



WETLAND'S GAZETTE

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Summer 2020

From the Field

Article by Brian Peters. Photos by Doug Urban

This has certainly been a non-typical situation for all of us with the COVID-19 requirements to work from home, close our facilities and cancel events. This has been the situation since March and continues as I write this. At the present time we cannot predict when the Mead Visitor Center building will reopen to the public. At least the property outdoors has been available for hiking, bird watching, turkey hunting, fishing and other allowable activities. We have noted high visitor usage on Mead and especially at McMillan.

Mead staff have been working remotely except for occasional critical work on the property to monitor water levels and check on the condition of the dikes and facilities. We were very lucky this spring that there were no serious flooding events. The snow melted slowly and there was minimal rainfall. As usual, there is new damage to several dikes that will need to be addressed. When we do receive the approval to phase back into the field there will be much work to try to make up. Prioritization will be required, and some projects will have to be put on hold until later or not done at all.

Happenings prior to the COVID safer at home orders, included several active and completed timber sales, and work on dike repair projects. Some trail repair work was started on the eastern side of the Mead property. There have been some functioning problems with two visitor center geo-thermal heat pumps that has and will require repairs. Information about the non-forested habitats on the properties has been gathered into a database system that will be used going forward to assist with planning and tracking management in these habitat types.

We held our annual post-waterfowl season hunter meeting in February and it was well attended. Information on waterfowl numbers and hunter success from the 2019 season was presented. The Department is instituting a change in the waterfowl refuge dates that is to begin with the 2020 season. The refuges on Mead and McMillan will be off limits for any entry from September 1st through the month of November. The November 30th refuge ending date is new. The previous ending date was December 10th.



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From the Field-Continued

Lastly, for those of you who haven't heard, after 36 years working on Mead and McMillan Wildlife Areas, I will be retiring as of June 26. I thank the Friends Group for your past and ongoing support of the properties! I hope you will continue your efforts and work well with the new Property Supervisor whomever that ends up being. It is anticipated that my position will be vacant for a time due to the current state employee hiring freeze. In the interim, the Wisconsin Rapids Area Wildlife Supervisor Ryan Haffele will be the acting Property Supervisor.

Stay safe and stay well,
Brian Peters



Membership Expiration Update

Historically membership expiration dates were 12 months from the date of renewal. This approach has proven to be difficult to manage and keep organized. Due to this issue, the board has decided to change membership from a rolling 12 months to set January 1st to December 31st (of each year).

We acknowledge that this may slightly decrease our membership income but hope that we will make it easier for everyone in the long run.

Renewals will be sent each year with the announcement for the annual meeting.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support!



Exploring the Mead Wildlife Area: The Stone Wall

The 33,000+ acre Mead Wildlife area is a mix of wetlands, forests, conifer bogs and old farm fields. At the end of nearly every dead end road in the “Mead” one can find old silos, barn foundations and evidence of farmsteads where farmers grew crops and milked cows. One such place is located in Marathon county northeast of the Mead Wildlife headquarters. There you can find a white cement silo, a pile of rocks the remains of a barn foundation, and the outline of what once was a farm house. The farm stands next to a hayfield that appears to once have been productive land. If you walk west from the silo you will find an old field road that leads to another field that is bordered by an impressive stone fence. This stone fence travels both North and South an East and West and intersects somewhere in the middle. One can imagine the number of loads of rocks that had to be picked from the fields to build such an impressive fence.

The farm and fence can be found SW of Parking Lot CW at the end of Capricorn Lane off of West County Road C. If you have a GPS device use coordinates 44.717275, -89.822794 to find the fence.





McMillan Marsh Matters

By Kyle Christianson

By the time you read this spring turkey time periods will be over. I've enjoyed some wonderful hunting stories and can not wait to hear yours. Spring has arrived. I hope everyone has been able to get into the garden and work the earth. With the arrival of spring comes the arrival of young wildlife. While you are out enjoying our public lands, I ask you to leave our Wildlife Wild. If you find young wildlife, please leave it alone. The best-meaning act, the desire to help, usually has the worst outcome. Please remember that when you encounter young wildlife, you most likely do not know the whole story. Please leave Wildlife Wild and allow nature to move along at its own pace. For further information/guidance, please go to the DNR website (DNR.wi.gov) and search "Keep Wildlife Wild".

