

MINNESOTA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1

March/June 2011

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SEPTEMBER
1, 2011.**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In my last newsletter message I mentioned the existence of ideas and proposals for improving our chapter. The Board began discussing them during our meeting in March. Interestingly, the conversation focused on the fundamental purpose of our Chapter. I think, therefore, it is worthwhile to revisit the direction we have from our parent organization and our Chapter Bylaws.

"TWS's mission is to represent and serve the professional community of scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners, and others who work actively to study, manage, and conserve wildlife and its habitats worldwide"(under About TWS).

Although we don't have a Chapter mission statement, our Operations Manual states that "The welfare of wildlife resources, in keeping with adopted principles and acceptable actions of those charged with their responsibilities, is the main purpose of the Chapter's membership."

Furthermore, we have the following objectives from our Bylaws (Article II):

- To advance the science of wildlife management;
- To promote and maintain high professional standards in wildlife management;
- To improve public understanding and support of professional wildlife management, research, conservation and other matters related to wildlife resources;
- To recognize and commend outstanding work in the wildlife management profession;
- To focus Chapter aims and objectives and those of TWS and the North Central Section upon the needs of wildlife professionals and upon wildlife issues, problems and events as they occur in Minnesota and as needed elsewhere;
- To take appropriate actions when wildlife or related problems arise in Minnesota, and to notify, if necessary, TWS and NCS for recommendations for actions; and
- To provide a common meeting ground for a forum for State individuals who are employed in or are interested in wildlife and related natural resource matters.

Both the Operations Manual and Bylaws are available on our website ([link](#)).

In short, the Chapter represents and serves its members, whose main purpose is to conserve wildlife. It represents us by giving us a common, credible voice for weighing in on issues of conservation policy, and it serves us by providing opportunities for professional development, networking, and recognizing the good work of our peers.

We need the Chapter to do these things because no other organization can. Likewise, the Chapter needs us to do what we can to help it do the best that it can.

Happy summer solstice,

Mike



2011 CHAPTER AWARDS

Nominations are open for the 2012 Chapter Awards. Descriptions of our Awards and their history are available on the Chapter website

<http://www.mntws.org/mn/index.html>.

Please take a moment now and review the Awards History to reacquaint yourself with these friends. Each time I read their names and consider these people, think about their lives and their stories, I am taken away to another time and place always returning enriched, as only good stories can do.

The oral tradition of storytelling is one of the strongest threads of humanity across the ages.

Since the earliest times storytelling was a means of explaining natural occurrences in nature such as lightening, the tides of the moon, the tides, seasons or other phenomenon, the success of the hunt, or the battle. Storytelling explains humanness and why people do things and how their emotions affect their decisions and their lives. Storytelling enables people from one generation to another to understand cause and effect and the long-term implications of their actions. Perhaps it was with this in mind that The Wildlife Society (TWS) Council adopted the Celebrating Our Wildlife Conservation Heritage (COWCH) Project in 1999 with the goal of preserving the history and evolution of the wildlife profession by interviewing influential wildlife biologists, educators, managers, and other pioneers.

Telling your "Story", telling our "Story" is a means of transmitting ideas, knowledge, tradition, ethics, and behaviors from one person, family or community to another. What is the first thing you do upon returning from a work assignment in the field, a hunting or fishing trip or even a walk alone on the prairie or in the forest? You tell your story!

Storytelling is a part of life, intrinsic to most cultures. They help people make sense of the world; life's experiences, dilemmas and hardships. Stories educate, inspire and build rapport. They are a means of communicating, recreating, and helping preserve cultures by translating memories knowledge and experiences into a more concrete manner that can be handed down verbally or in written form. Telling the story can provide the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of one's experiences and oneself.

We, The Minnesota Chapter of the Wildlife Society are a "culture" with many stories to tell. Stories we should be excited to tell whenever possible. One way you can contribute greatly to the Chapter and ultimately the wildlife resource is to help tell our stories through participation in the Awards process or the Chapters COWCH Project.

Whether you realize it or not you know someone, maybe a coworker, perhaps a colleague in another discipline or office that just seems to "fit" one of the Awards descriptions. Maybe you know or know of a biologist, manager or educator with a good story whom you could interview for the COWCH Project.

The realization of many of the Chapters goals and objectives and ultimately the existence of our Chapter and the welfare of our common hopes and desires for wildlife is dependant not only on our story being told but most importantly on the story itself.

Please take a moment now and review the Awards History. Take a moment to assure that a colleague, friend or coworker, someone you admire or that has been an inspiration or mentor who exemplifies the



qualities you and other members value that are articulated in one of the 6 Chapter Awards, who merits recognition is nominated. Please take a moment to consider how you want our Story to read.

Other Awards

Opportunities to recognize members' good work and achievements are limited. If you know of MN TWS members who received other recognition or an award during the past year from another organization; please let me or your Regional Representative know.

