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Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society Receives Facility Planning Grant from the George W. Neilson Foundation!

In December, 2017, we began initial planning discussions for the redevelopment of Neilson Spearhead Center (NSC). MHAS owns and manages this 466-acre tract of prime wilderness southwest of Bemidji, Minnesota surrounding Spearhead Lake. A sub-committee of the MHAS board was formed to assess the current condition of existing buildings, and provide guidance to the board on management of our aging infrastructure.

The current facilities are integral in support of the summer Young Naturalist Program. The Lehman Lab, originally built in the 1920s as a shed, was retro-fitted for programming in the 1980s. Initial assessment found that current facilities will not be sufficient for long term existing program needs nor will they support any expansion of future programs. The caretaker's residence is a 2 bedroom earthen structure constructed in 1980 and houses an on-site caretaker who assists in NSC maintenance and security. After 30 years of use, this house required some upgrades to replace heating, add air conditioning, and increase ventilation.



The caretakers now have new heating, cooling, air exchange, and flooring in their earthen home! Improvements were done to address mold and improve air quality.

The board sought and received funds from the George W. Neilson Foundation to address urgent heating and ventilation issues for the caretaker's house and for initial planning of a future education facility. Widseth, Smith and Nolting was selected to assist with stakeholder input, planning, and design of the new building. We began stakeholder meetings this fall to seek input from current and potential NSC users, and continue to gather input through the end of January. We are very excited for the future of the Neilson Spearhead Center!

The MHAS Board of Directors is Asking for YOUR Input!

Please take a moment to fill out this survey and return by January 31st, 2019. The results of the survey along with additional comments offered, will provide valuable input for the planning of the site and facility improvements at the Neilson Spearhead Center (NSC).

Please complete the enclosed double-sided survey and return by mail, or complete it online by visiting our website: www.spearheadMHAS.org

Birds, Bees, Butterflies, and Bemidji – It’s Been a Busy Year!

Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society and ten other local organizations collaborated on ‘Birds, Bees & Butterflies – Bemidji’ (BBBB) to promote planting native trees, shrubs, and flowers for birds and pollinators. This year BBBB has:

Established 5 new bird and pollinator-friendly ‘demonstration’ plantings

Bemidji Middle School, Leech Lake Tribal College, Little Bird Sculpture Garden Planting – Bemidji Public Library, Bemidji State University ‘Centennial Garden’, and the Watermark Art Center.

The focal planting project was the Watermark Art Center. Funds were provided by the Susan Burke Foundation, Beltrami County Soil and Water District, and a donation from BSU Arts of the Earth festival. The project includes 3 rain gardens full of native pollinator plants right in downtown Bemidji! Check it out!



‘Top Ten’ campaign

BBBB started an annual ‘Top 10’ list of native plants for birds and pollinators in our area. These ‘Top 10’ native plants were promoted in demonstrations, presentations, and local garden centers. The Bemidji Garden Club annual plant sale also included these species.

Two community celebrations

Two community events featuring birds, pollinators and native plants were held: Bemidji Bird City Festival and Monarch Festival.

“How To Get Started With Native Plants” workshops

BBBB partners held two workshops this summer to teach area gardeners how to incorporate native plants into their gardens. One workshop targeted the general public, while the other targeted downtown business owners offering ideas on container gardens.

These activities (and more!) involved 65 volunteers and staff who contributed over 650 hours in planning, organizing, and carrying out plantings and other projects. Over 500 people participated in BBBB events. In addition to MHAS, BBBB Partners include: Bemidji Parks and Recreation, Bemidji Garden Club, Bogs & Logs Chapter of Minnesota Master Naturalists, Beltrami County Master Gardeners, Bemidji State University Sustainability Office, Bemidji Downtown Alliance, Visit Bemidji, Watermark Art Center, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Bemidji School District, 3 local nurseries and 2 local garden centers.

