

NORRIS CAMP NEWS

NEWS FROM THE RED LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA HEADQUARTERS
PO BOX 100, 11536 FAUNCE-BUTTERFIELD ROAD SW, ROOSEVELT, MN 56673

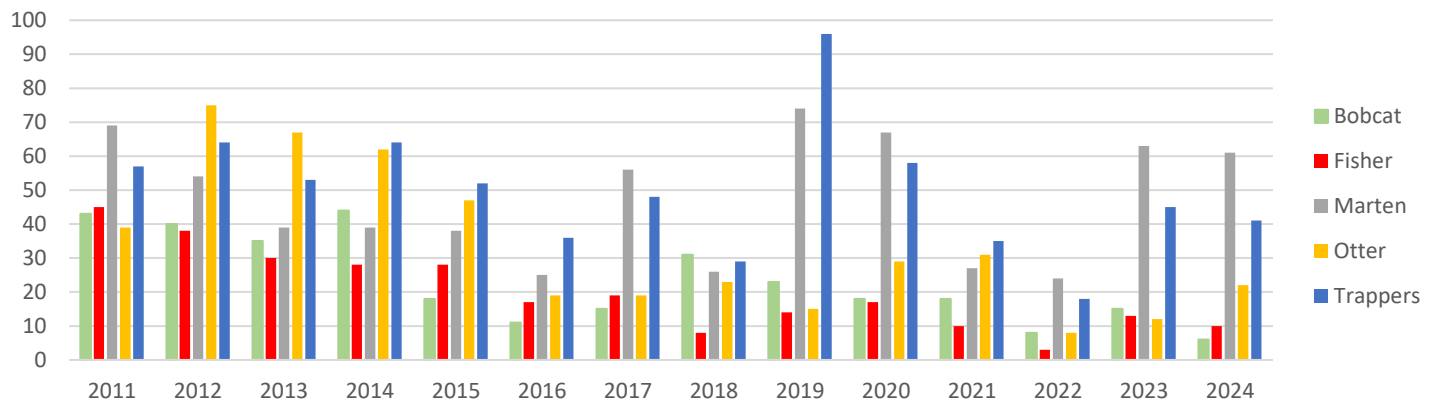
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TRAPPING

Each year, Red Lake WMA staff administer furbearer trapping registration stations in Warroad and at Norris Camp. Information is collected for four species (fisher, marten, bobcat, and otter) to better understand population trends, distribution, reproductive potential, and other harvest statistics. At these stations, trappers receive tags for their pelts, and each tag verifies the individual animal has been registered and is accounted for in harvest totals. Because bobcat and otter pelts look similar to other endangered species found throughout the world, those tags also serve an international purpose. Pelts with CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) tags verify legal acquisition of pelts leaving US borders. Additionally, carcasses/heads are collected and provide a wealth of information such as genetics, food habits, age, sex, and reproductive parameters. Overall, collecting harvest data on these species is a key component of managing their populations, and fur-harvesters play an important role in providing data to support the continuation of trapping seasons.

Combined Registration Totals for Red Lake WMA and Baudette Wildlife 2011-2024



**Trapping numbers in the Red Lake WMA and Baudette Wildlife work areas remained steady this year:
41 trappers registered 6 bobcat; 10 fisher; 61 marten; and 22 otter.**

Researchers are investigating rodenticide exposure and evaluating negative impacts of exposure to carnivores, specifically in bobcat and fisher. While not many trappers submit whole fisher carcasses, we would like to collect whole carcasses for the next several years. If you trap a fisher, please bring the carcass to fur registration or contact your local DNR Wildlife office to set up a time to drop it off.

A third fur registration day has been added for river otter. Otter can be registered at the Baudette Wildlife office (204 Main St. E, Baudette), at Norris Camp (11536 Faunce-Butterfield Rd SW, Roosevelt), or at Warroad Forestry (804 Cherne Dr NW, Warroad) from **3 – 6 pm on May 16th, 2025**. See hunting and trapping regulation booklet for other locations.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Christmas Day traditions can be an important way to gather with loved ones and create lasting memories. We often think of baking festive cookies, building gingerbread houses, hiking through the forest to find the perfect Christmas tree, or opening gifts on Christmas morning as traditions that are shared by many. However, back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, a common tradition was the Christmas “Side Hunt,” where groups of men and boys would split into teams, take the field, and hunt for any furred and feathered critters. At the end of the hunt, the animals were tallied to see which side won. While hunting is a crucial tool for wildlife management, birds were not winners for this holiday tradition. Sensing the population decline of many bird species in North America, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman proposed a slightly modified version of this tradition – that they count the birds instead of killing them. And so, on Christmas Day 1900, one of the longest running community science events – the Audubon Christmas Bird Count – began.

