Puddles the Blue Goose, Refuge System mascot, invites you to the 2017 Wildlife Festival, a FREE family event, on Saturday, September 30, 10 am – 3 pm, at the Oak Savanna Learning Center.

This year’s theme is education—learning about the refuge by exploring it. Expect to find new features and activities among your old favorites. More information available this edition, pages 4-5.

This Year’s Presentations:

- 11 AM - Audubon Center of the Norths Woods presents “Raptors by Family” with live raptors
- 1 PM - Local wildlife artist Gary Moss talks about the paintings he is creating for the Learning Center entrance area

A new feature this year will be food trucks. You will be able to purchase lunch and snacks from Gess What’s Cookin’ (Big Lake) and The Grandstand (Princeton).

Want more details? Download a flyer from the Friends’ home page at ExploreSherburne.org or check our Facebook page.

Photo: Sherry Winter

Other Fall Refuge Events

**Wildflower Tour**
Saturday, September 9, 10am-12pm
Meet at Refuge Headquarters

**Wildlife Festival**
Saturday, September 30, 10am-3pm
Oak Savanna Learning Center

**Bird Tour**
Saturday, September 16, 8am-11am
Oak Savanna Learning Center

**Sandhill Crane Tours**
LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE
Saturday, Oct. 14, & Sunday, Oct. 15, 6am-9am
Oak Savanna Learning Center
(Reservation Required)

For More Information: All events are FREE and open to the public. The Oak Savanna Learning Center is located at 16797 289th Ave, Zimmerman. See online at https://www.fws.gov/refuge/sherburne or call 763-389-3323
Do you remember what it was that originally drew you to Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge? Was it the wetlands or the tallgrass prairies and oak savannas? Was it the wildlife, the waterfowl, the songbirds? Was it the hiking, hunting, or photography? Was it the other people you met, with whom you had common interests and passion for conservation? It’s questions like these that get to the heart of our strategic direction for the Friends of Sherburne.

After working for many years advocating for and raising funds to support a learning center for the refuge, we celebrated the grand opening of the Oak Savanna Learning Center in June 2016. In January 2017, the Friends of Sherburne set out to develop a new direction that factors the learning center into our plans, aligns with the objectives of the refuge, and supports the needs of the surrounding communities.

Our planning accomplishments so far include a new board-approved strategic framework including mission, vision, objectives, and strategic pillars (below) that were developed in collaboration with refuge leadership, Friends members, and community partners. Our four new strategic pillars are Education, Advocacy, Volunteerism, and Sustainability, and represent key areas for focus and growth. Our tactical planning process is currently underway, with a new board-approved committee structure and member appointments that support the strategic pillars. These committees are tasked with developing the 2018 action plans.

Our mission is unchanged. Our vision to be “an intergenerational community of active stewards who conserve, protect, and support the unique natural resources of the Sherburne NWR and the Refuge System” will come to life as we honor and thank our long-time Friends and welcome new members to join us for the future.

**Friends of Sherburne Strategic Pillars: 2017-2021**

**Education**

We will cultivate the next generation of environmental stewards and everyday naturalists.

**Advocacy**

We will mobilize and sustain a broad and active base of conservation advocates.

**Volunteerism**

We will activate and sustain a strong volunteer corps to support education and conservation activities for SNWR.

**Sustainability**

We will leverage the success and goodwill generated by the Be Wild Campaign to inspire and activate a growing base of engaged members, donors, businesses and foundations.

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**Benefits of Friends Membership**

Your Membership Donation Gives You . . .

- A tax deduction to the extent allowed by law
- Quarterly newsletter and updates about refuge events and programs
- Invitations to special members-only events
- Discount of 10% at the Eagle’s Nest Nature Store (open M–F at the Refuge Headquarters and at events)
- Satisfaction of supporting education and conservation efforts at a local venue where everyone can enjoy nature
The Friends of Sherburne gratefully acknowledge recent donors (Through August 18, 2017)

New Lifetime Members
Kevin & Susan Brady
Paul Trunk
Michelle & Bob Bengson
Marvel Trunk

Other New and Renewed Members
Bruce Ellingson
Larry & Nancy Krieg
Maya McKean
Anne B Warner
Jim & April St Aoro
Carolyn Buvala
Leonard Ross
Douglas Wolfsteller
Kathy May
Pattie Murphy & Janet Rudd
Jim Eddy
Rosanne Fischer & Mark Trainor
Jeff McGowan
Kathy Hattling

Dale Hennek
Kris Spaeth
Jennie Ahrens
Diana Doherty
Rebecca Dey
Mary Chapman
Beth & Johann Boden
Nicolle Schuett
Esther Niemeyer
Sherman & Linda Fredrickson
Kelly Kohner
Annabelle Espetum
Jayna Schwartz
Cindy Schmatz
Becky Pollard
Ruth DuHamel
Susan Ward

