



Newsletter

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Our Great Naturalist, Educator, and Friend Kacie Carlson Moves On and Up in the DNR

By Elizabeth Huselid, Friends Board Member *

What makes Wild River State Park memorable for you? Is it the beauty of the flowing St. Croix River at the edge of the park? Maybe it's the abundance of wild flowers or natural prairie throughout the grounds? Or how about the well preserved paths and trails reaching peaceful places and scenic spots? All of these are special for most, however, it's time to thank a unique individual who has contributed time, extra efforts, and a plethora of talents in improving the overall experience we receive each visit to WRSP.

To highlight our former naturalist, accomplishments, here is a short initiatives she has either led or



Kacie Carlson's many compilation of the various been a major part of:

1. Revamped the Visitor Center created new interpretive displays
2. Significantly increased the amount of outreach programs and activities for local students and community members new to the park (e.g. "Kids to the Prairie" program, "I Can Camp," "Archery in the Parks," naturalist led canoe trips).
3. Initiated and organized the now annual "Wild River 5K."
4. Developed programming focusing on river ecology and history – just perfect for the 8 canoes purchased and guided trips offered!
5. Enthusiastically welcomed, taught, led and fostered passion in people of ALL ages for nature and animals within the park.
6. Attended "Friends" meetings and coordinated the logistics of multiple events.
7. Was a major contributor with articles, layout, and ideas for these Newsletters.
8. and on and on....

We **THANK YOU** Kacie, and wish you well as you continue your journey in working with our Minnesota State Park System as the Northeast Regional Naturalist based out of Grand Rapids. Visitors, park staff, and the Friends of Wild River State Park will greatly miss your positive energy, extraordinary work ethic, and many creative ideas!

* Paul Kurvers and park staff have aided in this list. More photos of Kacie at work on page 2.

WHERE IS IT?



Think you know where this photo was taken recently?

You're probably wrong!

Answer on page 4....

State Park Update

By Paul Kurvers, Wild River State Park Manager



Last Spring I was approached by a member from our regional management team to inquire about my possible interest in participating in a pilot project to better manage park resources. After a brief discussion, I agreed that Wild River would be a good pilot site for this project and a team of both park and regional DNR staff was formed. Over the course of the next couple weeks we discussed ideas for projects that we could pilot at Wild River that could potentially also have application at other state parks. After the conclusion of the first few meetings we settled on two projects to begin working on. The first project involved devising a better way to inventory and monitor park signs. With a park of this size, it has always been a challenge to keep track of the location of signs: what they say, when they were installed, and what condition they are in. To address this need the team formulated an approach to manage this problem by utilizing GPS and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology. In this case we decided to use a handheld GPS unit that allowed staff to locate and photograph a sign and input data pertaining to various sign attributes all while in the field. These attributes include sign material, date installed, and if the sign is an interpretive, directional, regulatory, or informational sign. All this information was then downloaded into a data base and incorporated into a GIS map layer of the park. Over the course of this past summer, a primary job of one park intern was to collect attributes and data for every known sign in the park. I knew there were lots of signs in the park, but I was quite surprised to find out that after all signs were inventoried the total tallied was over 500. This project will definitely help us manage our immense sign inventory and ultimately better serve park visitors.

- Continued on Page 2 -

From the President:

Friends Bylaws Get a Needed Update

By Dave Kozlovsky, Friends of Wild River State Park



When I was elected President of the Friends of Wild River State Park in 2007, one of my personal goals was to update the group's bylaws which had not been revised since 1996. As we know with the advances in technology, 1996 is light-years in the past. When I approached board members of the joys of updating by-laws I got many glassy-eyed stares. I did get a committee together a few years ago, but could not get past the verbiage and soon our quest was mired and ground to a halt. With an influx of new members the last few years, I thought I would try again to form a committee to revise the by-laws. The only board members that were interested were Bob Kessen, who became our word-meister, Brad Bjorklund, Robert's Rules of Order guru, and I, master of history of the Friends of Wild River State Park. We met at Brad's home and within two hours had come to agreement and updated the by-laws. We sent the revised edition out to other board members and they made suggestions and the three of us met one more time to revise again due to the suggestions. We met on Friday, December 13, 2013, with all board members, and the revised bylaws

were passed with one "friendly amendment."

