



Barred Owl at Fort Snelling State Park by Justin Pruden



Special Places

PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA NEWSLETTER

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Upcoming challenge



NOV. 16. 2017

Mark your calendars for the annual one-day event when Minnesotans give to the max for causes they care about. A group of dedicated supporters have pooled together to create a \$15,000 challenge fund to match gifts on this day to Parks & Trails Council.

Thank you to our matchers, Dick and Mary Brainerd, Bob and Nancy Erickson, Gail Fiskewold, Chris Howard, and Peter and Linda Seed.

www.givemn.org



Volunteers during a clean-up day at the newly acquired land on Lake 21 during summer 2017

Land Project Update

Sibley Park's Lake 21 all in the park



This project has been years in the making and shows how patience can pay off. Lake 21 may sound like a slightly unloved lake, but for retired park manager Dave Lais, who has been an active volunteer since retirement, this lake has long been a special place where he saw the potential for a completely natural lake experience—something quite rare in this part of the state.

He remembers discussions with the landowner years ago. At that time the landowner was scaling back operations on his minimal-frills resort along the

lake. But alas, the sale didn't work out then. Timing is critical in land deals and while there was a close call with a sale for high-end development, which would have precluded the potential to ever incorporate into the park, that didn't happen either.

Eventually the children inherited the land and they had moved away so had little use for the land. Because Dave Lais had ensured that the owners know the park would be interested if ever they sold, he was the first to get a

Sibley State Park | pg. 9

From the Executive Director

The year we defended our parks' from a whole new threat

By Brett Feldman

As we put the finishing touches on 2017 and begin planning for 2018, it is important we reflect on some of the amazing things we accomplished this year with the help of our members and partners who so generously share time, energy and financial resources to protect Minnesota's most special places.

I'll always remember this as the year when off-highway vehicles (OHVs) became a real threat to our state parks. And the year that we made our voices heard to protect them. When we learned the DNR was considering opening up three state parks on the Taconite State Trail to OHVs our members responded. Our combined efforts demonstrated the importance of these special places to so many people. And it showed that our members are knowledgeable enough to defend these places in a thoughtful and

reasoned way that is hard to refute.

Our members shared personal park experiences and hammered home the point that OHV users have 1800 percent more state land for their use compared with state park users. This is despite the fact that only 5 percent of Minnesotans own an OHV compared to 30 percent who visit state parks.

I thank you for supporting our efforts with your membership. And for those who took up the call to send in comments, we couldn't have done it without you.

This was also a year when our land program made bold moves that allowed us to see the strength of Friends Groups. When we learned that 159 acres of prairie oak savanna at the entrance of Frontenac State Park with spectacular bluffland views of Pleasant Valley Creek and Lakelet

was going up for sale, the Friends had our back and helped us bring the community together in support of an incredible addition to the park.

The same is true at Sibley State Park too, where the friends group has been instrumental in ushering the restoration work along at two land projects there. I want to give special thanks to Dave Lais, Ron Erpelding and all the members who have pulled up their sleeves to make this happen.

Special thanks also to Eagle Scout Connor Jarland of Corcoran for taking it upon himself to raise money to build a biker changing station at Betram Chain of Lakes Park (see page 5); and to Senator Dave Durenberger for continuing to speak out in support of saving land for parks and trails.

Brett Feldman



We are a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, a workplace giving option comprised of 19 environmental nonprofits working to protect, conserve and restore Minnesota's environment. Visit the website to see if you can donate through your workplace or to find out how to add your workplace to the program.

www.mnenvirofund.org

THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS





Supporters and neighbors hiking the land P&TC recently acquired and is working to add to Frontenac State Park. Local naturalist Bruce Ause talked about the history of the land and its creek (bottom center). Former U. S. Sen. Dave Durenberger spoke of the importance of people working to save land for parks.

P&TC Event Recap Sneak peek at land we're working add to Frontenac State Park

Sometimes seeing is believing. On Oct. 7, Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota (P&TC) partnered with the Frontenac State Park Association (FSPA) to bring supporters and neighbors to see for themselves the 160 acres of land that we are working to add to the park.

It was a damp day, but that didn't dampen the spirits of the 80-plus people who came. As we hiked to the top of the bluff, we carried a home-made flag, signed by all in attendance that symbolized the people-power necessary to save land for parks.

We planted it at the top and took a moment to reflect on the 60-year history of Frontenac State Park. And we imag-

ined what the next 60 will look like if this bluffland, with its majestic view becomes part of the story.

This land is located just outside the park's boundary, which means the Minnesota Legislature will need to approve a boundary adjustment before the park can begin to manage it. A key supporter in making this happen is the senator representing the area, Sen. Michael Goggin, who was in attendance and shared his support.

