

# Refuge News

Summer 2011 Newsletter

A Publication Funded by Seney Natural History Association for its Members.

## Seney Natural History Association

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### Manager's Corner

by Mark Vaniman



In the summer of 2010, Fish and Wildlife Service Employees began the process of charting the course for the National Wildlife Refuge System for the next decade. The results of the efforts of these people culminated in the Conserving the Future –

Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation conference held in Madison, WI the week of July 11th. I was fortunate to be able to attend the conference with over 1000 colleagues, leaders, Friends and non-government organizations. The main thrust of the conference was to finalize our vision document which will guide us for the next ten years. This document has been through much iteration over the past year and received more than 10,000 comments. The final draft was condensed into a 45 page booklet that includes 24 recommendations regarding wildlife and habitat, partnerships, visitor services and our vision for the future.

The conference was an excellent mix of speakers and workshops designed to provide inspiration and give everyone a final stab at crafting the final document. Madison was the host city due to its connection to Aldo Leopold and the "Shack" located nearby where theory of modern wildlife conservation and the land ethic were developed. There were several social events as well featuring local talent, speakers and, of course, beer. After all we were in Wisconsin.

The conference ended with a banquet and performances by the FWS Band, also known as the Impromptus. The band, an eclectic collection of musical talent assembled from amongst our ranks, rehearsed Wednesday and played a 90 minute set on Thursday and featured original music (I'm a fish, Wild in the Wood etc.) and covers of old favorites (Brown Eyed Girl/Squirrel, Wild Thing, Proud Mary et al).

Seney Refuge was well represented at the conference having several display items in the Legacy and Heritage booth in the main hall of the Monona Terrace Conference

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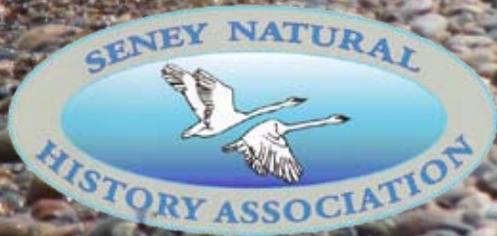


Photo: Piping Plover at the Whitefish Point Unit.

Credit: Sara Hollerich, USFWS.  
Photo: Mark Vaniman. Credit: Sara Hollerich, USFWS

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*Friends Email:*  
snhafriends@gmail.com

*Seney National Wildlife Refuge*  
1674 Refuge Entrance Road  
Seney, MI 49883

*Phone:* (906) 586-9851  
*Fax:* (906) 586-3700

*Website:*  
www.fws.gov/midwest/seney

*Refuge Email:*  
seney@fws.gov

*Photo:* Insect gall and a spittle bug  
on a goldenrod.  
*Credit:* Sara Hollerich, USFWS.

## New To Nature

by Kimaya Franklin, Visitor Services Intern

Before coming to Seney National Wildlife Refuge, I can honestly say I had never experienced the outdoors and was blind to nature. Spiders terrified me and the heat (I am from Arkansas) and mosquitoes helped confine me permanently indoors. Being at Seney, however, has given me a more pleasant outlook on the outdoors. The first week of being here we went camping at Clear Lake Education Center for interpretation training and the mosquitoes were terrible which gave me even more reasons to never again leave the house, but around noon the most fascinating thing happened. The dragonflies arrived and almost immediately reduced the annoying mosquito population. It was amazing, being the poor, sheltered child that I am; I never knew that mosquitoes had natural predators. From that point on, my stay here got better and better. At the living quarters here we are constantly pestered by mosquitoes, there I witnessed another predator that I would come to appreciate having around, (even though I am terrified of them) the spider. Now my relationship with spiders can be compared to mutualism, they gain by not being killed by me, and I gain because they eat mosquitoes, it's a win-win.

Besides the insects, a new activity I have picked up here is birding. I completely ignored birds at home and after being here, I do not understand how anybody could be deaf to them. As a team, my fellow interns have a list of birds we have to identify by sight and sound every week and now every time I go outdoors I am listening for a familiar song. It makes the outdoors even more exciting than watching dragonflies eat mosquitoes. I even find myself noticing flowers and beautiful plants. One day while we were filling brochures in the kiosks, I saw the most beautiful flower I have ever seen. I took a picture of it and brought it back and found out that it was a Wood Lily, so now I am excited to see more plants.

I am still technically warming up to the outdoors, and I think I have done well so far. I still have quite a bit of time here to experience more outdoor activities and look forward to them. The next activity on my agenda is to go fishing! ❀



Photo: Wood Lily. Credit: Kimaya Franklin, Student Conservation Association Intern at Seney NWR.

