

# Refuge News

Spring 2013 Newsletter

A Publication Funded by Seney

Natural History Association for its Members.

## Seney Natural History Association

### Table of Contents

Manager's Corner	1
Marshbirds, Wetlands, and Fire Ecology at Seney National Wildlife Refuge	2
Social Media	3
Introducing the Interns	4
New Websites	4
New Brochure	4
Manistique River Cleanup	5
Volunteers Lend a Helping Hand	6
Your Observations Can Help	7
Photo Contest	8
Nature Nut Column	10
Wolves in the Upper Peninsula	11
Refuge Calendar	13
Behind the Scenes	14
Removal of Pine Plantations	15

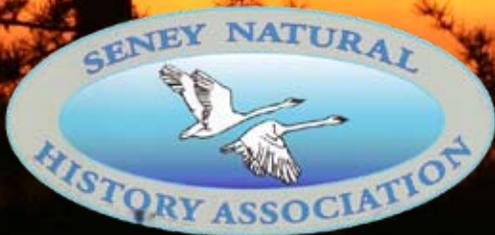


Photo: Sunset Tamarack - Dave Chase, 2012 Photo Contest.

Photo: Mark Vaniman - Sara Giles, USFWS.

### Manager's Corner

by Mark Vaniman



Yow – for a winter that didn't really get started until January it sure seemed to linger. As I write this, spring is still struggling to return. Fortunately, the things we hold dear and work so hard to protect are not driven by comfort (as are the relatively hairless *Homo sapiens*) but respond to something unknown that drives them to return, grow, reproduce and, pleasantly, add to the quality of our lives. I have been out walking on the Refuge of late and the transition is amazing. I often arrive here "with the chickens" to quote my favorite administrative staff person, and noted one day, after a silent winter, the calls, cackles, hoots, howls, burps, grunts, thumps and chirps of the myriad creatures that returned on schedule as they have done for thousands of years. This is not a quiet place. I look down and the ground, once white, is slowly returning to green. Wildflowers and other plants are poking through – looking for sunlight. Along with all of this wonderful stuff comes the black flies, the ticks, mosquitoes, weeds, and burrs. These things, although annoying, do have a place and serve a purpose, although it may be hard to appreciate. We choose to live in a wild place and in doing so accept those things that make us happy and those that annoy us.

This is a great time of year to get out and see what may be moving around. Notable sightings so far this spring include a yearling bull moose that strolled past the office one morning, a pine marten on one of our dikes, a black bear and the ever present swans, loons and geese. This list is a small part of the species list for the Seney Refuge that includes over 200 species of birds, 50 species of mammals, 17 species of fish, 20 species of reptiles and amphibians and countless insects and plants.

What are we planning for this summer? We will be hosting a Youth Conservation Corps again and have many projects planned for them including improving the accessibility of the Pine Ridge Nature Trail. Our fire program has several prescribed fires planned and we will let staff, volunteers and visitors know when these burns will be conducted. However, whenever you see smoke anywhere on the Refuge please let a staff person know immediately. We have some timber sales scheduled as we continue to manage the land as detailed in our Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and have scheduled a large project on the Riverside Dike. We will be cutting several breaks in the dike in order to restore water flow into the Driggs River. We have a PhD student monitoring the project

Continued on page 3

*Seney Natural History  
Association  
Board of Directors 2013*

*President*  
Dee Phinney

*Vice President*  
Tom Kenney

*Treasurer*  
Nancy Strawe

*Secretary*  
Joe Kolder

*Directors*  
George Phinney  
Pat Foldenauer  
David Fleischmann  
Liz Hill  
Laura Gasaway

*Book Store Manager*  
Claudia Slater

*Refuge Manager*  
Mark Vaniman

*Friends' Liaisons*  
Sara Giles  
Jennifer McDonough

*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/refuge/seney](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney)

*Refuge Email:*  
seney@fws.gov

*Photo: Morning Reflection - Canada  
Geese - Fred Gaunt, 2012 Photo  
Contest.*

# Marshbirds, Wetlands, and Fire Ecology at Seney National Wildlife Refuge

by Emily Grover  
College of Wooster

## What Are Secretive Marsh Birds?

Secretive marshbirds inhabit the wetlands of Seney National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and hide in the tall grasses and dense vegetation during the breeding season. They are so secretive that it is often difficult to track and monitor the various species.

Secretive marshbirds are also migratory birds. They live in Refuge wetlands during the breeding season, but migrate to places such as the south Atlantic Coast or Gulf Coast for the winter. Some may even migrate as far as Panama.

Due to decreases in the amount of emergent wetland habitats in North America during the past century, and consequently decreases in populations of marshbirds, populations of the birds at Seney NWR are important to the State of Michigan, regionally and nationally. The Refuge participates in the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Program.

The goals of this program include:

- evaluating population trends for marshbird species,
- improving our understanding of marshbird distribution and abundance, and
- informing conservation decision-making at many different geographic scales.

These surveys are conducted between May and June each year, with survey points randomly selected in the wetlands of Seney NWR by colleagues at the Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

Marshbird species of interest include the Yellow Rail, Le Conte's Sparrow, Sedge Wren and American Bittern. The American Bittern is a good example of a secretive marshbird because it prefers tall, dense cover for its well-concealed nesting sites. The bird also prefers dense vegetation that has not been annually mowed, grazed, or burned, and for this reason seeks the wetlands between periods of drought. American Bitterns rely on stealth more than pursuit when foraging, and they can wait motionless for hours just to catch their prey. They also use low-frequency echoing calls to communicate with other birds within the thick vegetation that



Many marshbirds including the American Bittern nest at the Refuge. Photo: American Bittern - © Teresa McGill.