Current projects on the marsh include the Pool 2 dike repair and Mann road parking lot rebuild. Both projects are on track to be completed this summer. Please be patient with the condition of the Pool 2 dike repair. Current conditions have prevented timely action to complete the repair. If you see me on the property, feel free to stop me. I look forward to hearing your stories of the marsh or your experiences with wildlife. Enjoy the beautiful spring weather. Get outside and enjoy your public lands!

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about the Marsh. Please contact me at kyle.christianson@wisconsin.gov or at 715-781-0928 (C). For any concerns regarding law enforcement, please contact the DNR Tip line at 1-800-TIP-WDNR.



Sight and Sounds of the Mead By Marlene Furo

What season of the year is your favorite? I think most of us would say the fall when the trees change color. My favorite season is spring. Have you ever looked closely at all the different shades of green there are in the woods this time of the year? It varies from a really deep green to a very light green. Then there is a touch of brown and the blossoms of the wild plum and pin cherries peeking through. SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE MEAD WILDLIFE AREA Also, the yellow, pink, white and other colors of the wild flowers on the floor of the woods.

Some other sights are the flocks of geese returning and now the goslings with their parents. All the different kinds of ducks that nest in the marsh near where I live. The turtles are busy laying their eggs alongside of the blacktop. The sandhill cranes are in the fields and the males are doing their mating dance. Tom turkeys are showing off by fanning out their tails. Soon the sandhills will have one or two chicks with them in the fields and the hen turkeys may have as many as a dozen poults. As I was coming home from Mosinee, I saw a loon swimming in The Big Eau Pleine River. No baby on its back yet. A large bear crossed the road just east of my house last week. They cross there frequently. I saw a smaller one near the woods a few weeks ago. The deer are moving around again. Does have had their fawns. I haven't seen one yet but I'm sure I will.

What are some of the sounds that we can hear? At night we can hear the wolves howl, and the yip of the coyote. By day the geese and ducks and the gobbles of the turkeys, the different songs of the robins, finches, cardinals, and woodpeckers.

Sunday, I put out my birdfeeder and suet again. I took every thing inside as I had a late-night visitor that ate every thing and wrecked my suet feeder. So far, no late night visitor. I think it was the masked bandit.





Turtle Patrol

By Doug Urban Photos by Marguerite Timmerman & Doug Urban



From late May till early June turtles can be seen crossing roads in search of a sandy area or gravel shoulder to lay their eggs in. Snapping turtles lay between 25-80 eggs guiding them into the nest with her hind feet and covering them with sand for incubation and protection. Incubation time is temperature-dependent, ranging from 9 to 18 weeks. Very few of the eggs hatch due to being devoured by raccoons, badgers, skunks and fishers. A popular area to find snapping turtles in the Mead is on the dike trail along the Little Eau Pleine River. A few years ago I found 17 turtles laying their eggs along a 2 mile stretch of the Little Eau Pleine in one morning. Some people eat snapping turtles as turtle soup, but it is recommended that they not be captured till after they have laid their eggs. Some states require either a small game license or fishing license in order to capture snapping turtles. Some duck hunters believe that snapping turtles eat a lot of ducklings and goslings, as they will occasionally, but their effect on such prey is frequently exaggerated.

Blanding's turtles are threatened and I have had the good fortune to see one in the Mead Wildlife Refuge the last several years. Blanding's turtles prefer shallow marshy habitats with abundant submerged vegetation, although they can be found in almost any aquatic habitat. They are semi-terrestrial and often move between wetlands during the active season.



Blandings turtle by Marguerite Timmerman.



Why is the Flowage Low or Dry?

