



# Newsletter

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org ■ info@FriendsOfWildRiver.org ■ 651-583-2923



**Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting  
is coming up soon: March 15!**

--- See page 5 for more info ---

## The vacant Naturalist position may not be filled this year!

As incredible as it sounds to many of us who have been going to Wild River State Park since its creation in 1978, there may not be a full-time DNR Naturalist providing programs, leading hikes and answering never-ending questions at the Visitor Center this year. In a Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> email to the board of directors of the Friends, Paul Kurvers (the Park Manager) wrote:

"Although my initial hope was that the position could be filled soon, the realities of a budget shortfall within our division for the remainder of this fiscal year as well as a projected shortfall for the next fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2014) has resulted in a decision being made to leave the position vacant. Unless our budget situation improves next fiscal year, the naturalist position will likely remain vacant through the remainder of this year. In order to maintain some very minimal level of interpretive services at the park, naturalists from other nearby state parks will provide programming at the park one day per week during the summer. In addition, using funds supplied by the Friends Group, Kacie Carlson has agreed to help book guest presenters that will provide some programs on Saturdays or Sundays during the busy season. Although I am very disappointed in this development, I am also very thankful that the park has such a dedicated group of volunteers like yourself. Through the efforts, activities and financial support of the Friends Group, the park is indeed a better place for all who visit."

At the time this article is being written (Feb. 23), the Friends board is putting together a letter that will be sent to officials at the DNR Division of Parks and Recreation stating our opposition to this development and making the following points:

- The Wild River Naturalist position has previously been identified as one of the nine or ten most important core interpretive positions in the division.
- Many innovative and important naturalist-led programs – like Prairie Care, maple syruping, Seegwan, environmental education speakers, etc. – were started at Wild River and have left a legacy for all Minnesotans.
- Our naturalists have recruited thousands of next generation outdoor recreation users.

We are now looking for solutions to this unacceptable loss of our naturalist. Some ideas are to find alternate sources of funds or make staff cuts elsewhere. ***Please join us at the Annual Meeting at the Visitor Center on March 15 for further information, discussion, and suggestions.***

From the President:

## Stepping Down after 7 Great Years as President

By Dave Kozlovsky, Friends of Wild River State Park



Greetings from a cold and snowy Almelund! What a terrific season for winter activity and sports! Whether you enjoy skiing, ice-fishing, snowshoeing, making snow angels or any other way to enjoy the cold and snow, this is your year.

The Annual Meeting and Pancake Breakfast have seen a good variety of weather from highs in the 60's to lows in the single digits. So, on this year's Annual Meeting and Pancake Breakfast Saturday, March 15, will we be hiking or skiing??

If you read my column in the fall Friends of Wild River State Park newsletter, I reviewed how we had changed our bylaws to have two-year terms for the president and vice-president. Since we now have these two-year terms in place and new board members willing to step up to these leadership positions, this will be my seventh and last annual meeting to preside over. I have really enjoyed being president of this organization over the years both for seeing the growth of programs offered in the Park as well as making many new friends. I will still remain on the board of directors and continue to be a "friend" of Wild River State Park. I would like to thank those on the board of directors and in our membership for their help and support over the years and hope to help keep the Friends of Wild River State Park moving onward and upward.

Hope to see you at the Annual Meeting and Pancake Breakfast!

### WHERE IS IT?

Do you know where in Wild River State Park this picture was taken? See where this impressive nest and birds can be easily seen – answer on page 6.



## Bald Eagle Tails

By Rubin Stenseng, Friends Member and very active volunteer at WRSP

As many of you know, the story of the recovery of the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), as a species, is a success story that has played out in recent history. The widespread use of DDT as a pesticide in the 1940-50's caused the egg shell of raptors, like the Bald Eagle, to be paper thin and when these large birds moved around in a nest, the eggs would break and cause a nesting failure. The elimination of DDT has slowly worked the chemical out of the environment to the point that a more healthy environment exists for eagle reproduction. They are protected from shooting and there has been progress in preserving and/or restoring their preferred habitat. Today, the Bald Eagle population is robust and these beautiful birds are often seen along the St. Croix River.

