

# Newsletter

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org ✉ info@FriendsOfWildRiver.org ✉ 651-257-4414



**Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting  
is coming up soon: March 14!**

--- See page 5 for more info ---

From the *President*:

## Spring Activities at the Park

By Tom Dickhudt, Friends of Wild River State Park



As Minnesota winters go, this one was probably somewhat wimpy. The lack of snow was a disappointment to many hardened, winter-loving Minnesotans. Spring however is coming and the Friends of Wild River State Park are again participating in a number of activities. Due partially to the efforts of Friends members, the Park Naturalist position has again been filled and activities can resume at a greater level.

March 14 is the date of the annual meeting. This is a special opportunity for members to meet each other and provide ideas and input into Friends activities. Members are encouraged to bring people who might be interested in our program to the meeting. The pancakes are great and there still is real maple syrup available.

Maple syruping is back! Details, schedules and other information will be available from the park office. See the article on page 4 for current information.

The first of two native plant sales will be held on Sunday, May 17 and the second at our Seegwan event.

The park open house and "Seegwan - Celebration of Spring" is scheduled for June 13. The theme this year is picturing spring and will feature a number of activities for photography. The St. Croix Valley Camera Club will assist The Friends in order to provide activities for all levels of camera users. Whether a person is using a digital or film-dedicated camera or a point and shoot or smartphone, there should be a number of fun activities for both adults and children. Bird, landscape, and wildflower walks should provide a number of interesting opportunities. Other activities will include the native plant sale, geocaching, and seed sowing.

A special thank you to all who have helped restore the Park Naturalist position. This person is key to helping people to enjoy everything the park has to offer as well as the unique educational opportunities.

**Enjoy spring!**

## Naturalist Notes

By Mike Dunker  
Wild River State Park Naturalist



### *The times they are a changin'*

I recently sat down with past park naturalist Dave Crawford to discuss the history project that took place at the park in the mid-90s. Volunteers worked with Dave on tracking down previous land owners, maps, oral stories and more to piece together what Wild River State Park looked like years ago. The landscape, cultural history and possible locations for burial mounds, fur posts and other significant spots were further investigated. All of this today helps to tell the story of the park.

The cultural aspect is just one piece of it. This summer I was excited to see a red-headed woodpecker at the feeders behind the Visitor Center. What was once a more common resident of the park is now rarely seen, not just at Wild River, but throughout much of the state. Habitat loss plays a large role in this. Small woodlots and edge habitat created an ideal home for them, the same that you would find in small family farms and even abandoned farm sites. Looking at the historical maps and photos of the park one hundred years ago show exactly that. Potato farms, woodlots and more were found as landscape turned from lumbering to farming communities.

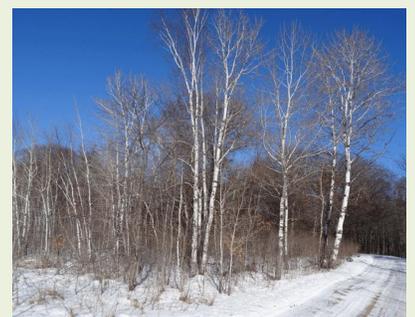
Times change, it's as simple as that. Park managers and staff have done a great job with staff and resource specialists to work with such issues as oak wilt, invasive species, park recreational use and prairie restoration. Volunteers have helped considerably in the process. Wild River State Park is a beautiful park, indeed, but is still part of a larger world. Just a waypoint for the red-headed woodpecker one might say.

- Continued on Page 2 -

### WHERE IS IT?

Do you know where in Wild River State Park this picture was taken?

Answer on page 6.



## Volunteers at Wild River

By Mike Dunker, Wild River State Park Naturalist

It never ceases to amaze me the accomplishments that can be done by a few people. I sat down with Assistant Park Manager Kris Backlund at the end of 2014 to take a look at the volunteer hours put in at Wild River State Park. Each year, we submit these hours and projects to get an idea of the time and financial value of dedicated individuals helping to create a better park.

Approximately 7,000 volunteer hours were donated to Wild River State Park through many different avenues. Whether you helped with the Prairie Care program, worked with invasive species control, offered time hosting at the visitor center, worked with the Friends of Wild River State Park for one of their events, or any of the many other projects we had going on at the park this last year, we appreciate your help. We want to say a huge thank you from all of the staff at Wild River.

