

Newsletter

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Candlelight Ski is Feb. 13!
... see page 3 for more information

From the President:

Winter Fun at the Park

By Tom Dickhudt, Friends of Wild River State Park



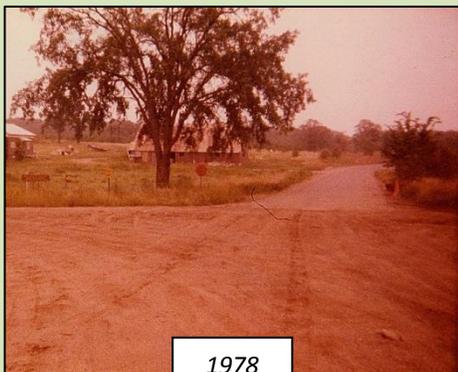
It is halfway through December and the ground is not yet frozen. Winter, however, has not yet officially begun. We have plenty of time for the snow that makes Wild River State park a special place. The Candlelight Ski is always scheduled for the second Saturday in February and this year is no exception. There are some years when sufficient snow does not come or the weather is so atrocious the event has to be cancelled. Usually, however, the snow comes and the park comes alive with those anxious for winter fun. Now is a good time to write in the event on the new 2016 calendar you probably have put behind the 2015 one that will soon become obsolete.

The second Saturday in March is the annual member meeting open to all Friends of Wild River and those interested in possibly becoming members. The pancake breakfast is great and features maple syrup refined from the sap of Wild River maple trees. There is an opportunity this year for folks to become more involved in planning Friends activities by becoming board members. If this might be of interest please contact me or one of the other board members. There are also a number of volunteer opportunities available at Friends events and regular park programs and activities.

Have a great Wild River Park year and have fun visiting the park.

WHERE IS IT?

Were you around the Park when it opened in 1978?
If so, you were probably here. Answer on page 4.



1978

Deer Hunts in the Park

By Paul Kurvers,
Wild River State Park Manager



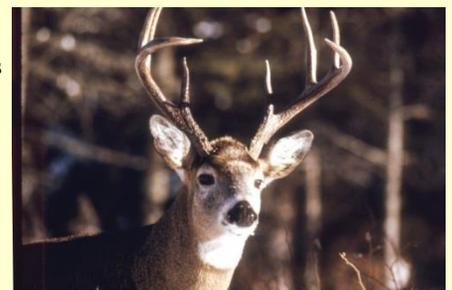
The topic of deer hunts in the park is one I get asked questions about many times throughout the course of the year. Questions typically come from two main groups of people: those who want a deer hunt and those who do not. Depending on which group you are affiliated with and my answers to your questions, you are either very pleased with my response or left wondering how I could have made such a decision. So, for those of you who have wondered how a decision is made regarding deer hunts in the park, I thought it would be helpful to explain the process.

First, some background information. By statute, State Parks are classified as Game Refuges. Within a refuge, as the names implies, animals are allowed to roam free from hunting and trapping activities. However, under certain circumstances, the DNR Commissioner does have the authority to open a refuge for hunting or trapping if a determination has been made that the species is causing damage to farm/timber crops, other species, or is over-populated. State statute also requires that State Parks be managed in a way which seeks to maintain a balance among the plant and animal life. In summary, what these statutes provide is an option to open a park for deer hunting if the deer population has expanded to such a degree where damage to plants or other resources is occurring.

To help make this determination both the Area Wildlife Manager and the Area Resource Management Specialist for the park are consulted. Factors taken into consideration include recent aerial deer count surveys, area deer population estimates and projections, habitat carrying capacities, and field observations of any significant deer browse damage to forb, tree, and shrub species within the park. Additional factors taken into consideration include the incidents of deer/car collisions and complaints from nearby private landowners regarding depredation of agricultural crops or other vegetation. Once all these factors have been considered and DNR specialists have been consulted, a decision is made regarding if a deer hunt is warranted. This decision is usually made by late spring to allow sufficient time to plan and publicize a hunt for the fall season.

Past visitor surveys have shown consistent opposition to increased deer hunting opportunities in State Parks, so our goal is to implement hunts in the most efficient manner to meet resource management needs and minimize inconvenience to other visitors. When deer hunts are conducted they are generally held for a short period of time and designed to focus on the harvest of breeding does through the implementation of special hunt rules. It should also be noted that the primary purpose of a deer hunt is not to provide for recreation but rather as a tool to help manage the park and its resources in a healthy sustainable manner.

A deer hunt was not held in the park this year. The most recent deer hunt conducted in the park occurred in 2012.



Naturalist Notes

By Mike Dunker, Park Naturalist

In 2016, Minnesota State Parks and Trails is celebrating 125 years since Itasca State Park opened to the public in 1891. A few activities are planned throughout Minnesota including picnics, hikes, paddles and special programming. Social media such as Facebook will also share upcoming events. This also gives us an opportunity to take a sneak peek into many of the state parks' histories.

Facebook users may be familiar with the term Throwback Thursday. It's an opportunity to post pictures or life events from your past to social media. Wild River State Park is joining in the fun. Although for me, the fun was to dig through old photos of the park to send in to our web team in St. Paul.

Being a relatively young park, only opening to the public in 1978, there isn't much for historical park photos in the albums. What was nice to find were pictures of big events in the past that happened within the current borders of the park. I came across photos donated to the park from 1896 and the building of Nevers Dam. Pictures also included the dam at work and ultimately pictures from 1955 shortly before it was dismantled.

