



Madeline Island

Wilderness Preserve News

Summer 2009

SPRING AT LAST !

By Tom Kromroy, President

Perhaps it was the long winter or the gloomy economy, but this year, more than ever before, I find myself especially grateful for and appreciative of the beauty of Madeline Island. While families and communities are being met with increasing challenges, there is a peace that comes from knowing that the life of island forests and wetlands continues to thrive, protected and unharmed. This is possible because of donations from the generous membership of the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve (MIWP), a not for profit land trust that is dedicated to protecting and preserving natural areas on Madeline Island. To all who contribute to preserving the lands that make this such a special place – Thank you!

Buckthorn Task Force

Started in the fall of 2007, the Buckthorn Task Force sponsored a few work days last summer. Under the guidance of National Park Service Invasive Plant Biologist, Carmen Chapin, several year-round island residents, Wisconsin DNR staff and several MIWP members teamed up to attack both the buckthorn and barberry in the area around the town entrance to the Capser Trail. The most efficient way to reduce the spread of buckthorn from an established infestation is to cut and apply herbicide to the plants that are mature enough to produce berries. Dedicated and persistent island residents have been targeting buckthorn infestations on public and private lands in town. Efforts will continue this year. See more in this newsletter. MIWP has a supply of tools and herbicide that we are able to loan out to anyone on the Island who would like to control buckthorn on their property.

MIWP Trails

Our trails and lands are open to the public free of charge for hiking in the summer, hunting in the fall and skiing in the winter. It was a great year for cross country skiing on Madeline Island. Thanks to Keith Sowl for his grooming and to Jerry Smith for putting up new signage.

Land Donation Adds to Protected Wilderness

The Wilderness Preserve also thanks Mr. Charles Dietz Jr. for his donation of undeveloped land on the North Shore Road adjacent to MIWP acreage. The gift was made in honor of Mr. Dietz's father, Charles Dietz Sr., who was an avid recreational fisherman for many years on Lake Superior in the Apostle Islands.

Will Steger, Arctic Explorer, to Speak

MIWP has invited Will Steger to speak at our 22nd Annual Spring Meeting and Evening Reception which will be held on May 24, 2009 at 7:00 P.M. at the Club House. He will share his observations on the effects of global warming on the arctic environment.

Member contributions support our annual program's \$15,000 budget. Since the MIWP is not for profit, all member donations are 100% tax deductible. In closing, I extend my thanks to everyone who supports the goals of the MIWP to protect our Island's beauty and resources. Together we are making a difference!



Capser Trail bridge under construction. The rebuilding of the trail in 2007-08 was done in collaboration with the Town of La Pointe with Wisconsin state funding.

MIWP BATTLES INVASIVE SPECIES ... AND SCORES BIG IN 4TH OF JULY PARADE !

Last summer the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve continued its efforts to manage some of the invasive plant species that have taken hold on Madeline Island. We are focusing on buckthorn and Japanese barberry. These plants invade the forest understory, displacing native plants and disrupting the ecosystem. This “new” understory not only changes the actual appearance of the forest, it destroys habitat for native wildlife. Currently, the buckthorn and barberry seem to be limited to the southern end of Madeline. Our main goal is to prevent their further spread.

Island community volunteers, with the help and guidance of National Park Service expert Carmen Chapin, made a big dent in the invasive footprint in and near town. The volunteers were trained in how to identify and safely remove or treat these unwanted plants. These volunteer efforts also spurred several private landowners to have their buckthorn removed.

This summer the MIWP will be sponsoring more invasive plant management activities and work opportunities. For information, please refer to the summer schedule of events, which can be found in this newsletter, or on our website: www.MIWP.org.



I think there is a general agreement that the 2008 MIWP July Fourth parade entry was the best ever. “Buckthorn Buckaroos” had a strong, timely environmental message. The float itself, a rundown shack complete with crooked chimney, was beautifully built (kudos to Steve, Dan and Tom). And did you ever see such incredible acting? From the piteously weeping Star Flower to the gallant buckaroos to the profoundly and profanely evil Buck Thorn, there was a whole lot of high class emoting going on. Our first place (Adult Float division) award was the proverbial icing on the already tasty cake. Congratulations and thanks to everyone involved.

Owing to circumstances way beyond our control, the MIWP will not be in the Fourth of July parade this year. This will not be a trend; plans are already starting to firm up for 2010. We will keep you posted.



MIWP's winning entry, "Buckthorn Buckaroos" in the 2008 Madeline Island Fourth of July Parade



Dastardly "Buck Thorn" displaces native "Star Flower" in our melodramatic parade entry

THE PIPING PLOVERS OF LONG ISLAND, WISCONSIN

By Francesca Cuthbert

One of Wisconsin's rarest birds, the Piping Plover, nests on Long Island in the Apostle Islands. This location has remarkable significance because it is the only site in Wisconsin where Piping Plovers have consistently nested since 1998. This sand-colored shorebird weighs about 2 ounces and is found only in North America. It nests in three distinct geographic areas: the Great Lakes, the Atlantic Coast and the Northern Great Plains. The Great Lakes population is endangered; the other two are threatened. Plovers from all three populations winter, and often intermix, on coastlines along the southern Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, rarely reaching the Caribbean and northern Mexico. As of summer 2008, 86% of the 63 breeding pairs in the Great Lakes region nested in Michigan. The rest were in Wisconsin and Canada. Six pairs nested in Wisconsin; 1 pair in Marinette County and the rest on Long Island in Ashland County.

