

# THE PRAIRIE'S EDGE



FRIENDS OF SHERBURNE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
[www.exploresherburne.org](http://www.exploresherburne.org) Summer 2011

## FRIENDS PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



### Educating the Educators

As a way to attract more student groups and add to the refuge's pool of environmental education (EE) volunteers, the Friends and the refuge often partner to offer free programs to local teachers and refuge EE volunteers. A one-day workshop, Using Sherburne Refuge as an Outdoor Classroom, was offered on June 13 with 6 educators and 3 volunteers participating. Shorter EE sessions focusing on wetlands/aquatic invertebrates and refuge birds and their habitats were offered on June 14 and 15, with a total of 6 educators and 4 EE volunteers participating. Programs were led by David Ellis, Instructional Systems Specialist, and Lionel Grant, intern, from the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls. EE volunteer leaders were Patty Crockford with the wetlands session, and Doug Stucki with the birding session.



## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY



*On May 14, 2011, thirty-seven adults and children participated in the two guided bird tours: Songbird Search and Birds in the Wetlands. A total of 66 bird species were observed at the refuge during the tours.*



## FRIENDS' PLANT SALE

### A SPECIAL THANK YOU

TO ALL WHO DONATED PLANTS  
FOR THE FRIENDS' PLANT SALE.

MARY BRENNEN  
ROBIN DELONG  
KEVIN HEITSCHMIDT  
SUE HIX  
NANCY HOWARD  
LISA NELSON  
APRIL ST AORO  
LINDA SECORD  
MADELINE SOULE  
CAROL VANHEEL  
MARV ZINER



*On May 7, 2011, the Friends hosted their annual Plant Sale at the refuge headquarters site. One hundred customers enjoyed wandering through and buying plants donated by the eleven members mentioned above. In addition, 31 children had fun decorating a pot and planting their own flowers. Thanks to all who helped make the 2011 plant sale a great success.*



## Thank You Once Again, Spring Clean-up Crew

During the months of April and May, BFI of St. Cloud donated a dumpster for our clean-up efforts. Although the rainy, chilly spring hampered the clean-up, 30 of the 43 miles of refuge roads got attention during April and May. And some groups will be working into June to continue the road clean-up. Work groups included Boy, Girl and Cub Scouts, 4-H Clubs, sportsman/conservation clubs, the YMCA, church groups, and friends and families. Because we have had such great groups over the last few years, it is taking less time to keep the refuge roads looking good.

**Thanks to every contributor for this combined effort!**

# "Buzz about Bees 2" Event May 21, 2011

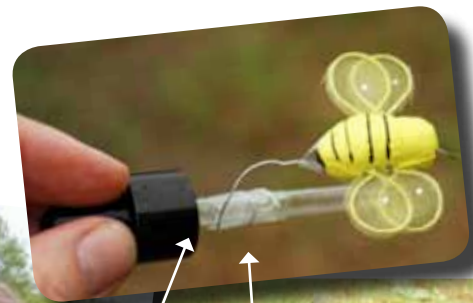
A fascinated intergenerational audience listens to Dustin Vanasse's educational outreach program from the Minnesota Hobby Beekeepers Association.



Dustin encouraged young listeners to act like honeybees and communicate emotions via dance moves.



Children in competing hives used a modified eyedropper to see which hive could collect the most "nectar" from vases of flowers scattered around the site.



Friends member/beekeeper Dave Martin, shown here in his beekeeper's outfit, presented the practical side of beekeeping. A frame (section) from one of Dave's hives shows busy bees making honey and raising their young.





## The Friends from President

Sue Hix

*Once the snow melts and the refuge comes alive with new growth and the arrival of migrant birds, the human activity level increases as well. Visitors of all ages rush to enjoy the trails and Wildlife Drive before our buzzing, biting*

*“friends” redefine the meaning of a close-up wildlife experience. Here are some recent highlights.*

### School Group Visits

To attract more student groups to the refuge, the Friends have offered to help pay part of the transportation costs for classes that otherwise would not be able to visit. This has been successful, with many school groups taking advantage during the past school year. (See article on page 5, this issue.)

*Do you know a school group that may be interested in visiting the refuge to explore and learn?* If transportation costs are a barrier, the Friends of Sherburne may be able to help. Please contact me or another board member for more information.