# Getting Out of the Office: Cormorant Chick Banding

by Karen Palmer, Visitor Services Intern

Picture this, you've poured yourself into a pair of borrowed waders (which had a small, unknown leak, that is now a small very well-known leak) and after a short boat ride on a gently used Zodiac to a desolate, treeless island have now waded to shore through waste deep water on slippery rocks. It's pitch black aside from the light of yours and your partners' headlamps. The pungent smell of fish and ammonia is ever present (a scent that kept reminding me of childhood visits to Sea World) and you're surrounded by flying dark masses of angry, noisy herring gulls.

Thus was the scene late Monday night when a team of researchers and volunteers headed out to a pair of double-crested cormorant colonies on islands off the coast of Wisconsin's Door County hoping to band at least 500 birds on each island. Myself and my colleague Mandy Salminen were only too happy to drive five hours, stay up all night and get disgustingly filthy in the name of wildlife biology. After setting up camp the whole banding team met for dinner, including myself and Mandy, Fish and Wildlife Service officials from Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife technicians, a graduate student and her research assistant from West Virginia University, a pair of wildlife researchers from the USDA, several volunteers and one retired wildlife biologist. I was stunned by the diversity of our group, people from at least three different states and as many agencies. We learned that the main purpose for banding the cormorants was to



Photo: Intern Karen Palmer holding a double-crested cormorant chick. Credit: Mandy Salminen, SNHA Intern.



Photo: Intern Mandy Salminen holding a double-crested cormorant chick. Credit: Karen Palmer, SNHA Intern.

monitor where the chicks migrate and settle after fledging from the area, important information for researchers and managers.

We split our sizable group between two islands, hoping to cover more ground. We had until sunrise to fit 1000 bands (two on each bird, one federal and one color coded band indicating where the bird came from) on each island. The whole process has to be done covertly at night while the birds are sleeping. If it was daylight the little chicks would have more energy and would probably be too difficult to handle. For the most part this technique seemed to work, although there were times when waking the chicks proved messy. A common response was to very quickly eliminate their bowels, spraying a smelly, white stream of excrement at the potential predator. We quickly learned that holding the bird out away from your body for a few seconds, maybe giving them a little shake, before bringing them close was a good way to avoid much of the... well... poop. We worked quickly and eventually got all 500 birds correctly banded on each island. I was thoroughly exhausted and after a quick shower finally crawled into bed

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# Plovers Still Piping?

by Mandy Salminen, Visitor Services Intern

Pip-pip, pip-pip screams a small quick flying bird. A tan, white, and black flash blurs by, circling our crew. Meanwhile, we work quickly to put the bands on tiny, little puffballs of peeping feathers. This is the scene that you will find when you tag with the bird banding crew working to conserve the piping plover.



Photo: Placing a band on a piping plover chick.  
Credit: Mandy Salminen, USFWS.

I had the pleasure of getting a chance to go out with dedicated people, thanks to Jon Haver, the Piping Plover Technician stationed with Seney National Wildlife Refuge. The banding crew came from the University of Minnesota, but the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Natural Resources, Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy, US Forest Service, and Lake Superior State University are also involved with the recovery efforts of the Piping Plovers.

The banding crew has perfected their technique in order to make banding run smoothly and efficiently. We started out by walking a mile or so to the nesting sites. Once we got close to their regular territory, we used binoculars and scopes to find the families on the beach shore. This is no easy task. Looking for birds that are sand colored and the size of a large sparrow is a challenging task. While I was still struggling with focusing my binoculars, they already picked them out and had them counted.

From there, we circled them from far off then slowly walked up, pushing them together against the shore. Once we got close enough we trapped the chicks with homemade baskets. As they were then weighed and banded, I served as the lookout to ensure the parents didn't abandon their chicks. The parents circled us and called to their offspring. They made every attempt to lure us away, even feigning a broken wing. I must say these birds would be amazing in the theater. After the crew finished we released the chicks all together so that the parents wouldn't accidentally leave a chick behind. The warm puffballs took off like racehorses out of a starting gate, but they aren't very stable and ended up tumbling about. We watched as they joined with the parents and ran off along the beach. We packed up and headed back. It was a good ending to a successful mission!!



Photo: Placing a band on a piping plover chick.  
Credit: Mandy Salminen, USFWS.

