DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NORRIS CAMP NEWS

NEWS FROM THE RED LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA HEADQUARTERS
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BE BEARWISE THIS SPRING

From the arrival of American woodcock to the first drumming ruffed grouse, April brings life to the once cold and snowy landscape of northern Minnesota. The songs of boreal chorus frogs and many migratory songbirds fill the forest as they begin establishing territories and looking for mates. Another sure sign of spring is the waking of Minnesota's only species of bear: the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*). After a long winter of sleeping, black bears are ready to stretch their legs and begin searching for food. Black bears can lose 20-50% of their body weight while denning during the winter months. After emerging from their dens, their first priority is finding some grub – be it natural or human-provided. Bears will eat fresh grass and raid ant hills in early spring, but they also have excellent memories and will return to human sources for easy meals. Because of this, it is important to "bearproof" your home and yard. Here are six ways to decrease human-bear conflict at home:

Bear tracks in mid-April along a forest road. © Brilyn Nicholson

Never feed or approach bears – teaching bears to approach humans for food can create dangerous situations, especially for children and pets

Secure food, garbage, and recycling – garbage and other food odors are very attractive to bears

Remove and clean bird feeders – high calorie bird seed and suet make for easy pickings, often leading to broken feeders

Never leave pet food outside – feed pets indoors or feed small portions; remove food and bowls after feedings

Clean and store grills and smokers – clean all grease, fat, and food residue after cooking outdoors; store grills and smokers in a secure area

Alert neighbors to bear activity – just because you do your part, doesn't mean your neighbors are; the best way to stop bear conflict is to notify your neighbors and share these tips with them

A young bear exploring the Beltrami Island State Forest © Brilyn Nicholson

Visit BearWise.org to learn more about bears, how to be BearWise, and to download free fact sheets and order outreach materials, including *Living With Bears Handbook*.

UN-"BEE"-LIVABLE RESEARCH

Bees build and live in many different types of homes – think honeybee hives along agriculture fields or bumblebee nests built in underground burrows. Within these bee homes, you may find hundreds or thousands of individuals! In contrast to these types of bees and their homes, solitary bees do not form colonies, and they build nests alone, naturally in hollow stems or cracks in trees. Because bees play such an important role in our ecosystem, researching native bee distributions and bee habitat needs is key to making sound conservation decisions.

The Minnesota Wood-Nesting Bee Atlas (University of Minnesota – Extension) is working to gather baseline information about bee species that nest in dead wood and plant stems. To do so, researchers are utilizing a community science project where volunteers can "host" a bee block on their property. The bee block is a special bee home designed to attract different species of solitary bees. The solitary bees and wasps lay eggs within the bee block, each partitioned into their own little cell. Each cell contains provisions (pollen or insect prey) and an egg; it is sealed with a plug of mud, resin, leaves, or grass. The larvae will remain in the cell until the following spring, emerging as adult bees in April or May. Volunteers monitor the bee blocks and record nesting activity. Researchers can extract larvae from the blocks and determine what species are using these homes.

To learn more about bees in northwestern Minnesota, researchers Colleen Satyshur and Thea Evans traveled to Red Lake WMA to deploy four bee blocks on the WMA. The blocks were deployed in areas where blueberries, cranberries, and other peatland plants are abundant in hopes of attracting bees that specialize in these flowering plants. Minnesota is home to over 500 species of bees. The most likely bees to use these bee blocks include species from the Megachilidae family (leafcutter and mason bees). Of particular interest is the genus *Osmia*. *Osmia* bee species are shiny-blue spring mason bees that are the first to emerge when it warms up. They tend to specialize on blueberry (*Vaccinium*) plants.

An *Osmia albiventris* (White-bellied mason bee) photographed by researcher Thea Evans. © Thea Evans

An *Osmia* nest with cells divided by masticated leaves. The pupae will feed on the pollen left behind by the female. © Heather Holms, Minnesota Native Bees

To learn more about wood nesting bees and how to participate in this research, visit https://minnesotabeeatlas.umn.edu/home

CREATURE FEATURE: GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET

A male golden-crowned kinglet showing off his golden-orange crown to protest a human intruder along the Flute Bird Hunter Walking Trail © Brilyn Nicholson

The golden-crowned kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) is a common breeding resident, migrant, and winter visitant to Minnesota. As cold-hardy birds, they are short- to medium-distance migrants that winter throughout most of the continent. They rely heavily on conifer cover to stay warm in the winter and spend most of their time in dense coniferous forests hopping among the branches to feed on insects. During the breeding season, males defend nesting territory by singing. When aggressive encounters arise, a male may lean forward, raise his crown feathers, and flick his wings and tail as he sings. The female builds the nest and sits on 3-11 eggs for about 14-15 days while the male feeds her during incubation. Most pairs have two broods in each breeding season.

PLANT PROFILE: LEATHERLEAF

Flowering leatherleaf at Upper Red Lake Peatland © Brilyn Nicholson

COMMON NAME: Leatherleaf

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chamaedaphne calyculata*

HABITAT: bogs, peatlands, and swampy streambanks in coniferous forests

BLOOM SEASON: small, pearly white, urn-shaped flowers bloom in full sun/part shade from April to June

NOTES: Leatherleaf is a perennial, evergreen, dwarf shrub that is common throughout Minnesota's northern wetlands. With favorable conditions, thickets will form via rhizomes in the soil. Like other plants in the Ericaceae family (the heath family with species such as blueberry, cranberry, and labrador tea), leatherleaf thrives in acidic, nutrient-deficient soils.

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Friends of Norris Camp

Treasurer's Report

By June Foss

Account Balance = $10,274.14

Thanks so much to the following people for the donations they have made since September 2025

George Braunwarth and Joe Osterberg

Dan Moss, Jeff Moss, Tim Bettcher, Gavin Bettcher and Austin Bettcher

John and Bonnie Palmquist

Bill Berg

In memory of Terry Berg

Dan Moss, Jeff Moss, Tim Bettcher & Gavin Bettcher

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