Photos & Article by Pam Resech

One of the wetland management practices here at the Mead Wildlife Area are drawdowns of our flowages. The flowages that will be in full drawdown are Little Birch and Berkahn East. Partial drawdowns are being done on the Rice Lake Refuge, by Smokey Hill Road and Pool 10. These two partial drawdowns are mainly to promote wild rice growth.

Flowages are periodically drawn down during the summer to benefit wetland health. As water levels recede, past years' aquatic vegetation is exposed to the sun and air and begins to decay. The decay process releases nutrients stored in the dead plants which then becomes available for new plant growth.

New plants grow rapidly, and the area is soon green. Among the new plants are annuals like smartweed and bidens that produce huge amounts of seed used by waterfowl. The process also encourages a variety of invertebrates which provide food for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other species. Emergent aquatic plants are also reestablished and will provide food and habitat in future years. Wildlife habitat quality is improved.



The flowage will be slowly re-flooded in fall. Waterfowl are drawn to these newly flooded areas to dine on the abundant seeds. Water levels will be stabilized at freeze-up to accommodate overwintering wildlife such as muskrats, otters, frogs, turtles and minnows.

Drawdowns mimic the natural conditions necessary to rejuvenate wetlands. Without drawdowns, the productivity of the flowages would slowly decline.

Thank you for your support and understanding!



Blue Heron by Marguerite Timmerman

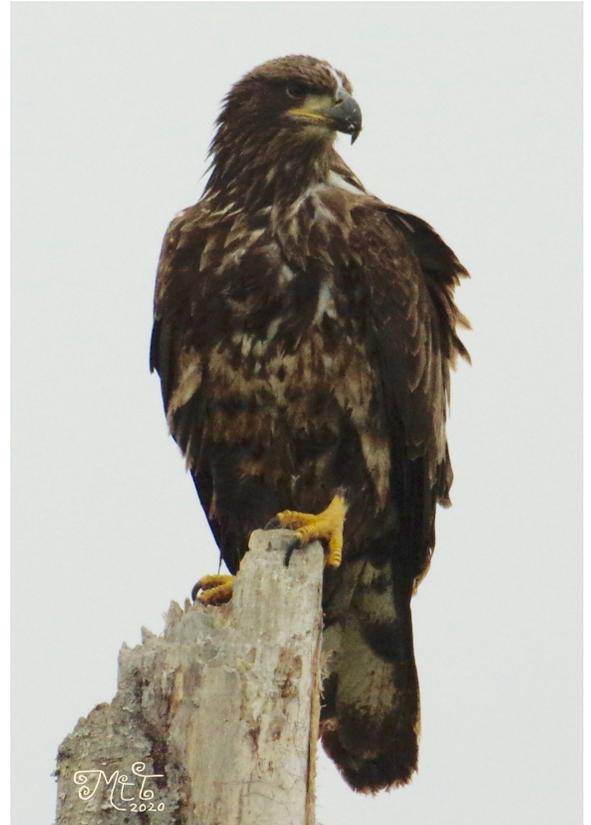


Mead Images by Marguerite

Photography by Marguerite Timmerman



American Bittern

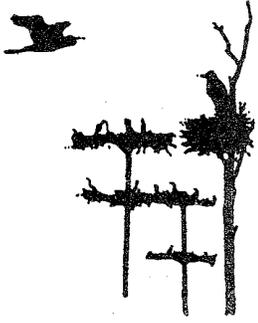


Mighty Eagle



Red-winged Blackbird...Get off my back!

THANKS TO BRIAN PETERS FOR
36 YEARS OF DEDICATED
SERVICE TO WILDLIFE MANAGE-
MENT!



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Wetland's Gazette

The Brightside of the Covic-19 Pandemic

- 1. More free time. People are staying home and getting that closet or junk drawer cleaned out or box of old letters and photos organized.**
- 2. Better for the environment. The air is cleaner and less carbon fuels are being burned.**
- 3. More people are riding bicycles. Most bike shops are sold out of everything except their high end bicycles.**
- 4. People are spending more time outdoors. I have been amazed by the number of cars in the Mead/McMillan parking lots on the weekend.**