



# Norris Camp News

News from the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area Headquarters  
PO Box 100, 11536 Faunce-Butterfield Rd SW, Roosevelt, MN 56673  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division  
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Photos by Stephen Maxson ©

## License Fee Increase

Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 Lakes and home to over 5.5 million acres of publicly owned state lands that are managed by the DNR. These lands and waters provide an abundance of recreational opportunities that Minnesotans enjoy, and contribute to a quality of life that is uniquely Minnesotan. These sought-after outdoor experiences are primarily supported by those who use the resources, including hunters, anglers, state park visitors, trail users and boaters. Faced with imminent funding deficits—which would ultimately affect Minnesotans who value these recreational opportunities—the DNR is seeking a few necessary modest fee increases.

Hunting and fishing license fees raise the majority of the funds that are used to ensure that Minnesota's abundant fish and wildlife resources are managed sustainably. Because of inflation, there is a growing gap between what Minnesotans expect and what current license revenue can support. The DNR seeks to raise the cost of a fishing license from \$22 to \$25 and the cost of a deer license from \$30 to \$34. *Continued on page 3*

## The 2016 Hunting Season Updates

**Ruffed Grouse:** Ruffed grouse hunting in the Beltrami Island State Forest was average in 2016, very similar to the 2015 season. Also similar to 2015, copious rains in early June likely reduced chick survival significantly. Early reports from hunters were dismal but success improved in October as the leaves came off the trees.

**Bear:** Bear harvest in Zone 12 has increased for 3 consecutive years, and it increased 30% in 2016 compared to 2015. Also, for the third consecutive year, bear harvest was dominated by males (54 males to 24 females in Zone 12) so we expect the population to continue to increase. Blueberry crops were excellent in mid-summer, but less available by

the time bear-baiting began. Other food sources were average in abundance. The increase in harvest in the last few years also coincides with more anecdotal observations of bears in the Beltrami, so we suspect that increasing harvest totals may be reflective of an increasing population, and not simply the result of scarce food resources that increased hunter success.



**Deer:** Firearms deer hunting harvest in deer permit area (DPA) 111 increased for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and increased 44% overall from 2015. This DPA went from bucks-only in 2015 to a lottery with 100 antlerless permits available in 2016. In 2016, 69% of the lottery antlerless tags were filled and buck harvest also increased from 433 in 2015 to 554 in 2016. Overall, this area is still recovering from bovine tuberculosis and recent harsh winters, but the population is increasing fast and hunters are noticing the difference.

**Trapping:** Every year, DNR staff register the furs of several species after the trapping season has ended. Registration fulfills two goals, 1) it helps the DNR determine how many animals are on the landscape and thus how many can be harvested without threatening the population in subsequent years and 2) it allows trappers to comply with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). CITES was developed to prevent hunting and trapping from contributing to the decline of rare species. Participating countries are required to monitor the export of species that are rare or that could be confused with rare species because they look similar to other species that are rare. In Minnesota, the species that require registration and tagging before they can be sold at fur auction include fishers, martens, otters and bobcats.

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## Christmas Bird Count in Beltrami Island State Forest

The 117th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) took place this winter all across the western hemisphere. Every year since 1990 volunteers have conducted a survey in the Beltrami Island area as part of this international monitoring program. The annual survey provides population data that are publicly available for researchers to assess changes in population trends. The Count is modeled after Christmas hunts that were popular in America through the 1800's whereby participants competed to kill as many birds as possible, regardless of whether they had any use for the carcasses. Eventually, in the early 1900's, ornithologists began counting birds on Christmas Day instead of killing them.

Today, the Christmas Bird Count is administered by the Audubon Society and coordinated by volunteers. The Coordinator of each Count identifies a point around which a 15 mile radius is identified. Volunteers can look up the locations of each Count online and contact the Coordinator if they would like to



Spruce Grouse

participate. On the day of the Count, volunteers tally each bird they see or hear and compile results at the end of the day. Participation is open to anyone with interest and if someone is less confident in their birding abilities they can usually be paired with a more experienced birder.

The Beltrami Bird Count has a history of extremely cold conditions that can limit the activity of birds and the comfort of the surveyors, but participants at this year's Count were greeted by a relatively balmy 21°F. This year's tally in the Beltrami Island State Forest included 23 species. Besides the often counted black-capped chickadees, ruffed grouse, pine grosbeaks and redpolls, some notable species from this year included boreal chickadees, one great gray owl, a spruce grouse and a single black-backed woodpecker. The Beltrami Count is typically low in species richness due to the timing and latitude of the Count. Some of the most diverse Counts in Central America regularly record over 200 species. Other counts, like the Breeding Bird Survey for example, which are conducted at other times of

the year in the Beltrami, regularly count more species as well.

The Beltrami Christmas Bird Count is coordinated by Martin Kehoe, who owns a remote cabin in the State Forest. He typically spends a few days at his cabin scouting for birds before the day of the official Count. On the day of the Count, participants are partitioned to different areas to be surveyed so that as much of the survey area as possible gets covered. After a long day in the cold, participants meet back at Norris Camp for a warm meal and to tally the results. If you're interested in participating next year you can contact Martin via the Audubon's website or you can call Norris Camp (218) 783-6861.