The juvenile Bald Eagle is dark brown with variable white mottling on wings and tail for the first four years. By the fifth year, the bird is mature and will have a complete white head and tail. The coloring is similar for both sexes, however, the female eagle is larger than the male eagle. In the photo below of two adults eagles in the Park, which is the female? (Hint: the one on the right appears to be significantly larger. And yes, they are looking over their shoulder.) Their preferred habitat includes open water that supports large numbers of fish and waterfowl. Their preferred food is fish, but will take waterfowl and will eat carrion as needed. They build very large stick nests near the top of large trees, often near water.



Amik's Pond Pair

... continued on page 3:  
Wild River Bald Eagle Tales



## Spring Native Plant Sale<sup>8</sup> – twice again this year

One of the most anticipated signs of spring is the opening of local nurseries with their spring plant sales. Friends of Wild River is also a part of this: one of our Board members – Tom Dickhudt – operates Sunrise Native Plants and he grows and donates locally hardy flowers and grasses for an annual fundraiser for the Park. Again this year there will be 2 dates for you to take advantage of his native plant sale:

**Sun. May 18 – 9:00 to 3:00** at the Park Entrance

**Sun. June 8 – 9:00 to 3:00** at the Park Entrance

As always, a wide variety of native plants will be offered, including wildflower species like Prairie Smoke and Wild Lupine; native grasses like Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, and Bottlebrush Grass; and a unique selection of ferns and sedges.

## Species Spotlight

### Smallmouth Bass

**Size:** Usually more than 12 inches long and rarely more than 20 inches.

**Mn State Record:** 8 lbs., 0 ozs, Otter Tail county – West Battle Lake, 1948

**Appearance:** Their color ranges from dark, olive brown to pale, yellow green with dark vertical bars on the sides. The belly is a mottled, dusky off-white, which gives it a salt and pepper look. On the head are 3 or 4 "tiger stripes" that radiate from the eye rearward. The eye is usually red or orange.

**Notes:** Along with many other fish in the St. Croix River, it is a favorite food source of the Bald Eagle and why you can find eagle nests close to the river edge. It's a favorite of anglers for its aggressive fighting and explosive jumps. Starting a couple years ago, Wild River has about a dozen fishing rods that you can check-out for free and return later. Also, a state fishing license is NOT required within state park boundaries when fishing from the banks of a river or lake.





## Wild River Bald Eagle Tales

In Wild River State Park (WRSP), there are two eagle nests that are readily visible and active along the St. Croix River. One is on the south end of the island that is just downstream from the Nevers Dam overlook. The second is on the river's edge just downstream from the Amik's Pond trail. Both eagle nests have been active in recent years, but not always successfully. I try to monitor the nests each summer to see if the adults are tending the nests and then later to see if any young birds can be seen in the nests. Because I have been doing other summer volunteer work out-of-state for the National Park Service, I have not been able to observe young birds fledge (leave the nest).

The Nevers Dam nest appears to have been very productive. In the past 3 years, the nest has been attended, maintained, and young birds observed. Things seem to be going well for this pair of eagles. When everything is going well, it does make for a somewhat boring tale however.

The Amik's Pond nest is a more complicated tale. In May 2011, the National Park Service (NPS) crew that climbs trees, captures young eagles, weighs them, takes a blood sample, and puts on a numbered leg band, came to check the eagles along this unit of the national park. Two of the WRSP Naturalist Corp staff were able to assist this crew while working with 2 eaglets from the Amik's Pond nest. In August of that year, a private party reported that a juvenile eagle had been observed along the St. Croix River, not flying and in the same spot for several days. As a volunteer for The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota, I have been trained to perform eagle rescues in the wild. After a short pontoon boat ride, I was able to locate the bird, to perform a clean rescue, and to deliver the bird to The Raptor Center. Based on the number on the leg band, it was a bird that had fledged from the Amik's Pond nest earlier that summer. So that bird was handled by the NPS crew, by the WRSP Naturalist Corp staff, by me, and by staff at The Raptor Center. That's a lot of human contact for one eagle! The diagnosis was that the young bird was malnourished. After proper rehab and strength-building, it was released later that fall down on the Mississippi River near Wabasha where it had a good chance to find food and to spend the winter. In the 2012 season, this nest was attended by a pair of adult eagles, but by early summer, all activity at the nest had ceased. It was clear that they got off to a good start, but for some reason, the nest failed that year. The nest was again active in the 2013 season.