So what did we change? These are the three major changes. First of all, the President of the Friends would serve a two year term after serving a two year term as Vice-President, which is a four year commitment. Board members would serve a 3 year term with no maximum of terms. Board members can use other means of meeting and voting other than face to face, such as conference calls, Skype, and other electronic means. The revised by-laws are posted on the Friends of WRSP website at

www.friendsofwildriver.org
if you would like to take a look.

The feeling of the bylaws committee was that board members should be heading up committees to involve more of our membership, including Candlelight Ski, Seegwan, the Fall 5K Run/Hike, and other programs we sponsor at Wild River State Park. I suspect we have members who would like to make these events world class whether you are a skier, runner, or just love to bake cookies and help organize!! Please contact me or other board members and we will find a spot for you!

- State Park Update -

Continued from Page 1

The second of the two pilot projects that we've been working on with regional staff involves developing a better method of planning and monitoring resource management activities (i.e. prescribed fires, invasive species control measures, and prairie restoration work, etc.) at the park. Due to the park's large size, (6800 acres) keeping track of all resource management activities over the years has been a challenging task. The idea of this pilot project was to divide the park up into smaller resource management units (RMU's) that have similar characteristics such as vegetation type, watershed areas, and rare/special concern species and thus similar resource management prescriptions. Once delineated, each one of these RMU's will have a clearly defined desired future condition and a description of the necessary actions required to achieve this condition. Like the sign prototype project, this project also involves the use of GIS mapping software technology to delineate RMU's and maintain associated data files. Data included with each RMU will also include a record of all resource management actions implemented over time which should be easily accessible regardless of park staff changes.

Both of these pilot projects are still a work in progress. However, over the coming months we plan on continuing to refine these pilot projects and will eventually share their application for use at other state parks.

As, always, we look forward to seeing you out at the park this winter season.

Calendar of Events

JANUARY:

- 4:** *Park Program:* Snowshoe along the St. Croix.
- 11:** *Park Program:* Animal tracks and signs.

FEBRUARY:

- 8:** *Park Program:* Snowshoe along the St. Croix.
- 14-17:** **Great Backyard Bird Count** – see page 4 for more information.
- 15:** **Candlelight Ski** – see page 5 for more information.
- 15-17:** **President's Day display** – see page 4 for more information.

MARCH:

- 15:** **Pancake Breakfast** at 9:00 in the Visitor Center, followed by our **Friends Annual Meeting** – more info in the Spring Newsletter coming out March 1.

Kacie Carlson in Action!



Unexpected Birds Over-wintering in Wild River State Park

By Rubin Stenseng, Friends Member and very active volunteer at WRSP

I remember as a young person hearing about "snipe hunts". Where I was raised in northern Minnesota, the snipe hunt protocol went something like this: The older members of the snipe hunting party would tell the younger novice hunter that everyone knows that snipes have one leg shorter than the other, so to keep from tipping over, the snipes always walk on hillsides. The novice snipe hunter is given a burlap bag and told to stand on the hillside, with the bag open and near the ground, while the other members of the group would go around and drive the snipes to the novice with the bag. While the novice waited patiently with the bag on the hillside, the other, wiser members of the group would go home. And of course, this was considered a really great practical joke to play on the unsuspecting novice hunter, who would undoubtedly get a chance to be the wiser member the next time a novice was taken hunting. There were many variations on this theme, sometimes involving loud screams to call the snipe into the bag, and sometimes it was a night-time event. You may have heard additional variations of this classic practical joke. As the youngest of 4 brothers, I am surprised that I was never suckered into this hunt - or perhaps I have blocked it from my childhood memories.

Today, as an older (and wiser?) birder, I realize that there really is a snipe bird. In this area it is the Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*). The Wilson's Snipe's habitat includes marshes, damp fields, and muddy edges of creeks. This is a common summer species in our area, however, because it is so well camouflaged, is solitary, and lurks in cover, it is often unseen. The Wilson's Snipe uses its long bill to probe in mud to "feel" for food such as invertebrates. The mud part of the habitat is a key element as that is where the food is located. Mud is not a problem in the summer and so this species is common in our area in the summer. No mud in the winter implies that these, like so many of our bird species, must leave for warmer winter locations.

