



Trail Mix

A Monthly Newsletter of Afton State Park

September 2010



A Wilderness Close to Home

A Muddy Day at Afton

The Muddy Buddy race on August 22 turned out to be a big muddy success. Over 900 racers completed the course which took place in the park and at Afton Alps. The racers started in the Alps lower parking lots and then crossed over into the park for about 2 miles and 2 obstacles, including a climbing wall and a low crawl.

Participants then crossed back over into the Alps for the remaining 4 miles up and down the ski hills with a few more obstacles mixed in. The race then ended in the infamous mud crawl which results in some very dirty racers at the finish line.

Thanks to everyone who helped make this event a fun time for all.



Riding bikes and running up an Alps hill



Obstacle in the park on race morning



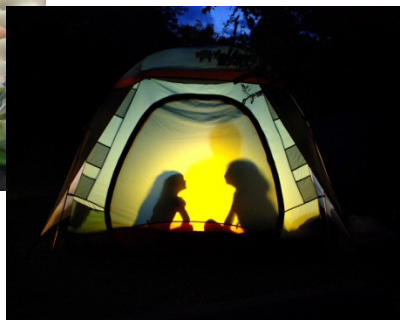
Finishers



Surviving the mud crawl

I Can Camp!

On August 7 and 8, we had our final I Can Camp! program of the year at Afton. We had one of the largest classes of the year anywhere in the state with 12 families and close to 50 participants. The weather turned out to be perfect and the participants learned many camping skills in addition to hiking, fishing, swimming, geocaching, and of course, making smores.



Don't forget to send us your comments on the latest draft of the Parks and Trails strategic plan by September 17.



On August 28, we were lucky enough to have the Minnesota Raptor Center come out to the park to present an Outdoor Extra Program. Around 30 visitors attended the program and learned about Minnesota birds, what the Raptor Center does, and saw a live owl and raptor.



Fall Migration

As we move into September, here at the Park we are seeing several different kinds of birds gathering in wooded areas and out on the prairie. Many species of birds, large and small, are getting ready to make the long flight south in search of a winter food supply. Some birds, like hawks and hummingbirds, fly during the day while others, like warblers and orioles, fly at night.

One of the easiest songbirds to see is the Eastern Bluebird. There are bluebirds here at Afton State Park well into November. Some bluebird populations stay all winter and you may see some robins doing the same thing.

We would love to hear from all you birders about your fall observations!

Fall Colors

The days are shorter and the nights are cooler so it must be fall!

Leaves are beginning to change and fall from the trees. The first trees to show color at the park are aspens and cottonwoods with yellow and gold. You can also see the reds and oranges of the maples. Later there will be the dark red, brown and russet of the oaks. Although it changes every year, depending on the amount of sun, rain, and the temperature, the best time to see colors here is during October. The prairie grasses are at their finest then.



2008 Fall Colors

To see the latest on fall colors at Afton, visit the website http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/afton/index.html which we'll be updating weekly.

Solar Panels

You may have recently noticed some strange metal posts being installed behind Afton's office. The park was lucky enough to receive a grant to have solar panels installed to power the office. It is expected that the 3 large panels will supply 111% of the office's electricity meaning we'll be able to sell some back to the power company. Once the panels are up and running, we hope to install an interpretive sign describing exactly how they work and how much money they'll be saving us.



Upcoming Events

September 6 – Labor Day

December 12, January 2, and January 9 @ 2pm
– Running on Snowshoes

February 5, 2011 – Candlelight Snowshoe/Hike
@ 6-9pm

Volunteer Opportunities

Collect native prairie seeds. Contact the park and we'll show you how to do it, including where and what to pick.

Let us know of any trees down on trails.

For comments, questions, more information, to volunteer, or to remove yourself from the mailing list, send an email to Rachel.L.Hintzman@state.mn.us.