

Newsletter

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org ✉ info@FriendsOfWildRiver.org ✉ 651-257-4414



Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting
is coming up soon: **March 12!**
--- See page 5 for more info ---

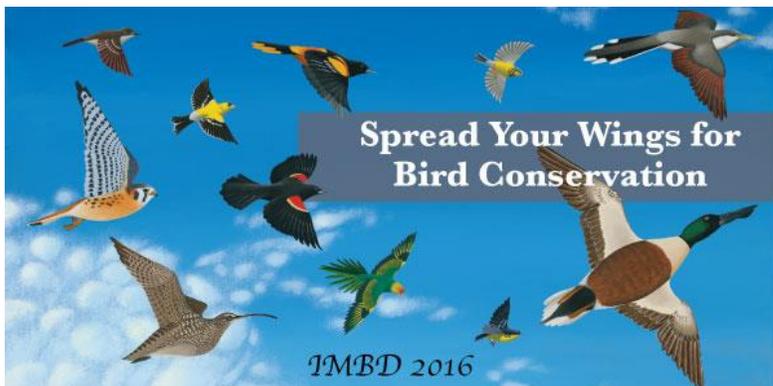
May 14: International Migratory Bird Day at the Park

By Bob Walz, Board Member of the Friends of Wild River

Attention Birders! Wild River State Park is spreading its wings for you. On Saturday, May 14, 2016, our Park will host its second annual International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD). It will begin with the Dayle DeClercq Bird Hike at 7:30 a.m. from the main boat landing. Sue Leaf, President of the Wild River Audubon Society and a member of MOU, will lead this annual bird hike. On display at the Visitor Center will be photos from the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica taken by students of Ben Thwaites, a professional nature photographer, plus an IMBD display in Spanish prepared by Master Naturalists from Anoka Ramsey Community College.

Now you may be asking yourself, why in Spanish? First it is to reach out to our Spanish-speaking Minnesotans. Second, we are hosting four high ranking park officials from Costa Rica. They will have a full day or two in the park to gain a hands-on experience of what takes place at a state park. Their visit is part of the third annual bird celebration of Tropical Wings, a non-profit organized to support the sister park agreement between 13 national parks of the Upper Midwest and 7 parks and protected areas of the Osa region of Costa Rica and to protect the migratory birds we share.

The other activities on May 14th include a program on bluebirds by Bob Walz, the Bluebird Recovery Program coordinator for Chisago County (yes, bluebirds are migratory; their range extends to the highlands of Nicaragua). There also will be a program on our prairie restoration and its impact on the populations of prairie birds given by retired Naturalist Dave Crawford. Finally, there will be a program on Migratory Birds by Park Naturalist Mike Dunker in the Amphitheatre in the evening and a native plant sale by Sunrise Native Plants in the park during the day.



Naturalist Notes

By Mike Dunker
Wild River State Park Naturalist



125 Years, 125 Miles

In the last newsletter, I shared that Minnesota State Parks and Trails was celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2016. It's great looking back at the old photos and reminiscing, but anniversaries also provide an opportunity to look at the present and future. It's a chance to show that, like wine and certain people, they get better with age. (If you are reading this, feel free to insert your own name into that 'certain people' category).

One of the ways we are doing this is with the 125 miles by Bike, Boot or Boat Challenge. Whether you bike, walk, run, ski, snowshoe, canoe, kayak or roll, keep track of your miles in Minnesota's state parks, state trails or state water trails in 2016. The goal is to accrue 125 miles in the course of the year through any of these methods. What's great is that people are already getting out to the parks, but this added incentive may increase how often they visit. I know I have already gotten into the habit of staying after work to add a mile or two towards my goal each week.

You don't have to do it alone. This is the great part – many of the naturalist-led programs are set up to count towards your total miles. If you come out for a snowshoe hike, wildflower walk or moonlight paddle it adds more mileage towards your total. The Friends of Wild River events are even better! The candlelight ski, St. Croix River clean-up or even the Otter Trotter 5K are great ways to add multiple miles at one time.