Imagine our collective surprise to find that multiple Wilson's Snipes have been over-wintering in Wild River State Park. Not only have a number of birds been staying over the winter, but there are at least two locations in the Park with over-wintering birds. This is completely unexpected and, for the local birders, kind of a big deal. Several birds have found micro-habitats within the Park that provide what all birds need at this time of the year - food and shelter. This winter (2013-2014), we confirmed 3 snipes in Spring Creek and 6 snipes in Deer Creek.

So what is going on? It is generally understood that there are risks for birds to migrate (i.e., huge energy consumption, distance to be covered, obstacles to avoid, weather, conditions at destination, ... the list goes on). There are risks to not migrate (i.e., winter weather, food supply, and shelter). It appears that the over-wintering birds have found enough food and shelter that, however they work these things, they stay.

Spring Creek and Deer Creek have some common characteristics for snipe habitat. They are both spring-fed; the temperature of the ground water entering the streams is constant and keeps ice from forming in the winter. In the summer, the water temperature feels bone-chillingly cold; in the winter, it feels like the warmest place for miles around. The streams are shallow with a muddy bottom and muddy shores (remember about mud - that's where the food is for these birds). Spring Creek in particular has heavy brush cover right up to the water's edge and as such, provides a little more shelter from the winter weather.

We were pleased and excited to discover that Wilson's Snipes are over-wintering in the Park. This is yet another indicator of the value of maintaining these natural areas for wildlife diversity. If you go to look at these birds, please be aware that their world is very, very small during the winter. The entire length of their world in Spring Creek is only about 600 feet. There is no other suitable habitat and they cannot survive the winter if they are stressed or forced to leave that short stretch of stream. They are in the streams and marshes in the summer also and I hope that at some time, you will have the chance to stop by and see the very pretty and interesting Wilson's Snipes of Wild River State Park (no burlap bag needed).

I would like to extend special thanks to Jenni Webster from Minnesota Interstate State Park for survey assistance and Wild River State Park staff for support and assistance in understanding the winter snipes in the Park.



**Over-wintering Wilson's Snipe
Spring Creek - Wild River State Park
December 2013**

A 4-in-1 Weekend at Wild River: February 14th through the 17th

This February will offer a very busy stretch of four days in the middle of the month at Wild River State Park with activities for everyone. These four fun events and the dates they will occur are:

- Sat. night the 15th: our BIG 23rd annual **Candlelight Ski / Snowshoe / Hike** event. See page 5 for more information on this event. The Friends board decided to try a later date this year in the hopes that there will be more snow, and so far it looks real good for 2014. Also, the 15th is a day after the official Full Moon so that should make the night even more remarkable.
- All weekend: 2 ongoing activities –
 - 1) The Friends are planning to provide information at the Visitor Center and perhaps sponsor a bird hike as part of the GBBC: **Great Backyard Bird Count**. This is a national 4-day event (14th – 17th) jointly sponsored by the Cornell Univ. Ornithology Lab and the Audubon Society. For more information and to get an official bird checklist, visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html.
 - 2) In honor of **President's Day** on Monday, we will have a display in the Visitor Center on Presidents that have played a significant role in the creation of parks and preserves. Many, especially Theodore Roosevelt, used a loophole in the Antiquities Act of 1906 that allowed them to set aside thousands of acres of land by simple Presidential decree without the need for approval from the US Congress or State Assemblies.
- And, of course, there's Friday the 14th: **Valentine's Day**. Although there will be no specific activities, the Park is a beautiful romantic place to spend some special time with your loved one. And there will be a Full Moon!

See you at the Park Feb. 14, 15, 16, or 17, or all 4 days!