"The world is full of courageous, active, heroic everyday people, but no one ever hears of them. You have to fight and make a

MNTWS 2011 Awards Committee

Thom Soule (Chair- DNR- Wildlife Retired)
Fred Bengston (R3-DNR Wildlife)
Bill Berg (R2-DNR- Wildlife Retired)
Wayne Bringer (R1-USF&WS)
Ross Hier (R1-DNR Wildlife)
Gregg Knutsen (R1-USF&WS)
Martha Minchak (R2-DNR Wildlife)
Sara Vacek (R1-USF&WS)

scandal to get into the papers." Here is your opportunity to hear the good news: Every day people like you build a grateful world through acts of creativity and compassion."
Gene Stratton-Porter

Contact me at any time if you have ideas or questions about the Chapter Awards or would like to join our Awards Committee.

Thank you for all you do for wildlife and the people of Minnesota.

Thom

Thomson P. Soule
14351 405th St NE
Driscoll, ND 58532
701-387-4420
souletp@bektel.com

MNTWS 2011 BOB FEDELER MEMORIAL AWARDS

The Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS) has established this Award in honor of Bob Fedeler. Bob was a popular and longtime biology and natural resources instructor at Staples Technical College and in the Natural Resources Department at Central Lakes College in Brainerd, MN. He served as Chapter President in 1997 and Membership Chair in 1998. Bob died of cancer in March 1999 after teaching for nearly two decades.

This Award consists of two full memberships (one undergraduate student, one graduate student) in The Wildlife Society (TWS) including all publications. The Fedeler Awards will help beginning wildlife professionals get started with membership in TWS providing them with high quality peer reviewed research, issues and discussions through the Society's various publications and access to TWS's regional and local networks of professional wildlife managers, researchers, conservation practitioners, policy makers, academics, other students and opportunities to participate or attend Conferences and Meetings



Students applying for the Fedeler Awards should be undergraduates in their junior or senior year or graduate students in a masters or doctorate program at a Minnesota college or university.

Applicants should:

- Have a 3.0 or better GPA.
- Have a strong interest in a career in wildlife biology.
- Be active in extracurricular activities.
- Have a strong sense of public service.
- Have demonstrated good communication skills.

How to apply:

1. Send a letter of interest by December 31, 2011 to the MNTWS Awards Committee indicating interest and explain how you meet the requirements. Include your address, phone number, and email address, and the name of your academic advisor.
2. Ask your academic or research advisor to send a letter of recommendation to the MNTWS Awards Committee.

Recipients will be notified prior to the Annual Meeting which will be held in early February 2012 at the Doublewood Inn in Fargo ND.

Submit Applications to:

Thom Soule, Chair MNTWS Awards Committee
14351 40th St NE
Driscoll, ND 58532
(701) 387-4420
souletp@bektel.com

STUDENT TRAVEL EXPENSES MNTWS 2011 ANNUAL MEETING

The MNTWS provides a travel stipend to Minnesota college students who plan to attend the Chapter's Annual Meeting. The 2011 Annual Meeting will be a joint meeting in early February 2012 with the North Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society at the Doublewood Inn in Fargo, ND.

The amount of each stipend depends upon the number of students applying for assistance (\$500 Total). Stipends are intended to assist with meeting registration, banquet tickets, and lodging. Students must be members of the MN Chapter of TWS (\$5.00 student membership, can join at the meeting) to qualify. We encourage recipients to volunteer to assist with the meeting as needed with lights, projectors etc.

Students interested in applying should:

1. Send a letter or e-mail indicating their interest to the MNTWS Awards Chair at the address below by January 15th 2012.
2. In the letter, students should include their address, phone number, email address, and the name of their academic advisor.

Recipients will be notified of their stipend prior to the Annual Meeting.



ZICUS RECEIVES HONOR

Dr. Michael Zicus, retired waterfowl biologist of Minnesota DNR Wetland Populations and Research Group, received the Award of Professional Excellence from the University of Maine Wildlife and Ecology Program this past March. Congratulations Mike!

Department of Wildlife Ecology



5755 Nutting Hall
Orono, Maine 04469-5755
Tel: 207-581-2862
Fax: 207-581-2858
www.umaine.edu

March 10, 2011

Michael C. Zicus
5369 Jackpine Road NW
Bemidji, MN 56601

Dear Michael:

It is with great pleasure that I inform you that you have been selected to receive the Award of Professional Excellence from the University of Maine Wildlife Ecology Program. You were selected for this award by our faculty from among those nominated by a committee of Alumni. This award is given to those graduates of the Department of Wildlife Ecology who have distinguished themselves throughout their careers and thus have brought honor to themselves and our Department.

Your name and dates(s) of your degree (s) from the University of Maine will be permanently posted on the Department's web site as well as on a plaque in Nutting Hall. In the Alumni page of our website, we will add your name and information to the list of those who have received the Award for Professional Excellence. In this small way we thank you for your years of service to the profession. The achievements of all those on the Registry are inspirational to our students.

Congratulations to you from everyone in the Department of Wildlife Ecology.

