



Tracks & Trails

Glendalough State Park • Battle Lake, MN • Fall 2019 • #98

A Glendalough Legend Retires

Dan Malmstrom, November 2019

Chris Weir-Koetter is a name that connotes smiles, tireless work, and stewardship to anyone familiar with the history of Glendalough State Park. She is regarded by many as the brains and brawn behind the “prairie restoration” in the park. In January of 2019, Chris W-K retired from the DNR and will be greatly missed by staff and Glendalough Park Partners, yet the evidence of her legacy is on display every day.

In an interview with Chris, I was able to learn more about her career, Glendalough perspectives and life in retirement.

Chris spent 30 years working with the DNR and began as a naturalist at Itasca and Scenic State Parks and then became a Park Manager at Old Mill, Zippel Bay and Lake Bemidji State Parks. Chris went on to become the Regional Resource Specialist for the Northwest Region, and ultimately the Strategic Program Manager.

Chris described her DNR experience this way, “I had a super career doing all sorts of diverse projects with lots of success. I got to be involved with planning and then creating several new parks, trails and recreation areas. Over the last 30 years, I saw lots of changes including the MN Legacy Amendment which gave DNR Resource Management a huge funding boost.”



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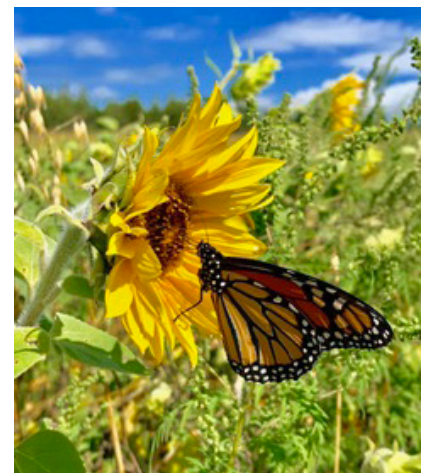
Milkweed and Monarchs

Dan Malmstrom, November 2019, Photos by Jay Anderson

Hikers and bikers observed two resurgences along the Glendalough trails in the summer of 2019 – milkweed and monarch butterflies. The interdependence of these two prairie natives cannot be overstated.

The monarch butterfly lives throughout Minnesota during the summer and is distinctive with its large size (3-4.5 inches), its bright orange and black wings, black veins and white spots. It is one of Minnesota’s most well-known insects and mesmerizes with its joyful flight on the Glendalough prairie. However, it would not be so without milkweed, which in agricultural circles is often viewed as a nuisance weed.

Many areas of Minnesota have experienced a decline in the monarch butterfly populations due in part to the absence of milkweed. Monarchs are uniquely dependent on milkweed for reproduction



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It would be inadequate to say that Chris was simply “successful”. She was a “change agent” who tangibly impacted DNR methods. She held a unique vision that resource specialists would become actively involved in managing park lands and resources.

Fortunately, her vision began about the time Glendalough was becoming a State Park. In the early days, she had a half ton pickup with a bag phone and would beg and borrow to get the equipment needed to start restoring prairie. Partnering with Les Estes, she experimented with seed varieties, planting and harvesting methods and grew to rely heavily on the Otter Tail County Sentence to Serve program as a key resource.

Cindy Lueth, Resource Specialist with the DNR describes Chris’ impact this way, “25 years ago Chris envisioned a team approach to actively manage our resources, but until she purchased her first backpack sprayer, then a drip torch and ultimately a combine and all the other big toys, the DNR Resource Specialists had been viewed as resource advisors, not resource managers.

Today, we have tractors, a combine, storage facilities, seed operations, various other equipment, and a staff of eight to manage the lands in the Northwest region. What a difference she made with years of persistence, both in the quality of our resources and the service delivery model!”

Many Glendalough enthusiasts would single out the prairie restoration as Chris’ capstone contribution. When asked about the process in our fledgling park, she responded, “What a great opportunity it was to add a new park in a great part of the state, and subsequently restore some of the historic Ottertail Prairie and Oak Savanna at Glendalough. It was an absolutely a joy. The folks that helped form the park and create the management plan had great foresight. I was honored to put it into action.”