Piping Plovers return from their wintering grounds to Wisconsin in mid-April to early May and choose nesting habitat on wide beaches composed of sand and cobble. Most pairs are incubating eggs by the end of May. The nest is a simple scrape in the ground and is often lined with tiny pebbles or shells. Incubation of the four eggs takes about 28 days and chicks typically hatch in June. The well camouflaged eggs and chicks help protect the birds from discovery by predators. The young are precocial and leave the nest cup within a day of hatching. They are able to feed themselves but depend on their parents for warmth, guidance to good feeding areas and warning if predators are near. Because plovers will nest for a second or third time if the first clutch of eggs is destroyed by storms or predators, it is possible to see young birds as late as July. The migration behavior is unusual but typical of most other shorebirds. Adult female plovers depart for the wintering grounds as early as mid-July leaving the male to care for their offspring; males typically leave by early August and juveniles initiate migration as late as early September. Therefore, the young plovers make their first migration with no adult to lead the way. How they are able to find the wintering areas in southern U.S. is unknown.

Historical abundance and population trends of the Piping Plover in Wisconsin are not well known but old records confirm that the species was always a rare breeding bird in the state. For example, over the past 50 years, fewer than 6 pairs have been known to nest during any given year. Between 1983 and 1987, no plovers were reported nesting in Wisconsin. By the mid-1980s, the entire Great Lakes population had declined from an estimate of 300-500 pairs to approximately 12-17 pairs located only in Michigan. A goal of 150 pairs (100 in Michigan; 50 elsewhere in the region) was set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for removal of this population from the Endangered Species List. Significant effort has gone into the recovery of Piping Plovers throughout the Great Lakes and the breeding numbers have slowly increased in response to several simple strategies: monitoring, beach closure and predator exclosures.



*A bird in the hand: a piping plover receives color-coded leg bands for identification and tracking.
Photo by Alice Van Zoeren*

Visitors to Long Island should be aware of and respect beach closure signs aimed at protecting nesting plovers.

22ND ANNUAL SPRING MEETING AND EVENING RECEPTION

The Wilderness Preserve will be hosting its 22nd Annual Spring Meeting this coming Memorial Day weekend, Sunday May 24th, at The Clubhouse on Madeline Island. In a major departure with tradition, the event will be an evening reception, rather than a luncheon as in past years. The change comes in recognition of the fact that most of us would rather spend a beautiful spring day (perhaps our first visit since last fall) outside enjoying the Island, and then capping that with a social event in the evening. The change will also make it easier to see the photographic presentation by our guest speaker, as we have found the Clubhouse windows nearly impossible to darken at mid-day. The evening meal will be an informal buffet of elegant and hearty hors d'oeuvres, complimentary wine service, and coffee /tea and assorted deserts (come with an appetite). Many thanks to the Madeline Island Music Camp for providing The Clubhouse for this event. This year's evening fare will be provided by the Ashland Baking Company. A social gathering and food service begins at 7:00 p.m., with the program beginning at 8:00 pm.

Our program this year features renowned polar explorer, educator, and environmentalist

WILL STEGER

“EYEWITNESS TO GLOBAL WARMING”

Will Steger is a recognized authority for the polar regions and their environmental issues, and is an eyewitness to the effects of global warming. He has spent more than 45 years traveling throughout the Arctic regions, advocating for the Earth's preservation, and advising about permanent solutions to our climate crisis. Steger holds a Bachelor of Science in geology, Master of Arts in education and Honorary Doctorate from University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn., in addition to Honorary Doctorates from Westminster College, Northland College and Franklin Pierce University.

As an educator, Steger taught science for three years at the secondary level. He founded a winter school and developed an innovative wilderness program in Ely, Minn. Steger also established the Global Center for Environmental Education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minn., and the World School for Adventure Learning at University of St. Thomas. With his ability to blend extreme exploration and cutting-edge technology, Steger pioneered online education during his 1995 expedition – reaching more than 20 million students via online daily journals and delivering the first-ever transmission of digital photography from the North Pole. Steger has been invited to testify before the United States Congress and has advised world leaders on the environmental protection of Antarctica.



The price of the Spring Reception and Program is \$30 per person.