- Continued on Page 2 -

WHERE IS IT?

Do you know where in Wild River State Park this picture was taken? Answer on page 6.



Help us fund a New Amphitheater!



← Change this...

TO THIS!



Above-left is a picture of the current amphitheater at Wild River State Park. There is no stage, cover, electricity or lighting. Many people, including the board of the Friends of Wild River State Park, feel this is inadequate and would like a covered stage with lighting and storage.

Above-right is a photo of Sully Hill Preserve Amphitheater in North Dakota which shows a building that provides amenities including a covered stage, electricity, lighting, and storage. An amphitheater such as this at Wild River State Park would be used for interpretive programs, naturalist presentations, and other park gatherings.

The Friends board of directors has approved the allotment of \$10,000 from our endowment fund toward this project. The total cost of this new shelter – the Apex 35 from Enwood Structures – including two 9 x 16 dressing rooms in the back, and delivered to the Park, is \$38,110.

The DNR will be responsible for all of the landscaping and major roadway and parking improvements, plus better seating, toilet facilities, and other amenities.

To contribute in any amount, please send a check to:

Bob Walz, -- FWRSP Treasurer

(make check out to "Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota" and put "Friends Amphitheater fund" in memo field)

39168 Riverside Ct.

North Branch, MN 55056

Or you can use your credit card by going to our website:

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org

Thank you for your support!

- Naturalist Notes -

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You may also wish to put in a few miles to work off the pancakes and syrup from the upcoming pancake breakfast!

To get started or to mark down the miles you have already accumulated, go to the MNDNR website "125 miles" page at www.mndnr.gov/125/125miles and download the tracking sheet under the "Count me in!" header. Then just keep track of your miles by location. Remember to keep it to Minnesota State Parks and State Trails. Once you get 125 miles, bring it in to any Minnesota State Park to receive a 125 Mile Challenge sticker and take a photo with it to upload to the website. It only took a month before our first park visitor put in his 125 miles on cross country skis.

If you're looking for other anniversary activities besides putting on miles, there are plenty of those too. Wild River State Park was chosen as the park for its daily winter activities. A list of itinerary options is available on the 125th anniversary web page. There will also be picnics and events throughout Minnesota if you plan on visiting some other state parks this year. You can also enter the Minnesota State Parks and Trails license plate design contest.

For more information on the 125th anniversary events throughout the state and at Wild River State Park, go to www.mndnr.gov/125. I hope to see you at the park!

Species Spotlight

American Redstart

Anticipating International Migratory Bird Day on May 14, we are highlighting this beautiful bird often found in Wild River.

Latin Name: *Setophaga ruticilla*

Length: 4.3 to 5.5 inches

Wingspan: 6.3 to 9.1 inches

Markings: Long-tailed warbler with distinctive orange and black plumage on males. Female has a pale gray head and breast, with olive-green wings with yellow patches.



Adult Male

Habitat: Prefers forests with open areas at middle height which permits the aerial pursuit of insects.

Notes: Common in the forested regions of Minnesota, but scarce or absent in the prairie regions in the SW portion of the state. The American Redstart is a long distance migrant, wintering from Mexico and the West Indies, south to Brazil and northern Peru. The spring migration period extends from late April through late May with most individuals arriving in Minnesota during mid-May. In the fall, most leave the state from late August to mid-Sept. The species has declined significantly in Minnesota over the past 25 years at a rate of about 3% per year.