Chuck Richardson, a member of FSPA, shared the history of this volunteer-based group that was integral to getting the park established and that continues to support the park and this acquisition.

Former U.S. Senator, Dave Durenberger spoke of the power of people coming together to get things done for the benefit of others. In talking about the efforts to save this land for the park he explained, "this is what brings us together."

"You are part of a tradition of a renewable resource," he said. "And when you get to my age and can't run up and down the hill as easily as you used to, there'll be somebody behind you. They'll do that because you gave them a good example; you raised their values."

Together, we are continuing the legacy of parks and trails for future generations.

Issue update

New Taconite State Trail plan approved, our voices were heard



Hiker points to sign along Taconite State Trail as it enters McCarthy Beach State Park (top). Litter on the Taconite State Trail seen shortly after photographer saw ATVs illegally using the trail.

This past July, the Minnesota DNR approved a new master plan for the Taconite State Trail. It was a plan we anxiously anticipated because of the implications it could have on introducing off-highway vehicles (OHVs) such as ATVs, into state parks.

We are happy to report that many of the concerns we raised and encouraged our members to comment on, have been addressed in the plan. This was an important step in continuing the protections our state parks benefit from in terms of making it clear that OHVs are prohibited in state parks.

Our members played a critical role in this plan. Of the 180 comment letters that the trail planners received, the “majority” expressed concern and opposition to allowing OHVs on the state trail, specifically within state parks. Considering that the draft plan seemed to be treading a fine line in alluding to introducing OHVs without outright stating that intent, it was an important time to unequivocally denounce the idea, before it takes root.

“Such an out-pouring of concern for protecting our state parks is incredible,” says Brett Feldman, P&TC’s executive director. “We let them know how important this issue is to us--something that I don’t think they realized before.”

One of the most significant changes in the plan, which we were advocating for and that was made, is the statement on p. 34 of the final plan:

OHVs are prohibited in state parks per MN Rules 6100.1900, thus an

OHV route around the park would be necessary. Also, the State Park Visitor Surveys and public comments during this planning process indicate strong opposition to adding OHV use within state parks.

Previously, the draft plan was less clear about the prohibition of OHVs within state parks and simply stated that a reroute may be needed to avoid state parks.

While we are heartened to see this important change in the Taconite State Trail plan, we realize that OHV groups continue to have a strong interest in removing the prohibition in state parks. We will remain vigilant to any attempt at changing state park rules (referenced above as MN Rules 6100.1900) or at legislation that would add an exemption.

To learn more about this issue visit our website at www.parksandtrails.org/advocacy/ohv-in-state-parks/



View the approved Master Plan at http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/trails/taconite_masterplan2017_final.pdf



Local trail advocates and DNR staff cut the ribbon on the newest segment of the trail.

Trail Extension Opening Shooting Star State Trail Extended Three Miles

This fall, the Shooting Star State Trail got a little closer to its goal of connecting into the city of Austin. On September 15 a ribbon cutting was held for the 3-mile extension running north from the town of Rose Creek, along County Road 56.

This extension brings the Shooting Star to a total length of 25 miles, stretching from LeRoy, through Lake Louise State Park (see high-

light on pp. 10-11) to this rural road three miles west of Austin. The final three miles have yet to be funded, but would connect the trail directly into the Hormel Nature Center in Austin, which has miles of nature trails and a new interpretive center.

The effort to build the Shooting Star State Trail began in the early 90's by the local community as a way to invigorate the tourist economy. "Pa-

ti-ence, frustration and excitement are words that describe our journey to being so close to finally connecting with the great Austin Trail System," says local trail advocate Becky Hartwig. "We have been so fortunate to have so many good people that never gave up along the way!"



Park project highlight Partnering with an Eagle Scout for a changing station



Connor Jarland by the changing station he built.

Mountain bikers know Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park, just northwest of the Twin Cities metro area, as a major destination. It has 11 miles of single-track trails with many fun and challenging obstacles. But one thing it didn't have was a place for changing out of sweaty or dirty clothes after a day of riding.

Local Eagle Scout Connor Jarland saw people scrambling, often unsuccessfully, to find ways to change discreetly. "It seemed that building a biker changing station would help out in a big way," he said. So, he talked with the Wright County parks director to

get the okay and the Friends of Bertram Chain of Lakes to seek funding. Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is the nonprofit umbrella for the Friends and together we pitched in the necessary funds to make it happen.

"I am so glad I could finish the project and I hope everyone who uses it, appreciates it greatly," Jarland said.





