



Newsletter

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Mark your calendars! One of Minnesota's most beautiful 5K Runs is coming up soon: the 4th annual

wild river run

Otter Trotter 2015 – Oct. 10

See page 5 for more info and the registration form.

From the President:

Pollinators at the Park

By Tom Dickhudt, Friends of Wild River State Park



Recently, there has been much concern about the continuing decline of honey bees and bumblebees. The many factors contributing to this decline are now being debated by various interests. An important outcome of this concern, however, has been a new interest in native pollinators. This interest includes many different critters such as native bees, moths, butterflies, birds, flies, and a number of other species.

A primary focus of the concerns seems to be targeted at providing a safe and natural habitat so that the populations of native pollinators can increase. This past summer I have visited a number of wild areas of the state including several state parks. Viewing them from a distance, many of these areas appeared to be green and rich in life. Upon closer inspection, however, I could see that they were dominated by invasive and non-native plants. As a result, the diversity of pollinators seemed very limited in these areas.

Upon returning home I realized that one of the best examples in this State of a natural and rich habitat is Wild River State Park. Through the efforts of many people -- both staff and volunteers over the years -- Wild River State Park has become a showcase for large areas of restored prairie, sample pollinator gardens, oak savanna areas, and diverse woodland and wetland areas. Sitting at a junction among three ecological regions, Wild River State Park features examples of almost every plant that is native to East Central Minnesota. The diverse habitats provide homes to an unbelievable number of critters. Wild River State Park provides a tremendous opportunity for visitors to become familiar with the many native pollinators available in Minnesota.

A visit to Wild River State Park can certainly be an inspiration for those people concerned with diminishing pollinators. They can carry that inspiration to their own environments by expanding or developing their own native and safe habitats on their own property. My travels around the state have convinced me that we have an important and special treasure in Wild River State Park.

State Park Update

By Paul Kurvers,
Wild River State Park Manager

History Underground



Recently I met with State Park Archaeologist, Dave Radford, who had come to the park to conduct a cultural resource assessment of an area near the river. A resource assessment was required for this particular area as we had plans in the future to dig a number of holes in the ground to facilitate the planting of trees for a restoration project. Dave's assessment of the area would ensure that we did not inadvertently damage or destroy any potentially significant archaeological sites.

As we approached the area near the river where Dave would be conducting his assessment he turned to me and said "this is going to be a hot spot", guaranteeing that he and his crew would definitely find artifacts. To assess the archaeological potential of the area Dave and his crew employed the very appropriately named "shovel test" process. This process involves digging a series of holes in the ground with a shovel and sifting the removed soil through a screen to separate and detect any artifacts that may be present. Of course it takes a keen and experienced eye to determine the difference between a natural rock and one that may have been altered by a human. As the shovel tests began Dave's initial prediction of a "hot spot" proved correct as the very first hole dug yielded a wealth of artifacts including remnants from the process of making stone scraping tools, arrow and spear points, and pieces of pottery once used for cooking plant and animal foods. As the shovel tests continued, virtually every hole dug produced similar results. Some artifacts were found deep in the holes while others were found closer to the surface indicating a long period of human occupation of this particular area. In fact,

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Where are all the birds?

By Mike Dunker, Park Naturalist

For years, the bird feeders at Wild River State Park's Visitor Center have brought in visitors who love to watch our little feathered friends. This definitely includes the park naturalist. Each year, there is also the need to bring in feeders during the spring and early summer due to bear predation on the bird seed. This year was especially hard on the feeders as a mother and three cubs found the rich fat and protein seeds and suet a great energy boost after a long winter's nap.

Those stopping by the Visitor Center today continue to see bare feeders and very few birds congregating outside of the window. Even this past week the bears continue to return to the feeders looking for food. While it is great to get a chance to see bears in the park, especially in an air-conditioned room with large glass windows, it is important not to let the bears become comfortable around people and park buildings. Each time we see the bears near the park buildings or campsites, the staff does their best to scare off the bear(s) and associate people and our facilities as a nuisance to them.