### Educating the Educators

With more student groups visiting, the demand for Environmental Education Volunteers has also increased. To increase our pool of volunteers as well as to increase an interest in using the refuge as an outdoor classroom, the Friends have partnered with the refuge to offer a variety of environmental education and interpretation opportunities for both volunteers and school teachers. (See article, page 1.) Would you like to know more about becoming an Environmental Education Volunteer at the refuge? Do you know a teacher who may be interested in participating in an Outdoor Classroom Workshop? Please contact Betsy Beneke, Visitor Services Manager, ext. 13. or Beth Watson, Volunteer Coordinator, 763-389-3323, ext. 10.

### Spring Events Successful – Schoolhouse or No Schoolhouse

May was a month packed with events at the refuge. Thanks to all the volunteers and donors who helped make our May 7 Friends’ Plant Sale a success! In one day we cleared more than \$700 in plant sales and brought in more than \$200 in gift shop sales. An added attraction was a children’s activity—potting a plant for Mom for Mother’s Day—offered free by the Friends for kids who accompanied their parents to the Plant Sale or the Bird Tour offered earlier the same day. The headquarters and surrounding lawn were the perfect venue on a beautiful day.

Unfortunately, the ideal weather on Plant Sale Day did not hold for International Migratory Bird Day on May 14, and weather was equally challenging for The Buzz about Bees event on May 21. Despite the rain, however, our tents were filled to capacity as nearly 60 visitors and volunteers sampled honey, browsed pollinator exhibits, enjoyed bee crafts and the gift shop, and learned about honey bees from Dustin Vanasse, MN Hobby Beekeepers Association, and Dave Martin, Friends member and local beekeeper. People of all ages enjoyed the interactive programs and came away impressed by all that bees do for us.

### Nature’s Circles Women’s Group

This group continues to meet on the first Sunday of each month from 4 – 6 PM. Meeting places will vary since we no longer have the schoolhouse to call home. This informal group of women and girls meets to learn about, explore, and experience nature on the refuge. For more information about program topics and meeting locations, contact Mary Brennen at [brennen\\_mary@yahoo.com](mailto:brennen_mary@yahoo.com) and ask to be added to the group’s email notification list.

On June 5 the group gathered at the Blue Hill parking lot to meet our guest naturalist, Marv Ziner. By popular demand, Marv reviewed basic compass skills in time for summer exploring. The group then took a hike to the Blue Hill overlook, learning about plants, birds, butterflies, and trees along the way. After

being greeted by a scarlet tanager at the overlook, we enjoyed Marv’s talk about Blue Hill, how it was formed by glacial activity, and other glacial remnants in our area.



### Legacy Fund Goal Still Out There

Once the Friends of Sherburne endowment fund at the Initiative Foundation reaches a balance of \$20,000, the Friends will be able to draw an annual grant from the account proceeds. The principal will remain intact, thus ensuring funding for the refuge’s environmental education programs and events into the future. Read elsewhere in this issue about the generous challenge offered by Ken and Mary Brennen. Your gift of \$10 or more will be matched by the Brennens, up to \$1,000. ***We’re getting very close!*** Please help us “go over the top” by mailing a check or donating online at <http://givemn.razoo.com/story/Friends-Of-Sherburne-National-Wildlife-Refuge>

### Grants – An Important Funding Source

Your dues and generous donations, along with silent auction and gift shop/bookstore income, help us co-sponsor refuge programs and “pay the bills.” However, when the Friends envision ambitious new projects, grant income is essential to implementation.

During the past few years, grants from the Initiative Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have helped us complete a feasibility study and fundraising training, develop marketing materials, and provide transportation funding to schools so that more students could visit the refuge.

***We recently received a grant from ECM – Elk River (Elk River Star News) for \$450 to help us***

**continue supporting student visits to the refuge.** These dollars will give us a big boost as we enter the new school year in September. Groups who visited this year are already planning to come again next year, and more are excited about visiting for the first time. If you have friends or family who work at the *Star News*, please tell them how much we appreciate their support!

We are also hoping to receive a **\$10,000 Nature of Learning grant from NFWF for an earthworm citizen science project at the refuge.** Yes—I said WORMS! Few people realize that earthworms in our area did not survive the last period of glaciation and that the earthworms we find in our yards today are all exotic invaders that arrived with European settlers. Though a welcome sight on a fish hook or in the compost pile or garden, earthworms are devastating our hardwood forests and may be contributing to a cascade of negative effects on wildlife and biodiversity. Since no earthworm data exist for Sherburne County or the refuge, the Friends of Sherburne have applied for funding to organize a citizen science project so that we may contribute to the Great Lakes Worm Watch earthworm database (University of MN – Duluth) and determine what impact, if any, earthworms are having on refuge habitats. Stay tuned—there may be WORMS in your future!