Nevers Dam Nest



Amik's Pond Nest

Bald Eagles are one of the bird species that Park visitors often ask about. It is fun to explain to visitors that the river habitat is a perfect place for this beautiful bird to live and to reproduce. We are fortunate to have two pairs of eagles that have decided to establish territories and nests in the main part of the Park where we can see them and their young on a regular basis. April is a good time to start looking for young birds moving about in the nests.

A tall tree, lots of sticks, a clean river, some fish, and fresh air are all they ask for, yet they give so much pleasure to humans every time they float by on broad, flat wings with white head and tail shining in the sun. They add some magic to the river scene, and, I think, to our lives.

-- Rubin Stenseng, WRSP Volunteer



Amik's Pond Nest – close-up

... all photos courtesy of Rubin,  
except Amik's nest by Dave Crawford

## Eagle update!

*From an email from Rubin Stenseng  
on Wed., Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>*



Right on schedule, the Bald Eagles of Wild River State Park are at their nests.

You may know this from visitor reports or from your own observations, but I would like to give you the spring report. I checked on the nests this morning, Feb. 19th, and here is the report:

**Amik's Pond nest:** One adult eagle in the nest and the second adult was perched in a tree a little upstream. All looked peaceful and okay. Last year at this same time we were seeing the exact same activity.

**Nevers Dam nest:** Two adult eagles were in the nest, appeared to be sharing a fish brunch. Again, the birds and nest looked normal – ready for another spring of raising young birds.

To be clear, it looks like "nest spring start-up" activity. The birds were all standing up in the nests so it is clear that there are no eggs at this early stage. Historical phenology would suggest that as soon as a week, or two, or three, we may start to see an adult sitting in the nest, suggesting that either there are eggs or soon will be.

**The Eagles are back! Come out soon to see these magnificent creatures at Wild River!**

## Calendar of Events

### Maple Syruping Workshops

Usually held throughout March and early April, but have now been cancelled unless the Naturalist position can be filled – see article on page 1.

### FWRSP Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting

March 15: 9 - 11 am at the Visitor Center

Find more information on page 5 of this newsletter.

### FWRSP Native Plant Sale

#1: May 18: 9 am – 3 pm at the Park Entrance.

#2: June 8: 9 am – 3 pm at the Park Entrance.

Find more information on page 2 of this newsletter.

### FWRSP "Seegwan" Events

June 7: all day throughout the Park.

More information will be in the Summer Newsletter which will come out the end of May.

*Find more activities at [friendsofwildriver.org](http://friendsofwildriver.org)  
or at [mndnr.gov/wildriver](http://mndnr.gov/wildriver)*

## 2014 Candlelight Event: A beautiful evening!

The annual Candlelight Ski, Snowshoe, and Hike Event was held on February 15 and the Friends, who sponsored the event, were extremely pleased to finally have great snow depth, trail conditions, and temps in the upper teens after a few years of little snow and frigid weather. This resulted in what was estimated as the second highest turnout of park visitors in the 23-year history of the event. Approximately 1600 people in 500 vehicles took part in the night's activities which this year included over 8 miles of beautifully lighted ski and hiking trails.

Park staff and Friends pass on their sincere appreciation and thanks to all who volunteered to make this annual event such a success, especially:

- 65 North Branch H.S. Honor Society Students (and Advisor Chas Bettendorf) for helping out everywhere, including setting up the luminaries, directing parking, etc.
- Wade Vitalis at Wild River Rental for donating a ski package for the raffle. The excited winner this year was Michelle Ferreira of Mpls.
- Gigi Nauer at the Trail Center and Paul & Cass Dennison and Sarah Thompson at the Visitor Center for sharing their musical talents.
- Bonnie Patrick, Tessa Hill, Elizabeth Huselid, Jan Kozlovsky, Dave Crawford, Tom Dickhudt, Jeanne Walz and Brad Bjorklund (among others) for the donation of delicious treats.



