Educator at the Mead Center of the Mead SWA. The WDNR agreed to provide the fringe benefits for this Educator, but the salary is to be funded in the private sector.

To assure that the position is funded forever, we have begun a fund raising effort for a perpetual fund called the "Mead Wildlife Area Education Trust".

The Friends of Mead-McMillan Assoc., Inc., the citizens organization that is raising money for the Educator, has been promised a \$500,000 challenge grant from the Mead-Witter Foundation of Wisconsin Rapids. However, none of this money will be available until the Friends raise the entire "matching" \$500,000.

It will take a year after that money is raised before the investment raises enough interest to hire an Educator. For that reason, the "Friends" want to raise another \$50,000 to assure this position can be filled up to a year earlier than if we had to wait for the "Trust" to generate enough interest to hire the Educator.

Therefore, our fund raising goal is \$550,000 by Dec. 31, 2008, with an Educator on Board by no later than spring, 2009. The "Friends" met on December 28, 2006, to organize our fund raising efforts, but it was not until mid-February that we were able to get our fund raising materials organized, printed and kick off our fund raising program.

Since that time we have passed the half way point by raising \$288,070 (52.3%) of our \$550,000 goal (donations & pledges). The twelve members of the "Friends Board" have pledged or donated \$47,000 (16.3%) of that amount (all Board members have pledged or donated).

I am hopeful that you will join us in this fund raising effort. We have special recognition for those donating \$500 or more (Recognition Board to be placed in or near the Education Room). But we are very appreciative of **any level** of donation.

If you are interested in donating to this fundraising effort please contact me or any "Friends Board" member and we will get you a donation form.

And keep in mind why we are hiring this Educator. We want to pass along the traditions of hunting and fishing as well as the simple enjoyment of our natural world to future generations; instill in them the importance of energy conservation to prevent or reverse global climate change and to break our dependence on foreign oil. Future generations offer the best hope to accomplish these goals.



SPORTSMEN'S AUCTION

A BENEFIT FOR MEAD EDUCATOR TRUST

A LIVE AUCTION IS BEING PLANNED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE MEAD WILDLIFE AREA EDUCATION TRUST. IT WILL BE HELD IN MID TO LATE AUGUST AT THE STANTON W. MEAD EDUCATION AND VISITOR CENTER.

ITEMS TO BE AUCTIONED WILL BE SOLICITED FROM LOCAL SPORTSMEN AND, DEPENDING ON THE NET VALUE OF THE ITEMS SOLD, DONORS WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE A TAX RECEIPT AND/OR MAY EVEN QUALIFY FOR RECOGNITION AS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE MWA EDUCATION TRUST.

A CORE COMMITTEE HAS ALREADY BEEN FORMED TO BEGIN THE DETAILED PLANNING FOR THIS EVENT. ANYONE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS ACTIVITY EITHER AS A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, VOLUNTEER AT THE EVENT OR AS A DONOR OF UNUSED OUTDOOR RELATED GEAR CAN CONTACT DOUG AZIZ (715/693-3491) OR AZ54455@YAHOO.COM IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING DONATIONS OR WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY WAY.

ANYTHING OF VALUE PERTAINING TO THE OUTDOORS INCLUDING BUT, NOT LIMITED TO, FISHING, HUNTING AND CAMPING EQUIPMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR INCLUSION IN THE AUCTION. THE DONATED ITEMS MUST STILL BE FUNCTIONAL AND IN REASONABLY GOOD CONDITION. THERE WILL BE SPECIFIC DAYS AND HOURS DURING WHICH DONATIONS OF AUCTION ITEMS WILL BE ACCEPTED AND LOGGED-IN AT THE EDUCATION AND VISITOR CENTER.

PLEASE CONSIDER PARTICIPATING IN THIS EXCITING EVENT BY DONATING GOODS TO BE AUCTIONED AND/OR AS A VOLUNTEER.





Auburndale Teachers Join the Drive for Mead Educator

Article by Beth Clouse

The Auburndale Education Association (AEA) has started working on a plan to help raise money for the Mead Wildlife Area Education Trust. Their first step in raising money to contribute to the Trust was to hold a bake sale on Sunday, March 25th at the annual FFA Pancake feed held at Auburndale High School. The bake sale was a success!