### Friends Partner with Refuge to Focus on Environmental Education

With our facility funding requests stuck in the federal budget quagmire, the Friends of Sherburne have been focusing on providing opportunities for schools, community groups, families, and people of all ages to connect with nature. By networking through six Chambers of Commerce and cultivating existing relationships, we have been especially successful at attracting more student groups to the refuge during the past school year.

**School Group Visits** Thanks to a generous grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this school year the Friends were able to help schools

bring more than 1,300 students to visit the refuge by providing funds to defray transportation expense. Spring visitors have included Princeton first-grade and preschool classes and Elk River and Princeton High School classes. Groups scheduled to visit this summer include Princeton and Elk River school-age child-care groups as well as scout and other youth groups.

**Summer “Camp”** Something new at the refuge this summer was a 4-day “refuge camp” for the Sherburne Refuge Explorers, a group of children who participate in Rum River Health Services (RRHS) programs in Princeton. Co-sponsored by RRHS, Sherburne County Area United Way, the refuge/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Friends, these June days at the refuge provided a “summer camp” alternative to playing computer games or hanging out inside. While exploring and learning about the refuge and what lives there, the young students developed friendship, assertiveness, and self-reliance skills.

The refuge experiences of the 13 Sherburne Refuge Explorers and their adult volunteers will continue after camp because they have signed up to be adopt-a-trail and adopt-a-fishing-area volunteers. On the last day of camp, campers hiked the short loop of the Mahnomen Trail, collecting trash and noting areas where pruning would make hiking more pleasant. The true highlights, however, were the many blooming plants, animal tracks, caterpillars, dragonflies and damselflies, animal holes, moss, minnows, and bull snakes that the kids spotted along the way.

Despite the usual challenges — fear of bugs and poison ivy, rain time in the headquarters garage, tick-picking, tussling about who gets to return a toad to the safety of the grass — campers were enthused and ready to visit the refuge again.

## New Legacy Fund Challenge

The Friends have established a Legacy Fund with the Initiative Foundation of Little Falls as custodian. Once the fund total reaches \$20,000, the Friends will start receiving regular payments from the Initiative Foundation. The fund is still about \$2,000 short of the \$20,000 goal. Ken and Mary Brennen have challenged the Friends to reach that goal quickly by agreeing to match all contributions received before July 31, 2011, up to the amount of \$1,000. Use the form below to send your contribution to the Foundation. Results will be announced in the next issue of *The Prairie’s Edge*.

DETACH FORM BELOW AND SEND IT TO: Initiative Foundation  
ATTN: Friends of Sherburne NWR Fund, 405 First Street SE, Little Falls, MN 56345

### COUNT ME IN! Sherburne Refuge Friends’ Legacy Fund

I/We want to provide ongoing support with a gift to the Friends’ endowment fund.

Please accept this endowment gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

This is a one-time gift.  This is an annual pledge to expire in \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work or Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Select a payment method:

Payment enclosed (Make checks payable to the Initiative Foundation)

Send annual pledge reminder on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (date)

Visa/MC #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE** (required)

## 2011 Programs and Events

- September 3 Bird Tour<sup>1</sup> . . . . . 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
 September 10 Wildflower Tour<sup>3</sup>. . . . . 10:00 a.m. - noon  
 September 17 Wildlife Festival . . . . . 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
 October 9 "The Big Sit" Bird Count<sup>4</sup>. . . . Daylight Hours  
 December 17 Christmas Bird Count<sup>2</sup> . . . . .8 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

<sup>1</sup> Meet at the Blue Hill Trail.    <sup>2</sup> Meet at the refuge headquarters.  
<sup>3</sup> Meet at the Old School House parking lot.  
<sup>4</sup> Meet at the beginning of the Wildlife Drive on the observation deck.

For additional information on the above events check the refuge web site at [www.gov/midwest/sherburne](http://www.gov/midwest/sherburne) or contact Betsy Beneke, Visitor Services Manager, at 763-389-3323 ext. 13 or toll free at 877-721-4295 ext. 13.