With modesty, Chris would describe her work at Glendalough as the “broad brush backdrop” for the Glendalough painting and is hopeful other stewards will add more native species to both the plant and animal landscape in the park.

Her parting words of advice should ring long and true, “It’s important for people and native species to be part of a system, not isolated pieces. Keep the mission of state parks at the heart of your involvement. Balancing human recreation and its impact with the park’s natural features is not easy but figuring out how to achieve the right balance can be challenging and fun. Continue to be in partnership with the DNR staff and know that your influence is very important.”

Chris Weir-Koetter will take her love of nature into retirement. When asked what she’ll be doing, she replied, “I will travel. Since retirement I have been to California,

Croatia, Chili, Canada...I guess I am working on places that start with “C”. I continue to firefight with state and federal organizations and also volunteer with prescribed burning and native seed harvests with Minnesota Parks and Trails. I manage our family forest lands and rental properties. I am a ski patroller, raise mushrooms, windsurf, and have a pet pocket gopher named Gopher 1.”



Her goodbye to her Glendalough friends goes like this....”If you stand on the savanna ridge north of the seed house on a windy day, you can see the waves of prairie grass and almost see the ocean... surfs up”.

Thank you Chris Weir-Koetter, and happy retirement!

Chuck Carpenter Promoted *Dan Malmstrom, November 2019*

It wasn’t that long ago – August 2018 – that Tracks & Trails welcomed Chuck Carpenter to our readers as the District 1 Supervisor in the Northwest Region. Now, a little more than a year later, we are wishing him a congratulatory farewell as he begins his new role as the Southern Regional Manager in the DNR Parks and Trails Division.



Chuck found his first DNR experience with the State Parks in our area to be rewarding at many levels. Although he acknowledges that Itasca and the North Shore parks are often in the Minnesota limelight, he sees the Central

Minnesota parks as real gems.

When asked specifically about Glendalough, Chuck offered this, "I have been really lucky to have my office at Glendalough. What a beautiful spot...driving through a beautifully restored prairie, passing by deer, pheasants, and lakes on my way to work each morning...wow!"

Glendalough served as Chuck's DNR learning ground as he observed Park Management, regional and state staff, and community come together to serve the park well. He was very complimentary of Jeff Wiersma by saying, "Jeff has been welcoming and gracious to me, he works well with the Advisory Board and has done a great job as Park Manager of Glendalough". Chuck said he finds that most DNR employees love their work and are extremely dedicated to the preservation and stewardship of natural resources, while pursuing "unforgettable experiences" for the public.

Chuck spoke highly of the partnerships that have made Glendalough flourish. He said, "Glendalough has had a long history of being a site for the Otter Tail County Sentenced to Serve program. The park has benefited immensely from this program in terms of projects completed. Additionally, the STS service projects provided a constructive and positive experience for those working in the program."

Likewise, he was positive about our community partnerships by offering, "I have the utmost respect for the Glendalough Park Partners. The Park Partners and Citizen's Advisory Board have been key stakeholders since the park's inception. I have been tremendously impressed. Their positive, get-it-done-right attitude coupled with a very thoughtful approach has resulted in great successes at the Park!"

Chuck sees a bright outlook for the future, "Glendalough's natural resources are extraordinary with the restored prairie, clear lakes, abundant wildlife and wildflowers. Recreationally, the focus on a more primitive, quiet experience with cart-in camping, hiking and skiing trails, canoe in campsites and the Yurts have proven very popular with the public. The bike trail and connection to Battle Lake have been a huge boost for the Park and has made Glendalough very accessible in a compatible way that works with everything else. The Trail Center project is coming at a perfect time and the possible property expansion to the north could offer even more unique opportunities."

Thank you for your service and positive impact Charles Carpenter, and best wishes in your next DNR endeavor.

President's Remarks

I swear, I have cleaned up the same leaves over, and over, and...On top of that, temperatures have been lower than normal, and we've had occasional snow flurries. I continue to tell my wife Jan that I love the fall in Minnesota, but my story became a bit less convincing when I had to use hand warmers to finish up the yard work yesterday.