Sincerely,

James R. Gilbert, Chair
Department of Wildlife Ecology



REGIONAL REPORTS

Region 1 – Greg Knutson **USFWS - Agassiz NWR**

A mid-winter aerial deer/moose survey of Agassiz NWR and adjacent WMAs estimated the current moose population at 43 ± 33 , which is similar to the previous winter. Observers detected 8 moose during this transect-style survey that covered ~1/4 of the survey area. Interestingly, during a late May 2011 aerial waterfowl survey of this same area, 14 moose were observed (1/3 of the survey area covered), despite the dramatically different level of visibility (i.e., no snow, new veg. growth). Three dead moose were documented on the Refuge this winter, including a cow that was collared as an adult on the Refuge in 1997.

A breeding sandhill crane survey was completed on the Refuge this spring, despite troublesome weather conditions during the optimal survey period. This was the first systematic breeding crane survey completed on the Refuge since Jeff DiMatteo did his M.S. research in the mid-1980s. On a related note, preliminary results from a stable-isotope analysis completed by the Canadian Wildlife Service and U. of Saskatchewan on 50 hunter-harvested samples from sandhill cranes in NW Minn. indicate that a significant portion of the sample (82.0%) consisted of local (MN-breeding) cranes.

USFWS - Detroit Lakes WMD and Hamden Slough NWR

Despite a cold, wet spring, and greatly reduced fire budgets, the DLWMD Fire Crew burned >4,350 acres on the District, Hamden Slough NWR, and at Tamarac NWR. These accomplishments were possible due to the cooperation of above multiple USFWS stations, along with assistance from the BIA/White Earth Tribe, and the Glyndon TNC office. Prescribed burns at Tamarac NWR were a mix of

grassland management burns and pine understory burns. During prescribed fire operations on the Lepier WPA in Polk County (2 miles west of the town of Fosston) the burn crew observed a brood of prairie chickens.

MN Chapter TWS Regions



Hamden Slough NWR is getting a new Environmental Education Classroom, thanks multiple acquired grants. Many partners are

joining forces to complete the project including: The Perham Alternative Learning Center, Perham High School, Rural Minnesota CEP, Minnesota Youth Build Grant, Herzog Roofing, Toad River Timber Frames, LLC., the Friends of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Volunteers who would like to help with the project are needed. The building will serve as an outdoor classroom for local schools, meeting place for conservation organizations, and contact station for visitors to the Refuge. It is hoped that volunteers will “staff” the building on a regular basis.

Volunteer opportunities abound at the DLWMD/Hamden Slough. We’ve had an overwhelming response from a multitude of people interested in volunteering their time to help. Volunteers will assist with wildflower seed picking, vegetation monitoring, invasive species management, wetland sampling, GIS/GPS work, public use activities, and more. We are still recruiting for more volunteers. A brief description of some of our volunteer opportunities can be found at



<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitlakes/Volunteer.html>

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please call our office at 218-847-4431.

MN DNR - Karlstad

The MNDNR Karlstad Area Wildlife Office is planning to thin oaks on the beach ridge adjacent to State Highway 11 east of Karlstad in the Twin Lakes WMA.

Years of fire suppression have caused the historic oak savannas to succeed to oak woodlands in many areas. Oak savanna habitat across the state and globe is very rare, so it's important to restore the historic savannas. Wildlife associated with these oak savannas has been displaced due to the change in habitat.

The area wildlife office plans to selectively thin the oak ridges along State Highway 11 to approximately 20-30 trees per acre, beginning this summer. The cut trees will be removed from the site and the stumps will be treated with herbicide to prevent re-sprouting.

After the thinning, the DNR will maintain the sites in a more open state through the periodic use of prescribed burns. The areas that will be treated will look much different once the project is completed.

MN DNR - Red Lake WMA

During summer 2010 and spring 2011, research on spruce grouse took place at Red Lake WMA and Beltrami Island State Forest. The first study consisted of brood surveys, but despite great effort researchers found few broods. The current study focuses on habitat selection by adult spruce grouse during spring. During spring of 2011 DNR research biologist and field technicians conducted 8-minute counts in which tape-playback was used during the final 2 minutes. They surveyed at least 38 plots (nearly 600 survey points) centered on

stands of jack pine and 18 plots centered on stands of lowland black spruce. They detected 44 spruce grouse in those plots; approximately half were males and half were females. Spring counts will resume during spring 2012.



Spruce grouse male (Wes Bailey, MN DNR)

No winter brush shearing occurred as there was never enough frost in the ground to support dozers. Wet conditions and limited staff this spring resulted in relatively little prescribed burning. Scott Laudenslager is still on a work detail as the area manager at Baudette.

A busy summer is planned with visiting staff working in the area from the County Biological Survey, Ecological Resources working on the adaptive red pine management project and a hydrological study of one of the patterned peatlands, research students working on forest insects, a volunteer collecting data for the Breeding Bird Atlas and three DNR interns – two for Forestry and a Wildlife GIS Intern.

Work continues under the direction of Mike North on the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the federal LUP lands in the Beltrami Forest. Two public focus group meetings were held this spring at Norris Camp with good input received from a diverse group of interested participants.