Naturalist Corner

What to look for this fall

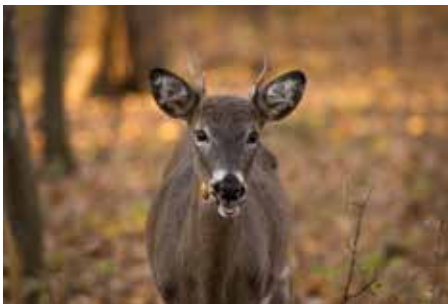


Fall in Minnesota is an exciting time of change. More than any other season, fall is a time of preparation and planning as many animals scramble to gather the provisions they'll need to survive the winter.

The color of the leaves are the tell-tale sign that change is coming. It's almost as if they are flashing a warning signal to us with their yellow, orange and red filling the landscape. It's hard to miss and worthy of special outings to see. But there are other signs of fall. They are less noticeable, but that's what makes them particularly fun to search out while walking in the parks or trails.

Look for mushrooms and other foraged foods hanging in the trees. It's likely the work of red squirrels who are drying the food before caching it away in their underground, winter pantries.

Deer are in full swing with their breeding season. Bucks' antlers are at full-size, having grown since spring to be ready for battles with other bucks at this time of year. Listen for the sound of two bucks'



Young buck at Myre Big Island State Park munching one of the last mushrooms of season. Photo by Jimmy Rollins.

antlers crashing together as they establish who will stick around to mate with nearby does. If you walk past the site of the sparring, look for disturbed ground and you'll know you found the site of the



Moose at Grand Portage State Park. Photo by Travis Novitsky.

action.

If you're in northern Minnesota, moose put on a similar display as they change from their previously solitary behavior to more social and gregarious. Keep your distance from moose--they like a lot of space.

When visiting a lake or pond, search the shallow areas for snapping and painted turtles that have begun to dig into the mud to wait out the winter. As the ice begins to form, while it's still a thin layer, beavers can be seen and heard bumping their heads against it to crack it open. They do this until the ice gets too thick and they are sealed into the lake and take



Beaver at Bear Head Lake State Park. Photo by Mick Rollins.

refuge in the lodges for the winter.

Keep your eye on the ground while walking among the oaks to see if you come

across a branch left behind by a porcupine. Before the acorns begin falling from the trees in late fall, porcupines climb up and bite off branches full of acorns. They eat them up, a drop the branch onto the ground with the acorn caps still attached. The end of the twig is usually cut at a 45-degree angle with grooves visible from the teeth.

As the leaves begin to fall from the trees, formerly hidden bird nests are revealed. Most songbirds use a nest only once,



Abandoned nest revealed after leaves have fallen in Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. Photo by Liz Pushing.

leaving it behind for other creatures, like mice to take over or take bits and pieces to use in their own nests until it blows away. Because each bird species builds nests differently, you can learn which birds were raising a babies in that place by looking closely at the size, shape and materials used in the construction.

Source for much of this corner came from, "Naturally Curious Day by Day," by Mary Holland.

Photo Contest update Winners of our 2017 Photo Contest



1ST PLACE IN SEASONAL CHANGES CATEGORY: Upper Sioux Agency State Park by Jussi Lehti

1ST PLACE IN FLORA & FAUNA
CATEGORY:
Judge C. R. Magney State Park
by Jimmy Rollins



1ST PLACE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION &
APPRECIATION CATEGORY:
Frontenac State Park
by Manda Baldwin

Member Spotlight

Keith Ottoson: Think globally, act locally

Our members' stories are essential to our story. The deep connection we all have with the places preserved as parks and trails provide inspiration to continue to advocate for these special places. Here is member Keith Ottoson's story.



Carol and Keith Ottoson at Gooseberry Falls State Park

Keith Ottoson and his wife Carol have always valued the outdoors, but at the turn of this century Keith said something clicked in him and he felt the urge to invest in his environmental values.

He began supporting several environmental nonprofits. "I really liked the Minnesota focus of Parks & Trails Council," he said. It resonated with his sense of "think globally, act locally."

Soon enough, Keith signed up for what would become P&TC's annual bike ride led by former congressman David Minge. Those trips hooked Keith into our mission. He says those rides gave him a whole new sense of connection to the various parks and trails across the state and the communities that support them.

Last year, Keith volunteered to lead the bike ride around his hometown of Shakopee. As someone who bikes 5-6 days a week, he was well versed in accessing the numerous parks and trails in the area. "It was an honor to have a long-time supporter step up to continue the tradition for one more year," says P&TC staff member Lisa Filter.