Become a Master Watershed Volunteer for the Park

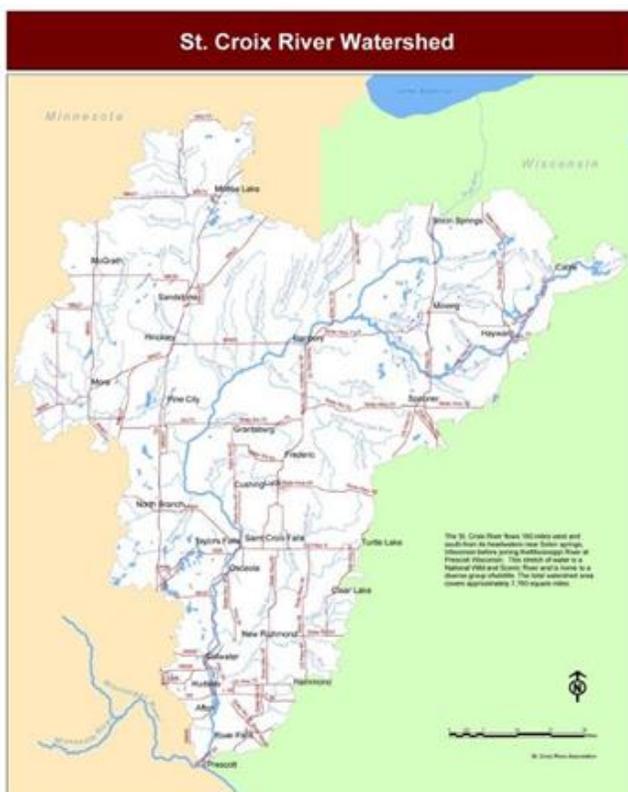
By Bob Walz, Board Member of the Friends of Wild River

The Saint Croix Valley Foundation through Tropical Wings (an affiliate of St. Croix National Scenic Riverway) and North Woods and Water Heritage Area received a grant to establish a Master Watershed Volunteer Program for the St. Croix River watershed. There will be three groups of volunteers recruited for each of these areas:

- the Minnesota side of the Upper St. Croix, including Wild River State Park
- the Wisconsin side of the Lower St. Croix
- a joint Minnesota and Wisconsin group covering the Lower St. Croix.

They have created a website and an application process for the program: <http://www.stcroixstewards.org/>. The cost of the training will be covered by the grant and each participant will be allotted up to \$1500 to carry out a capstone project on behalf of a sponsoring organization, e.g. Wild River State Park or Soil and Water Conservation Authority.

There will be an informational meeting held at Wild River State Park. To learn more about this opportunity please contact Patty Mueller, Project Manager, muellepm8@gmail.com.



Calendar of Events

FWRSP Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting

March 12: 9 - 11 am at the Visitor Center
Find more information on page 5 of this newsletter.

Maple Syruping Workshops

To be held throughout March – see article below.

Belated Earth Day Hike

April 23: 1:00 pm at the Visitor Center

Mother's Day Wildflower Walk

May 8: 2:00 pm at the Visitor Center

International Migratory Bird Day

May 14: all day throughout the Park – see article on page 1.

FWRSP Native Plant Sale

#1: May 15: 9 am – 3 pm at the Park Entrance.

#2: June 11: 9 am – 3 pm at the Park Entrance.

For more information see article below.

Species Steward Volunteer Training

May 21: 10 am – 1 pm at the Visitor Center

Snake's Alive

May 28: 1:00 pm at the Visitor Center, with Emily Roberts from Snake Discovery; will bring live snakes to see and touch.

FWRSP "Seegwan" Events

June 11: all day throughout the Park.

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

*For more info and activities go to friendsofwildriver.org
or mndnr.gov/wildriver*

Special Note on 2 upcoming Events

The complete **Maple Syruping** process is again being demonstrated at the Park. It is divided into two programs:

- 1) **Tree Tapping:** the program is presented at the Visitor Center and then you can drive to our maple tree "sugar bush" to assist Mike Dunker in tapping some trees. Held on: **March 5, 6, 13 -- 1:00 to 2:00, then drive to tree site**
- 2) **Maple Syruping Workshops:** at the Visitor Center and all the steps involved in making syrup from sap are covered. Each session is limited to 35 participants so reservations are required – call [651-583-2125 x227](tel:651-583-2125). Held on: **March 19, 20, 26 -- 11:00 to 2:00 (bring a lunch)**

Also, one of the most anticipated signs of spring is the opening of local nurseries with their spring plant sales. The 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 as a fundraiser for the Park. The two dates for these **Native Plant Sales** are:

Sun. May 15 – 9:00 to 3:00 at the Park Entrance

Sat. June 11 – 9:00 to 3:00 at the Park Entrance

Prairie Restoration Success on Private Land

By Dave Kozlovsky, Board Member of the Friends of Wild River

Our first trip to Wild River State Park was in 1984. We were moving to Minnesota and as a cost saver we camped at Wild River while we were house hunting (and even before a job interview). And while we did enjoy our stay, there were a couple things about the park that we didn't "get." No swimming beach? Really? And those big fields of nothing? What was that?

