

The Source



AUDUBON SOCIETY
MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS
CHAPTER

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The Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.



Fostering environmental education and resource protection in Northern Minnesota.

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The Source



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Follow the Money...

We use the adage "Follow the money" when we really want to know what is going on in an organization. With the MHAS budget for 2021, this provides a good time to explain where MHAS's money comes from, how it is used by our different 'budget centers', and how it is managed.

- **Operations:** The most important sources of funds for MHAS operations are Local Chapter and National Audubon memberships. This pays for our website, newsletter, Annual Members Celebration, phone, accounting, and other basic costs. Memberships and donations help with everything we do!
 - *Special Events and Community Programs:* This includes 'Birds, Bees, & Butterflies – Bemidji' and Bemidji's 'Bird City Minnesota' events. Over the past few years, the **primary source of funding for these programs has been grants we've been successful in getting from National Audubon.**
- **Neilson Spearhead Center (NSC):** Exploring the forests, wetlands, and trails around the Neilson Spearhead Center comes with a cost. It's a special place, but dollars are needed to build boardwalks, mow trails, repair buildings, maintain the road, pay insurance, and other property management tasks. **NSC generates very little direct income from visitors and groups.** Trail users who are not MHAS members are asked to contribute at our donations box, and groups who use our facilities pay a modest fee. **Expenses to keep the doors open at NSC are paid from memberships, donations, and other funds.**
- **Caretaker's Residence:** Look carefully and you will see an earth-home across from the parking lot where our caretakers live. It was built in 1981 by MHAS Volunteers and friends. Our caretakers provide a constant presence for us at NSC; welcoming visitors, answering questions, letting us know of any problems or issues (*like last summer when the road was partially washed out*), and doing general upkeep.
- **Young Naturalist Program:** has been reaching area youth since 1985 with experiential activities and nature education. **It is largely self-sufficient, with registration fees covering the costs of the naturalists, supplies, promotion, etc.** We recently received a grant from Beltrami Electric's 'Operation Roundup' for binoculars and other field science equipment (2019), and a used canoe donated by Jim and Laddie Elwell.

To MHAS



Birds, Bees & Butterflies



Neilson Spearhead Center



Caretaker's Residence



Young Naturalist Program



Find us online
www.spearheadmhas.org and
on Facebook

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Get the Lead Out!

Non-lead fishing tackle is an effective alternative and it protects loons, eagles and other wildlife.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

Lead is a toxic metal in sufficient quantities, has adverse effects on nervous and reproductive systems of animals. Found in most fishing jigs and sinkers, this metal is poisoning wildlife such as loons and eagles.

ALTERNATIVES TO LEAD TACKLE

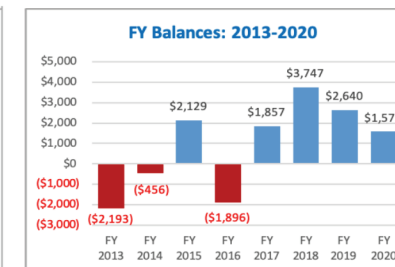
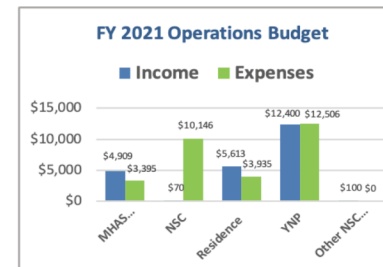
More anglers are using tackle made from non-poisonous materials such as **tin, bismuth, steel and tungsten**. And these are becoming easier to find. For more info go to: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/nontoxic-tackle-get-lead-out>



Spearhead Center Update

Spring has returned to Spearhead and visitors are enjoying the sweet sounds of wildlife as they walk our trails. The ice went out on the 6th of April, the earliest date in our 10 years here. The very next day, the loons were calling...beautiful, haunting and so welcome! We see activity at the eagle's nest! If only we could see inside! The beavers are hard at work again! They are amazing and challenging and very persistent! Our whitetail friends are abundant and everywhere. Please be careful as you navigate our long driveway, we encounter deer often when we come and go each day. We welcome you to visit and enjoy the peace and beauty that Spearhead offers!