Keith says that his love of the outdoors was instilled as a child with family camping trips and growing up as a boy scout. "Just being in the outdoors," was influential to his formative years. He was also a runner; something he did for 50 years before it began to hurt his knees. That's when he turned to riding bicycle and he never turned back.

Exploring the many trails throughout Minnesota has become a fun way to stay healthy. He says his favorite trails are the Mesabi Regional Trail in the iron range and the Willard Munger around Duluth.

Riding seems to be something that runs in the family. His 10-year old grandson has been riding with him on the Gitchi Gami State Trail ride for the past couple years. "He rode 14 miles on a single speed bike; and if you've ever ridden that trail you know... it's not flat."

When Keith and Carol joined P&TC's Magney Circle they began coming to all the events they could. They both enjoy the opportunity to

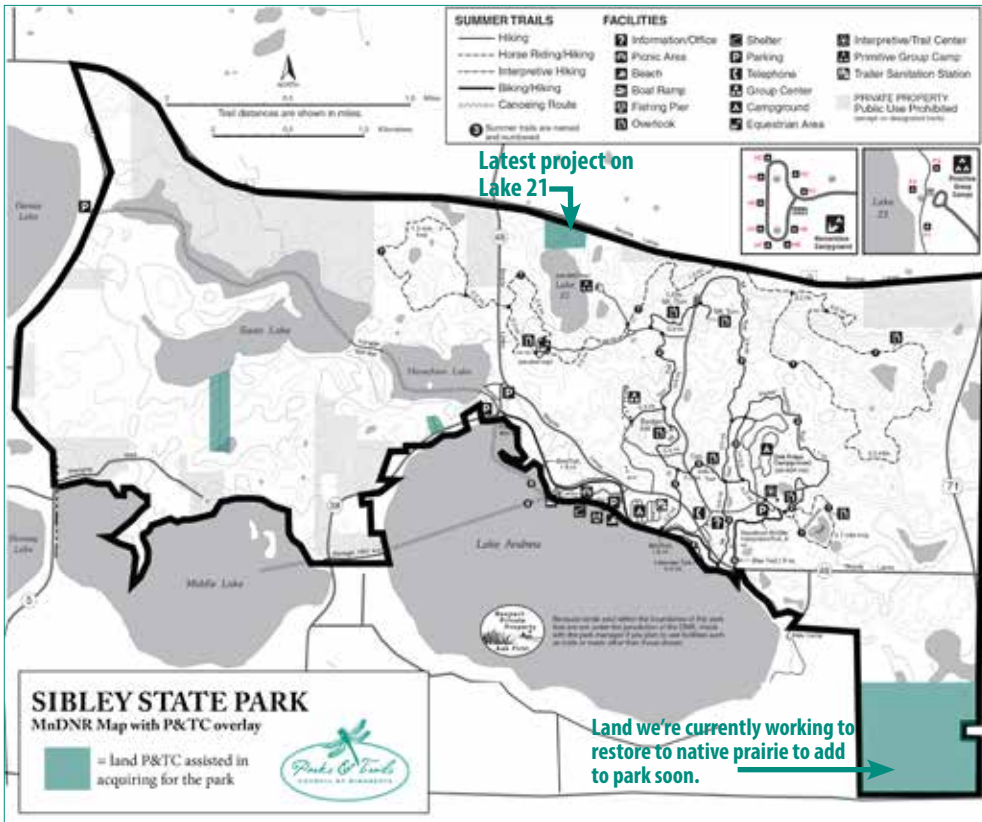
connect on a personal level with the work being done and the other supporters.

"I encourage everyone to participate and contribute to the best of their ability; to give generously of your time and talents," he says.



Magney Circle

Named in honor of Judge C. R. Magney, the Magney Circle consists of members who support our mission with a generous contribution of \$500 or more each year. Magney Circle members are invited to special events during the year. To join, visit parksandtrails.org/join_donate



ring when it was time to sell.

However, with the park not in the position to buy at the moment, Dave Lais called on Parks & Trails Council to buy the land, which we did in 2017. Similar to the 154 acres we acquired for Sibley State Park in 2014, this land required some heavy lifting to remove all the buildings (3 dwellings were moved) and other structures (decrepit shed, silo, and outhouse were demolished). Once again, it was

the hard work of the Sibley State Park Improvement Association's volunteer members who tackled this part of the cleanup.

As this was the last piece of private property along the lake, a whole new potential is opened up for a trail to circle the lake. The group campsite is located along this lake and now these campers have a completely unobstructed view of this beautiful lake.

Clockwise: View from land we recently acquired along Lake 21. Sibley State Park Improvement Association members cleaning up the land. Moving the house off the land with an oversized truck. Map of Sibley State Park showing history of land projects we've assisted with.