Of course, over the years we came to love the river and to appreciate the beauty of the prairies that were gradually being restored. We even became Prairie Stewards for a few years, harvesting Dull Indigo Bush along the river and Northern Bush Honeysuckle in dappled sunlight along the trails.

So by 2007 it seemed natural to decide to restore some prairie at our home near the park. We had about 7 acres of overgrown pasture. Working with the Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District we were able to access a couple grant programs, both federal and state, to defer part of the cost.

Clearing the land was the first challenge as the old farm land yielded a lot of "treasure." It seemed that the land had two other house and farm buildings which were burned down or razed before our house was built on the back of the property. We hired one of our neighbors to rework the land and ended up with a few truckloads of tires, wheel weights, barrels, car doors, etc.

But eventually the land was ready and the seeding of grasses and forbs took place. We had to pay for the forbs, the grasses were provided by the grant, and the planting was done by the DNR. The summer of 2007 was one of the driest, so we were nervous nothing would grow, but prairie grasses have a built-in defense for drought and they were just putting down their very long roots.

After the spring rains of 2008 we had great growth, not all wanted. The first two years required mowing at the height of 12" to minimize the return of the unwanted plants as well as pulling out a great deal of mustard and brome grass, but finally Big Bluestem, Indian Grass and other native plants and forbs had gained the upper hand.

Through the grants we were committed to two burns, in 2011 and 2015. All of our 7 acres of prairie are surrounded by woods and, thankfully, the Almelund Fire Department assisted with the burns. Besides a donation, some hotdogs and refreshments, it was an opportunity for the Almelund Fire Department to do a grass fire training in which they did a terrific job containing the fire to the prairie. Those two summers after the burn yielded phenomenal growth and beauty.

We are still learning about our prairie. Every summer it looks a little different. The deer seem to stay to the edges. Our out-of-pocket costs were a bit higher than we anticipated but the results have been worth it. And now we appreciate that those big fields are definitely fields of something special.



A prescribed burn overseen by the Almelund Fire Department



Dave hiding in his great restored prairie

You are invited to the Friends of Wild River's

Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting



Saturday, March 12, 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.
- Guest speaker: Erika Rivers, Director -- DNR Parks and Trails Division

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.**

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.

Report on our Candlelight Ski/Snowshoe/Hike on Feb. 13th

By Bob Walz, Board Member of the Friends of Wild River

The DNR has identified Wild River State Park as one of the top cross-country ski experiences in state parks. In fact, this was our 23rd annual Candlelight event, making it the oldest continuous such event sponsored by a state park in Minnesota.

There were approximately 675 participants cross-country skiing, snowshoeing or hiking, a lower number than past years probably reflecting the cold temperatures and snow conditions. Nevertheless, everyone had a good time. There were bonfires to warm the participants, music and refreshments at the Trail and Visitor Centers, and an astronomy program, as well as displays on the role of U.S. Presidents (after all it was Presidents Weekend) and a display on the Great Backyard Bird Count.

The Park Manager, Paul Kurvers, had this to say about the event: "An event of this magnitude definitely could not have been conducted without the outstanding contributions and teamwork of everyone involved. Once again the North Branch High School Honor Students, under the leadership of Chas Bettendorf, performed critical tasks to ensure the smooth functioning of the event. The students working as luminary crew members, parking lot attendants, entrance greeters, and Visitor and

Trail Center workers all performed their tasks at the highest level and demonstrated the high quality of their character.

A big thank you to everyone who helped make this year's event a success."



6 of 40+ NBHS Honor Students

See you next year -- with tons of snow!