UM-Crookston

The first annual Land Management Field School (LMFS) will be held at the Crookston campus of the U of M from Tuesday, June 21 through Friday June 24. The training session will be sponsored by the University's Center for Sustainability, in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service – USDA. Other sponsors include the Northwest Research and Outreach Center of the U of MN, UMC Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, U of M Extension, MNDNR, USFWS, Wagner Farms, and the Truax Company.

The LMFS will be a hands-on, 4-day, residential camp for new employees of the NRCS; MNDNR, and the USFWS to gain an understanding of the fundamentals of land use in Northwest Minnesota from an agricultural and natural resource perspective. Emphasis will be placed on the natural resource base of soil and water and how farmers use these resources in production agriculture, management considerations, and relationships with various agencies. Lecture, laboratory, and field instruction by professionals representing universities, agencies, and conservation organizations will provide an in-depth exposure to a practical understanding of the landscape. Sessions will be structured for participants to learn from each other as well as from professionals. For more information contact: Dan Svedarsky, Director, Center for Sustainability; U of M - Crookston. dsvedars@umn.edu. 218-281-8129

Morris WMD **Fire Management:**

Despite reductions in fire program funds and difficult conditions this spring (high winds and moisture), 33 units for 3,980 acres have been burned to date. The budget reductions limited the use of crews from other agencies or FWS stations, as well as overtime compensation for collateral staff. Fire staff from Big Stone and Sherburne NWRs

helped out as well as all able bodied collateral staff from Morris.

Grazing Management:

Five WPAs with no grazing history have been or will be, permanently fenced by cooperators for grazing in 2011 and/or 2012. A sixth unit with grazing history on 80% of the area was fenced on the remaining 20% to facilitate grazing. Three of these units have remnant prairie, and the grazing timing will be used to hinder exotic cool-season grasses. Two of the WPAs are being monitored as part of an adaptive management project to assess the effects of grazing, burning, and resting on native prairie. For the most part the district has switched from barbed wire to four strand high tensile fence for permanent fencing. The cooperators prefer working with high tensile over barbed; it is more economical and goes up more quickly. The district has plans to graze 32 units and 3,050 acres this year.

The second season of grazing with goats is in full swing at Hegland WPA in Lac qui Parle County. Portable electric mesh fence is used to graze approximately 15 acres for about 8 weeks before moving the fence to the adjacent piece. The site was a 45 acre grove of buckthorn, Siberian elm, and Russian olive that was cut down several years ago. The goats are being used as a tool to control sapling and sucker re-growth. Herbicide application may be applied in future years, but for now we want to see what the goats can accomplish by themselves.

A second attempt to receive LSOHC-CPL funding for contract fence work was unsuccessful in the second round RFP. This application was made through the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, which was successful in receiving a large award for tree removal. This leads one to believe that the CPL approval board has more interest in treating symptoms than in prevention.



High Water:

Record high water levels have generated acquisition inquiries from several landowners, especially in western Big Stone County. There have also been several easement and drainage enforcement issues. On the positive side, we are seeing incredible wetland conditions and have seen great duck numbers in the areas where we conduct pair counts each spring.

Region 2 – Nancy Gellerman

Welcome to Melissa Thompson, new DNR Shallow Lake Specialist in Eveleth! Melissa & 2 interns will have a work area covering the entire Arrowhead Region. She attended both Vermillion Community College & Stevens Point, plus received her MS degree from Bemidji State. She spent the last 3 summers working for the Forest Service out of Duluth & Ely. Her first day in Eveleth is May 18.

New Moose Study Underway - Ron Moen, Natural Resources Research Institute In January satellite GPS collars were deployed on 64 moose across NE Minnesota and in Quetico Provincial Park. These collars will collect GPS locations every 20 minutes for 2 years and then drop off. The main focus of each of the overall project is identifying habitat use and possible habitat management strategies for moose in Minnesota. Data such as calving locations and changes in behavior on hot summer days is also being collected. For additional information go to www.nrri.umn.edu/moose

Region 3 – Beau Liddell – No report

Region 4 – Molly Tranel – No report

Region 5 – Brian Pember – No report

Region 6 – Erica Hoaglund

The MN DNR Division of Parks and Trails is updating the management plan for Afton State Park and is inviting public comment on the trail and campground changes. There will be an open house at the park's visitor

center on Tuesday, June 21 from 5 to 8 p.m. Public comments will be accepted through July 11.

A webcam providing a live feed was placed in a peregrine falcon box in the Bremer Bank building in downtown St. Paul. A link to the webcam can be found here:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/features/webcam/s/peregrine.html>

The National Park service spring eagle survey found 41 active nests along the Mississippi river from the City of Dayton to Vermillion.

The recent North Minneapolis tornado destroyed a great blue heron colony along the Mississippi River with 250 nests.