-Julie and Lee Patten – Caretakers, Spearhead Center



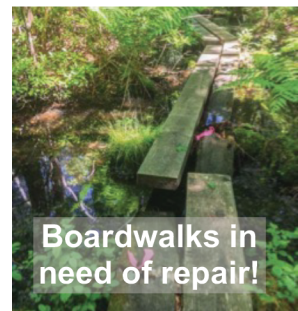
The Board is establishing two new accounts in FY 2021 using our current savings account. An **Equipment Replacement Account** to pay for things like a new chain saw, appliances, canoes, and similar items. Each budget center will be charged annually for a portion of the replacement costs for equipment they require. We are also creating a **Strategic Initiatives Fund** to pilot new and innovative programs and projects at NSC. The "Family Nature Trail Hike with Dan Bera" is one of those (see related article).

In this issue:

- New Boardwalks for NSC
- Nature Trail Hike with Dan Bera
- Shrink Your Lawn with a Pollinator Garden
- 2021 Young Naturalist Program
- Get the Lead Out
- Spearhead Caretaker's Update

*Bird Identification: 1. Common Goldeneye, 2. Belted Kingfisher, 3. Osprey, 4. Red-necked Grebe, 5. Common Merganser

New Boardwalks for NSC Trails



Boardwalks in need of repair!

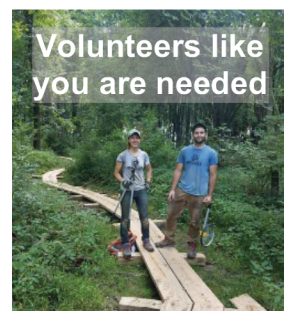
MHAS has used the Neilson Spearhead Center as an outdoor classroom for environmental science since 1975. NSC trails provide an opportunity for families, kids, and community members to learn about and experience nature in a wilderness-type environment. During the pandemic general visitor use has increased as people turned to the outdoors for exercise and their well-being.

Our trail system around the lake draws people out to explore the preserve, but if you have been here, you know a few segments go through some soggy areas.



Possible future boardwalk

These have been getting worse in recent years due to one of our natural residents! Beavers are an enjoyable part of our north woods environment but controlling their impact on our trails has been a challenge. To address this, MHAS submitted an "Operation Roundup" grant application to Beltrami Electric to cover the cost of lumber for repairing and building new boardwalk segments on our trails.



Volunteers like you are needed

Beltrami Electric received over \$134,000 of requests from organizations in this round of grants and only \$56,617 was available. Fortunately, MHAS received \$1,700 for our trail project! This grant will cover the lumber and MHAS will provide tools, hardware, and

other supplies. Construction will be done entirely with the help of MHAS member volunteers. Let us know if you want to help! Our 'super volunteer', Dan Bergsven, will be leading the project.

We want to thank all the members of **Beltrami Electric Cooperative** who participate in the Operation Roundup program. Without their support our projects – and many more like it in our community – would not be possible.

Nature Trail Hike with Dan Bera

Many of you have hiked the trails at the Neilson Spearhead Center. Maybe you've walked out to see the eagle nest, or explored the Einerson Bog Walk, or made it all the way around Spearhead Lake. But, have you had a naturalist pointing out nature's secrets and stories along the way?

Our naturalist, **Dan Bera**, is a long-time favorite of youth and their families participating in our summer Young Naturalist Program. His knowledge of forest facts and lore seems boundless, but there is only one



Dan. Those who would enjoy a personal trail hike with Dan when they visit Spearhead, could do just that.