We also get asked, "What needs to be done?" and "How do I volunteer?" Stop out at the park and visit with the Park Naturalist to sign up as a volunteer. With so many different projects and needs going on, it should be easy to find something that interests you.

The Prairie Care program is always in need of volunteers. By becoming a species steward, volunteers get an opportunity to walk through areas of the park collecting seeds and building their plant identification skills. We have a list of desirable plants that we need seed from for restoration projects and will help you identify what plants look like and where you can find them in the park. There is also a need for invasive species removal in the park. Throughout the year, I see individuals and groups come out to remove buckthorn from areas and it makes a difference.

If you would rather visit with people, we are in need of Visitor Center hosts. You can sign up for a day or weekend and greet visitors and answer questions. This allows us to keep the Visitor Center open when staff are providing programs or are out for the day. Canoe paddles, Archery in the Park, maple syrup making and other interpretive activities are lots of fun to help with as well.

The Friends of Wild River State Park also need help for events like the 5K Run in October, Seegwan, Candlelight Ski and Snowshoe and other events. Please contact Friends President, Tom Dickhudt, at 651-257-4414 if you would like to help out with these one-time events.

If you have any questions or want to volunteer, contact the Park Naturalist, Mike Dunker, at 651-583-2125 ext. 227, or by email at michael.dunker@state.mn.us or stop in at the park. Training will be available for new volunteers or refreshers if you are getting back into volunteering. We look forward to seeing you out at the park!

*The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green. ~Thomas Carlyle*

## - Naturalist Notes -

Continued from Page 1

You don't have to look very far in the media or among nature groups to hear concerns about other declining species such as monarch butterflies, bees, and a multitude of other species. It's a sad outlook, but not one we haven't heard before. Peregrine falcons, eastern bluebirds, gray wolves and bald eagles are other species that were once disappearing too. Through volunteer efforts, these species all rebounded in MN. But it took time, effort and every little bit helped.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find an article on the volunteer numbers in the park. I'm proud of all that is accomplished, through resource work, park projects and all those who help with the interpretive program. Thank you! Your efforts are appreciated. There are still a lot of slots to fill. Taking the time just one day to collect milkweed seeds to replant for monarch butterflies can have an effect that stretches beyond the park boundaries.

Who knows, maybe one hundred years from now people will look back at the work we are doing and think we helped to bring back a species, a habitat or protect a waypoint along the way. If you want to help, contact Wild River State Park to be a volunteer or a Friends of Wild River State Park board member to help with one of their events.

## Early Spring Flower Photos:

Courtesy of Kris Backlund, Park Assistant Manager

Bloodroot



Hepatica



Trout Lilies



## Give a Book, Take a Book

By Bob Walz, Board Member of the Friends of Wild River

Last year Wild River State Park became the first state park to install a Little Free Library (<http://littlefreelibrary.org/>) in the park. A little over 40 books have been taken and 60 books have been returned or donated in its first six months of operation. As more park visitors discover it, the numbers are likely to grow.

For it to be successful we need park users to donate field guides, nature books and books in general to our Little Free Library. It can be done quite easily. You simply drop off books at the Park Station at the Entrance, the Visitor Center or in the Little Free Library itself. Go through your personal libraries and see if there are books you can donate, rather than collect dust on your shelves.

If you are coming to the March 14<sup>th</sup> Pancake Breakfast and Annual meeting of the Friends of Wild River State Park, why not bring some books to donate. By the way, "Pi" day will officially happen at the Visitor Center during the Pancake breakfast on 3/14/15 at 9:26 am ( $\pi = 3.1415926\dots$ ). This meeting is open to the public and the pancake breakfast is free to anyone that is a member or joins that day.



**The Wild River Little Free Library, located next to the amphitheater across from the Campground.**

## Species Spotlight

### Musclewood, or Hornbeam

*Much of the following information was provided by Rebecca Koetter, Garden and Landscape Consultant and a former Wild River park intern.*

**Latin Name:** *Carpinus caroliniana*

**Habitat:** an under-story tree that likes a shaded cool environment. It is often found near streams, but usually on banks or on terraces rather than in the wetter swamps.

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet.

**Canopy spreads:** 15-20', flat-topped or rounded crown with layered spreading branches.

**Notes:** Musclewood or American Hornbeam is a Minnesota native. It provides three seasons of interest: summer, fall and winter. In summer the blue-green to dark green foliage changes to variations of yellow to orange to red in the fall. The most striking feature of this plant is its smooth bluish gray bark on fluted multi-stemmed trunks that stands out during winter months.