Piping Plovers are a small shore bird. They feed on marine worms, crustaceans, mollusks, and insects. These birds are considered Endangered to the Great Lakes Region and

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# 4th of July Parades a Success

by Kimaya Franklin, Visitor Services Intern



Photo: Seney NWR interns with the 4th of July parade float. Credit: Karen Thomas, Seney NWR Volunteer

The interns at Seney National Wildlife Refuge were featured in two Fourth of July parades this month. The first parade was July 3rd in Curtis and the second parade was July 4th in Newberry. With the help of the YCC students, we were able to clean and prepare the Marshmaster as our float. We decorated the Marshmaster with red and blue decorations to fit the Fourth of July theme, and created posters that were placed on the Marshmaster encouraging people to come visit the refuge. The interns wore costumes of animals found on the refuge. The featured animals were; grey wolf, raccoon, barred owl, northern pike, and the monarch butterfly. The costumes included a face mask made to look like the animal, and a shirt which had the common name on the front of a shirt and the scientific name on the back (except for Perky Pike who had a very elaborate costume). The shirts were decorated according to which animal was used. The float and costumes seemed to be enjoyed by the public, making this year's 4th of July parade a success. ❁

## Join the Social Network

Fan us on Facebook to stay up to date on the happenings at Seney NWR. Become our contact on Flickr and see up to date photos of the Refuge.

[www.facebook.com/seneyrefuge](http://www.facebook.com/seneyrefuge)

[www.flickr.com/seneynwr](http://www.flickr.com/seneynwr)



## Cormorant Chick Banding Continued from page 3

at 5 am, just as the sun was rising.

These birds suffer from a bad reputation as competition to game and commercial fishermen. However, you can't begrudge them for their nature. Most people don't like mosquitoes but they're just doing what they do, and without them many ecosystems wouldn't flourish. Double-crested cormorants are the same way, they are piscivorous and therefore must fish to survive. In fact, these birds are opportunistic and will feed on whatever fish is available, which is not necessarily a game fish. There is some local research that indicates these birds are primarily feeding on round goby and alewife, two invasive species currently plaguing the Great Lakes Region. Double-crested cormorants are a vital piece of biodiversity and an important part of the Great Lakes ecosystem. After spending several hours in their nesting grounds and handling their feisty young I can honestly say that I have a brand new appreciation for these most fascinating birds. The whole experience was very rewarding and a great way to get out of the office. The next time you see a cormorant, take a close look at its legs. If you see a red band on its left leg, there's a good chance I helped put that band on! And with any banded bird, if you can get the color and/or number from the band be sure and report it to the FWS or DNR! Get more information at <http://www.reportband.gov> or call toll-free 1-800-327-BAND (2263) from anywhere in Canada, the United States and most parts of the Caribbean. The operator will need to know the band number, and how, when and where the bird or band was found. ❁



Photo: Double-crested cormorant chicks.  
Credit: Karen Palmer, SNHA Intern.

# As the Water Flows

by Damon McCormick, Common Coast Loon Researcher

Between 1998 and 2010, the breeding female loon of G Pool, pictured below this April, was paired to six different males. She lost her first partner when he was eaten by a bald eagle. She lost her second when he was physically evicted by a challenging male, who subsequently became her third. She lost this mate when, after four years on G, he decided to move to nearby C Pool. She spent two years with his replacement, her fourth, before this consort was evicted by another challenger, who became her fifth. In the autumn of 2007, after a second consecutive year of successful nesting, this mate perished on Lake Michigan during his migration toward oceanic wintering grounds, a victim of type-E botulism poisoning. His replacement, her sixth, succumbed to the same fate in the autumn of 2010; the bodies of the two deceased loons were discovered, three years apart, within a half-mile of each other along a remote stretch of the northern Lake Michigan shoreline to the southeast of Seney NWR.



Photo: Common Loon. Credit: Damon McCormick, Common Coast.

In April of 2011 the G Pool female returned to her territory and quickly paired with her seventh partner, an eight year-old who was hatched on C Pool in 2003 (his father was the aforementioned Partner #3, rendering him a stepson of sorts to the G female). Their nascent pair bond was abruptly dissolved when, in early May, a challenging female arrived on the territory and successfully convinced the male that she was a more attractive breeding candidate; upon making his decision he forcibly drove the G female from her home of 13 years. Since her eviction she has idled alone upon non-territorial backwaters of nearby refuge pools, awaiting an opportunity to acquire a new turf and an eighth mate.

Seney NWR currently houses 20 pairs of breeding common loons spread across 17 pools, and not all of their life histories have been marked by the romantic flux of the G female: The first pool that visitors encounter along the auto drive, F, harbors a loon pair who have been coupled since 1997. During their 15-year alliance they have hatched 20 chicks, three of whom, all males, have subsequently returned to the refuge as adults and established

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## **Manager's Corner** **Continued from page 1**

Center. The SNHA was also superbly represented by our own Liz Hill, who attended as the Friends delegate for Seney.