## Canada Lynx in Minnesota

Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) and Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) are both members of the *Lynx* genus that occur in Minnesota. The range of bobcats extends throughout most of North America, whereas lynx are much rarer in Minnesota. The only confirmed breeding population of lynx in Minnesota is in the northeastern portion of the state although there have been some confirmed reports of lynx in the Beltrami Island area during the last few years, including a video of an animal that was successfully released from a leg-hold trap.

As one may expect, because these two species are in the same genus, they have similar appearances, which can make identification difficult. In general, both species are medium sized cats with short tails and ear tufts, but some characteristics that can positively identify lynx include a black band that completely encircles the end of the tail (instead of partially encircling), hind legs that are conspicuously longer than front legs, and very large feet that produce tracks over 4.5 inches wide.

Because lynx are more common in northeastern Minnesota, and because they are listed as a threatened species, the Superior National Forest maintains a genetic database on all lynx found in Minnesota. For species that are difficult to visually verify, DNA analysis is often the best way to positively identify individuals. Biologists collect samples from road killed animals, and from hair and feces samples that are located by following a set of lynx tracks located during a survey. So far, the database contains 1,193 positive identifications of lynx (as opposed to bobcats).

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## Nongame Wildlife Program in NW MN:

By Nongame Specialist Christine Herwig

The Nongame Wildlife Program works with wild-life species that are not hunted, fished or trapped including birds, bees, butterflies, frogs, bats and many more. The Nongame staff have been quite busy in 2016 with efforts to protect, promote and enhance Minnesota's nongame resources. Here are just a few of their activities from the past year.

Numerous presentations were given to citizens on topics such as landscaping for pollinators, wildlife on your lake, salamanders and managing wet-land habitats for rare species. A variety of surveys including bird surveys at the North Ottawa Impoundment (a man-made flood damage reduction im-poundment near Tintah, MN) and butterfly and tiger beetles surveys at the Badoura Jack Pine Woodland Scientific and Natural Area.



Festive Tiger Beetle

Nongame staff coordinate the annual Minnesota Loon Monitoring Program, where citizens have been monitoring loons for over 20 years on pre-identified lakes to assess the loon population.



The Nongame wildlife program is a citizen-funded program, where the majority of funding comes from donations provided on tax forms (look for the loon drawing or "Nongame Fund on your tax forms). Please help us continue this important work in Minnesota by making a tax deductible contribution today.

### Canada Lynx in MN (Continued from page 2)

They have identified 316 individuals (153 females, 162 males and 1 unidentifiable sex). Interestingly, they've also identified 42 first generation lynx-bobcat hybrids. They have not reported any second generation hybrids so it's possible that the hybrid animals cannot breed. The main goals of this database are to determine the size and range of lynx in the Great Lakes region, which likely extends beyond northeastern Minnesota. We are interested in submitting lynx samples to the database from the

Beltrami Island area to increase our understanding of the species use of this area. What this means is that if someone has a credible report of a lynx, we would like to further investigate and possibly collect a DNA sample from the animal. If you are able to take a picture of a lynx or happen to observe a lynx track we would like to know about it as soon as possible. Then, we will follow the tracks for as long as possible until the animal (hopefully) either defecates or rubs on a branch or fence and leaves behind a hair sample that we can collect so the sample can be submitted to the database.



### License Fees Increase

(Continued from page 1)

State parks and trails fees have remained stagnant for over a decade, even while state parks, trails, and water accesses connect more than 10 million people per year to the outdoors and to local tourism economies. To continue to maintain this level of facilities and recreational opportunity, the DNR is proposing raises to state park vehicle passes by \$1 for daily passes and \$5 for annual passes. The DNR is also proposing modest increases to annual ATV, snowmobile and boat registration fees to maintain trails and water accesses at their current levels.

Hunting and fishing licenses, boat registration and trail passes are user fees that support the recreation of those who enjoy those activities. The cost of these fees is not tied to inflation, so occasionally, fee increases are necessary to "keep the lights on." If you enjoy the resources and facilities that are currently managed by the DNR, please contact your legislator about the proposed fee increases.



To learn more about how license dollars are used, visit:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licensedollarsatwork/index.html>

## Neal Slick Is Retiring From Norris Camp

Neal Slick, who has been a fixture at Norris Camp since 1974 will be retiring on March 31, 2017. A native of the Baudette area, Neal grew up on a farm east of Norris Camp near Carp, MN. He began working as a seasonal technician at Norris Camp until he eventually became full-time employee in 1982. Through his more than 4 decades at Norris Camp, Neal has seen a lot of changes in his career as a laborer and repairman for the DNR.

Originally, Neal lived at Norris Camp in Cabin #1, which no longer exists. He eventually moved on to living in the Duplex, which is now used for seasonal workers and researchers. He said that one reason that he lived on-site in those days is that the roads were not plowed in the winter, which made it impractical to commute every day. The DNR began plowing roads at Norris Camp in the 1980's with the procurement of a military surplus jeep that was modified to push a snowplow.



