

# Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society

Audubon Society - Mississippi headwaters Chapter  
PO Box 193  
Bemidji, Mn 56619



"Fostering personal connections to, and stewardship of, our natural world."



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# The Source

Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society

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## THE YOUNG NATURALISTS OF 2013

by Dan Bera



engaged in our activities. We also had Erin Maxson join us for several weeks leading the "bug" study. She also brought out some interesting guests as examples before we all went collecting. I want to thank them for their tremendous input in making this season a success.

The program would not be complete if it were not for the support and enthusiasm of the children and their parents. Dedication to arriving each day and encouraging other family members and friends to join us has helped tremendously! Thank you so much. We have many enlightened, educated and well informed young citizens to leave our future "out of doors" to. It has truly been a great summer immersing ourselves in the wonders that Neilson Spearhead has to offer. I learned a lot!

Naturally-  
Lead Naturalist,  
Dan Bera

It was hot and humid, plants pulling at our clothing and parasitic bloodsuckers abounded. Yet through all of this, young future naturalists persevered! Our traipsing throughout the woods brought us memorable encounters with huge orb weavers, scads of parasitic wasps, schools of shiners, rafts of bull rush boats and fanciful flights of fireflies at night.

Many trails were taken in the quest to "up" the number of recorded species in our variously available biomes. These we tallied on our weekly lists. (the highest this year was 298!) We often explored unchallenged territory to experience

new species and get to understand how it all interacted and related to us. Hiking, aquatic study, canoeing, orienteering, games, stories, overnight camping, exploring and insect study. These are just some of the many ways in which the young naturalists here at the Neilson Spearhead Center spent the summer learning about the environment around them.

Mary Comfort was an enthusiastic Co-Naturalist this year. Her encouragement and bubbly personality brought out the best in the children. She was a great help in organizing the overnights and keeping everyone

## Events

### Volunteer Work Party at NSC

Come join the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon volunteers and board members as we perform much needed improvements on the Lehmann Lab, winter preparations, and possibly some trail work. We'll have snacks and water. Wear long pants, work gloves, and your hiking boots!

Meet us at noon on Oct. 19 at the Neilson Spearhead Center's Lehmann Lab. For questions call Jaime at 225-810-5591 or jaimethib@hotmail.com

### Birding Club

The MHAS birding club meets once a month in the Luekens' North conference room from 6:30 to 7:30. We try to start on time and finish on time. We begin by sharing any interesting sightings we have seen in the past month. In some cases people might bring some photos. Each month there is a special topic that is being presented. So far we have discussed loons, swans, wood ducks and birds of Iceland. We are always looking for guest speakers. Maybe you would like to be one. Everyone is welcome. Contact John Eggers (766-9009) for more information.

### Christmas Bird Count

Saturday December 14th, Meeting at 7:30 in Bemidji at Minnesota Nice Cafe

### Snow Sparkles & Winter Wonders

Join Naturalist Dan Bera at the Neilson Spearhead Center (an Audubon nature site located 9 miles SW of Bemidji) for a very special post Christmas treat on Saturday December 28 from 12 noon to 5:00 pm.

Enjoy a toasty bonfire, hot chocolate, snowflakes, animal tracks, and a walk on the frozen lake. Second grade and older are welcome! Dress warmly; bring an extra pair of snowpants and mittens, ingredients, and leftover Christmas cookies to share. Limited to 15 participants, \$10 per person or a special rate of \$15 for two friends or siblings.

Register by December 23 by calling George-Ann at 218-586-3414

A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.

-Lou Holtz

## Lake Trail Finished!

Majestic pines, mysterious fern hollows, hardwood ridges and scenic lake overlooks. This and more is awaiting those who take the time to travel on the recently completed trail around the lake.

This newly completed trail was laid out several years ago due to ATV trespass issues where the county trail we used connected with Audubon's trail system. The Lake trail (or "trail around the lake, ie: the west trail") is now completely separate from the county trail system and almost completely within the Neilson Spearhead property boundaries. This new trail section connects with the rest of our trails at the "ama-

zon rivulet" and goes south along the west side of the lake all the way to the South Access. From there it adjoins the "Buck Rub" trail to take you north along Revoir creek to our entrance road. There is plenty to experience along this trail for all who take the short hike to experience it, including: wild animal activity, various fungi, and serene peacefulness, as well as beautiful scenery.

Thanks to Dan Bergsven, Matt Eiler and the many others who have helped to make this trail a reality!