A copy of the draft document and video from the conference are available at <http://americaswildlife.org/>. You can also access Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr Pages from the site. If you are not into social media or websites you can always stop in and learn about the conference and our vision the old fashioned way – face to face conversation. ❁

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## **Happy Birthday Piping Plovers**

The piping plover nest at the Whitefish Point Unit of Seney NWR hatched three chicks on July 6th, 2011. This is the third year in a row that the nest has produced young. Please take a moment to toast to the successful fledge of the young and continued success for the Whitefish Point Unit's nest! ❁

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## **What Bird Am I? Answers (from the cover)**

1. Pileated Woodpecker
2. Eastern Kingbird.
3. Common Yellowthroat
4. American Goldfinch
5. Common Loon
6. Common Grackle and Red-winged Blackbird.

Photo Credits: Karen Palmer, SNHA Intern.

# Nature Nut Column

Dear Naturenut,

Why can't whooping cranes and sandhill cranes breed with each other? I mean they are both cranes right? Dogs don't have a problem, so why can't we see a "sandhill whoop"?



Signed,  
McLoving

Dear McLoving,

That's a good question. First off, species and breeds are very different. Breeds are types of animals or plants with a certain appearance within a species. A species is a group of animals or plants that can freely breed and produce fertile offspring. So a German shepherd and a Chihuahua are different breeds, but they are the same species. Whooping cranes and sandhill cranes are two different species.

There are many reasons why organisms become different species. One of those reasons is due to mechanics. Some organisms cannot interbreed because of structural or molecular reasons. Molecular reasons for species not being able to interbreed due to fertilization and post zygotic issues. An example of a problem with mechanics can be seen when looking at pollen of plants. Different species of plant pollen is shaped differently so there is no chance of interbreeding.

Another way that species are prevented from breeding is when the species breed at different times. A good example of this is frogs. Spring peepers breed from around mid-March through May, depending on their location. Here at Seney, they usually breed in May. This doesn't overlap with the mink frog, which usually breeds in late June to early July. So you probably will not find "spring minks" any time soon.

Geographical barriers also put a damper on interbreeding. Some species are separated by geographic features like mountains, rivers, islands, long distances, etc. Even types of habitats will prevent species from freely breeding. Lions and tigers are good examples of this. In captivity, these felines have no problem breeding, but because tigers are found in the forests of Asia while lions are found on the grasslands of Africa. Why

would a cat what to travel miles and miles when there is a fit handsome bachelor right in her neighborhood? They don't come across each other in the wild so they don't interbreed.

Mating behavior and courtship differs between species. This can prevent interspecies breeding too. This is part of the reason why the sandhill crane and



Photo: Sandhill Crane.  
Credit: Mandy Salminen,  
SNHA Intern.

the whooping crane don't interbreed. Both cranes have a certain dance they do in their courtship, but these dances are different. It would be like comparing hip pop dancing to polka... some people like hip pop dancing while others like a good polka dance. Their choice of dancing styles along with geographical barriers, and breeding times is why you will most likely not see a "sandhill whoop". For more information on the process of speciation please visit this <http://bit.ly/fGIQar>.

Signed with Much Love,  
Nature Nut

Dear Nature Nut,

Do swans mate for life?

Signed,  
Curious Observer

Dear Curious Observer,

Swans can mate for life, and in many cases they do. But just like people, they can have divorces, re-marry, have affairs and so on. The species of swan you see at Seney National Wildlife Refuge are called trumpeter swans or (*Cygnus buccinators*) not to be confused with the mute swan, which is an invasive species from Europe. These swans do not reach reproductive maturity until they are 3 or 4 years old, until then they will often congregate away from other paired,

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# Seney National Wildlife Refuge Summer 2011 Calendar

## Wildlife Wednesdays

Wednesday nights June – August from 7 - 9:30pm

Join us Wednesdays for a guided auto tour of the refuge's backcountry. We'll be on the lookout for a variety of wildlife, while sharing refuge history and management practices.

## Amateur Photo Tours

Most Thursdays from May 26th to September 29th from 7:00 - 11am

Join other amateur photographers to explore the refuge, look for great shots, and share photos and skills. You should have a working knowledge of your equipment and come prepared for a variety of weather and bug conditions. Call or check the website before you come to ensure the tour will take place as scheduled.



## Federal & Junior Duck Stamp

July 2nd to the 22nd

Community members and visitors alike should mark their calendars for this exhibition of original art work by artists from across the country. The first place winners from each state and US territory in both the federal and junior duck stamp contest will be on display.

## Muskrat vs Beaver

July 20th and August 1st, 3rd, 8th and 10th from 2 - 3pm.

Musk rats and beavers are often mistaken for each other on our Wildlife Wednesday Tour. Come to this informative program and learn to properly identify them by their most prominent characteristics.

## What's That Bird?

July 22nd, August 5th and 19th from 3 - 5pm.

Stop by this activity table to test your bird identification skills by sight and sound.