**Please note the change of date for the Wildlife Festival.  
 Previously held in October, it will be on  
 September 17 this year.**

### Fall Wildflower Tour

Join us on Saturday, September 10, at 10 a.m. for the Fall Wildflower Tour. We will begin at the Old School House parking lot and car-pool to the Wildlife Drive. The tour is free and open to the public.

### Volunteers Measure Refuge Effectiveness

In the cool brisk months of late winter and early spring some Friends and other volunteers monitor eagle nests and collect sandhill crane breeding information to assess how well the refuge is providing breeding habitat. Their efforts over the years tell a happy tale. At the mid-60's founding the refuge had no nesting eagles. This year we have 11 bald eagle nests and 10 have been productive. Monitors think there are 13 eaglets this year. Estimates are that more than 160 eagles got their start here since 1965. In the mid-70's one sandhill crane nest was recorded. After a steady increase over the decades there are now an estimated 45 sandhill crane nests on the refuge. That's progress!

## Friends Gift Shop

**A Great Place to Shop for Family and Friends**

**OPEN MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.**  
 at the Refuge Headquarters

Stop in and see the new book selection  
 when you are out enjoying the refuge.  
 Check out the new water bottles and totes.

Friends of Sherburne Jackets, Sweatshirts,  
 Hats, and T-shirts (Long & Short Sleeved)



**Friends Members receive a 10% discount.  
 Your support helps provide educational programs about the refuge.  
 Thanks!**

The Friends  
 of Sherburne  
 gratefully acknowledge  
 recent donors

### New & Renewed Members

- Brian Aho  
 Denise Beattie  
 Susan Bialka  
 Ronald Brockamp  
 Todd Davidson  
 Estelle Gunkel  
 Tom Hovorka  
 Sharon Klemenhagen  
 Bill & Phyllis Krumholz  
 Scott Liestman  
 Phil & Susan Lingle  
 Craig & LeeAnn McArthur  
 Fred McCluskey  
 Herb & Corrine Murphy  
 Carolyn Stabne  
 Miranda Rawley  
 Elizabeth Roberts  
 Beth Watson*

### Businesses

- Princeton Insurance Agency/  
 Sherburne Insurance Services  
 Glenn Metalcraft*

### Wildlife Circle

- Bluebird  
 Helen Loing*

### Discovery Center

- Janet Meeks  
 General Mills*

### Corporate Members

- ACE Solid Waste  
 Bank of Elk River  
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 Bremer Bank – Princeton Office  
 First National Financial Services  
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 Howard Homes, Inc.  
 Nelson Chiropractic Health Center  
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 Prairie Restorations, Inc.  
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 Sherburne Insurance Services  
 a Division of Princeton Ins. Agency  
 Sherburne State Bank  
 Sheri Packer Agency –  
 American Family Insurance  
 Zimmerman Dairy Queen*

## Guided Bird Tour on Saturday, September 3 at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge



Fall migrants will be winging their way across Sherburne's prairies and woodlands, as they head for warmer climates. Join veteran birders as they lead you on a search for waterfowl, raptors and songbirds during our annual Fall Bird Tour.



Meet at Blue Hill Trail at 8:00 am on Saturday, September 3 for this

3-hour tour. This tour includes walking and driving. Weather and preferences of the participants will determine the itinerary of the tour. You may see warblers, sparrows, ducks, trumpeter swans, sandhill cranes, bald eagles and more! Bring binoculars, field guides, water, a snack, and wear clothing appropriate for the weather.



To pre-register, or for more information, call the refuge office (763) 389-3323, ext 13. Blue Hill trail is located 6 miles west of Hwy 169 on County Road 9. The tour is free and open to everyone.

### Friends of Sherburne NWR 2011 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Betsy Beneke – Visitor Services Manager



## Gardening for Restoration

By Lizzy Berkley, Refuge Biologist

The distribution of oak savanna and tallgrass prairie throughout the Midwest was widespread prior to European settlement in the mid-1850s. Most savannas and prairies have been lost or degraded due to fire suppression, loss of grazers such as bison, conversion to agriculture, and development. Only 0.02% of original savannas and 5% of tallgrass prairie remain today in small fragments and scattered remnants. These ecosystems are among the world's most threatened plant communities and consequently, the plants specific to them are also rare. Historically, uplands on the refuge consisted primarily of oak savanna with prairie openings. Restoring these imperiled ecosystems is now a priority. Restoration techniques that are implemented on the refuge include: prescribed fire, thinning trees, mechanical and chemical treatment of invasive species, and reintroduction of native flora.