To best provide safety for the park visitors, and ultimately do what's best for the bears, the bird feeders will remain empty for the foreseeable future. It is currently unknown whether or not feeding will begin again in the winter, but they will remain empty during the spring, summer and fall seasons. A noticed side benefit of the removal of the suet feeders is a reduction of woodpecker damage to the visitor center. This could also be due to the time of year, but it is an interesting "coincidence."

Never fear, for all the birders looking for their favorites at Wild River, they are still here. The brightly colored tanagers and buntings, woodland warblers, prairie sparrows and more are found throughout the park. Feel free to check out a birding kit and take to the trails and overlooks to see them and to hear their sweet sounds.



- State Park Update -

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some of the oldest artifacts found during this assessment may date back to 1000 years ago.

To me, this whole process was very intriguing and awe inspiring as I began to grasp the significance of these archaeological finds. In the simplest form, these artifacts demonstrate that for many hundreds of years people have been drawn to the river for the bountiful natural resources that provided both physical, and I assume, mental sustenance. The same day that the artifacts were discovered I saw people hiking on park trails, canoeing on the river, fishing from the shore, and pitching a tent in a nice campsite near the river bank. It was pleasing to witness that people of today are still drawn to the river and are able to engage in the same activities as those people and cultures did in the past. The artifacts also made me realize that regardless of time, the natural resources and scenic beauty of the river are common attributes all people value.



State Park Archeologists LeRoy Gonsior and Dave Radford (left to right) screening soil for artifacts



Stone artifact found by archeologist at Wild River State Park

Naturalist Notes

By Mike Dunker, Park Naturalist

The River Wild

In 1968, Congress created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational value for current and future generations. The reasons for the protection of these special rivers was to maintain their character and allow the free-flowing of the river. Classifications for these rivers included Wild, Scenic, or Recreational. The St. Croix River is the only federally designated Wild and Scenic River in Minnesota. In fact, the Upper St. Croix that flows alongside Wild River State Park was one of only eight rivers first included in the act in 1968.

For many of you who have spent a lot of time on the St. Croix River and taken part in local St. Croix organizations, this may all be common knowledge. The effects of the Wild and Scenic River Act continue to make a large impact on park users and visitors throughout the summer. The interpretive programs at Wild River State Park this summer have enhanced these experiences.

The park has its own set of eight canoes for interpretive programs and teaching paddling skills. This summer they have been getting used quite a bit for different programs and different experiences. How quickly these paddles fill up with reservations are a good indicator of their popularity as well.

The interpretive river paddles were a great way to introduce park guests to some of the history of the river. I have enjoyed sharing stories of the American Indians that once used this river. Recent archeological shovel tests at the park indicated not only rock flakes from projectile points and cooking fires, but also turned up a fair amount of pottery. The use of the river, and the park lands, was integral in their life. The fur trappers and loggers stories on the river also have connected visitors to another section of the park's history. Even the modern day background of the river's protection continues the river's legacy. Probably the most popular paddles of the summer have been the full moon paddles. This year we were also lucky enough to be able to offer a Blue Moon paddle. A blue moon is the second full moon in a month. Not only did we have perfect weather for the paddle, we managed to time our stop just right to watch the sun set on one section of the river as the full moon rose on the other side.

One of the important paddles of the summer is also one of the Friends of Wild River State Park annual activities. The annual river clean-up this year was really a great partnership with John Eret of the National Park Service and Gary Noren, who has done outstanding work over the years with the St. Croix River Association and was the President of the Friends of Wild River for many years. It is nice to see how clean the river is every year we hold the clean-up.

It's been enjoyable to see so many people on the river this summer, whether it is at an interpretive program or on their own. As you come out to the park, take a minute to enjoy the river and how its story is so important to Wild River State Park's story. See you on a paddle soon.