## A Naturalist's Notebook: Journaling at Seney

July 22nd, August 5th, and 19th from 9:30 - 11am

Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, and Byrd Baylor: their journals provide us with unique glimpses of their world, records of natural history, and a source of inspiration as we grow in our own abilities as naturalists. Join us as we explore beginning techniques in writing and drawing in the natural world! You are invited to bring your own notebook or create one from recycled paper.

## Animal Architecture

Each Saturday from July 23rd to August 27th from 3:00 - 5:00pm

Flippers? Beaks? Hooves? Fangs? Ever wonder why animals have different traits? Stop by this activity table to create an animal while learning about how different adaptations help animals fill their role in their habitat.

## Love a Loon:

### Respecting Nature's Wonders

Each Sunday from July 24th to August 28th (except August 21st) from 10 to 11am and August 23rd from 4 to 5pm

Join us on the observation deck behind the Visitor Center to learn about one of Michigan's most charismatic birds, how they have affected us and us them.

## Sunset Sounds of Seney

Every other Tuesday at dusk from August 2nd to August 30th from 9 to 11:30pm weather permitting.

Join us for an evening amble on the refuge, we'll use our ears to identify wildlife that becomes active at dusk. Take some time out of your busy day to reflect and watch the sunset as the refuge says goodnight.

## Ducks to Diversity

Tuesday, August 9th from 1 to 2pm.

Come and learn about how the refuge and its philosophy have changed over the last 76 years.

## Monarch Madness

Sunday, August 21st from 8:30am - 1:00pm

Would you like to participate in collecting and tagging monarch butterflies? Join us for this morning of monarch education and citizen science. We will start with an orientation session and then will be in the field for about 3 hours.