The HUGE Prairie Bonfire

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 Court
North Branch, MN 55056

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

Fun times at the Candlelight Ski on Feb. 12, 2016:

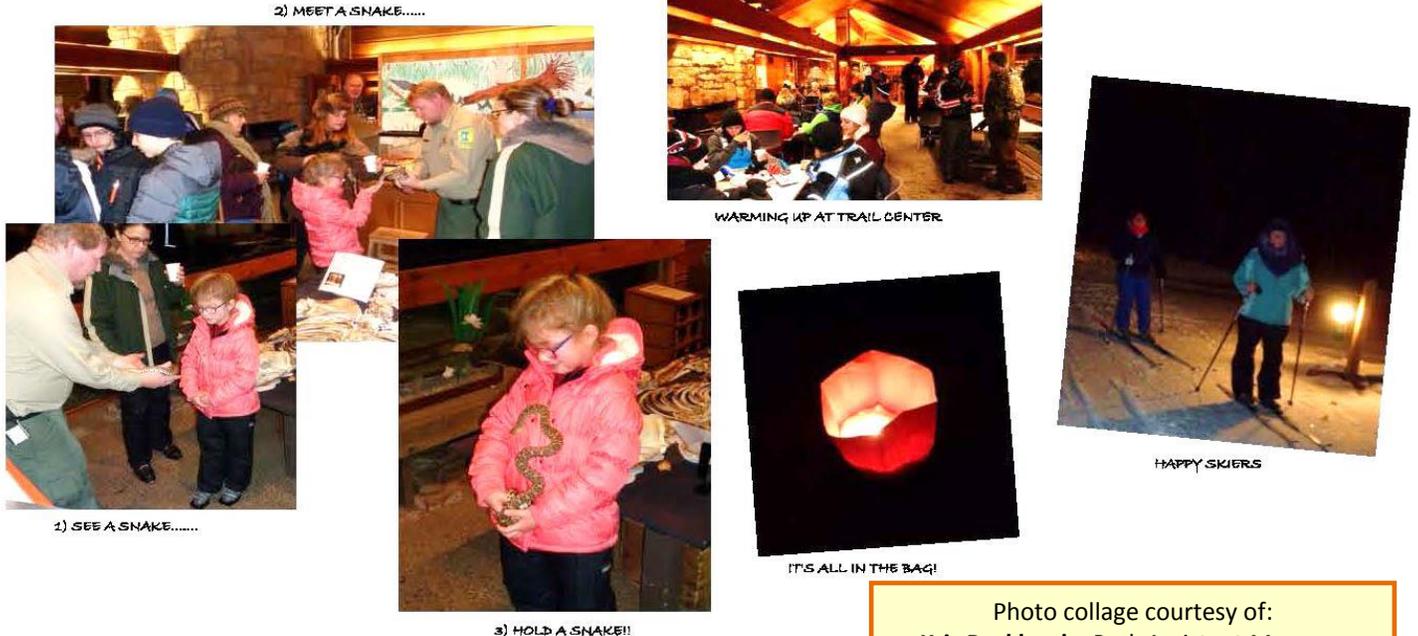


Photo collage courtesy of:
Kris Backlund – Park Assistant Manager

Happy almost Spring! From the Friends Board

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| President | Tom Dickhudt |
| Vice President | Brad Bjorklund |
| Treasurer | Bob Walz |
| Secretary | Jeske Noordergraff |
| Communications | Bob Kessen |
| Past Presidents | Gary Noren
Dave Kozlovsky |
| Board Members: | |
| John Eret | Dave Crawford |
| Jacque Zita | Elizabeth Huselid |

Answer to **WHERE IS IT?**

The peninsula at the mouth of Spring Creek.

It's about a quarter mile north of the main boat landing. This little peninsula gets narrower and narrower as Spring Creek bends northeast toward the St. Croix. This section of the river can be especially exciting in late winter and early spring because you may be lucky enough to see two of Wild River's more elusive animals: River Otters and Trumpeter Swans. This is just one photo of the many lovely spots along the St. Croix that can be reached on park trails – there are 18 miles of St. Croix riverfront in Wild River!