Reservations can be made (through May 18th) by contacting MIWP Treasurer Russ Fridley, 740 Amber Drive, Shoreview, MN 55126 ☞ (651-484-1542) ☞ Email at: russellfridley@gmail.com

SUMMER 2009 PROGRAM

Evening lectures are co-sponsored by the Madeline Island Historical Museum

Saturday, May 23rd, 9:00–11:00 a.m. “Spring Bird Migration on Madeline”

Annual bird hike with Peter Hudleston & Victoria Erhart. Bring your binoculars, see warblers and other spring migrants. Meet at Big Bay Town Park

**Sunday, May 24th, 7:00 p.m. MIWP’s 22nd Annual Spring Meeting and Evening Reception
“Eyewitness to Global Warming”**

Don’t miss this exceptional presentation by renowned polar explorer, Will Steger. At the Clubhouse
(see detailed announcement, page 4)

Monday, May 25th, 1:00 p.m. “The Front Lines on Global Warming”

Join Will Steger for a personal perspective on his early years in polar exploration and concern for the arctic environment. This community program is co-sponsored by the Madeline Island school and is open to families and all ages. At the Island Schoolhouse Gymnasium

Saturday, June 20th, 9:00 – Noon. “Get into The Thick of It! – Outdoor Work Session and Open House”

With biologist crew leader, Isaiah Messerly, National Park Service, Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management Team. Learn/participate in eradicating buckthorn on Madeline Island. Wear work clothes, gloves and boots; enjoy cider and cookies! Meet at the new and improved Capser Trail, across from the Fire Station.

Thursday, July 16th, 7:00 p.m. “Alternative Energy on Madeline Island: Progress Report No. 2”

With Burke Henry, Alan Fischlowitz, and Larry Bean of the Island Alternative Energy Committee. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum

Saturday, July 18th, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. “Wetland and Beach Floral Ecology”

Nature hike/saunter led by Pastor Marina Lachecki of St. John’s UCC. Meet at Ojibwe Memorial Park (near the marina and Indian cemetery)

Thursday, July 30th, 7:00 p.m. “The Bald Eagle as a Sentinel Species for Assessing the Health of the Great Lakes”

With Bill Route, Ecologist, National Park Service, Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum

Thursday, August 6th, 7:00 p.m. “What’s Next for the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore?”

With Bob Krumenaker, Superintendent, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum

All events are free (except the Spring Reception) and open to the public



Sunset over Hermit Island, photo by Tom Kromroy

(Piping Plovers: Continued from page 3)

Monitors on Long Island, and elsewhere, collect data on nest success and ensure protection of each site until chicks have fledged. Additionally, an intensive banding effort was initiated in Michigan in 1993 to track the survival and movements of individual birds. It was through banding that we were able to confirm that the birds that recolonized Long Island were pioneers from Michigan. Long Island's nesting plovers hatched at locations in upper and lower Michigan and dispersed to Long Island for their first and subsequent breeding years. One bird (see photo) that hatched on Long Island was found nesting on North Manitou Island (Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore) in Lake Michigan. Information on the identity of plovers is critical to the conservation effort because these records demonstrate that the population is expanding and intermixing within the region. Current threats to the population include: increasing predator populations; public recreation on nesting beaches and shoreline

development. Despite the increase in breeding pairs, and the reoccupation of previously used habitat, the Great Lakes population is still extremely vulnerable to extirpation. Consistent annual monitoring and protection will be needed for at least several more decades to ensure the Piping Plover remains a breeding species in the Great Lakes region. The following are responsible for protection of Piping Plovers in Wisconsin: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, the Bad River Band and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Dr. Francesca Cuthbert is head of the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. She and her graduate students coordinate the banding program and conduct research for the Great Lakes piping plover recovery effort. Dr. Cuthbert can be contacted at: cuthb001@umn.edu

WILDERNESS PRESERVE SALUTES WILDERNESS INQUIRY

Wilderness Inquiry to Establish a Basecamp near the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

Wilderness Inquiry is a Twin Cities-based nonprofit organization that provides inclusive outdoor adventures for people of all ages and backgrounds, including individual with disabilities.

Over the last 20 years, the Apostle Islands has become Wilderness Inquiry's most popular tripping area. Says Wilderness Inquiry's Executive Director Greg Lais, "the Apostles is naturally one of the most accessible places for outdoor recreation. Over the years we have served thousands of people with disabilities and low-income families." They currently provide 40 trips annually serving approximately 500 people. Overcrowded campsites and increasing development pressure have made it imperative that Wilderness Inquiry create its own base of operations and protect a vital corridor to Little Sand Bay from further development.

In December of 2007 they purchased 20 acres located next to Little Sand Bay. They are in the process of raising funds to purchase the adjacent 20 acres. Wilderness Inquiry's purchase of this parcel will permanently protect the entire 40 acres from further development.

The site will be a model sustainable, low impact, and accessible camping area designed to serve people

with disabilities, low income families, and others who have limited access to outdoor experiences. Their goal is to keep the land in its most natural state, with modest improvements of campsites, trails, bathroom facilities, and an access road.

Wilderness Inquiry will be hosting two public events on the property the weekend of June 26-27. If you are interested in learning more about this project and/or attending either of these events, please contact Greg Lais at 612-676-9409 or greglais@wildernessinquiry.org.