This time of the year it is often difficult to come up with enough copy for a good newsletter, but Dan Malmstrom has put together some great stories and interviews, and Jay Anderson has chipped in with an excellent feature article. Thanks to everyone that contributed to this issue. We welcome ideas for future stories that may interest our readers.

I want to give a shout-out to the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, a valued partner of ours for many years. They are co-sponsors of our Walk for Glendalough every year, they provided valuable advice and advocacy during our successful request for Trail Center funding from the MN legislature, and they provide networking opportunities with other groups like ours. Check them out at parksandtrails.org

I had the opportunity last week to watch the state archeologists doing some exploratory excavations at the proposed site of the new Trail Center. Glendalough is rich with Native American artifacts, and these professionals take great care to preserve anything they find with historical value.

Congratulations to Chuck Carpenter, who was most recently in charge of a five-park district that includes Glendalough. He has been promoted to Regional Supervisor of DNR's Southern Division based out of New Ulm. We hate to see Chuck leave, but it is a great opportunity for him, and we wish him and his family well.

This being the final Tracks & Trails for the year, we want to thank you for your generosity as a Park Partner. We wish you a wonderful Thanksgiving and holiday season and look forward to seeing you at Glendalough in the future.

Finally, for you snowbirds who love to jab at me via email this time of year. I had the same sunrise as you this morning. The only difference was that mine was filtering through our boat lift in the front yard.

Steve Nelson, President
Glendalough Citizens Advisory Board
stevenbrucenelson@gmail.com

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and sustenance in parks and fields where these native plants are common.

According to information on the DNR website, each year Minnesota monarchs that have wintered in Mexico will migrate north laying eggs on milkweed plants there or in southern states. Then the adult dies. Monarchs develop first as an egg, continue to grow as a caterpillar, and finally emerge as a butterfly. Growing from an egg to a butterfly takes about one month. One month later, the young butterflies head to Minnesota. The process repeats itself. Critical fact; monarch larvae eat only milkweed.

During the summer of 2019, stands of milkweed in the park were exceptional and the monarch population followed suit. One particularly dense concentration of milkweed and monarchs could be found along the bike trail on the east side of Molly Stark Lake near the low habitat area. Hikers and bikers often stopped along the trail to watch as the prairie seem to lift in flight given the high numbers of monarchs.

The Jay Anderson family of Battle Lake – frequent users of the bike trail – enjoyed the monarch presence in Glendalough and captured some outstanding photography.

Each fall, tens of millions of monarchs, including those from Minnesota, migrate to their wintering grounds west of Mexico City. Researchers believe as many as 50 million Monarchs migrate south each fall. The migration generates considerable public interest. In our area, it is not uncommon for DNR Naturalists and conservation groups across Otter Tail County to invite students and the public to “catch and tag Monarchs” to observe their migration patterns and wintering locations. Park Manager Jeff Wiersma often reports on this popular park activity in his reports.

Let's hope the resurgence continues as another benefit of a restored and healthy Glendalough prairie.

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It's All Part of Day's Play for 'Slug' at The Tribune's Game Farm

1939 Minneapolis Tribune

The baby star of Glendalough, The Minneapolis Tribune's game farm at Battle Lake, Minn., is Slug, a young fawn whose mother just up and deserted him. But being deserted this way didn't bother him a bit. He's been having the time of his young life going it on his own. Already the precocious youngster has made friends with Mrs. Myrtle Johnson, at the head gamekeeper's lodge, where he's always sure of milk to drink; has struck up a romping

companionship wjth Tippie, the Boston bull, who gave up his warm bed in the duck-pheasant-turkey hatchery house to sleep in the fawn's private pen; and has had himself adopted by the Glendalough staff. Slug is the youngest member of a herd of 29 deer and a dozen fawns that roam the game preserve, where this year 8,000 wild ducks and 10,000 pheasants are being grown for release next fall.



Slug, the deserted fawn, takes a swig.



A pair of pals - fawn and Boston bull.