The 2011 Joint Meetings of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists will be held in Minneapolis this year from July 6-11. Symposia include "Ranaviruses: An emerging threat to ectothermic vertebrates" "Biology of turtles of the Upper Mississippi River Basin" and "Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Genetic Resource Banking: Tools for Conserving Declining Amphibians" among others. More information can be

found at: <http://www.dce.k-state.edu/conf/jointmeeting/symposia>

Region three of the MN DNR has welcomed a new regional director: Keith Parker

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as opened the public comment period for their proposal to remove Endangered Species Act protection for wolves in our area. The service is particularly interested in any information on threats and impacts on wolves and their habitat. The public comment period closes July 5, 2011.

The Como Zoo in cooperation with Ramsey County and the MN DNR has initiated a turtle survey at Como Lake, in St. Paul. Surveys are focusing on what turtle species occur in the lake, as well as some population estimates.



STUDENT CHAPTER REPORTS

Minnesota State University Moorhead – Char Binstock – No report

University of Minnesota, Crookston - Tim Knudson – No report

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Student Chapter – Devin Tunseth – No report

CONSERVATION REPORTS

House Votes to Cut Over \$1 Billion from Conservation and Renewable Energy Programs

The House passed their 2012 Agriculture Appropriations bill yesterday by a narrow 215-200 margin, slashing over a billion dollars from farm bill conservation and energy programs. The bill completely eliminates funding for the “Open Fields” Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program and the Biomass Crop Assistance Program. Additionally, the bill dramatically cuts funding for the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Grasslands Reserve Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and the Rural Energy for America Program. A number of members spoke out against these sharp cuts, including Reps. Blumenauer (D-OR), Lucas (R-OK), Peterson (D-MN), Farr (D-CA), and Holden (D-PA).

Many amendments were offered on the bill, including an amendment by Rep. Scalise (R-LA) to prohibit USDA from spending any funds to implement their Agriculture Climate Change Adaptation Plan, which is a planning document that would help USDA examine how climate change may impact farmers, ranchers, and foresters. The amendment passed (238-179). Rep. Holden

(D-PA) offered an amendment that would restore the funding to conservation programs by implementing an across-the-board cut of 5.88%. The amendment failed, but a number of members used it as an opportunity to point out the disproportionate nature of the cuts to conservation programs.

The future of these farm bill conservation and renewable energy programs depends now on the Senate, which has not yet started its budget and appropriations process for 2012. It is expected that Vice President Biden and the six members of Congress he has been negotiating with will try to reach a deal by July 1st.

In response to the vote, NWF issued a press release (<http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/Media-Center/News-by-Topic/Wildlife/2011/06-16-11-NWF-Tells-Congress-to-Stop-Playing-With-Food-Energy-Security-Conservation.aspx>) condemning the steep cuts to conservation and renewable energy, calling the bill shortsighted.

Submitted by Aviva Glaser, Agriculture Policy Coordinator, Climate and Energy Program, National Wildlife Federation, 901 E St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20004, 202-797-6616, GlaserA@nwf.org



Results of CRP sign-up announced; New States Join Voluntary Public Access Program

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced USDA has accepted 2.8 million acres into the Conservation Reserve Program during the 41st general sign-up. CRP helps producers to voluntarily protect their most environmentally sensitive lands. This brings total enrollment to 29.9 million acres, leaving some room under the 32 million acre cap for continuous enrollment efforts through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and other CRP initiatives. The average rental rate for this sign-up was about \$48 per acre and over 3.8 million acres were offered by farmers, indicating continued interest despite high commodity prices.

In another announcement from USDA, eight states have joined the Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Improvement Program: California, Georgia, Hawaii, Montana, New Hampshire, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming. They join Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin as states already participating in VPA-HIP along with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. VPA-HIP provides block grants to participating states and tribes so they may offer incentives and programs to encourage owners and operators of privately held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily provide public access for the enjoyment of wildlife-

dependent recreation. VPA-HIP is obligated \$17.8 million for 2011, but is currently slated for no funds in 2012 in a proposal by the House Appropriations Committee.

Grasslands Conference Registration Opens

The National Wildlife Federation and South Dakota State University are pleased to announce that registration is now open for the upcoming "America's Grasslands: Status, Threats, and Opportunities" conference, to be held in Sioux Falls on August 15-17. The conference will bring together biologists, policy experts, ranchers, federal and state agency staff, representatives of elected officials, and conservationists for two days to discuss the latest information on the status, threats and opportunities related to North American grasslands in order to raise the national profile of this endangered ecosystem and inform those interested in developing a roadmap for its conservation. The event will be immediately followed by a "Grasslands Policy Summit" on August 18th sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, and World Wildlife Fund.

Visit

<http://www.sdstate.edu/wfs/grasslandconference> and register for this important event.

There is an impressive array of speakers lined up for the conference, so be sure to check out the conference agenda. Early bird registration ends on July 8th, 2011.

*Submitted by Ryan Stockwell, Ph.D.
Agriculture Program Manager, 715-965-2538*



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources NEWS RELEASE

www.mndnr.gov

New law aimed at slowing the spread of aquatic invasive species

(Released June 3, 2011)

Legislation aimed at strengthening Minnesota's ability to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species was signed into law May 27 by Gov. Mark Dayton. Among the results will be more thorough watercraft inspections and stronger regulations to prohibit the transportation of invasive species.