Memorials
For Janet Brady from Leann Haley
For Dave Nelson from Nancy Haugen
For Ron Holmes from Rea Holmes

Honorarium
For Jim Stroschein from Carol & Dan VanHeel

Wildlife Circle Donations

Bluebird
Linda & Dick Roback

Monarch Butterfly
Sherburne State Bank
Rosanne Fischer & Mark Trainor
Dale Hennek
Princeton Lions
Sue Hix & Dean Kleinhans
Carol & Dan VanHeel

Blanding’s Turtle
Paul Trunk to honor Bob Trunk
Marvel Trunk in memory of Ed Trunk

Friends Spot Light
By Susan Bialka

A shining gem of the Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge is Carol VanHeel. Carol has been a Friends member for 10 years. A retired CPA, she currently serves as Treasurer on the Friends board, a position she has held since shortly after she joined the board. This is a long time, and Carol jokes that she is “Treasurer for Life.” From keeping track of memberships, to organizing silent auctions, to maintaining accurate financial records for the Friends, Carol stays plenty busy with our organization.

When Carol isn’t contributing her heart and soul to the Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, you could find her on a golf course somewhere perfecting her swing, out tending her gardens, or on her front steps hand feeding the chipmunks and squirrels. Carol is not an early bird—more like a night owl. We assume that’s when she uses her creativity to craft one of her famous poems, which she writes to recognize special people on special occasions. As busy as she is with the Friends of Sherburne, Carol also finds time to be a Sherburne County Master Gardener and to volunteer at Quiet Oaks Hospice House and for the Sherburne History Center. She also served on the Becker Chamber of Commerce board for 6 years, 5 as treasurer.

A special thank you goes out to Carol VanHeel for being such an amazing Friend!

Carol VanHeel enjoys a laugh during the Friends’ Plant Sale during the Spring Celebration.

Photo: Myrnà Krueger

Thank You, Plant Sale Donors!

The Friends plant sale during the May 13 Spring Celebration would not have been possible without the donation of a wide variety of perennials and vegetables from the people listed below. Some of Kevin’s vegetables were so popular that we ran out, but he was able to provide more to sell to those who ordered them the following week.

Kathy Chesney
Robin DeLong
Sierra Armien Funk
Kevin Heitschmidt
Sue Hix
Nancy Howard
Amberly Suhsen
Scott Suhsen
Carol VanHeel
Sherry Winter
Marv Ziner
FREE family event
Saturday, Sept. 30
from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

New activities as well as favorites from prior years will get you onto the trails and down to the dock to learn about the wild things that live at the refuge and the habitats they call home.

Dip for and learn about aquatic invertebrates; look for butterflies, pollinators, and the plants they depend on; ask Photo Club members how they get those amazing shots; enjoy an interpreted ride on a horse-drawn wagon; design and use a nature journal; join a trail rover for a guided hike; try archery, the Jakes shooting range, and the Friends “scat challenge;” meet Spike the Porcupine and his friends; shop at the nature store, bid at the silent auction, take in a presentation; purchase lunch or snacks at one of the food trucks. Activities for the entire family at the Oak Savanna Learning Center!

For more great photos see Sherburne Photography Club Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/sherburnephotoclub/

Wildlife Festival 2017: Explore and Learn!

Princeton students learning to be “Naturalists.”

Volunteer Lukas Karel and Intern Alyssa Lu.

Monarch expert AnnMarie Kemptotch.

Spring Celebration was a beehive of activity!

The ever-popular horse-drawn rides return this year.

The ever-popular horse-drawn rides return this year.

Birding on Mahnomen Trail at Spring Celebration with volunteer Jill Beim.

Pied-billed Grebe pair by Bruce Eichhorst

Sunset on Prairie’s Edge Wildlife Drive by Sandy Clemons

Yellow-headed Blackbird by Dean Ramsay

Trumpeter Swan by Laura Bowden

Common Loon by Andy Beim

Cormorant by Mike Woodard

Pied-billed Grebe pair by Bruce Eichhorst

Beaver by Laura Bowden
Become a Friends Volunteer?

With fall upon us, we are looking toward 2018 and have several open slots to fill on the Friends board of directors. If you would like to get more involved, board membership is a dynamic and rewarding way to support the refuge. Interested? Please contact us at friendsofsherburne@gmail.com. New board members are elected at the Friends annual meeting in January and nominations are presented at the board meeting in December.

The Friends are also looking for volunteers who would like to advocate for the refuge and the Refuge System. Activities involve writing letters/emails and attending events to advocate for issues special to the refuge and wildlife conservation. For more info on how to get involved, email us at friendsofsherburne@gmail.com.