Jeff's Jottings

by Park Manager Jeff Wiersma



Additional land has been purchased by Otter Tail County for Phelps Mill County Park. DNR staff have been asked to provide input on a new management plan for the park.

An eagle has been a frequent visitor to the eagle nest again. It may be a good sign that the nest will be occupied next spring. If you're on the bike trail, have a look!

One of the biggest Glendalough bucks in 20 years has been seen at the park. Hopefully, he will survive another hunting season.

Protect the Glendalough deer herd! Due to the continuing spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the state, please DO NOT leave food for deer in the park this winter.

The holidays will be here soon! Don't forget that Glendalough sells state park gift cards, and the lodge makes a great place for a holiday party. Want to make a present for someone? Sign up for the Woodworking with Nature program on Saturday, December 21. Past projects have included birdhouses, bird feeders, mason bee houses, Christmas crafts, and beeswax candles. The program does have a minimal cost to cover materials.

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Park Projects

Fishing Pier – Gravel path in the Molly Stark picnic area was extended to the fishing pier for better accessibility.

Bike Trail Loop Completion – Engineers were out surveying sections of the trail for topographical data which is needed for the design phase.

Trailhead Building – Archaeologists have done some preliminary shovel testing in the construction area. Completion of work this fall will depend on the weather, which is not looking promising right now.

Trail Center – New propane line was installed to the trail center after the old one sprung a leak and emptied the tank. Woodchucks may have chewed the old line.

Office – Park phones will be switched to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) in December. This will save the park money and move office phones from an ancient, outdated phone line to the new fiber-optic Internet line. Park phone numbers will be changing as a result.

From St. Paul

Marketing Initiative

Glendalough will be part of a new pilot program being developed to increase the diversity of visitors using Minnesota's state parks and trails.

As Minnesota's population has grown, our cultural diversity has significantly increased, but many of these new residents are unfamiliar with the experiences that our state parks and trails offer or don't have the knowledge or comfort level to take advantage of these opportunities. This program will attempt to remove some of those obstacles so everyone can take part in Minnesota's great outdoor recreation heritage if they desire.

By adding new user groups, we also ensure the sustainability of our parks and trails, and protection of our natural resources, for the future. Other participants include Buffalo River and Maplewood State Parks, and the Fergus Falls Area Office which manages the Central Lakes Trail and the district's Public Water Access program.

Positions

District Supervisor Chuck Carpenter, who was stationed at Glendalough, accepted a Regional Manager position in southern Minnesota. Interviews for Chuck's replacement will be happening soon, but the new person will likely not be in place until January at the earliest. Buffalo River Park manager Brian Nelson has temporarily been filling in. Northwest Regional Manager Gary Hoeft retired this fall. Assistant Regional Manager Melody Webb has been filling in. There have been no recent updates on whether a candidate has been chosen.

Fees/ Reservations

Camping fees will increase by \$1/night in 2020. Cabin and yurt fees will increase by \$5/night on the weekends, and there will no longer be a weekday discount. Reservations that have already been made will not be affected by the increase. Reservations for day-use facilities (lodge, trail center, picnic shelter) will still be made at the park, but customers will be able to look up availability online.



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- Steve Nelson – President (2022)
- Dan Malmstrom – Vice President (2020)
- Sarah Govig – Secretary (2021)
- Peter Christianson – Treasurer (2021)
- Tracy Kortlever (2021)
- John Christensen (2022)
- Chris Estes (2022)
- Jay Anderson (2020)
- Joan Vorderbruggen (2020)

DNR:

- Melody Webb, NW Region Parks and Trails Manager
- Chuck Carpenter, District Recreation Supervisor
- Kathy Beaulieu, Region Naturalist
- Ben Eckhoff, Area Naturalist
- Cindy Lueth, Region Resource Specialist

Glendalough State Park:

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Battle Lake, MN 56515-9654
(218) 864-0110

Jeff Wiersma, Park Manager

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the Glendalough Park Partners