The new law, which received bipartisan support in the Legislature, is the product of a year-long effort by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to gather input from stakeholders, including lake associations, angler groups, conservation organizations, businesses, counties and local units of government. That input was the key to developing legislative support, according to DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr.

"Aquatic invasive species threaten the lakes and rivers that are so valued by Minnesotans," Landwehr said. "With the support of Governor Dayton, legislators and water resource users, we are ramping up the battle to stop the spread of zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil and other aquatic invasive species."

As part of that effort, the DNR will add new authorized inspectors to ensure compliance with invasive species laws. And those laws now cover more than just watercraft and trailers. Docks, lifts, rafts, trailers, livewells, bait containers and other water-hauling equipment capable of transporting aquatic invasive species are addressed in the new regulations.

All such water-related equipment, including portable bait containers, must be drained before leaving any water access. Anglers who want to keep leftover bait alive should bring fresh water to replace existing water in bait containers.

To help ensure that watercraft owners are familiar with the new regulations, free DNR decals will be distributed later this summer at boat and bait dealers, DNR license sellers, stores, at DNR offices, and by DNR conservation officers and watercraft inspectors. Failure to display the decals on watercraft will be a petty misdemeanor after Aug. 1, 2014.

Accelerated inspections are a key element in the heightened efforts to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Currently the DNR employs 100 seasonal watercraft inspectors who work at public accesses around the state. The DNR will hire new authorized inspectors, who along with conservation officers will visually and tactilely inspect water-related equipment. Those inspectors may require the removal, drainage, decontamination or treatment of water-related equipment to prevent the transportation of aquatic invasive species.

The new law puts some muscle behind the requirements. Authorized inspectors can prohibit the launching or operation of water-related equipment if a person refuses to allow an inspection, or doesn't remove water or aquatic invasive species. A civil citation and a one-year watercraft license suspension can be the result.

Businesses that install or remove water-related equipment or structures will also be held to higher standards. They must complete invasive species training and pass



an examination in order to qualify for a required permit, which will be valid for three years. People who work for the service providers must also complete DNR training.

“Through training and education, our goal is to make people aware of their responsibilities in limiting the spread of invasive species,” said Luke Skinner, DNR Invasive Species Unit supervisor. “Boat owners, recreationists and lake service providers must remove all aquatic plants and prohibited invasive species, drain all water from water-related equipment including portable bait containers, remove drain plugs and take other precautions or incur penalties.”

Boat drain plugs must be left out while transporting, and replaced before launching.

Zebra mussels, which are of particular concern, have been discovered in more than 20 Minnesota lakes and several major rivers. They can affect water quality and navigation, destroy fish habitat, drive out important native species, impede beach access, and ultimately damage the state’s water-based recreation and tourism economy.

The DNR will need increased funding for this work, which is included in Gov. Dayton’s budget.

Ruffed grouse counts still high; sharp-tail count decreases slightly

(Released June 20, 2011)

Minnesota’s ruffed grouse spring drumming counts were higher than last year across most of the bird’s range, according to a report released by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

“The grouse population is probably still near the high end of the 10-year cycle because drumming counts this spring were between the values observed during 2009 and 2010,” said Mike Larson, DNR research scientist and grouse biologist. “Drum counts from the

last three years haven’t followed the same smooth pattern as during the previous two peaks in the cycle, but relatively small changes in the index may be due to factors other than the density of grouse.”

Those factors could include weather, habitat conditions, observer ability and grouse behavior.

Ruffed grouse populations, which tend to rise and fall on a 10-year cycle, are surveyed by counting the number of male ruffed grouse heard drumming on established routes throughout the state’s forested regions.

This year observers recorded 1.7 drums per stop statewide. The averages during 2009 and 2010 were 2.0 and 1.5 drums per stop, respectively. Counts vary from about 0.8 drums per stop during years of low grouse abundance to about 1.9 during years of high abundance.

Changes in drumming counts compared to those during 2010 were not statistically significant. The averages, however, increased 18 percent in the northeast survey region, the core and bulk of grouse range in Minnesota, to 1.9 drums per stop. They also increased 16 percent to 2.1 drums per stop in the northwest and 32 percent to 0.4 drums per stop in the southeast. Grouse counts decreased 17 percent to 0.8 drums per stop in the central hardwoods region.

Minnesota frequently is the nation’s top ruffed grouse producer. On average, 115,000 hunters harvest 545,000 ruffed grouse in Minnesota each year, making it the state’s most popular game bird. During the peak years of 1971 and 1989, hunters harvested more than 1 million ruffed grouse. Michigan and Wisconsin, which frequently field more hunters than Minnesota, round out the top three states in ruffed grouse harvest.

One reason for the Minnesota’s status as a top grouse producer is an abundance of



aspen and other ruffed grouse habitat, much of it located on county, state and national forests, where public hunting is allowed. An estimated 11.5 million of the state's 16.3 million acres of forest are grouse habitat.