A big welcome to Jessica Nelson, the refuge's new Visitor Services Specialist. She says she's looking forward to meeting everyone, so stop by Refuge HQ to say hi and get acquainted.

The Oak Savanna Learning Center was a busy place this spring! Nearly 600 students from nearby partner schools visited to participate in standards-based lessons like “Becoming a Naturalist – Using Your Senses to Explore” and “Refuge Animal Families and Their Life Cycles.” Then we had the very popular Game Warden Camp, the Career Discovery (CDIP) intern training, monthly Photo Club meetings and special programs, and other meetings too numerous to list. All of these events were possible because of your support for the Learning Center. Thank you!

Several projects supported by the Be Wild Campaign have been underway this summer.

- Special metal sculpture pieces and donor recognition plaques were installed on the wall opposite the classrooms—check them out when you come to the Wildlife Festival.
- The trail system was completed with the addition of nearly a mile of ADA-compliant crushed granite surface. It will be ready for you to explore at the festival.
- An interpretive sign about wetlands and the wildlife that use Schoolhouse Pool now stands near the boardwalk going to the dock.
- Gary Moss, well-known local wildlife artist, has been working on a unique educational triptych for the wall opposite the doorway of the Learning Center. Having seen the work in progress, I can say only, “Wow!”
- Installation of brick pavers recognizing Friends Lifetime members and Be Wild donors will soon be completed by the flagpole in front of the building. Two benches are also part of the plan.

In our last issue I wrote about the Expedition Model, the metaphor we use to describe the refuge’s unique approach to nature education. Envisioned by former visitor services manager Michelle Bengson, this approach builds on the factors that contributed to the success of Lewis and Clark. Like these brave explorers of old, we realize that our journey will be long and challenging; we don’t have good maps to show us the way; and the quality of our expedition team—including dedicated and talented refuge volunteers, teachers and students from partner schools, the Friends of Sherburne, and our larger community—is essential to our success. Although Michelle left the refuge in July and we can’t be sure whether or when there will be funds available to replace her, the genius of her Expedition approach allows us to continue serving students from partner schools—at least for a while. Your support enabled us to begin this journey, and with your help, we’ll be able to continue it—more on that later. In the meantime, please come see what we’ve already been able to do because of you.

Fall: It’s Sandhill Crane Viewing Time

Crane watching becomes a popular activity in late September, October, and November as thousands of migrating Greater Sandhill Cranes stage at the refuge to prepare for their long flight to the Gulf Coast. During the day, the birds forage in nearby harvested fields. Then around sunset they return in large groups to spend the night in refuge wetlands. It’s easy to plan your own crane-watching trip. One popular viewing location is the refuge parking lot on CR 70, west of the CR 3 intersection with CR 5. Take your camera and binoculars and be ready to experience a sense of wonder.

Pick up a map at Refuge Headquarters or download a copy at www.ExploreSherburne.org.

Photo: Mary “Karlie” Carlson

The Expedition Continues

By Sue Hix

The Oak Savanna Learning Center was a busy place this spring! Nearly 600 students from nearby partner schools visited to participate in standards-based lessons like “Becoming a Naturalist – Using Your Senses to Explore” and “Refuge Animal Families and Their Life Cycles.” Then we had the very popular Game Warden Camp, the Career Discovery (CDIP) intern training, monthly Photo Club meetings and special programs, and other meetings too numerous to list. All of these events were possible because of your support for the Learning Center. Thank you!

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The Manager’s Corner
by Steve Karel

Sherburne National Wildlife refuge is always such an exciting place to visit. I recently joined a small group of Friends to provide a refuge tour for Greg Swanholm, Outreach Director for Senator Klobuchar. While we were on the tour I explained that one of the things that make the refuge so exciting is that you never know what you’re going to see. You can visit the same place 15 minutes, an hour, or a day later and see something that wasn’t there before. Of course, the change of seasons always brings a spectacular change in wildflowers, birds, and mammals. That is what makes the refuge so special and exciting.

While the plants and animals are putting on the show, the staff, volunteers, and the Friends of Sherburne are working hard. We always have more projects planned than we can get accomplished, so there is never a time when we can say our work is done. Managing a 30,700 acre refuge including buildings, signs, trails, and roads presents its challenges. One of the biggest challenges is having the funding available to maintain the infrastructure, but this summer we were able to fund several projects. One ongoing project is replacing signs. The maintenance staff was able to replace numerous signs that have slowly deteriorated over time. We still hope to replace more signs and kiosks in the near future as our budget allows. We are also funding a road rehabilitation project on our maintenance shop service road this fall. This will involve adding road material and reshaping the road to allow for better drainage. Finally, our entire staff along with several volunteers and Friends members participated in the construction of the remaining section of the Oak Savanna Learning Center trail. The Friends purchased crushed granite with funds from the Be Wild Campaign to provide an ADA-compliant hiking trail for everyone’s enjoyment. Thank you to the Friends of Sherburne for bringing this dream to fruition. Although the Oak Savanna Learning Center is open only for scheduled educational programs, meetings, and special events, the trail is open for the public to use during daylight hours and is no longer part of the closed area during sanctuary.