**Candlelight Ski/Hike Photos:**  
*Courtesy of Gary Noren and Bob Walz*

*You are invited to the Friends of Wild River's*

# Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting

**Saturday, March 15, 9 – 11 a.m. at the Wild River State Park Visitor Center**

We will start at 9:00 with the delicious Pancake Breakfast (members eat for free), featuring:

- Famous secret recipe organic buttermilk pancakes
- Wild River State Park's home-made Maple Syrup tapped from the park "sugar bush" last spring
- Fresh scrambled eggs, hot coffee and juice

The Annual Meeting will follow at 10:00. Topics to include:

- Last year's very successful programs and initiatives
- Reports from the Friends Board of Directors
- Plans for the upcoming year and beyond
- Presentation of the annual "Wild Friend" award
- Guest speakers will include:

**Kacie Carlson**

Past Wild River State Park Naturalist, and current  
DNR Northeast Regional Naturalist

**Courtland Nelson**

DNR Parks and Recreation Division Director



## Membership Special

If your membership is renewed at or before the Annual meeting, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$55 gift card!

This would cover a one night stay in a camper cabin for up to six people at Wild River State Park. Or you could use it for anything else in the park, including campsites, items at the park store, annual parking permits, etc.

The drawing will be held at the Annual Meeting. You do not have to be present to win, so renew your membership today online or by completing the registration form on page 4!

### Please note:

- 1) A vehicle permit is required to enter the State Park.
- 2) This event is free to current members of the Friends. If you are not a member, please sign up at the door and enjoy the great food and company.

## 3 important reasons for you to attend the annual meeting at 10:00 –

- 1) Discussion of the as yet unfilled position of Naturalist. What suggestions do you have to ensure that the DNR hires someone soon?
- 2) Nomination of our officers, including a new President and Vice-President – and an opportunity to thank Dave Kozlovsky and Tessa Hill for their years of excellent service in these positions.
- 3) Possible use of committees made up of board and regular members to help in many areas such as major event planning and supplies, communications, education, political action, etc.

Join us for a morning of friendship, food, and fun at the Visitor Center! And please bring any friends who might be interested in joining us and supporting Wild River State Park.



Thank you for your  
Membership

## FWRSP Membership Options

- ☐ Junior **Friend**, 12 and under – \$5 / year  
Includes an "Action Guide" and other benefits
- ☐ Individual **Friend** – \$20 / year
- ☐ Family **Friend** – \$35 / year
- ☐ Silver **Friend** – \$50 / year
- ☐ Gold **Friend** – \$100 / year
- ☐ Platinum **Friend** – \$250+ / year  
Add an additional \$10 and be a member of  
Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota

Name:			
Address:			
City:			
State:		Zip:	
Email:	We will never sell or trade your email address		

**Option 1:** Mail above with check to:  
Friends of Wild River State Park  
c/o Bob Walz, Treasurer  
39168 Riverside Ct.  
North Branch, MN 55056

**Option 2:** Sign-up Online and use your credit card:  
[www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org](http://www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org)



2014 Candlelight Ski: Trail Center  
Photo by Gary Noren

### Answer to **WHERE IS IT?**

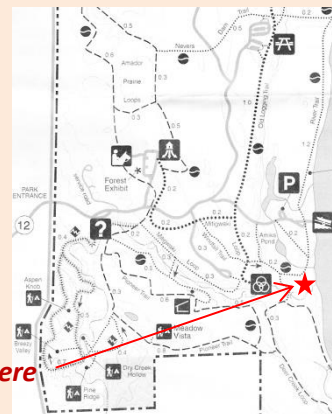
#### The Amik's Pond Trail Eagle Nest

If you've read the many articles and enjoyed the great photos of eagles in this special Eagle Edition, you probably know that this is the nest off of the popular Amik's Pond Trail where it runs next to the St. Croix River. It's very recognizable since it is so large and a small prairie is between it and the trail making it easy to see.

And, as noted on page 4, **the Eagles are back** – so come out to the Park and marvel at them soon!



Photos by Rubin Stenseng



It's here

End of...