Tracy Kortlever • membership

New/Renewing Park Partners

July 15, 2019 – November 10, 2019

- Dr. Bob & Phyllis Ellington, Battle Lake
- Richard & Marjorie Falen, Princeton
- Tom & Cheri Zosel, Battle Lake
- Rick & Jan Voller, Duluth
- Bob Voller, Rochester
- Tom Voller, Duluth
- Clarence & Lorraine Bladow, Battle Lake

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Please check the date on the address label of your Tracks
and Trails to check your membership status. Send your
membership correspondence to:

Glendalough Park Partners
PO Box 901
Battle Lake, MN 56515

Next Advisory Board Meeting: Thursday, November 21, 7:00 p.m.
Glendalough Lodge - Open to Everyone

Board Meeting Minutes can be found at www.morethanatrail.com

Hunting Camp with Helen

Dan Malmstrom, November 2019

Although my graduation from Battle Lake High School was more than 40 years ago, I vividly recall a senior-level class called “Age to Age”. The class paired high school students with a senior resident in our community. Each student made a visit once a week to hold meaningful conversations with assigned residents. It was a great experience that fostered a deep respect for the experiences, wisdom, and local history that was waiting to be passed from old to young.

That will be the intent of “Hunting Camp”; a series of short articles in future issues of Tracks and Trails. Hunting Camp will convey an era of Glendalough’s history – impressive hunting retreats – through the lens of a steward who was directly involved in the story.

Helen Estes, wife of the late Glendalough Manager and Battle Lake Mayor Les Estes, will be the primary source of content for the series. Helen and her family lived and worked in Glendalough. They, along with many other local residents at the time, were masters at hospitality for the employees, guests, and dignitaries of the Minneapolis Star Tribune. The invitation to a “Glendalough Hunting Weekend” became a coveted perk in Tribune circles, and the Hunting Camp articles will tell you why.

My first interview with Helen provided a backdrop to the hunting dimension of Glendalough’s lore. I quickly realized hunting birds in Glendalough was not as simple as a few people from Minneapolis showing up to hunt. (by the way, whitetail deer were never part of the hunts, as they were viewed as nearly sacred by the owners, staff and guests).

Prior to Glendalough becoming a state park in the early 90s, it was owned and operated by the Minneapolis Star Tribune as a game farm, formal hunting retreat, and as a hatchery for wild game that would eventually be processed and sold at Minnesota grocers. Because Glendalough had several vibrant dimensions during the 1900s, the duties of managing Glendalough as a retreat overall were sometimes separated from the game farm and hunting activities. Helen was quick to point out the management of Glendalough preceded her family. She respectfully acknowledged the Axel Hanson, Alex Johnson, and David Severson families as being very instrumental in Glendalough’s rise as a highly sought after retreat.

Les and Helen Estes were very involved with the game farm and hunting weekends as they raised their family in the park. By observing one of the commemorative gifts given to guests after a hunting weekend – customized suspenders – it appears the hunting camp era spanned 1927 – 1990.

Helen’s reflections on the hunting retreats; along with her scrapbook gave evidence to this fascinating piece of history. The pages showed guest lists, formal invitations, travel arrangements, sleeping accommodations, dinner menus, customized gifts, and staff schedules for the many local workers. It was obvious that everything was approached with the precision and personal touches of a 5-Star experience. And that’s what the Star Tribune executive team expected for their guests.



It was not uncommon for Helen to receive a formal list of 22 guests would often arrive on Thursday afternoon and depart on Saturday afternoon. From there, the intricate hospitality machine surged into motion. Guests received personalized invitations, assigned cabins or Lodge sleeping quarters, customized gifts, hunting guides, and exceptional wild game cuisine. This continued each weekend during the hunting season.

The hunting retreat experience was popular due in part to the variety. I learned that some guests did not hunt at all; yet found enjoyment with platform tennis, bowling, pool, cards, croquet, hiking, and even drawing cartoons while in a duck blind.

Helen said the real magic occurred during meals, around the fireplace, and in the field as precious life-long friendships were formed.

One thing was common; they ALL wanted to return to Glendalough! Seems some things never change.

Thank you, Park Partners!

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