There were also photos going back to 1908 showing the men working on the Arrow Line Railway bed near Sunrise. Although the railroad bed can still be seen in areas of the park, the construction never made it past the town of Sunrise. Management and financial issues ended up stopping the dream of this railroad from becoming a reality. It's interesting to think what the town of Sunrise might look like now if the railroad had been finished.

I found newspapers bearing front page articles on the park proposal in 1969 and another on the park opening in 1978. Some of you will remember the park going through a bit of an identity crisis in the naming for the first few years. Originally proposed to be called Sunrise State Park in 1969, the park actually opened under the name of St. Croix Wild River State Park.

Photos of the park's early additions, old buildings that have since been torn down, multiple dedications and former staff members were found. Although short, the history of the park shared 1,000 words per picture and I was listening.

Our state park and trail system has had an amazing past. I can only imagine what other parks are finding in their storage boxes. I'm sure they are enjoying it as much as I am. Yet as great as they are, my biggest smile comes from watching visitors coming out today making new memories, capturing new photos and creating new stories. Hopefully you are one of them.

2015 Prairie Care Report

By Mike Dunker, Park Naturalist

As I write this in mid-December, the prairies are brown in the park with nary a flake of snow upon them. It feels a little odd to have put away the seed collecting tools already when temperatures are more like a late-October day than mid-December. Even so, this year's collection of seed increased in number of species over last year's.

The final tally for the 2015 Prairie Care species collection is 61 different native grass and flower species. Of these, eleven are grasses with the remainder being forbs of all types. Collecting started as early as June and went as late as November of this year, helping to increase the diversity of the collection. As we continue to be more intentional about which species we collect to better fit the next year's prescribed fire and restoration plans, this diversity is important. The work former naturalists Dave Crawford and Kacie Carlson did identifying these species needs and group partnerships has been incredibly valuable and much appreciated.

We had approximately 45 volunteers and park users collecting seed this year. In addition, four school groups consisting of just over 300 students and adults helped in the Prairie Care program. Boy Scout groups also added another 25 to the volunteer numbers. I would like to give a big Thank You to Dan Carlson who came out for much of the fall and personally collected about 41 species.

This year, processing seed was also made easier through the addition of a modified wood chipper. The park's hammermill began to have issues a few years ago, with it becoming a safety hazard due to its age and wiring. Modifying a small wood chipper was suggested by another park resource specialist and has been very useful. Last year almost everything was processed by hand which took much longer, as you can imagine.

Thanks to all of you for your help, time and effort in creating such a memorable place in Wild River State Park. Your interest in preserving this resource as well as sharing it with others makes me excited to continue working with you in projects like this.



1896: Building Nevers Dam



1908: Arrow Line RR near Sunrise



1969: the proposed "Sunrise State Park"

Wild River State Park CANDLELIGHT

❄️ *Ski • Snowshoe • Hike*



February 13, 2016

Ongoing 6-9 pm

Wild River State Park

FREE!

With a Minnesota State Park
Vehicle Permit.
Skiers: see **NOTE** below.

Featuring the following fun activities throughout the night:

- Raffle Prizes including a new set of skis and boots!
- Minnesota's largest prairie bonfire - lit at 5:45pm
- 6 miles of candle-lit ski, snowshoe, and walking trails
- Live music at both the Visitor Center and Trail Center
- Home-made cookies, cider and coffee (donations appreciated)
- Large Telescope for viewing the remarkable night sky.
- Ski & Snowshoe rental available -- call Wade of Wild River Ski Rental at 651-257-0685 for more info.
- Call Dave at 651-583-2923 to volunteer to help out.

NOTE: A Minnesota Ski Pass is required for ski trails in State Parks or Forests, or on State or Grant-in-Aid Trails, for those who are age 16 and above. The cost is \$6 daily or \$20 for the season, and are available at the Park Office or online.

A big **Thanks** again goes to the 50+ members of this year's North Branch High School National Honor Society for doing all the following work, and more:

- Bagging, lighting and planting the hundreds of luminaries on a cold February afternoon.
- Greeting visitors at the entrance.
- Providing directions for parking.
- Selling raffle tickets.
- Serving cookies and cider.
- Re-lighting and maintaining the luminaries throughout the night.
- Answering questions.

-- Friends Board & Park Management

IT'S WINTERTIME FUN FOR ALL AGES!

Friends, please cut this portion, then, hang this poster somewhere in your hometown or workplace to invite new Friends and visitors to Wild River State Park for this event!

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:
Bob Walz, FWRSP Treasurer
 (make check out to "Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota"
 and put "Friends of Wild River membership" in memo field)
39168 Riverside Ct.
North Branch, MN 55056

Option 2: Sign-up Online and use your credit card:
www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org



Ice forming on the St. Croix River near Amik's Creek – Christmas Day, 2015

Improvements to our Website!

Check out the Friends updated website at:
www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org

Some of the new features are:

- Complete list of the 7 main Friends-sponsored events, plus additional information on each.
- More past editions of this Friends Newsletter plus listings of articles in each.
- An expanded list of "Our Favorite Links."
- A cool new link to this DNR page:
▶ **NEW!** [DNR Snow Depth and Trail Conditions](#)

Please contact me if you have any comments or suggestions about our Friends website:
 Bob Kessen – kesse002@umn.edu

Answer to WHERE IS IT?

Main entrance to the Park when it opened in 1978

This is looking into the park at the junction of what is now County Rd. 12 and Reed Ave. – both paved today. And there is no park sign or main office building yet. In 1978 the field was recently plowed. Today it has many native grasses and wildflowers due to the Prairie Care program and volunteers.



1978



2015