As part of a new partnership with **Crystal Mathisrud** at the Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District, we are exploring ways to offer MHAS members and visitors self-guided naturalist hikes and other engaging outdoor activities – all designed to help you learn more about our northern forests, lakes, and wetlands. Crystal, her staff and Dan will be going out monthly and developing videos based upon natural events at Spearhead. You'll be able to view these later from the comfort of your home; but more importantly, Dan will teach you how to identify bog vegetation, make bulrush boats, taste lemon-leaf, junberries, and wild raspberries, on your own hike. QR codes will be used on trail signs so you can use your phone to see and hear Dan show you a special feature at that location. You may also be able to post a picture of the featured plant to document its phenology and share that with others; or record and share the frog calls you are hearing.

Additional possibilities include: scavenger hunts, a 'bioblitz' challenge to see who can document the most species of plants and animals at Spearhead. The plan is to pilot several of these activities over the next year with support from our "Strategic Initiatives Fund". *If you would like to help us pilot more programs like this, please consider making a contribution to our **Strategic Initiative Fund**. You can do this on our website.*

Be a Hero for Birds & Pollinators? Shrink Your Lawn and Create a Pollinator Garden!

Want to be a hero for birds and pollinators? Shrink your lawn and create a



pollinator garden! Bonus: a well-planned garden of native pollinator plants doesn't require much upkeep! Start this spring so you can get planting seeds this fall.

First: Pick your spot. Pollinator gardens are perfect for areas of your yard difficult to mow or unsuccessful at growing grass. Measure the size of your garden in square footage.

Next: Prep your site. Eliminate vegetation (lawn grass). The simplest method is to lay overlapping cardboard down this spring and weight it down with leaves, rocks, or logs. Keep covered until Oct. for a good lawn kill. Pro-tip: include edging in your design for "intentional" appearance.

'Bee' Pollinator Savvy. Choose Native Plants.

Planting from seed is the most economical method for lawn conversion. Beware of wildflower mixes sold in commercial seed packets. They contain species not native to the United States and are becoming nuisance species. Minnesota native seed producers have ready-made mixes for various conditions of moisture and sun exposure. To find native plant suppliers visit www.mndnr.gov/gardens/nativeplants/suppliers. Staff can help you choose appropriate species and quantity for your order. A good seed mix includes:

- At least 40 pure live seeds per square foot
- 40% forbs (flowers)
- 3+ species of flowers blooming at any given point in the growing season
- Filler like rice hulls to help disperse seed by hand

Plant the Seed

Keep your seed in a cool dry place until you're ready to seed. Just pull up the cardboard and rake in the seed! Spread the seed over your site, flinging the seed in a broad arc.

Finally: Watch it grow

Full disclosure. Your garden will look horrible the first couple years. Be patient. Many native plants may not come up the first



year. Weedy species may over-crowd your prairie species. You can control weeds by cutting them to a height of 6 inches or pulling them directly out of the ground. By year three you will notice flowers coming in. First it sleeps, next it creeps, then it leaps! Check-out www.spearheadmhas.org/birds-and-bees and BlueThumb.org for a lot of great information. (Photo credits: Xerces Society / Jessa Kay Cruz)

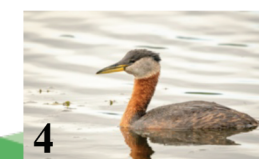
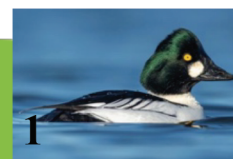
2021 Spearhead YNP Young Naturalist Program

After canceling the program in 2020 due to Covid virus restrictions, we're thrilled to announce that Dan Bera and the Young Naturalists



are returning this summer. There will be 8 weeks in total, beginning with the constructive energy of Dan's Crew in June and ending with Family Week in August. Since enrollment is limited to only 10 campers per week most sessions are nearly full. Call or email if you'd like to add your child to a waitlist. Check the Young Naturalist page: www.spearheadmhas.org for current information.

Can You Identify These MN Wetland Birds?*



The solitude people find on the trails at the Neilson Spearhead Center provide a great place to experience the healing nature of the north woods. A great way to "creatively contend with Covid."