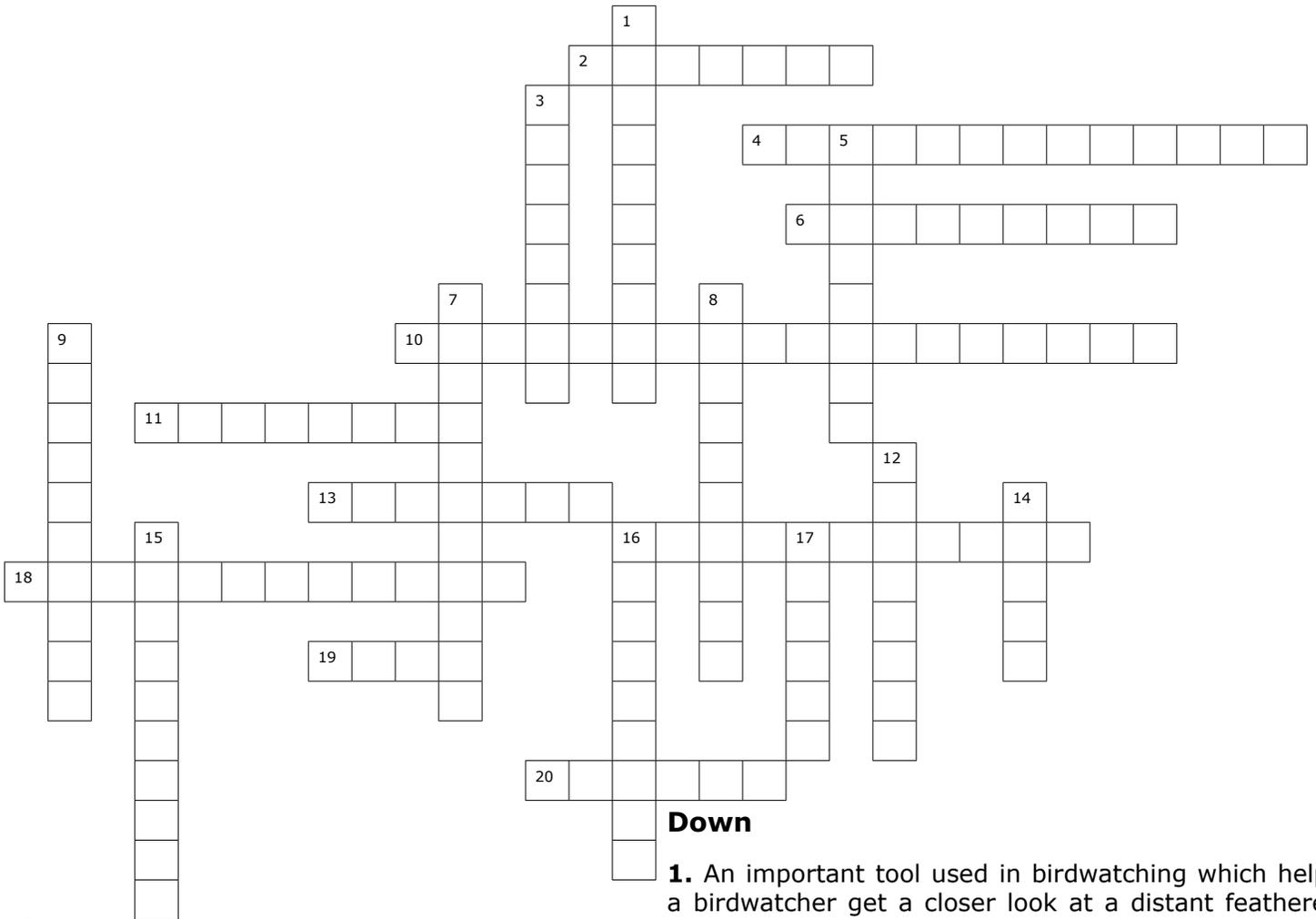
## Morning Bus Tours

September 5th, 22nd, and October 12th from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm

Enjoy a casual outing into the backcountry with a member of our seasonal staff. This is a great opportunity to check out the habitats behind the



# Who's Who at Seney NWR



## Across

2. A popular activity on the refuge, better bring your rod, reel and worms!
4. These usually appear gray, but here at Seney NWR their feathers turn rusty brown because of the tannic acid in our soil.
6. This species of swan likes to summer on the refuge pools where they raise their cygnets.
10. Seney's Stragmoor Bog is one of the largest \_\_\_\_\_ located in the lower 48 states.
11. This gluttonous visitor to the Visitor Center can be seen filling his cheek pouches at the bird feeders.
13. A butterfly whose caterpillar prefers the milkweed plant (we're raising them in the Visitor Center).
16. A special piece of equipment used both by the fire and biology departments. It looks like a tank that floats.
18. These large purple flowers are seen in the marshy areas throughout late June and early July.
19. This organization raises funds and provides hardworking, enthusiastic interns for the refuge. An acronym.
20. This animal builds lodges and dams. The average size is about 30 - 40 lbs., but they can weigh up to 90 lbs.

## Down

1. An important tool used in birdwatching which helps a birdwatcher get a closer look at a distant feathered critter.
3. An annoying pest for humans, but a tasty snack for things like dragonflies, frogs, and fish.
5. The aurora borealis are commonly known as the \_\_\_\_\_ lights.
7. Seney's Refuge Manager, you can't miss a mustache like that!
8. A lifelist bird that makes Seney a popular stop for serious birders. Although, you are probably more likely to hear one, than see one.
9. A Native American tale says that these birds can cure blindness by carrying you to the bottom of the lake over and over, washing your eyes.
12. If you are particularly lucky, you may catch a glimpse of this elusive and charismatic canine.
14. A very important tree at the Seney NWR, they are the major mast (or nut) producing tree in the area. They are currently suffering from an outbreak of disease.
15. If you are doing a GPS treasure hunt, you are doing this activity.
16. The \_\_\_\_\_ Wildlife Drive is a great way to get a close look at the refuge without leaving your car.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ on the Pine Ridge Nature Trail is a fun way to get some exercise and get a close look at Upper F Pool.

Answers on Page 15

**As the Water Flows**  
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Photo: Common loon with chick.

Credit: Damon McCormic, Common Coast.

their own breeding territories (a fourth, the first chick they ever produced, currently resides as the 13 year-old breeding female of Bunting Lake in Alger County, 40 miles to the west of Seney; it is likely that additional offspring occupy as-yet-undiscovered territories on other Upper Peninsula lakes). This season the F pair, after 28 days of shared incubation duties, hatched two chicks on June 6. Having progressed beyond the two-week backriding phase, the F Pool young will spend July and August exclusively on the water, being diligently fed and rigorously protected by their parents as their rapid growth is marked by the replacement of brown down with gray and white feathering.

There are eight additional loon territories that are visible along the refuge auto drives: Pairs on G and J each hatched one chick in early July [pictured below is the new G female with her two week-old chick]; pairs on C south, C north, E east, E west, and H have already failed in their nesting attempts for the season; the D pair is still incubating two eggs, with an expected hatch in late July 20. Among the life-history tidbits attached to these auto-drive loons, the D female has occupied her territory continuously since 1989, while the C south male (12 years old) and E west male (11 years old) are both sons to the F Pool pair.

Since 2000, the Seney loon population has averaged 13.8 hatched and 11.3 fledged chicks per season. While these numbers sound modest, they actually represent an impressive rate of reproductive efficiency compared to other well-monitored Michigan regions such as Isle Royale National Park and the Ottawa National Forest. The refuge is distinguished by its prohibition of watercraft, which is of unequivocal benefit to an island-nesting species that demonstrates extreme sensitivity to human disturbance during the incubation period. Although it is often difficult to pinpoint causes of nest failure, at Seney the two main culprits appear to be agitation from blackflies (which often hatch concurrent with the initiation of

nesting) and intrusion by challenging loons. In reference to the latter dynamic, an irony of the refuge's sterling production is that many of these chicks, after the requisite three years of adolescence spent on the ocean, return to Seney pools as breeding adults in search of their own territory... thus high productivity in one generation begets heightened competition in the next.