Lake Louise State Park

State Park Highlight



Mark Lingl



Situated nearly on the Iowa border, directly south of Rochester, Minn., lies a quiet park with a long history. Lake Louise State Park is the site of Minnesota’s oldest, continuous recreation area.

The heart of the park is a portion of the Upper Iowa River that was dammed in 1853 to provide power to a short-lived grist mill. When the mill was abandoned, the owner gave the land around the human-made lake to the village for a recreation area. Since that time people have enjoyed the place for picnics, swimming, fishing and boating.

The park’s namesake lake is located at the meeting of two rivers. The park encompasses the rivers as they sprawl out across a landscape of prairie and hardwood forest. Mowed-grass trails follow the meandering rivers and branch out through the restored tall-grass prairie with its fields of golden-rod sprinkled with other native prairie flowers such as blazing star and asters.

The park is popular among horse-back riders with many of the trails designed for the dual use of hiking and horse-back riding. An equestrian

campground allows riders to camp overnight.

Many people enjoy the campground for its smaller size with 20 sites, half of which are electric. A key aspect to the campground has been the campground hosts, Vernon and Darlys, who have greeted folks and helped care for the campground for 14 years. This was their final year filling this role and the friends group hosted a farewell picnic for the couple with many people from the community. A new host will have big shoes to fill.

Bicyclists and rollerbladers enjoy the Shooting Star State Trail that runs through the park. The trail starts in the nearby town of LeRoy and continues for 20 miles, through a few small towns and nearly to Austin, Minn. (see p. 7 to read about the recent extension).

Many wildlife species find a home in Lake Louise State Park, thanks to its diverse mix of river, wetlands, prairie and forest habitats. Also, with the surrounding area intensively farmed, wildlife find a refuge here. More than 140 species of birds make for great birdwatching.



Friends Group Partners

Friends Groups that are members of P&TC

Meet the Friends Group Lake Louise State Park Association



Friends Group Started

in 1962 to advocate for the park's establishment, which happened one year later.

Mission:

Support the operations and increase awareness of the park.

"I get by with a little help from my friends." If a park could sing, Lake Louise State Park would be singing this tune. This park has just one employee who makes a regular appearance in the park (other staff are shared with the nearby Forestville-Mystery Cave State Park), and she does it all with a little help from her friends.

Sally Vietor started as the buildings and grounds worker at Lake Louise nine years ago. One year into her job, she started attending the meetings of the association and this last year she took on the role of president.

It's a small but dedicated group of members who come from the nearby small towns, including LeRoy, which borders the park. Vietor explains that it's largely older, retired folks who care about the park and want to see others appreciate it as much as they do.

The group organizes three main events every year: an open house, a get-together in appreciation for the camp hosts and a candle-lit walk event. All the events include food and refreshments but they go all-out for the open house with a full-day of music and activities. "We're lucky because we have a lot of local musicians who donate their talent to the event," says Vietor.

When the budget cuts came last year and the vault toilet in the picnic grounds by the beach was about to be closed, the association members volunteered to do the job of cleaning it every week.

Vietor says that the association is critical to keeping this park open. "They are spreading the word to come camp here and it's working."

- Border Route Trail Association, Inc.
- Cedar Lake Park Association
- Central Lakes Trail Association
- Faribault Flyers Bike & Ski Club
- Freeborn County Trail Association
- Friends of Anderson Park
- Friends of Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park
- Friends of Blue Mounds State Park
- Friends of Cannon Valley Trail
- Friends of Casey Jones Trail
- Friends of Father Hennepin State Park
- Friends of Fort Ridgely
- Friends of Glacial Lakes State Park
- Friends of Itasca State Park
- Friends of Jackson County Trails
- Friends of Lake Bronson State Park
- Friends of Lake Maria State Park
- Friends of Luce Line West
- Friends of Maplewood State Park
- Friends of Mill Towns State Trail
- Friends of Nerstrand Big Woods
- Friends of Scandia Parks and Trails
- Friends of Whitewater State Park
- Friends of Wild River State Park
- Friends of Zippel Bay State Park
- Frontenac State Park Association
- Gateway-Brown's Creek Trail Association
- Gitchi Gami Trail Association
- Glacial Ridge Trail Association
- Glendalough Park Partners

Lake Louise State Park Association

- Minnesota Trail Riders Association
- MN Nordic Ski Association
- North Star Ski Touring Club
- Northstar Trail Travelers
- Prairie Visions
- Sibley State Park Improvement Association
- Southeast MN Assoc. of Regional Trails (SMART)

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Special Places is
published three times a year by the
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota
Lisa Filter, editor