



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 ©

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Dragonflies

An informal dragonfly day is scheduled for Saturday, June 25. It's informal because the dragonfly experts we've had in previous years won't be with us, so it will be up to our local experts Jeff and Johanna Birchem to help identify anything we catch. Plan on meeting at Norris Camp at 10 am and bring along a butterfly net if you have one and something for lunch. You'll also need to bring lots of water to drink and rubber boots or shoes you don't mind getting wet. There will be a short presentation at Norris Camp before we head out to the field. We intend to learn a lot about dragonflies and have a lot of fun outside in the process!



Biking

There's a BUSHCRAFT Bike Ultra planned for September 2nd – 4th. It will involve a biking adventure of 120 miles of trails in the Beltrami Island State Forest. As the flyer announcing it says: "Bears, wolves, and sasquatch will

be the biggest spectators as you fumble through their woods." The starting place is at the Clear River Tower and there will be a starting event for everyone (including non-bikers) that will include local artisans showing their skills and wares, food for sale, a band, and a bonfire. For more information, contact Chuck Lindner at 218-242-0315 or go to www.bushcraftbike.blogspot.com

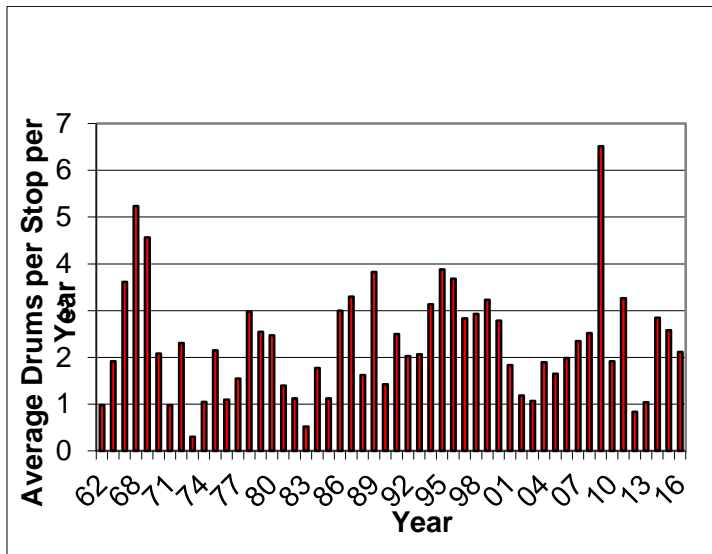
SURVEY UPDATES

Bats

We'll be catching bats next week, starting Monday June 20. We are targeting the federally threatened northern long-eared bat and will be putting radios on most of the ones we catch (focusing primarily on females). We hope to learn more about the habitat they use, especially the type of trees they select for roosting and taking care of their young.

Ruffed Grouse

Ruffed grouse drumming counts were similar to last year in the Beltrami Island area. Drumming counts were also near historical averages. Because the number of grouse entering the breeding season is roughly similar to last year, differences in the grouse population this fall relative to last year will likely be influenced by chick survival. We are just starting to see the first broods now. There has been over 4 ¼ inches of rain so far this month, so we are hoping the wet weather doesn't decrease chick survival.



Sharp-tailed Grouse

DNR Wildlife staff survey sharp-tailed grouse each spring. Instead of surveying the same routes every spring as we do with ruffed grouse, staff count grouse at known lek sites. Male sharp-tailed grouse gather at lek sites each spring to display for females. These sites are usually located in open areas of pastures or cultivated fields. Presumably, the males choose open areas because they want the females to be able to see them. Lek sites can move from year to year, depending on grouse preference or changes in habitat. This can make it difficult to track changes in the grouse population because we only survey a portion of the leks in the state, and birds move between leks. When a lek disappears, we sometimes don't know if it is because that population is gone, or because they have simply moved elsewhere. Regardless, when we track



the population of these birds we compare individual leks from year to year. The number of birds surveyed by Red Lake WMA staff was down slightly in 2016. We had some assistance with sharp-tailed surveys from a volunteer this year and in years past. Harold Forpahl made many early morning visits to leks south of Warroad to help us keep tabs on those leks. **Many thanks to Harold.**

Owls

Students from the University of Minnesota Crookston helped out again with owl surveys in early April. The following six owl species were heard during the surveys: great gray, long-eared, great horned, saw whet, barred, and a rare boreal owl.