Since 1987 refuge loons have been the focus of a long-term research and monitoring program, the centerpiece of which has been a color-marking effort that has allowed individuals to be identified and subsequently followed from week to week, month to month, and year to year. In the first photograph, a glimmer of orange is faintly visible underwater along the rear flank of the former G Pool female; this is one of four colored leg bands, two per leg, that in combination mark her identity. While her personal life history, notable for its cavalcade of territorial partners, is an interesting by-product of thorough annual observation, the primary goal of the research to aggregate data from all banded Seney loons into scientific insights regarding the species' ecology and breeding biology.

For more information about Seney loons and the work conducted upon them, please contact Damon McCormick of Common Coast Research & Conservation at [d1m@commoncoast.org](mailto:d1m@commoncoast.org) or 906 202 0602.

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## **Children's Fishing Day Recap**

by Mandy Salminen

June 18th marked the 22nd annual Children's Fishing Day at Seney NWR. This event was created to spark an interest in fishing in the younger generation. Promoting interest in outdoor activities, such as fishing, is very important to conservation efforts. Fisherman and hunters have inputted billions of dollars into conservation efforts. By invoking the interest of each generation, we create a more stable future for the natural world.

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# Crazy for blueberries...or are they huckleberries..???

by Jennifer McDonough

Although I do not know how Native Americans defined "craziness", the fact that they inhaled the vapors of blueberry flowers, heated on stones, to treat the disorder, makes me think of the "crazy" obsession some of us get about picking blueberries.

The blueberry picking season is upon us and many members of the Northwoods community, human, bird, rodent, and bear alike, will find themselves seeking out, and possibly, obsessively drawn to, local blueberry patches. We may gather a few handfuls or many gallons. They may be powdery blue, purple, or nearly black. They may be growing in dry sandy areas under pines or wet boggy areas next to leatherleaf. We may call them blueberries or we may call them huckleberries. Whatever or wherever, they all go into our mouths and our buckets. While they all taste good, and you may not care what botanists call them, you may want to impress your fellow pickers with a few identification tidbits.

According to our herbarium records, there are two species of blueberries on the refuge, velvetleaf blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtilloides*) and low sweet blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). The blueberries can be challenging to tell apart, so let's stick with separating blueberries from huckleberries. Blueberries and huckleberries are in the same family (*Ericaceae*), but are in different genera. They are both related to cranberries, wintergreen, trailing arbutus, laurels, and heaths. Blueberries are in the genus *Vaccinium* and have warty twigs; huckleberries are in the genus *Gaylussacia* and do not have warty twigs. Huckleberries have resinous leaves, blueberries do not. The resinous dots are on the underside of the leaves and if you rub the leaves between your fingers or on paper you can see the faint yellowish resin left behind. Blueberries have many minute seeds; huckleberries have only ten small chewy seeds. When you bite into a huckleberry you can feel the seeds crack between your teeth; you probably don't even notice the seeds of the blueberries. Huckleberries are sometimes called crackle berries because of the feel of their seeds. That's it, three tidbits, about stems, leaves, and seeds, to tell the difference



Photo: Compare the huckleberry leaf with faint yellow resin smear on left to the blueberry leaves with no resin smear on right. Credit: Jennifer McDonough, USFWS.



Photo: Compare the smooth stems of huckleberry on left to the warty stems of blueberry on right. Credit: Jennifer McDonough, USFWS.

between blueberries and huckleberries.

Now, get out in the field and start impressing your fellow pickers. And for those "crazies" who can't stop picking, even after the freezer is full, you could always try the blueberry flower inhalant, to keep the obsession in check. ❁

# Why buy a Duck Stamp?

by Jennifer McDonough,

## What are Duck Stamps?

Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as "Duck Stamps," are pictorial stamps produced by the U.S. Postal Service for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. They are not valid for postage. All waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older must purchase a stamp. Besides serving as a hunting license a current year's Federal Duck Stamp also serves as an entrance pass for National Wildlife Refuges where admission is normally charged. Duck Stamps and the products that bear duck stamp images are also popular collector items.

Federal Duck Stamps are a vital tool for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sales of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Understandably, the Federal Duck Stamp Program has been called one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated and is a highly effective way to conserve America's natural resources.

Since 1934, the sales of Federal Duck Stamps have generated more than \$750 million, which has been used to help purchase or lease over 5.3 million acres of waterfowl habitat in the U.S. These lands are now protected in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System.

