



Refuge News

Seney National Wildlife Refuge

August 2007



Baiting Black Bears on the Refuge

When biology intern Nate Rathbun was asked to wear waders and carry one-pound slabs of bacon and handfuls of sardines into the wild marshland areas of the Refuge, his immediate response was “Sounds like fun!”

From July 9-11, Rathbun hung bear baits on trees at eight designated locations as part of the 2007 Black Bear Tetracycline Project. The project is designed to estimate the size of the Upper Peninsula bear population by marking bears with a biomarker placed in baits.

Tetracycline, a commonly used antibiotic, was inserted into baits made of bacon and sardines. When bears eat the bait, the antibiotic produces a permanent mark in their teeth.

By marking teeth of a known number of bears and later determining the number of marked and unmarked teeth from harvested bears, an estimate of the bear population can be made.

“It’s been a fun project,” said Rathbun, who had been working on trumpeter swan surveys for most of the summer. “It gets me outside and in the woods and it’s something different. It will allow biologists to understand the black bear population better and the affect that human populations have on them.”

All baits will be removed by August 10.

In 1993 the average vegetative cover along selected survey points on the Driggs River was 17 percent. This year the research group measured 67 percent, an almost 400 percent increase, in the amount of vegetative cover. It was a percentage Olson was happy to record. The canoe trip took an unexpected turn, however, when Olson and his crew took a vegetation sample and found a rusty crayfish.

Rusty crayfish are native to the Ohio River Basin, but have since invaded many rivers and streams throughout the Midwest, the North Eastern states, New Mexico and many areas in Ontario, Canada.

Typically spread by anglers who use them as bait, rusty crayfish can severely reduce lake and stream vegetation, depriving native fish and their prey of cover and food. They also reduce native crayfish populations.

Rusty crayfish measure two and one-half inches (not including claws) in length. They can be identified by black bands and an orange tip on their large claws, and dark, rusty spots on each side of their carapace (hard outer body covering). Their claws are grayish-green to reddish-brown and smoother than most other crayfish.

“Finding rusty crayfish is not good news for the Driggs,” said Olson. “We plan on working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to set up a monitoring protocol for these crayfish. A lot still has yet to be determined.”

A Guest’s Perspective

Recently, I had the great opportunity to spend six weeks at Seney National Wildlife Refuge. I am an air quality specialist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I spend most of my time at a desk, 1300 miles away, reviewing air quality permits and regional haze reduction plans. I knew little about the refuge other than it was considered a “super-site” for air quality monitoring and it was designated as “class I” under the Clean Air Act.

My time at Seney gave me the opportunity to see, touch, and hear an amazing refuge. Seney, to me, is no longer a refuge with an extensive array of air monitors and special protection under the Clean Air Act, but a place that I can visualize. When I look at a mercury deposition map, I’ll think of the loons and other affected wildlife. When I look at an air permit or regional haze plan, I’ll think of the vista across the beautiful ponds and thriving marshes. When I think about sulfates and nitrates being atmospherically deposited into the refuge, I’ll think of plant species that can be negatively or positively impacted and all the challenges it can pose for management.

I have a new appreciation for just how multi-faceted refuge management can be. The air is a part of the refuge and thus adds another dimension to the challenges faced by managers. I’m now even more inspired to work hard and do my part to protect this part of Seney National Wildlife Refuge...from my desk, 1300 miles away.



photo by Jim Timmons

Black Bear are common on the refuge and are a species visitors are allowed to hunt. See the refuge hunting brochure for regulations.

Driggs River Shows Improvement, but New Problem Found

From June 18-20, wildlife biologist Dave Olson, along with biology intern Nate Rathbun, volunteer George Phinney and DNR fisheries biologist, Darren Kramer, spent three days canoeing down the arduous Driggs River.

The research team recorded the amount of vegetation cover along the river at 36 designated sites that were originally marked in 1993 by Seney NWR wildlife biologist Mike Tansy. The effort was part of a long-term project created by Tansy to increase the amount of vegetation along the river bank in an effort to stop soil erosion.

Did You Know . . . 61 Trumpeter Swan cygnets and 23 Common Loon chicks were reported to have hatched at Seney this year....record numbers for both species.

Mark Your Calendars

- **Jr DuckStamp Art Exhibit** Aug 8-29
- **Wildlife Wednesdays 7pm** Aug 1,8,15,22,29
- **Morning Auto Tours** Aug 27 & Sept 4
- **Friday Bike Rides 3pm** Aug 3, 10, 24 & 31
- **Volunteer potluck (6pm) & Sea Lamprey presentation (7pm)** Aug 16
- **Art on the Lake** Sept 1
- **Volunteer Recognition Banquet** Sept 20
- **Scout Day** Sept 29

Jr. Duck Stamp Art Exhibit August 8th - 29th

The exhibition presents the work of the first-place winner from every state competition in the junior division



New at the VC: “Fish of Seney” Display

Visitors that stop into the Visitor Center are now able to get a close look at some of the underwater inhabitants of Seney NWR.

A 10-gallon fish tank, complete with fish, was donated on June 21 by resident forester Greg Corace and has been placed under the supervision of public use intern Chris Homeister. A sign located in front of the tank includes pictures and identification cues that teach visitors how to distinguish one species from another. The fish tank has displayed up to six species of fish at one time, including brown bullheads, yellow perch, bluegills, brook sticklebacks, common shiners and golden shiners. On several occasions, visitors participated in dip-netting for aquatic invertebrates to feed the fish. “It’s been a lot of fun watching people become interested in fish,” said Homeister, who coordinated this year’s Children’s Fishing Day on June 9. “People of all ages seem to enjoy learning

Timberrrr! Section of Driggs River Road Closed for Timber Harvest

On Monday, July 9, refuge volunteers watched as a giant logging processor picked up trees and produced cut-to-length logs. The noisy equipment was one part of a 4-hour guided tour given by Seney NWR forester Greg Corace, along with biology interns Julia Polasik and Ken Leister.

The timber harvest covers 428 acres on both sides of the Driggs River Road between the south side of the C-2 Road and Driggs River Road intersection and the north side of the M-2 dike road.

The harvest is set up to carry out several objectives: maintaining biodiversity, reducing jack pine, shifting stand dominance towards red and white pines, releasing existing red oaks and enhancing the number of average size of standing snags and fallen coarse woody debris. All harvesting and road work must be done between July 1 and September 1, 2007.

about the different body shapes and attributes of each fish.” he added.

All of the fish species in the tank are less than four inches in length, and were caught from pools near the visitor center.

Can You Help?

If your going to be traveling locally or within the state could you pick up some newspapers and brochures and deliver them to welcome centers and chambers of commerce along your route?

Do you remember the Seney Natural History Associations early days? Has your life been affected by the associations efforts? If you can provide interesting anecdotes or photos your efforts would help us celebrate 20 years of valuable assistance given to the refuge by the Seney Natural History Association and its founding organizations.