MHAS received funding for this project from National Audubon Society’s Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants, and an Audubon Minnesota Collaborative grant.

We are already beginning to work on plans for 2019! Let us know if you want to get involved by sending us a message on Facebook or sending us an email. You can find out more information about BBBB on our website at www.spearheadMHAS.org/birds-and-bees.

SNOW SPARKLES AND WINTER WONDERS

Thursday, December 27

Noon- 5pm, Neilson Spearhead Center

Join Naturalist Dan Bera at the Neilson Spearhead Center for a very special post-Christmas treat! Enjoy a toasty bonfire, hot chocolate, and snowflakes, snowsnakes, animal tracks, and a walk on the frozen lake. Second grade and older - welcome!

Dress warmly; bring an extra pair of snowpants and mittens, bring gorp (trail mix) ingredients, and leftover Christmas cookies to share. \$10 per person, or \$15 for two siblings or friends.

www.spearheadMHAS.org Register by December 22 by calling Dan at 218-835-4782.



Naturalist Dan Bera leads path through frozen cattail marsh

Bemidji Hosts 2nd Annual 'Bird City' Celebration with Purple Martin Fest

On Saturday, June 30th, Bemidji hosted a "Purple Martin Fest and Nature Expo" at Cameron Park in Bemidji. This event included talks and demonstrations on purple martins (Dr. Brian Hiller, Bemidji State University), bluebirds (Dr. Sarah Knutie, Assistant Professor of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut), native plants for pollinators (Christine Herwig, MNDNR NW Region Nongame Specialist), and a keynote talk on our lakes by Bruce Carlson (Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan). Dina Janke helped kids make and take home a bird feeder courtesy of Home Depot. Participants were also able to take a pontoon ride to visit purple martin colonies around Lake Bemidji. On Friday evening Lake Bemidji State Park offered a 'Raptors Live!' presentation.



Dr. Bruce Carlson



Dr. Brian Hiller shows banded Purple Martin chicks



Birdhouse construction

This event is Bemidji's 2nd annual celebration of being designated a 'Minnesota Bird City'. This program recognizes and celebrates communities with a long-term commitment to creating bird habitat, reducing threats to birds, and engaging citizens in birding, bird conservation, and outdoor recreation.

Event Sponsors Included...

Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society, Bemidji State University, BSU student Chapter of The Wildlife Society, The City of Bemidji & Parks and Recreation Dept, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Visit Bemidji. Special thanks go to Dr. Brian Hiller at Bemidji State University for organizing the event

**AUDUBON SOCIETY -
MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS CHAPTER**

P.O. Box 193
Bemidji, MN
56619
headwatersaudubon@gmail.com

We're on the WEB!!
www.spearheadMHAS.org

Non-profit organization
US Postage paid
Bemidji, MN 56601
Permit #28

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

Save the Date for the 119th Annual Christmas Bird Count!



Bemidji CBC

Saturday, Dec 15th

7:30 AM

Minnesota Nice Café

Itasca State Park CBC

Monday, Dec 17th

7:30AM

Itasca SP Visitor Center

An annual rite of early winter is to take part in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) sponsored by the Headwaters Audubon Society. This world-wide tradition began on Christmas Day in 1900 when conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. Chapman proposed that they identify, count and record all the birds that they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most long-running significant citizen-based conservation effort, a more than a century old tradition.

The Bemidji CBC has been a tradition since being started by Laddie and Jim Elwell, John Matheson, and others who were founders of the Headwaters Audubon Society chapter back in the 1970s. The Itasca State Park count began in the 1970s. Participants regularly see crossbills, redpolls and other winter finches.

Come out and participate in citizen science. You need not be an expert in bird identification. MHAS has loaner binoculars and bird guides and we will team up less experienced folks with more seasoned birders. Join us in this fine tradition! If you have any questions, or need a loaner pair of binoculars contact this year's compiler, Doug Johnson, at 218-751-4162 or dougjohn23@gmail.com.