Waterfowl are not the only wildlife to benefit from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps. Numerous other bird, mammal, fish, reptile, and amphibian species that rely on wetland habitats have prospered.

Further, an estimated one-third of the Nation's endangered and threatened species find food or shelter in refuges established using Federal Duck Stamp funds.



2010 Winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest - James Hautman of Chaska, MN.

## What are Junior Duckstamps?

In 1989, the first Junior Duck Stamps were produced. Junior Duck Stamps are now the capstone of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Junior Duck Stamp environmental education program teaching students across the nation "conservation through the arts." Revenue generated by the sales of Junior Duck Stamps funds environmental education programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 2



2010 Winner of the Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest - Abraham Hunter of Vienna, IL.

territories (American Samoa and the Virgin Islands).

More information and artwork can be found at [duckstamps.fws.gov](http://duckstamps.fws.gov) ✿

## Children's Fishing Day Recap Continued from page 11

Over seventy youth, 17 and under, participated in the event this year. The event consisted of a fishing contest, games and activities, and a fish fry for the participants and their families. After the dinner, winners of the fishing contest received certificates and every participant received a prize. These prizes were donated by local businesses.

About 58 fish were caught and brought back for measurement. The largest perch caught was 7 3/4 inches long and the largest two pike were measured at 25 3/4 inches long. Overall, the 23rd annual Children's Fishing Day was a huge success.



Photo: Children posing in the new fishing game "Pike Bite" at Children's Fishing Day. Credit: Karen Palmer, SNHA Intern.



**Seney NWR 2011 Summer Calendar  
Continued from page 8**

gates. Tours last approximately 2½ hours.

**Fascinating Fungi**

*September 4th from 1 to 4pm*

Our special guest Marilynn Smith who has a Ph.D. in Mycology, the study of fungi, will be sharing a one hour power-point presentation on fungi with a 2 hour hike following. Last year's fall rains had mushroom popping up everywhere, so let's hope for a damp fall and a wonderful day. Please call ahead of time to reserve your space for the walk, everyone is invited to join us for the power-point presentation.



**Evening Fishing**

*August 11th and 18th and September 1st and 8th from 8 - 9:30pm*

Come and join us for an evening of fishing. Fish act differently at night than they do during the day. Learn a few tips which should help you increase your likely hood of catching your dinner. The refuge has a supply of fishing poles and some tackle participants may borrow. This activity is weather dependent and will be cancelled if bad weather strikes.

**Art on the Lake**

*September 3rd from 10am - 4pm*

Seney will be at Art on the Lake in Curtis.

**Scout Day**

*Saturday, September 17th from 9 am - 4 pm*

A variety of activity stations will be available to help elementary age boys and girls fulfill scouts badge requirements and learn about wildlife. Pre-registration is required. See website or call for details and registration form ([www.fws.gov/midwest/seney](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/seney)).

**Fall Color Float**

*Sunday, October 2nd 11:00 am - 4 pm (the rain date is October 9th)*

Join one of our staff for a 4-5 hour canoe/kayak trip down the Manistique river. Boat rentals are available locally. Pre-registration is required. Call for details.

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*Saturday, September 17th from 9 am - 4 pm*

A variety of activity stations will be available to help elementary age boys and girls fulfill scouts badge requirements and learn about wildlife. Pre-registration is required. See website or call for details and registration form ([www.fws.gov/midwest/seney](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/seney)).

**National Wildlife Refuge Week**

*Week of October 9th to the 15th*

Come to your Wildlife Refuge and see what it has to offer. The Visitor Center and Marshland Wildlife Drive will remain open through October 16th. The Visitor Center is open from 9am-5pm. Amateur radio operator John Forslin will be broadcasting from the refuge during part of Wildlife Refuge week. ❁

**Nature Nut**

**Continued from page 7**



Photo: Trumpeter swans with cygnets.  
Credit: Karen Palmer, SNHA Intern.

breeding swans, which can be territorial. These congregations are similar to the single's bar or the mall, it's a place where young swans can meet other young swans and practice social behaviors until they are ready to choose a mate a begin raising cygnets.

Sincerely,  
Nature Nut

*The questions in the Nature Nut column come from questions posed by visitors. This month's nature nuts include Mandy Salminen responding to the question about sandhill cranes and whooping cranes interbreeding and Karen Palmer answering the question about trumpeter swans. ❁*

Photo: Garter snake after eating lunch. Notice the large bulge in its middle. This photo was taken at the Whitefish Point Unit of Seney NWR.  
Credit: Sara Hollerich, USFWS.





Seney Natural History Association  
1674 Refuge Entrance Road  
Seney, MI 49883



# What Bird Am I?