The AEA also plans to hold several brat fries at Festival Foods in Marshfield this summer for the Mead Educator Fund: June 8th and 9th, and again on June 22nd, and 23rd, come join us for some brats!

Our goal is to earn enough money to have the Auburndale Education Association name on the recognition panel for the Trust. Can we do it? We are sure we can!

It is the hope of the Auburndale Education Association that other educators in the area will help with this very worthy cause. The Mead Wildlife Area is an educational resource that is available to every school district and individual classroom in the area. Many of our classes have been going to the Mead Education Center and have had exceptional experiences. This resource has so much potential for students now and in the future; every educator needs to show their support!



Auburndale Educator Association Bake Sale fund-raiser for Mead Educator March 24, 2007
(from left: Sheila Hellner, Beth Clouse, Mary Jo Krings)
(Photo courtesy of Richard Clouse)

Students from Auburndale High School helping at the Mead Educator Bake Sale March 24, 2007.
(Photo courtesy of Richard Clouse)





Hunting Wetland Bogs at the Mead

Article by Terry Lane

I started hunting in the conifer bogs in 1963, which were referred to back then by everyone, as the "Spruce Swamp". We still call them spruce swamps. Our dad introduced us to the "Spruce Swamp" when we began hunting by chasing snowshoe hares around in there. Snowshoes were abundant in the "Spruce Swamp" back then. There were also plenty of cottontails there along the edges of the tag alders and cattails. Now snowshoes are scarce there and have been for many years. They just don't seem to be making a comeback.

There were "trails" that could be followed for some distances throughout the swamp back then. It seemed like a decent trail when you started walking it, but it always got smaller and smaller, and then would finally be eaten up by the thick black spruce. We knew where most trails went by heart, but now you can find very few of those trails. The "Spruce Swamp" has swallowed most of them. There is a small drainage creek that runs south to north, about 3/4's of the length of the large bog. It's not wide, but it's wide enough that you usually cannot jump from one side to the other, and if you choose to try walking the over it on the ice in winter, you will most likely find yourself waist deep in MUCK!! There is only inches of water much of the time, but lots of muck underneath. About ten years or so ago, a county line survey trail was blazed through in an East/West direction. That trail is already being swallowed up by the black spruce conifers. Sooner or later, the bog swallows up all trails. Maybe that's a good thing.

The large bog is no doubt my favorite place to be at Mead. It is a totally different world when you are in there. Thick, quiet, peaceful, and a very diverse place to visit. It was a must to carry a compass when entering it, even on a clear day. It can cloud up in a hurry, and you can get turned around in less than 100 yards on cloudy days. Today a modern GPS would be helpful for getting out. The bog is about a mile and a half long, and a half mile wide. There are actually some places where the spruce grow so thick you cannot push your way through, but most of the time you can shove through the thick stuff.

Every trip there brings special memories. I have seen a Boreal Owl (a bird many birders have not seen) with a vole in it's feet, perched on a black spruce branch, enjoying its' meal. And I have encountered numerous Great Grey Owls there.

I always enjoy looking at the Northern Pitcher plants growing in the bogs. July is the best time for them, usually before the "flower" wilts and collapses to the moss carpet. There are also wild upland cranberries that grow on the moss carpet in there. These can be found and picked in late August-early September. Something I didn't realize, until a few years ago, is that Poison Sumac is rather abundant in there. I had seen it, but didn't know what it was until I pointed some out to my brother-in-law, Ross Mueller. Now I am much more cautious when near the Poison Sumac.

On a trip following my hounds in there in 1996, as they pursued a coyote, I was in for a surprise. It sounded as though they had caught up to the coyote. I had my camera and tried to quietly get close for a picture. They quit barking and I finally found their tracks. They had stumbled across a hibernating bear as they chased the coyote, and were now following the bear! Luckily they left it alone. I



caught the dogs and left the area so the bear could rest. It was near 40 degrees that January day, and the bear had been foraging for food the night before.

My brother and I used to hunt bobcats in the spruce bogs years ago. The last one we harvested there was in 1978.