Meet Erin Denny, our 2015 Naturalist Corps employee



From a very young age, I figured out I was happiest while outside. Once college came around, I had no idea what I wanted to major in, so I settled for sociology. It was not until later that I realized I could major in the outdoors! How cool! I was quickly submerged into the world of wilderness tripping and immediately fell in love. I received a four year degree in Environmental and Outdoor Education from the University of MN Duluth. Upon graduating, I knew I wanted to teach and share my passion for the outdoors and I figured being a naturalist would be a perfect fit.

Being from Shafer and growing up on the St. Croix, Wild River State Park has always been a special place to me. I applied and was lucky enough to be chosen to work as the Naturalist Corps for the summer. The job has been incredible for so many reasons. I am lucky to have such great people to work with and such cool visitors with which to share experiences.

One of my highlights for the summer was during a Turtle program I gave at the Amphitheater. The entire place was packed with tons of excited young children and enthusiastic adults. Everyone in the crowd was equally engaged and had a blast. Being able to see that my work is causing others to smile and learn is one of the greatest feelings.



Calendar of Events

SEPTEMBER:

- 7:** *Park Program:* Monarch Tagging –
11:00 - 12:30 at the Visitor Center:

With long-time butterfly gardener and educator Randy Korb. In coalition with the Monarch Watch program, we'll be tagging Wild River State Park monarchs so that they can be tracked during their migration to Mexico. Limited nets available on a first-come basis, but feel free to bring your own. Registration not required. Milkweed plants and other wildflowers will be available for purchase for \$5 to bring monarchs to your own backyard.

- 14: 6:30 p.m.:** **Friends Board meeting – at Jeske Noordergraaf's house**
- 26:** *Park Program:* Archery in the Park --
10:00 - 2:00 at the Picnic area.
- 27:** *Park Program:* Harvest Time! Seed Collecting –
1:00 p.m. at the Visitor Center (Prairie Care).

OCTOBER:

- 3:** *Park Program:* Fall Colors Walk –
2:00 p.m. at the Visitor Center.
- 10: Wild River 5K Run/Walk:**
8:30-9:45: Registration.
10:00-11:00: The race!
11:00-11:30: Winners determined and awards given.
Note: this event will always be held on the 2nd Saturday in October.
- 15-17:** *Park Program:* Wild "Shiver" Weekend –
an Education Minnesota weekend –
see mndnr.gov/wildriver for details.

NOVEMBER:

To be determined: *Park Program:* Snowshoeing

DECEMBER:

To be determined: *Park Program:* Snowshoeing

28: Winter Newsletter sent to members

-- 2016 --

JANUARY:

- 6: (Tentative date) 6:30 p.m.:** **Friends Board meeting – location to be determined.**

FEBRUARY:

- 12-15: Great Backyard Bird Count** – display by Friends (Bob Walz) in the Visitor Center
- 13:** 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.: board members and volunteers meet at Visitor Center for Candlelight Ski preparations
6:00 - 9:00 p.m.: **Candlelight Ski**
Note: this event will always be held on the 2nd Saturday in February.
- 13-15: President's Day** – display by Friends (Bob Walz) in the Visitor Center

MARCH:

- 12: Pancake Breakfast** at 9:00 in the Visitor Center, followed by our **Friends Annual Meeting**
Note: this event will always be held on the 2nd Saturday in March.
- To be determined:** *Park Program:* Maple Syruping

For more information on park programs:

http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/wild_river/calendar.html

Species Spotlight

Trumpeter Swan

Latin Name: *Cygnus buccinator*

Habitat: These impressive birds – the largest North American waterfowl species – are found quite often on the St. Croix River in the park because their ideal habitat includes about 320 ft. of open water for take-off, stable levels of unpolluted, fresh water, emergent vegetation, low levels of human disturbance, and the presence of muskrat houses and American beaver lodges for use as nesting platforms.

Length: 5 to 5 ½ feet.

Wingspan: 6 to 8 feet.

Color: Adults are white, and juveniles are light to medium gray. Adults have black bills and feet and juveniles have pink bills and feet that gradually turn black during their first year.