**Quick ID:** its basic form is rounded and the trunk looks like it is corded with muscle. Smooth bluish bark is very attractive. The flowers are interesting; male flowers droop in catkins and female flowers called "aments" are tiny pinkish red racemes at the shoot tip. The fruit is displayed in three lobed leafy bract clusters. Leaves are dark lustrous green and they turn a fiery red in the fall. Leaf buds are small, close to the slender twig and a bit fuzzy. Bud scales are in rows. The leaves are simple, alternate, doubly serrate coming to a pointy tip.



## Spring Native Plant Sales – twice again this year

One of the most anticipated signs of spring is the opening of local nurseries with their spring plant sales. Friends of Wild River is also a part of this: one of our Board members – Tom Dickhudt – operates Sunrise Native Plants and he grows and donates locally hardy flowers and grasses for an annual fundraiser for the Park. Again this year there will be 2 dates for you to take advantage of his native plant sale:

**Sun. May 17 – 9:00 to 3:00** at the Park Entrance

**Sat. June 13 – 9:00 to 3:00** at the Park Entrance

As always, a wide variety of native plants will be offered, including wildflower species like Prairie Smoke and Wild Lupine; native grasses like Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, and Bottlebrush Grass; and a unique selection of ferns and sedges.

## Birding in the Park

By Bob Walz, Board Member of the Friends of Wild River

Last year we added the Great Backyard Bird Count (<http://www.birdcount.org>) to our Presidents' Weekend Candlelight Ski (Snowshoe, Hike). This year, the Candlelight Ski was cancelled because of cold and severe wind chill temperatures, but not the Bird Count. As of February 16<sup>th</sup> the count was 4,796 different bird species from 137,291 count lists that were submitted worldwide.

If you missed the Bird Count this year, you can still checkout the results, become familiar with the E-Bird web site (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>) or come out to the park and enjoy the birds from the comforts of the Visitor Center or hiking along one of the trails.

I will be traveling to the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica the first two weeks of March to participate in the International Birding Festival there as part of the Sister Park Initiative. And on May 9, 2015 -- International Migratory Bird Day -- we will have a birding festival here in the Saint Croix River valley. This would be a good time to learn more about neotropical birds.

Our park also has several bluebird trails that are maintained by "birders" like you and me. It is not enough to put up bluebird houses, they must be maintained or the bluebirds will become an easy target for one of a number of predators. To learn more about bluebirds I would encourage you to visit the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota's web site (<http://www.bbrp.org>) or, better yet, attend their Annual Bluebird Expo. This year it will be held at Northfield Middle School on Saturday, April 11, 2015.

You can also ask our Park Naturalist to checkout a birding kit at the Visitor Center when you go birding in the park, or visit our Little Free Library and access one or more birding books. Or if you are looking for more advanced information, join your local Audubon society or local ornithological group (e.g. <http://moumn.org/>).

## Calendar of Events

### FWRSP Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting

March 14: 9 - 11 am at the Visitor Center  
Find more information on page 5 of this newsletter.

### Maple Syruping Workshops

To be held throughout March and early April. Contact the park Naturalist or check the park website for more information.

### FWRSP Native Plant Sale

#1: May 17: 9 am – 3 pm at the Park Entrance.  
#2: June 13: 9 am – 3 pm at the Park Entrance.  
Find more information on page 3 of this newsletter.

### Live Frogs and other Amphibians

May 30: 11 - 12 am at the Visitor Center, with Rancy Korb.

### FWRSP "Seegwan" Events

June 13: all day throughout the Park.  
More information will be in the Summer Newsletter which will come out the end of May.

### Wild edible and medicinal plants of MN/WI

June 7: 10 – 11:30 am at the Visitor Center, with Dr. Kelley Haggenbuch.

### Snake Behavior and Research

July 11: 1 – 2:30 pm at the Visitor Center, with former Wild River State Park Naturalist Dave Crawford.

### Universe in the Park

July 18: 8:30 pm near the amphitheater, with members of the Institute for Astrophysics.

### Bruce the Bug Guy

July 25: 1 - 2 pm at the Visitor Center, with Bruce Giebink from the Bug Zone, featuring live insects.