October 5K Run/Walk is a Big Success

The 2nd Annual Wild River 5K Run/Walk, also known as the Bear Tear 2013, was a big success! We had 69 participants this year, over 50% more than 2012's 42. And we had a wide range in ages: from 8 year olds to 77! There were also many volunteers from our Friends group and staff from the DNR that quickly and effectively ran the event, plus provided free refreshments including bottled water, cookies, and fruit. See our website for more information and photos: www.friendsofwildriver.org.

Join us and spread the word in 2014!



Species Spotlight

American Highbush Cranberry

Size: 3' to 16', but usually around 10'

Habitat: Moist to wet woodlands; edges of lakes and ponds; streambanks.

Flowering: late May to June.

Appearance: The white, flat-topped flower cluster later becomes a large cluster of raisin-sized red fruits. These fruits persist on the bush throughout winter thus providing an important food source for many animals and birds.

Notes: This is a deciduous shrub, not a true cranberry. Some chefs use the fruit along with rhubarb to make a dessert.



Editor's Ramblings...

Visit the Friends website!
www.friendsofwildriver.org

It's full of interesting information about the Friends group and Wild River State Park.

Some of the currently featured items are:

- 5K Run results and photos
- Upcoming events
- The newly revised Bylaws
- Past issues of this newsletter

Thanks to Dennis Johnson and Tim Kastelein for maintaining and constantly improving this site!

Renew today, and ask others!

Membership dues is one of our biggest sources of revenue, so please renew today! We will add 12 months to whatever your expiration date is. And ask other members of your family or those in your circle of friends to join too so we can grow and continue to add great programs and activities at Wild River.

How is this Newsletter?

Are there any suggestions or ideas on how to improve this newsletter? What types of articles do you enjoy, and what is not so great?

Contact Bob Kessen at kess002@umn.edu to share your ideas and comments. But, more importantly, we would love to receive articles from you on anything related to Wild River State Park – please send them to Bob now and often!

Wild River State Park CANDLELIGHT

❄️ *Ski • Snowshoe • Hike*



February 15, 2014
Ongoing 6-9 pm

Wild River State Park

FREE!

With a Minnesota State Park
Vehicle Permit.
Skiers: see **NOTE** below.

Featuring the following fun activities throughout the night:

- Raffle Prizes including a new set of skis and boots!
- Minnesota's largest prairie bonfire - lit at 5:45pm
- 6 miles of candle-lit ski, snowshoe, and walking trails
- Live music at both the Visitor Center and Trail Center
- Home-made cookies, cider and coffee (donations appreciated)
- Large Telescope for viewing the remarkable night sky.
- Ski & Snowshoe rental available -- call the park for more info: 651-583-2125.
- Call Dave at 651-583-2923 to volunteer to help out.

NOTE: A Minnesota Ski Pass is required for ski trails in State Parks or Forests, or on State or Grant-in-Aid Trails, for those who are age 16 and above. The cost is \$6 daily or \$20 for the season, and are available at the Park Office or online.

Plus **2** other NEW fun activities
happening at the Park this weekend,
sponsored by the Friends:

- 1) Join in the Cornell/Audubon Society's "*Great Backyard Bird Count*" by logging the birds you see on Sat., Sun. and Mon. and even at night during the Candlelight Ski. Some unusual species you may see: snowy owls, bald eagles, & trumpeter swans. Stop in at the Visitor Center for more information.
- 2) We will have an interesting display at the Visitor Center showing US Presidents that have contributed to the establishment of parks and to the protection of wildlife.

IT'S WINTERTIME FUN FOR ALL AGES!

Friends, please cut this portion, then, hang this poster somewhere in your hometown or workplace to invite new Friends and visitors to Wild River State Park for this event!