Population: Trumpeter Swans are classified as Threatened in Minnesota, but their population is making a remarkable comeback mainly due to efforts of Carol Henderson of the DNR since the 1980s. There were just 6-8 pairs in 1982, and today there are an estimated 17,000 individuals! See an excellent article in the StarTribune on Aug. 22.



Early Fall Photos: Courtesy of Kris Backlund, Park Assistant Manager

**Checkerspot
Butterfly**



**Colorful Oaks on
the main Park road**



Friends of Wild River State Park
Fourth Annual

Wild River Run

Otter Trotter 2015!



Take a walk or run under the fall colors and along the St. Croix River at Wild River State Park, and on one of the most beautiful 5K courses in the state! This 4th annual event will take you on both paved and unpaved surfaces.

- Awards will be given to the top finishers, plus all those under 12 will receive a nice prize.
- Registration is available on the day of the race, but at a discounted price before Oct. 1.
- T-shirts are available race day while supplies last.
- All proceeds go to the Friends of Wild River to help support park events and improvements.

Early registration discount – register by October 1!

Race Day:

Saturday, October 10, 2015

Registration: 8:30-9:45 at Picnic Shelter.

Race begins at 10 a.m.

Wild River State Park

39797 Park Trail

Center City, MN 55012

(15 miles east of North Branch, 12 miles north of Taylors Falls)

651-583-2125

Sponsored by the Friends of Wild River State Park and the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota



Wild River 5K Run/Walk

Saturday, October 10, 2015

Registration: 8:30-9:45 am -- Race begins at 10 a.m.
Wild River State Park

Note: you can also register online at FriendsOfWildRiver.org and payment there is through PayPal.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email*: _____

Division: Female Male

Age: under 12 12-24 25-50 51 and over

T-Shirt Size: _____ (Requires a \$7 additional fee)

* Email will only be used to relay information regarding the Wild River Run
 Check here to be added to park and Friends email lists.

Cost: Before October 1, 2015:	\$15 (\$22 with T-shirt)
After October 1/Race Day:	\$25 (\$35 with T-shirt)
Friends Member Discount	Free T-Shirt (\$7 discount)

Amount Paid: \$ _____

A \$5 daily or \$25 annual Minnesota State Park permit is required on all vehicles entering the park – not included in the Wild River 5K Run registration fee.

Please write a check made out to our fiscal agent "Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota" with "Friends of Wild River 5K" in the memo field, then mail this form to:

Friends of Wild River State Park, c/o Jan Kozlovsky
re: Wild River 5K Run
17190 410th St
North Branch, MN 55056

The Wild River 5K Run will route participants on both paved and non-paved surfaces. By participating in this event, you understand the risks involved with trail running and individually take all precautions necessary. Should injury occur, the Friends of Wild River State Park, nor the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, nor Wild River State Park will be held liable.

Call 651-583-2125 x227 (Mike Dunker) with questions.

Signature of understanding the terms of liability:

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 Ct.

North Branch, MN 55056

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

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org



Another beautiful Fall photo in Wild River courtesy of Kris Backlund

Current members of the Friends of Wild River Board

- President** Tom Dickhudt
- Vice President** Brad Bjorklund
- Treasurer** Bob Walz
- Secretary** Jeske Noordergraaff
- Communications** Bob Kessen
- Past Presidents** Gary Noren
Dave Kozlovsky

Board Members:

- John Eret Dave Crawford
- Dan Otto Elizabeth Huselid
- Jacquie Zita

We need HELP!

The Friends of Wild River is a very active group that currently could use some new ideas and actual hands-on assistance with our many events. As an example, our 5K Run/Walk is coming up on Oct. 10 and we do not have anyone on the committee that is connected to running groups and would know how to promote the race better. We also have specific needs for:

- Web page designers and administrators
- Finance committee members
- Political Action experience
- Any outdoor expertise (birding, canoeing, fishing, hiking, etc.)
- Folks with connections to other Nature/Outdoor organizations

Please contact Tom Dickhudt (dickens501@frontiernet.net) or Bob Kessen (kesse002@umn.edu) if you can help!