A trail isn't a trail unless it's used, please take the time (while there are no bugs out) to use and really enjoy this trail. Naturally - Dan Bera

## Meet your new board member: Susan Joy

Susan Joy, director of Headwaters Science Center and self-described science nerd and outdoor enthusiast, is excited to join the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society as a board member. Susan holds a Bachelor's degree in Geology from Gustavus Adolphus College and a Master's degree in Geology from the University of Montana. Past work experience includes managing the Community Services Administration with the Northern Arizona Council of Governments, hydrology consulting in Boise, Idaho, and visitor services with the Palouse Discovery Science Center in Pullman, Washington where she enjoyed demonstrating the Van de Graff ball. Originally from Coeur d'Alene Idaho, she comes to Bemidji from Flagstaff, Arizona and is no stranger to cold weather and lots of snow. When not working at the science center, she enjoys trail running, canoeing with her husband and two sons, and long road trips, preferably to mountainous states. Susan looks forward to working with fellow board members and members of the community to support the mission and vision of the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society.



Black Squirrel

## AUTUMN BEAVER ACTIVITY

by Tina Hanke



For the past few months I've been delighted to witness the building of a new beaver lodge. At first I was a bit worried over the choice of location: a riverbank along a busy waterway (outflow of the Miss. Riv. from lake Bemidji), not to mention the bridge and bike path virtually overhead. But as spring turned into summer, the busy pair of beavers had turned the small jumble of sticks and mud into something much sturdier and lodge-like. And now as the days turn crisper and darker, the beaver lodge has begun to get its fall coat of thick mud that once frozen, will provide solid protection from predators such as fox and coyote.

Not only are beavers busy beefing up their lodges for the coming winter, they are also caching branches of their favorite winter foods (aspen, willow, cottonwood, birch,) submerging them just outside their lodges for easier winter nibbling. Beavers, with their

webbed hind feet and rudder-like tails, are sleek and graceful as they glide through the water, but once on land take on a decidedly slower and more awkward gait, making them much more vulnerable to predation. Which is why beavers must be so busy this time of year - to ensure they have a protective lodge and ample food source for the winter so that they don't have to expose themselves any more than necessary. I wish them luck with every additional log, twig, and clump of mud that goes on their lodge.



## MY SPEARHEAD EXPERIENCE

by Maija Faver

I started going to Spearhead when I was around eleven years old. My best friend Erica had talked to me about it and knowing I loved nature, I excitedly agreed. My first year and every year after that have been amazing! I learn new things every year about everything I love. I learned about animals, plants, trees, and anything you would think about in the woods. And talk about story telling! I have only found a few people in my life time that tell stories like they are dreams. Dan Bera is one of them. He makes me laugh every time I go to Spearhead. He's an amazing Naturalist and I would trust him any day lost in the woods.

I especially give thanks to Dan's hard work on keeping the land fascinating with his special care of keeping the trails cut and clear. His passion for all living things is something I take to heart, and his explicit knowledge on the wonders of nature is something I certainly envy. I love everything to do with Spearhead. The midnight canoeing is one my favorites. Garbage can stew, whip cream fight, scary stories, and hiking. There is nothing I would change about it. It's amazing with everything it has. It teaches everyone to treat nature like you would treat yourself and it's a great program for all ages.

## BUCK RUB TRAIL

by Dan Bergsven

A new foot trail has been established and is nearly complete at the NSC. The trail allows a person to hike around Spearhead Lake without having to do any backtracking and is approximately four miles in length with a few additional spurs. Some bridging needs to be completed in a couple of low areas but the trail is usable at this time. GPS work for mapping will be done in the near future and trail marking and identification will help hikers remain oriented. Photo opportunities abound with vistas and wildlife sightings being the norm. The trail skirts ponds and brings one close to the lake at times only to wind back through some of the large pine stands that the NSC is known for. This is truly a birder's paradise so grab your hiking stick, binoculars and camera, and enjoy some time hiking all or some of the trails at the NSC. Oh, and don't forget your snowshoes this winter.

## BLACK BEAUTY

by Julie Patten  
NSC Caretaker

The black squirrel is not a new species, but it is a fairly new resident here at the Spearhead Center. Often, as I leave for work, I see the little black beauty scampering across the driveway! It always makes me smile and wish he would move closer to our house so I could see him more often. Black squirrels are actually an eastern gray squirrel with a genetic mutation that causes excessive pigmentation. Though they are common in many areas of North America, their beauty and overall rarity (as few as 1 in 10,000) has caused many communities to take special pride in their populations of them. Festivals, sports teams and businesses are named for the black squirrel! Hmmm..... "Black Squirrel Trail" sounds like a great name for one of our many trails here at Spearhead!



YNP Harvesting Wild Berries

## Meet your new board member:

Dr. Carla Norris-Raynbird

Dr. Carla Norris-Raynbird is currently an Assistant Professor in Sociology with areas of emphasis in Environmental Sociology, Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and Disaster Studies. She received her M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Texas A&M University. Before coming to Bemidji in 2006, Dr. Norris-Raynbird worked for the University of Louisiana for three years as a Research Scientist on an EPA funded climate change project. Dr. Norris-Raynbird's research interests and publications focus on the human/natural environment interface, specifically in building human and organizational capacities in the social management of natural resources, the coastal zone, and disasters. In her leisure time she is a 'fledgling' Master Naturalist interested in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and canoeing -- and is very excited to be serving on the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society board.