For the past 62 years, DNR biologists have monitored ruffed grouse populations. This year, DNR staff and cooperators from 15 organizations surveyed 125 routes across the state.

Sharp-tailed grouse counts decrease slightly

Sharp-tailed grouse counts in the northwest survey region decreased approximately 16 percent between 2010 and 2011, Larson said. Counts in the east-central region declined approximately 18 percent. Observers look for male sharp-tails displaying on traditional mating areas, called leks or dancing grounds.

This year's statewide average of 10.2 grouse counted per dancing ground was similar to the long-term average since 1980. Last year's average of 10.7 grouse per dancing ground was down from the 2009 average of 13.6, which was as high as during any year since 1980. During the last 25 years, the sharp-tailed grouse index has been as low as seven birds counted per dancing ground.

Overall, sharp-tail populations appear to have declined over the long term as a result of habitat deterioration. In recent years, the DNR has increased prescribed burning and shearing that keep trees from overtaking the open brush lands that sharp-tailed grouse need to thrive.

The DNR's 2011 grouse survey report, which contains information on ruffed grouse and sharp-tailed grouse, is available [online](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MN TWS LISTSERV

Do you want to exchange ideas and information with fellow TWS members? Or be the first to hear about the annual meeting, summer meetings, or important issues in conservation? We now have a listserv for all members for just that purpose. . If you would like to join the list, direct your browser to http://wildlifeprofessional.org/mailman/listinfo/mntws_wildlifeprofessional.org.

The governing board corresponds on a similar list (which is open to the members) at http://wildlifeprofessional.org/mailman/listinfo/mntwsboard_wildlifeprofessional.org

MN TWS SHIRTS!

Short sleeve (natural white or sage green, S-XXL): \$10

Long sleeve (natural white, S-XXL): \$12

Please contact Sara Vacek (320-297-0386 or curtsara@hotmail.com) to order.

WEBMASTER NEEDED

The Minnesota Chapter is searching for a webmaster to assume responsibility of the chapter website as it transitions from its current location to be hosted on the parent society's server. An interest in website design and Joomla software used to manage web content is a plus! Anyone interested in additional information should contact current webmaster John Loegering, 218-281-8132 or jloegeri@umn.edu.



2011 Raptor Research Foundation Annual Conference

The 2011 Raptor Research Foundation annual conference will be held October 5-9, 2011 at the Radisson Hotel in Duluth, Minnesota. The conference is hosted by the [University of Minnesota's Natural Resource Research Institute](#), [Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory](#) and the [Duluth Audubon Society](#). The scientific program will include oral and poster sessions including symposia on Raptors and Contaminants; Raptors and Wind Energy; Breeding Ecology, Distribution, and Movements of *Aegolius* Owls; Short-eared Owls: the need for a continental conservation plan; and Ecology & Conservation of Eastern North American Golden Eagles. The 2011 Plenary Address will be delivered by Dr. Scott Lanyon, Professor and Head of the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Lanyon will explain how scientists discover the evolutionary relationships of modern species (the Tree of Life) and how our changing understanding of these evolutionary relationships leads to changes in raptor classification. For complete conference details, visit our website at www.raptorresearchfoundation.org

MULTI-PARTNER GRASSLAND MONITORING TEAM

In 2007, a group of grassland managers and scientists from the Minnesota Department of

DO YOU KNOW.....

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WAKE UP TO FIND A BAT FLYING IN YOUR BEDROOM?

According to the Minnesota Department of Health, "in recent years, most human cases of rabies in the US have been due to bat bites that were not recognized or reported." (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/rabies/rabies.html>). When interviewed by medical professionals, family members of people that have died of rabies sometimes reported that they had woken to find a bat flying in their bedroom several weeks prior, but had no knowledge of having been bitten.

Natural Resources, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy formed the Grassland Monitoring Team (GMT) to initiate a cooperative, standardized monitoring effort that seeks to decrease our uncertainty about grassland management (burning, grazing, resting, haying). This project attempts to bridge agency boundaries to increase learning about grassland management in an adaptive management framework.

Over the past four years, standardized monitoring methods have been developed, tested and implemented. The protocol was designed to be fast and robust to all skill levels of plant identification. The transects can be completed with minimal training. Thousands of acres of native prairie have now been surveyed across Minnesota, and the initial results are being compiled. With the framework of the project now in place, we are hoping to increase participation in the project. By working across agencies using standardized protocols, we can enhance our ability to learn by increasing samples sizes without too much burden on any one group. If you are interested in learning more about the GMT and how you can participate, please contact a representative within your agency: MN DNR Daren Carlson, Daren.Carlson@state.mn.us; USFWS Sara Vacek, Sara_Vacek@fws.gov; TNC Marissa Ahlering, mahlering@tnc.org.

The minute teeth of bats are so sharp that a sleeping person may not awaken. This is especially true of the mentally handicapped and young children who sleep heavily, or may not be able to communicate the occurrence, and of people under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

What to do? If one can positively rule out any chance of exposure, the bat should be safely removed and released out-of-doors unharmed. To capture, use a container with a lid, such as a coffee can. Wear leather gloves and slowly place the container over



the bat, then slide the lid underneath and flip the container over.