Today we don't take our dogs into the bogs anymore. There's a wolf pack that has taken up residence in there, and taking a hound in there is asking for trouble. Wolves won't tolerate a dog in their territory. Last winter, in one day, I counted nine different wolf tracks there; seven were in a pack, and two were single tracks, possibly loners hanging around or passing through. I have seen, and had the luck to get pictures of young wolves in there, and have heard the adult wolves howling.

The "Spruce Swamp" isn't a large area, but it is incredibly interesting and a special place. I am pleased it has been placed on the states "natural area" list since about 2002, officially referred to as the "Mead Conifer Bogs". However, I cannot break my habit of more than forty years of referring to it as "The Spruce Swamp!"

A very interesting place to visit but be sure to take a compass or *GPS*, and believe what they tell you. You may "think" you are going in one direction but find your compass or *GPS* telling you different. It's difficult traveling in the bogs during the summer months. The best time is after it freezes up (and there is less damage to this sensitive ecosystem).



Pitcher Plant photos Courtesy of Terry Lane



Exhibits and Trail Ready for Visitors

Article by Mike Gross

After two years of work, "People of the Little Eau Pleine", an exhibit that tells the history of the Mead Wildlife Area and Little Eau Pleine River is now ready for viewing at the Stanton W. Mead Visitor Center. Dr. Michael Gross, Professor Emeritus in the UWSP College of Natural Resources developed the exhibit. It incorporates artifacts collected on or around Mead Wildlife Area and historic photographs taken over the last century. The objects and photos provide tangible connections to prehistoric Indians, French fur traders, loggers and farmers who all came to the valley over a 10,000 year period for the rich wildlife, timber and agricultural resources available there.

This exhibit and the "Audubon Prairie Nature Trail" will be officially opened at the Family Festival on Sunday, June 3. The nature trail, also developed by Dr. Gross, is a half-mile loop that includes five interpretive panels, a listening and viewing bench, and two boardwalks. The panels interpret the wildlife that can be viewed in flight across the valley, the sedge meadows, Dragonfly Pond, and Audubon Prairie.



The introductory panel for "People of the Little Eau Pleine" shows the rich artifacts and images incorporated in the exhibit. Katie Guntz (pictured), graphic design student at UWSP, designed the panels. (Photo courtesy of Mike Gross)



Albino Whitetail

Article by Pam Stange

This albino 9-point buck was found during the deer gun season in the fall of 2005 by Dave Budtke in the Auburndale area. The deer was not shot. It was checked over by the warden and he determined that it was not shot or hit by a car and therefore died of natural causes. This buck is one of several albino deer that been seen in the Mead area. The Friends of Mead-McMillan paid for the mount, taxidermy was by KD Taxidermy, Wisconsin Rapids. The deer will be on permanent display at the Stanton W. Mead Educational Center.

(Photo courtesy of Brian Peters)



McMillan Marsh Bike / Pedestrian Trail

Article by Dennis Dieringer

Located to the immediate north of Marshfield, the McMillan Marsh Wildlife Area provides quality opportunities for the outdoor enthusiast. Now that spring has officially sprung, the wildlife have returned to active duty to prepare for raising their young over the summer. What a wonderful time to see some of our native wildlife, not only the animals but the trees and flowers as well.

At the trailhead you will find a kiosk with information about the history of the area, an overhead photo and other pertinent information. You will find these new signs to be a pleasure to read. The history of the area and pictures of the artifacts that have been found tell quite a story of the change from a not to distant time. A bulletin board completes the kiosk which will have seasonal information as it comes available.

The bike / pedestrian trail is open year around with the bike trail open from May 1st through September 1st. No ATV's, motor vehicles, motor cycles, or horses are allowed on the trail. Dogs must be on a leash from April 15 - July 31 due to the nesting of waterfowl. The trailhead is located one-quarter mile off of Mann Road on Meadow Avenue.

As always thanks to all of you who help keep our wildlife areas clean of garbage and litter. A few moments here and there of litter pickup will go a long way in keeping our wildlife areas looking their best!

Come and enjoy a truly diverse wildlife area not far from your home. Bring a friend and share the experience with nature at its best!



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Wetland's Gazette



**Elementary
students take
part in educa-
tional experi-
ences at the
Stanton W.
Mead
Education
Center at the
Mead**

Pam Stange leads a
birding lesson.

(Photo courtesy of Brian
Peters)