Today, tens of thousands of volunteers participate in the Christmas Bird Count between December 14th and January 5th throughout the Americas each year. There are two counts near Red Lake WMA: Baudette and Beltrami Island. This year, the Baudette count recorded 30 species and 1317 individual birds. Among the most common were Common Redpoll (406), Black-capped Chickadee (368), Common Raven (81), and Snow Bunting (80). Least common were Great Gray Owl (5), Northern Shrike (7), and Evening Grosbeak (6). The Beltrami Island count recorded 19 species and 795 individual birds. Common Redpoll (217), White-winged Crossbill (147), Red-breasted Nuthatch (121) were some of the common species while American Three-toed Woodpecker (1), Black-backed Woodpecker (1), and Boreal Chickadee (5) were less common sightings.

Data collected allows researchers, biologists, and land managers to study and assess long-term health of wild bird populations and guide conservation effort.

To learn more, visit <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>



Great Gray Owls are large, powerful birds. They can break through hard packed snow to grab small mammals; in the winter, they eat up to 7 vole-sized mammals each day. © Kristen Martin



Redpolls can survive temperatures of -65°F and often tunnel into the snow for warmth in the winter. ©Kristen Martin

WINTER SHEARING

Large, seemingly impenetrable walls of alder, willow, and other shrubs dominate many places around Red Lake WMA and Beltrami Island State Forest. However, many wildlife species require large, expansive areas of open brushland habitats.

Wintertime is the best season for habitat management in these areas – shearing and mowing with bulldozers and skid steers is easiest when the frost is thick. The purpose of this work is to set back succession of these habitats and maintain openlands that were once maintained by fire.

There are many wildlife species that benefit from this kind of habitat management. Sharp-tailed grouse rely heavily on large open areas with a mix of grass, brush, and small, scattered islands of trees. This habitat is important for lekking (a type of courtship), nesting, and raising their chicks. Another bird that benefits from mowing and shearing is the northern harrier. These hawks use the unobstructed flying space to glide low to the ground in search for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. Unlike most other raptors, northern harriers nest on the ground in clumps of vegetation. Moose enjoy new growth that results from mowing in these areas. Their favorite plant to munch on is red osier dogwood, a common lowland brush shrub.

After initial shearing work is completed, additional mechanical mowing or prescribed fire can be used in subsequent years to remove vegetation and perpetuate open habitat. Recently sheared areas are great places to view wildlife like sharp-tailed grouse, short-eared owls, sandhill cranes, yellow rails, moose, and a plethora of songbirds.

Over 200 acres of lowland brush was sheared for habitat improvement this winter alone.



A northern harrier flying over Winter Road Peatland with a rodent in its talons. © Brilyn Nicholson



A bull moose in a sheared/mowed area on Red Lake WMA. © Brilyn Nicholson



Before shearing



After shearing

CREATURE FEATURE: PINE GROSBEAK

Sweet, flutelike warbles from spruce tops bring a warmth to the subzero mornings during late winter at Norris Camp. The source – the Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) – are common wintertime visitors to bird feeders in the northern states. Pine grosbeaks are a plump boreal finch that spend most of their time in coniferous forests sluggishly hopping between tree branches searching for buds, seeds, and fruits. Males are a rosy, pink color while the females are gray with a yellow or burnt-orange head and rump.

During the breeding season, these birds form monogamous pairs. The male sings from treetops to defend his territory and courts his mate by feeding her bits of food. The female will build a nest made of roots, twigs, grass, evergreen needles, and lichen between six and sixteen feet above the ground. She lays two to five eggs that hatch after two weeks of incubation. Another two weeks later, the young pine grosbeaks are ready to leave the nest but will still depend on their parents for food.

Pine grosbeaks are relatively tame. One of the best ways to see one in northern Minnesota is to provide black sunflower seeds in a large tube or platform feeder during the winter. Groups of these boreal birds can also be seen along roadsides eating salt and grit.



A male pine grosbeak atop a spruce tree at Norris Camp
© Brilyn Nicholson

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Friends of Norris Camp

Treasurer's Report

By June Foss

Account Balance = \$9,025.47

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