Our visitor services program also had an eventful summer. In July, our visitor services manager, Michelle Bengson, resigned from her position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to spend more time with her children. Michelle was a great asset to the refuge and we will miss her. We wish the best for her and her family. At this time, our budget will not allow us to refill Michelle’s position, but we were able to fill a seasonal visitor services specialist position with a new employee, Jessica Nelson. Jessica has already proven to be a great asset to the refuge and with her help, we will be able to continue the events scheduled at the refuge for the remainder of this year. Jessica hit the ground running and we are so thankful she has joined our team. One of Jessica’s primary tasks will be to coordinate volunteer activities and oversee the volunteer program. With the visitor services manager vacancy, the refuge will depend even more on volunteers to help with our visitor services programs. Having passionate, knowledgeable volunteers with strong teaching abilities will enable us to continue the newly developed educational programming and maintain the relationships we have established with teachers and schools in the local communities so that outdoor education opportunities for our youth can continue.

In early May, the refuge hosted a Game Warden Camp that was developed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Officer Kelly Modla from the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Officer Modla worked with our staff, Friends of Sherburne, refuge volunteers, and several refuge officers in our region to provide a hands-on game warden experience for 5th-7th grade students. 50 students participated and the camp was well received with many of the students leaving the camp claiming they want to have a career as a game warden when they grow up. Any time we can create interest in nature and conservation in our youth, it is a success. A big thank you goes out to the Friends of Sherburne for providing food, supplies, and t-shirts for this activity.

In late May, the refuge hosted the National Career Discovery Intern Program (CDIP) orientation workshop. This program is part of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) that partners with the Fish and Wildlife Service to introduce the next generation of wildlife professionals to conservation careers. More than 40 student interns from across the United States met for a week of orientation at the Oak Savanna Learning Center. The students had all been assigned to a national wildlife refuge but came to Sherburne for their orientation. The Friends played a role by giving the students an overview of Friends groups and what they do to support refuges, and then they hosted a meal for the students. This was the first time that a Friends organization had been part of the orientation program, and at the end of the orientation, the Friends received enthusiastic thanks from the students. Two of the CDIP students spent their summer working at Sherburne NWR. Alyssa Lu was our visitor services intern, and Conor Cubit was our biologist intern. They both did a wonderful job and we all hope they can land a position with the USFWS after they graduate.

As you can see, the Friends of Sherburne were involved in practically everything we did this summer. This proves that the refuge would not be as productive without the strong relationship we have with the Friends. Thank you for all your contributions! Now get out and enjoy the refuge--you might be missing something!

Stay Wild, My Friends!

Happy Birthday, Sherburne Photo Club!

Jill Beim, one of the founders of the Sherburne Photography Club, flashes a big smile before serving the club’s first birthday cake at the August meeting. The club, which meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7 pm at the Oak Savanna Learning Center, welcomes photographers of all skill levels. Learning, sharing, questions, and encouragement are a part of each meeting.

Photo: Dean Kleinhans
Who Are The Friends? The Friends of Sherburne is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that supports 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. See us at www.ExploreSherburne.org as well as on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Contact the Friends c/o Sherburne NWR, 17076 293rd Avenue, Zimmerman, MN 55398, or at friendsofsherburne@gmail.com.

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

Other Ways to Support the Friends and Refuge Programs

☐ Friends’ Wildlife Circle Donation
   - Bald Eagle: $10,000 and above
   - White-tailed Deer: $5,000 – $9,999
   - Sandhill Crane: $1,000 – $4,999
   - Blanding’s Turtle: $500 – $999
   - Monarch Butterfly: $100 – $499
   - Bluebird: $10 – $99

☐ Be Wild Education Fund
   - This gift will support the Oak Savanna Learning Center and its education programs and also defray transportation expenses for visiting student groups.

☐ Memorial or Honorarium
   - This gift is in memory/honor of:
     Name: __________________________

☐ My employer has a matching gift program.

Employer: __________________________

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.

AMOUNT ENCLOSED $__________

Name: ____________________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
City: ___________________________________ State: _____________ Zip: _____________
Phone: __________________________________  Email: _____________________________

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Wildlife Festival!