When asked about some of his most memorable moments, a few large fires came to mind. One notable fire that became large was a fire that originated in the Browns Lake area in the spring of 1978. There were some slash piles that had burned down into the peat during the winter and when spring came the fire came out of the ground and started running north out of the brushland. Neal was in town at the time and someone told him that there was a fire in the forest so he headed to Norris Camp. He took a military surplus jeep with a water tank on it and went straight to the fire. He was fighting the fire alone with a small hose and claims that he could have stopped the fire if the hose hadn't kept kinking.



As it was, the fire got away and ran north onto a jack pine ridge before it was eventually stopped.

Neal has seen a shift in workload, too. He says that when he started, there was more of a focus on food plots, wildlife-opening maintenance, and impoundments. In fact, his first job with the DNR was to collect soil samples at impoundment sites and conduct land surveys in the forest. Also in his early days, brush control was conducted primarily with large prescribed burns, but the time and expense associated with extinguishing a few peat fires caused a shift toward shearing brush instead of burning it. At some point, Neal says that Norris Camp consistently ran 3 bulldozers in the winter to maintain early successional habitats.



Some things don't change however, as Neal still prefers physical work to administrative work: he does not like computers and he has never sent an email. After March, if you want to catch up with Neal, you will have to find him in town where he will likely be relaxing or hanging out with his two granddaughters.

## Friends of Norris Camp

### Treasurer's Report

by June Foss

Account Balance = \$6,853.81 on 3/27/2017

**Thanks so much** to the following people for donations they've made since December 2016:

**Louis E Norquist**

and

**Joe Aberwald, Tim Bettcher, Gavin Bettcher,  
Dan Moss, Rick Moss, Ron Moss, Rob Moss,  
and Vello Maegi**

***Given in Memory of Gary Moss***

and

**Beverly Clemons**

***Given in Memory of Grant Coyer***

and

**Jennifer Smith**

***Given in Memory of Everett Clem***

and

**Sandra Klaers**

***Given in Memory of Tom Klaers***

### ***Hunting Season Updates*** *Continued from page 1)*

The number of fishers, martens, otters, and bobcats registered by Baudette and Red Lake Wildlife staff declined for the second consecutive year. Trapper participation has also declined over the last three years, which may explain a portion of the harvest decline. Decline in trapper effort may be related to relatively low projected fur prices this year or because of lack of good tracking conditions during the fisher and marten season.

## In Memory of Gary Moss

By Karl Narveson

Gary Moss, who had hunted deer near Norris Camp for almost 60 years, died this past summer. He died while he was doing what he loved, camping with family.

Gary loved being in the outdoors, and especially that time of year when he would spend a week deer hunting up near Norris Camp with his family and friends. He was the last of his original



group of hunting buddies that first started hunting up there in 1956 after reading about it in a wildlife magazine. That group included Gary's father Irv, his brother Mel, and Bill Lambie. Ron Narveson (my Dad) and Gary started hunting up there the following year. Gary and I were the only members of the group to start hunting up there at 13 - camp rules stated you had to be 14.

The many stories and memories that were made over the years were priceless. From surviving snow so heavy you could not see across the firebreak trail, to tracking deer from the Wildwood Cemetery as far as Lambie's old camp on the North 40. There were great harvest years like 1963, '64, and '65 - and not so good years, including the year they closed the season: 1971.

The old hunting camp has changed much over the years. We've progressed from tents and barrel stoves to campers and propane heaters. Our camp sites have been cleared of their trees - twice. We've watched favorite hunting spots get logged off, and grow back up to be even better spots. Now, the last of a generation is gone - the one that always had a smile and a joke for us (even if it was the same joke every year). Rest easy, my friend, and thanks for all the memories. You will be missed.

## A View From the Grouse Blind

In the Spring, Norris Camp RLWMA and the Baudette Area Wildlife offices offer the opportunity to watch two different grouse during their unique mating ritual.

During courtship, ruffed grouse display banded fan-shaped tails. Males also have a concealed neck ruff (hence the name "ruffed grouse") that they display during courtship.



Each spring, male ruffed grouse perform a mating ritual that sounds like the beating of a distant drum. The male "drums" by compressing air beneath its wings. The bird makes the sound in the hopes of attracting a female grouse. Most males drum on a log, but they may also stand on roots and boulders.

To reserve the Ruffed Grouse blind at Norris Camp RLWMA (218) 783-6861.

As for the sharp-tailed grouse. To attract a female for mating, male sharp-tailed grouse perform a courtship dance. Each spring, multiple males gather in a grassy area and begin to display. The same dancing ground, called a lek, is used each year if the habitat remains unchanged. Females visit the lek and to choose a mate.

Sharp-tailed grouse are a mottled brown and gray. During spring, the male's eyebrows are yellow and its air-inflated throat sacks are lavender.



From the blind, you can watch the sun rise as male grouse perform extravagant displays, fight midair, and stomp their feet, all for the chance to mate. To reserve a morning in one of our blinds call the Baudette Wildlife Office (218) 634-1705.

## CONTACT

### For more INFORMATION

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