Staff Changes

Diana McLain has left us at Norris Camp for her dream job of doing electrical system design work for a company in the Twin Cities. We will miss her hard work, good nature, and excellent ideas.

We welcome **Deb Beckel** who will soon be joining our team as the new Office and Administrative Assistant. She is transferring here from the Baudette DNR office.

CONTACT

For more INFORMATION

MN DNR Wildlife Division

Red Lake WMA Headquarters

PO Box 100

Roosevelt, MN 56673

Area Manager: Gretchen Mehmel

Assistant Area Manager: Charlie Tucker

Phone: (218) 783-6861

redlake.wildlife@state.mn.us

Public Input Sought for Recreational Forest Trail Planning

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) just had an open house in Warroad last Tuesday June 14th, 2016 to allow the public to learn about the process and provide input on how to improve trail sustainability and to enhance user experiences. If you missed this meeting and are interested in recreational trail systems and motorized use in the Beltrami Island State Forest there's still time to send in comment (see below).

Between 2003 and 2008, the DNR inventoried all routes and designated trails within state forests. This current project will reevaluate the designations made during the initial review. Changes could include adding new motorized trails and trail connections, redefining how trails can be used, designating new hunter-walking trails, closing unsustainable trails and designating areas where off-trail ATV use is prohibited during hunting and trapping activities ("areas with limitations").

The comments received at the open house and by mail or email will be used to develop a draft recommendation that will be submitted to the DNR Commissioner for approval. Changes to state forest trail designations must be made by Commissioner's order and published in the State Register.

Written comments may be submitted by e-mail to joe.unger@state.mn.us or by mail to: Joe Unger, DNR Parks and Trails, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4039. The DNR will accept written comments through June 28th, 2016.

For more information, please call:

- Joe Unger, OHV Planner, Division of Parks and Trails, 651-259-5279.
- The DNR Division of Parks and Trails Regional Office in Bemidji, Tim Williamson, Acquisition and Development, 218-308-2369.

Palsburg Fire Update

There has been a lot of salvage logging in the fire area and trees are naturally establishing nicely in some places and are being aerial seeded or planted in other places. This is year two for the bird survey. Beth Siverhus of Warroad is an expert birder and she has been conducting point counts to help us evaluate bird use in the burned area as well in the surrounding unburned forest. The goal is to continue to sample for many years after the fire to identify some of the wildlife impacts of this large fire. Bird use of the fire area over time may help us make management decisions after similar fires occur in the future. Publications resulting from the survey will also make the information publicly available so that others can also learn from our experiences and use them to make informed management decisions.

FROM THE ARCHIVES:



This is a photo taken in 1952 at Ward Davis Deer Camp in Graceton, MN. In the back row are Daryl Follett, Kinbrae, MN; Marvin Koch, Bloomington, MN; Ray Koch, Williams, MN and in the front row are hunters from Sanborn and Lambertson, MN. The photo was provided by William Leopold.

Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) - Nature's Tenacious Habitat Engineer

By Jodie Provost, DNR Private Land Habitat Coordinator

Our largest North American rodent, the beaver, can be hailed as one of our greatest, if not the greatest, engineers of habitat, while simultaneously being a tenacious rascal. It depends on where he does his handy work and how affected landowners perceive it. Is that wetland created by a dam the perfect place to store spring runoff, raise waterfowl, observe wildlife and hunt over? Or is that dam backing water up on your road and constructed of trees you planted and tended?

History Shaper North American history was shaped by this immense rodent. Beaver were critical to European expansion westward and settlement. Early explorers and trappers depended heavily on their luxurious hides and castor for revenue and bartering. Due to lack of hunting and trapping regulations and conservation ethic, they were seriously depleted in Minnesota by the mid 1800's. However, with the advent of regulations, creation of much young deciduous forest due to extensive harvest of pine in the logging era, and ditching for roads and agriculture, we created a fruitful environment for beaver. They are now back in full force and present in every Minnesota County.