In 1995 a community garden was established near the Old School House to supplement the seed collection program for the purpose of restoring native prairie and savanna plants throughout the refuge. Prior to planting, the area was plowed, tilled, and 5 plots were constructed and planted with various seedlings purchased from Prairie Restorations, Inc. Refuge volunteers maintained the garden plots by weeding and watering as needed. Eventually, the garden expanded from 5 to 18 plots with as many as 15 species of forbs (i.e. wildflowers). The efforts from this dedicated group of volunteers made the community garden a successful endeavor for several years. A few years of drought hindered the productivity of the garden and excessive weed encroachment made it difficult for a small group of volunteers to maintain production.

In the summer of 2010, refuge staff decided to revamp the garden by constructing 8 raised garden beds to limit weed encroachment, minimize disturbance by gophers, increase ease of maintenance and seed collection, and increase production. The beds are each 16'x4'x2' and will contain one species that is desired on the refuge. In November 2010 seed collected by refuge volunteers including: prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*), prairie larkspur (*Delphinium carolinianum*), dotted blazing star (*Liatriis punctate*), sky blue aster (*Aster oolentangiensis*), and silky prairie clover (*Dalea villosa*), were frost-seeded in the beds. In June 2011 seedlings were purchased to supplement the seeds and 3 additional species were planted that were not available from the seed collection program including: Bicknell's frost-weed (*Helianthemum bicknellii*), golden alexander (*Zizia aurea*), and cream gentian (*Gentiana alba*). These species were chosen because they are conservative plants that are indicators of high quality savanna and/or prairie, that are either rare or absent on the refuge or the seed collectors usually have difficulty collecting seed from these plants. All seedlings and/or seed used in the garden are from local Anoka sandplain ecotype (a group of organisms within a species that is adapted to a particular set of environmental conditions). It is important to obtain local ecotype for 3 reasons: 1) to ensure the greatest success during restoration efforts, 2) preserve local pollinators and native wildlife which have co-evolved with plants of local ecotype and depend upon them for food and shelter and 3) to preserve the genetic diversity and integrity of native plants. As the plants in the garden beds mature, seed will be harvested annually by the seed collectors and distributed in select areas throughout the refuge. Conservative plants native to this area that have fidelity to high quality habitat must be present for a complete and successful restoration.



Golden Alexander

# THE PRAIRIE'S EDGE

## Membership Form (Check a box below to select your category.)

	<b>1 Year</b>	<b>2 Years</b>		<b>1 Year</b>	<b>2 Years</b>
Student . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	Corporate . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80
Senior (62+) . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	Lifetime . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300	
Individual . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25			
Family . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40	Organization . . . . .	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	

(Student or civic group)

- Please send email link for the newsletter.
- Please send information about the Refuge Volunteer Program.

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Friends of Sherburne NWR, 17076 293rd Ave., Zimmerman, MN 55398  
 Membership fees and other donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## Other Ways to Support the Friends and Refuge Programs

(Check a box below to select the donation you wish to make.)

### Friends' Wildlife Circle Donation

Bald Eagle . . . \$10,000 and above  
 Trumpeter Swan . . . . \$5,000 – \$9,999  
 Osprey . . . . . \$2,500 – \$4,999  
 Sandhill Crane . . . . \$1,000 – \$2,499  
 Great Blue Heron . . . . \$500 – \$999  
 Common Loon . . . . . \$250 – \$499  
 Mallard . . . . . \$100 – \$249  
 Red-headed Woodpecker . . . . \$ 50 – \$ 99  
 Bluebird . . . . . \$ 25 – \$49

### Discovery Center Donation

This gift will be dedicated to the creation of the Discovery Center and Programs.

### Memorial or Honorarium

This gift is in memory/honor (circle one) of:  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- My employer has a matching gift program.  
 Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Who Are The Friends?** The Friends of Sherburne is a non-profit group formed to support refuge projects and educational programs. **THE PRAIRIE'S EDGE**, the newsletter for the Friends of Sherburne, is published quarterly for its members in cooperation with Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. Information about the Friends of Sherburne is also available at [www.exploresherburne.org](http://www.exploresherburne.org).

Graphic Designer: Mary Brennen. Editor: Ken Brennen. You can contact Ken at [kenbrennen@yahoo.com](mailto:kenbrennen@yahoo.com) or 612-280-3645.

## FRIENDS OF SHERBURNE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

17076 293rd Avenue  
 Zimmerman, MN 55398