*For more info and activities go to [friendsofwildriver.org](http://friendsofwildriver.org)  
or [mndnr.gov/wildriver](http://mndnr.gov/wildriver)*

## Maple Syrup Programs return to Wild River State Park!

After a year hiatus, the sugar bush will be back in action at Wild River State Park. The sweet sap cooked down to delicious maple syrup has been missed based on the significant number of inquiries the park has received this last year. There are plenty of opportunities for you to participate in this year's adventure.

The Visitor Center will again play host to the cooker and storage for the sap. Programs will also start from the Visitor Center before heading to the sugar bush at another location within the park. Here the trees will be tapped, sap collected and brought back to the Visitor Center. Cooking will take place later in March when enough sap has been collected to make it worthwhile.

If you're interested in learning and being involved in the process as a volunteer, we could use help tapping trees, daily sap collectors to transport sap from the sugar bush to the Visitor Center for storage, volunteers to help cook and watch the sap as it evaporates down and others to lead stations during interpretive programs.

There will be a number of chances to come out to the park to watch the process as well. Check out the Wild River State Park website at [www.mndnr.gov/wildriver](http://www.mndnr.gov/wildriver) under events to see what is coming up. You can also take advantage of previous years' maple syrup work at the Friends of Wild River State Park Annual Pancake Breakfast on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

If you wish to sign up to be a maple syrup volunteer, contact the park naturalist, Mike Dunker. You can find him at the park visitor center or by phone, 651-583-2125 ext. 227 or e-mail [michael.dunker@state.mn.us](mailto:michael.dunker@state.mn.us).

*You are invited to the Friends of Wild River's*

# Pancake Breakfast & Annual Meeting

**Saturday, March 14, 9 – 11 a.m. at the Wild River State Park Visitor Center**

We will start at 9:00 with the delicious Pancake Breakfast (members eat for free), featuring:

- Famous secret recipe organic buttermilk pancakes
- Wild River State Park's home-made Maple Syrup tapped from the park "sugar bush" last spring
- Fresh scrambled eggs, hot coffee and juice

The Annual Meeting will follow at 10:00. Topics to include:

- Last year's very successful programs and initiatives.
- Reports from the Friends Board of Directors.
- Plans for the upcoming year and beyond.
- Presentation of the annual "Wild Friend" award.
- A guest speaker or two.

## Membership Special

If your membership is renewed at or before the Annual meeting, you will be entered into a drawing for a **\$70 gift card!**

This would cover a one night stay in a camper cabin for up to six people at Wild River State Park. Or you could use it for anything else in the park, including campsites, items at the park store, annual parking permits, etc.

The drawing will be held at the Annual Meeting. You do not have to be present to win, so renew your membership today online or by completing the registration form on page 6!



### Please note:

- 1) A vehicle permit is required to enter the State Park.
- 2) This event is free to current members of the Friends. If you are not a member, please sign up at the door and enjoy the great food and company.

**Join us for a morning of friendship, food, and fun at the Visitor Center! And please bring any friends who might be interested in joining us and supporting Wild River State Park.**



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:

**Bob Walz, FWRSP Treasurer**

(make check out to "Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota"  
and put "Friends of Wild River membership" in memo field)

**39168 Riverside Court**

**North Branch, MN 55056**

**Option 2:** Sign-up Online and use your credit card:

[www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org](http://www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org)



A panoramic view of Amador Prairie looking northwest from the Observation Deck off the main park road. The 4 photos that make up this view were taken on a very bright, cold and windy Valentine's Day this year.

### Happy almost Spring!

#### From the Friends Board

<b>President</b>	Tom Dickhudt
<b>Vice President</b>	Brad Bjorklund
<b>Treasurer</b>	Bob Walz
<b>Secretary</b>	Jeske Noordergraaf
<b>Communications</b>	Bob Kessen
<b>Past Presidents</b>	Gary Noren Dave Kozlovsky

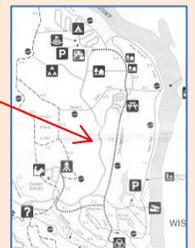
#### Board Members:

Bill Carlson	Dave Crawford
John Eret	Dennis Johnson
Tessa Hill	Elizabeth Huselid
Jacque Zita	

### Answer to **WHERE IS IT?**

**At the junction of the main park road  
and the road to the guest house.**

The park has a number of beautiful stands of birch trees that particularly stand out during the winter. The ones in the photo are among the largest and easiest to locate since they are right on the main park road about halfway to the campground and on the east side of the road opposite Amador Prairie.



*It's here*