Perfect Scuba Gear Beaver are perfectly adapted to their aquatic life, and dam and lodge building. Their scuba gear includes webbed hind feet, nose and ear valves that shut as they submerge, and nictitating membranes that

protect their eyes like built-in goggles. Their lips close behind their teeth so they can carry a branch in their mouth without drowning, and they can remain submerged up to 20 minutes. Their flat, paddle-shaped, scaled tail acts as a rudder when swimming and sturdy prop when on land. Amazingly, kits can follow their mother underwater even before they are a day old! With their strong jaws and teeth that never quit growing, beaver can chew through a six-inch tree in 15 minutes and down hundreds of trees a year.

Endlessly Growing Vegans Beaver typically reach 35-40 inches in length and 40-45 pounds, but because they grow their entire lives, can reach five feet and 90 pounds! They are primarily nocturnal and true vegans, eating aquatic plants, the inner growing layer of bark, twigs and leaves of woody vegetation such as aspen, birch, alder, cottonwoods, and willow, and even crops such as corn and soybeans. Because they do not hibernate, they must stockpile food for the winter near their lodge.

Family Life Bank dens or lodges of sticks and mud are built by beaver to house their families. They enter them below water level, but inside are high and dry. The whole family kicks in to construct a dam to back up water and enhance their wetland home. Intriguing videos of beaver at work can be found on YouTube. Mating occurs when they are two years old, with three to four kits born each May or June. A colony generally consists of two parents, two or three juveniles and the kits. Communication occurs through churrs, mumbles, whines, snorts, hisses, and tail slapping on the water as an alarm. If beaver can evade their typical predators of coyote, wolf, bobcat, bear and otter, they may live up to 12 years.

Habitat Engineer Impacts from this dogged engineer's work are far reaching and essential to ecosystem health. Our forests and wildlife have evolved with the natural disturbance and habitats they create. Their ponds and associated meadows are magnets for waterfowl, shorebirds, rails, songbirds, mink, muskrats, otter, fish, frogs, toads, and salamanders. Their dams slow and store water runoff, and provide watering holes during drought. Dead, flooded trees, while standing and down, provide perches, cavities, dens, and foraging and nest

sites for swallows, wood ducks, mergansers, herons, eagles, osprey, woodpeckers, chickadees, marten, fisher, turtles and more. Tree loss allows sunlight to stimulate aquatic plant growth and production of organisms in the food chain, such as dragonflies, damselflies, mosquitoes, and minnows. Diverse insect populations are food for warblers, nighthawks, and bats, and aquatic invertebrates for waterfowl, especially broods. Finally, aspen and willow cut by beaver regenerate to provide browse for themselves, deer, moose, and snowshoe hare.

Renewable Resource Beaver also have social and economic worth as part of our cultural heritage and for the fur, meat and recreation they provide. They offer a valuable, renewable resource. For example, in contrast to beaver fur, synthetic furs are made primarily from petroleum. Our beaver trapping season in Minnesota generally runs from late October/early November through April. In the 2013-14 trapping season, an estimated 3,860 trappers harvested 33,330 beaver. In the last 25 years, the highest harvest was in the mid-1990s at over 100,000 beaver in one year by roughly 5,000 trappers. Average price per pelt over that time period has ranged from \$9 to \$19.



Living with the Rascals Where beaver are a nuisance, get ahead of the game by implementing long term solutions. In some cases, water levels can be controlled by installing special devices such as Clemson beaver pond levelers (can be purchased from Minncor Industries, 1-800-646-6267). Protect valued, individual trees with hardware cloth cylinders at least 30" tall around their base and larger areas of trees with energized fence. Or grow shrubs that regrow after some beaver damage (dogwoods, willows). Habitat can be made less attractive to beaver by not growing trees, growing trees less preferred by them (native conifers such as pines and juniper), or encouraging riparian buffer strips of locally native vegetation (see the DNR Lakescaping web page).

When short term solutions must be employed, beaver can be removed during the open trapping season. Your local DNR Conservation Officer or Area Wildlife Office may have names of experienced trappers. Landowners can shoot or trap beaver causing damage on their land without a permit or license, provided local ordinances that may prohibit trapping or the discharge of firearms are followed and a Conservation Officer or Area Wildlife staff is contacted within 24 hours. For more detail on managing beaver, see the DNR Living with Wildlife web page. Realize that if habitat is attractive to beaver, more will likely move into the area after the current mischief makers are removed.