Thank you for your
Membership

FWRSP Membership Options

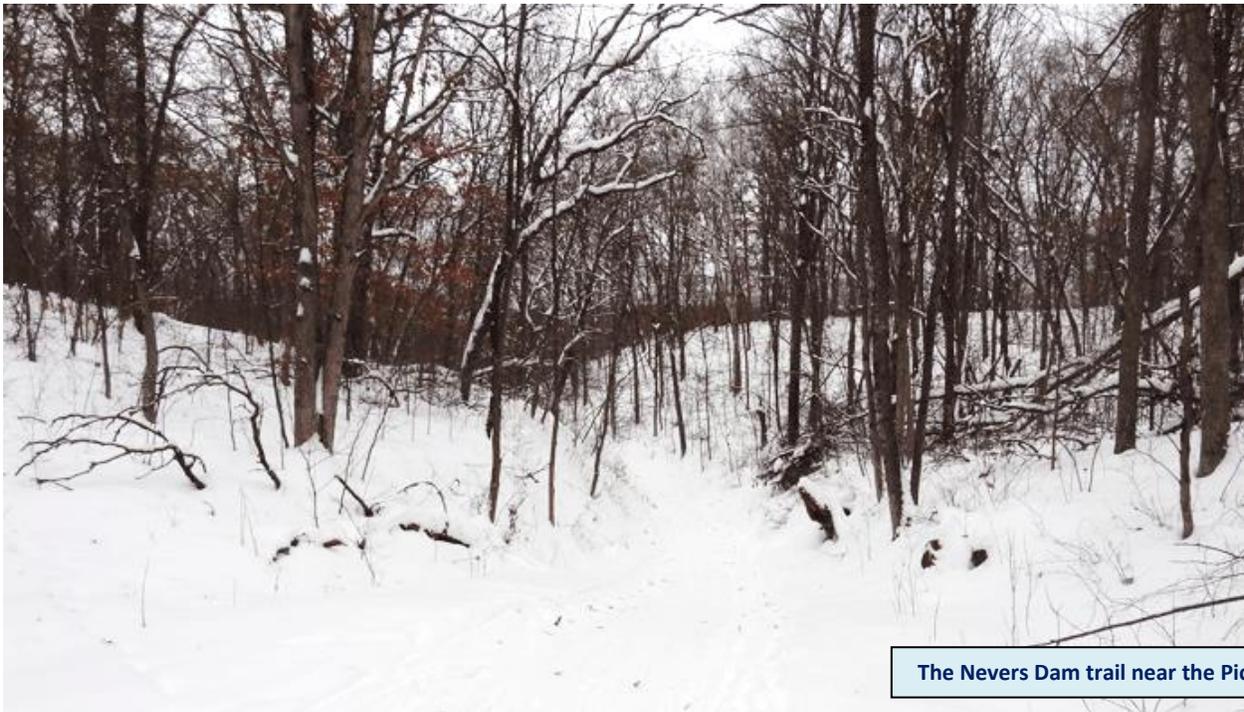
- Junior **Friend, 12 and under** – \$5 / year
Includes an "Action Guide" and other benefits
- Individual **Friend** – \$20 / year
- Family **Friend** – \$35 / year
- Silver **Friend** – \$50 / year
- Gold **Friend** – \$100 / year
- Platinum **Friend** – \$250+ / year
*Add an additional \$10 and be a member of
Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota*

Name:			
Address:			
City:			
State:		Zip:	
Email:			

We will never sell or trade your email address

Option 1: Mail above with check to:
 Friends of Wild River State Park
 c/o Bob Walz, Treasurer
 39168 Riverside Ct.
 North Branch, MN 55056

Option 2: Sign-up Online and use your credit card:
www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org



The Nevers Dam trail near the Picnic Area.

Happy New Year! from the Friends of Wild River Board

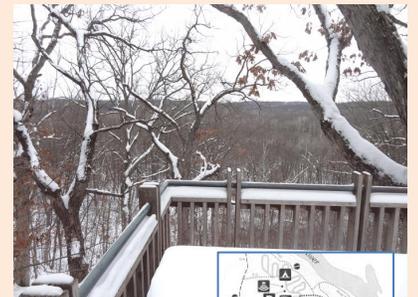
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Answer to **WHERE IS IT?**

The Deck/Overlook at the Picnic Area

Looks like the main Visitor Center deck, right? But it's another beautiful St. Croix valley overlook found behind the shelter building in the Picnic area. There are also many picnic tables on the deck plus a large sheltered area with an impressive rock fireplace. From here you can start out on many hiking trails: Nevers Dam, Old Logging, and River Terrace. And in the winter there are groomed ski (30 miles!) and snowshoe (6 miles!) sections too.



It's here