If exposure is a possibility, capture the bat and take it to a local veterinary clinic for shipment to the Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Lab. If the bat cannot be captured, seeking medical advice



is advised. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend post-exposure prophylaxis in those situations where one

cannot be certain that a bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure did not occur (<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/exposure/animals/bats.html>).

To prevent reentry, inspect your home and determine the area(s) that bats may be entering. Openings $\frac{1}{4}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " are large enough for a bat to enter, depending on the species. Block all openings that allow access to the living areas of your home using caulking, hardware cloth, insulation, screening or similar materials. Lastly, it is also advisable to wear gloves when removing any dead bats found on your premises.

Developed by NE Region Safety Committee
– March 2011



EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

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<p><u>President-Elect</u> Wayne Brininger wayne_brininger@fws.gov</p>	<p><u>Region 2</u> Nancy Gellerman nancywildlifer@yahoo.com</p>	<p><u>Region 1</u> Gregg Knutson 22996 290th St. NE Middle River, MN 56737 (c) 218-686-4329 Gregg_Knutson@fws.gov</p>
<p><u>Past-President</u> Greg Hoch ghoch@umn.edu</p>	<p><u>Region 4</u> Molly Tranel missmolly102@hotmail.com</p>	<p><u>Region 3</u> Beau Liddell 16543 Haven Rd. Little Falls, MN 56345 liddell@brainerd.net</p>
<p><u>Treasurer</u> Charlotte Roy clroy_50@yahoo.com</p>	<p><u>Region 6</u> Erica Hoaglund erhoaglu@gmail.com</p>	<p><u>Region 5</u> Brian Pember 51 E. 4th St. Room 203 Winona, MN 55987 504-494-6237 Brian_Pember@fws.gov</p>
<p><u>Secretary</u> Rich Olsen 23070 N. Lakeshore Drive Glenwood, MN 56334 320-634-0342 richard.marje.olson@gmail.com</p>	<p><u>Newsletter Editor</u> Wes Bailey wes_bailey@yahoo.com</p>	



COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND STUDENT CHAPTERS

<p><u>Audit</u> Gretchen Mehmel Box 100 Roosevelt, MN 56673 (h)218-783-2521 gmehmel@wiktel.com</p>	<p><u>Fundraising</u> Norm Moody PO Box 365 Hackensack, MN 56452 (w) 218-947-3338 (h) 218-675-7739 cassland@tds.net</p>	<p><u>UMN-Crookston</u> Tim Knduson, President Knud0194@crk.umn.edu; John Loegering , Advisor jloegeri@umn.edu</p>
<p><u>Forest Issues</u> Wayne Brininger wayne_brininger@fws.gov</p>	<p><u>MCF Representative</u> Bill Faber Central Lakes College, Department of Natural Resources 501 West College Drive Brainerd, MN 56401 (w) 218- 855-8082 (h) 218-575-2328, wfaber@clcmn.edu</p>	<p><u>UMN-Twin Cities</u> Devin Tunseth Tunse003@umn.edu Peter Jordan, Advisor sbme@umn.edu</p>
<p><u>Archivist</u> John Moriarty john.moriarty@co.ramsey.mn.us</p>	<p><u>FWLA Representative</u> Dave Fronczack dave_fronczack@fws.gov</p>	<p><u>Student Relations (co-chairs)</u> Jim Berdeen james.berdeen@gmail.com Mark Hanson Mkhanson@paulbunyan.net</p>
<p><u>Awards</u> Thom Soule 14351 405th St. NE Driscoll, ND 58532 (701) 387-4420 souletp@bektel.com</p>	<p><u>Membership</u> Vacant</p>	<p><u>Webmaster</u> John Loegering 2900 University Avenue Crookston, MN 56716 (w) 218-281-8132 jloegeri@umn.edu</p>
<p><u>Publicity/Programs</u> Wes Bailey wes_bailey@yahoo.com</p>	<p><u>Statewide Issues</u> Bill Faber Central Lakes College Department of Natural Resources 501 West College Drive Brainerd, MN 56401 (w) 218- 855-8082 (h)218-575-2328 wfaber@clcmn.edu</p>	<p><u>USDA NRCS State Technical Committee Rep.</u> Jodie Provost 27267 Spruce Grove Road Aitkin, MN 56431 218-546-7310 (h) sprucegrovefarm@emily.net</p>
<p><u>Prairie/Farmland Issues</u> Molly Tranel missmolly102@hotmail.com</p>	<p><u>Wetland Issues</u> Mike North 13261 21St Ave SW Pillager, MN 56473 (w) 320-255-4279 x 235 tjnorth@brainerd.net</p>	<p><u>COWCH</u> Nicholas Snavelly nsnav589@yahoo.com</p>



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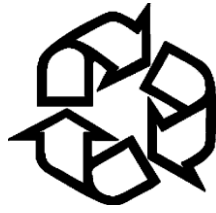
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