Prescribed fire is used as a management technique to keep wetlands free of unwanted shrubs and vegetation.  
Photo: USFWS.



Fire may be used during dry periods when the land is burnable.  
Photo: USFWS.

covers their wetland nesting habitats.

### **Wetland and Fire Ecology**

The Refuge contains both open wetlands and scrub-shrub wetlands. Management goals include managing the open wetlands 1) to increase the acreage of this type of habitat in order to prevent it from succeeding into the scrub-shrub wetland habitat or other kinds of habitat and 2) to reduce encroachment of the invasive shrub, glossy buckthorn. At present, open wetland habitat is dominated by sedges, or grass-like plants, and within these sedges are small stands or pockets of bluejoint grass, cattail, leatherleaf, and sphagnum hummocks, all species of vegetation that cover the wetlands. Shrub species in these sedge-dominated systems are generally tolerant of fire – especially leatherleaf – unless the fire is severe enough to kill the growth points of these plants near or just below the surface. Prescribed and natural fires are being used as a management strategy when and where management staff deems it appropriate to try to keep shrubs from invading the open wetland acreage. When periods of drought occur, the wetlands dry up and become burnable, allowing an opportunity for either natural fire or low or mixed-severity prescribed fire.

The goal for managing the scrub-shrub wetlands is to reduce the acreage of this area through the use of prescribed fire. Historically, the Refuge had large expanses of fens, or low marshy areas with a continual flow of surface water, which were dominated by sedge species. However, many years of fire suppression and altered hydrology have enabled the encroachment of trees and shrubs into these open fens, including the invasive glossy buckthorn, as in the open wetlands. One management strategy to combat the shrubs involves modifying annual burn plans to define target areas of wetland that are most vulnerable. ❁

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

so that we can assess the effectiveness of the dike removal and the resulting release of spring runoff. Our CCP states that: “Any pool that is not contributing to the life history strategies of the Region 3 Conservation Priority Species list or inhibits the natural function and processes of wetlands on a landscape scale will be considered for removal.” The pools identified include the spur pools (affected in the Riverside Dike project), the Delta Creek Pool and T-2 East. Initiation and completion of these projects will be dictated by funding and other considerations. And, as always, working in the background, is our maintenance crew, largely responsible for the roads we drive, the buildings we use and essentially keeping the Seney infrastructure in good shape for our visitors and other Refuge customers.

Spring is a great time of year and Seney is a great place to come and recharge after a seemingly long winter. The Visitor Center and Auto tour are open and our knowledgeable, cheerful and amazing volunteer crew has returned to help plan and improve your visit. Stop in anytime – the Refuge is open dawn to dusk and the Visitor center hours are 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, seven days a week, including holidays. ❁

## **Social Media**

Join the fun and stay up to date on what is happening at the Refuge. Facebook allows us to interact with the public by answering their questions, posing observations, fun facts, and even historical photos. Flickr is a photo sharing website where we post photos for the public to enjoy.



Facebook: [facebook.com/seneyrefuge](https://facebook.com/seneyrefuge)  
Flickr: [flickr.com/photos/seneynwr](https://flickr.com/photos/seneynwr)

# Introducing the Interns



## **Dawn Marsh**

*Visitor Services and Applied Sciences Intern*

*May 9th to August 8th*

*Hometown: Greenville, MI*

Hello, my name is Dawn Marsh and I am the 12 week Visitor Services Intern. I had a fantastic time last year and I can't wait to learn more about the Refuge. This summer I hope to improve my interpretation skills as well as continue to gain valuable experience. I call Marquette home, but I am originally from Greenville, Michigan. I am currently a senior at Northern Michigan University where I am majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Biology. When I graduate I plan on pursuing a masters degree in wildlife management so I can pursue my passion for birds. When I am not studying, I volunteer at MooseWood Nature Center and observe birds through my binoculars or camera.



## **Ronald "Ronnie" Allen**

*Visitor Services Intern*

*May 8th to October 20th*

*Hometown: Harrison Township, MI*

Raised in Harrison Township, Michigan on the coast of Lake St. Clair. I attended L'Anse Creuse Public Schools until graduating in the May of 2009. The first year out of high school I enrolled at Macomb Community College. I took a few courses with no specific goal or direction. I then discovered Northern Michigan University (NMU) and have been actively completing my degree in Environmental Conservation since the Fall of 2010.

Ronnie (left) with his brother on vacation in Texas.

This summer I will be working as the 24 week Visitor Services Intern. I am very excited to work with Sara Giles, my supervisor at the Visitor Services Center. Over the course of the summer I hope to become engaged in every task possible. Working at the Refuge will provide a whole new experience for me. Learning as much as I can this summer is my #1 goal, closely followed by having fun!

Since I have been chosen as the 24 week intern I will continue to work into the Fall. While working at Seney during the Fall, I will also be finishing my course work at NMU. Albeit my time commitment made to the Refuge and my school work will be exhaustive I think that it will a great time.

## **New Websites**

All U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service websites in the Region have had a face-lift, including Seney. Check out the new website at [www.fws.gov/refuge/seney](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney). We are always open to suggestions on how to make our website the best. Share your suggestions at [seney@fws.gov](mailto:seney@fws.gov).

## **New Brochure**

Seney National Wildlife Refuge has a brand new general brochure and it looks great. In March a contest was held to select a new photo for the cover. Laura Wong won with her stunning photo of two pileated woodpecker chicks. See the new brochure at [www.fws.gov/refuge/seney/publications.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney/publications.html).

## **Emily Gavard**

*Applied Science Intern*

*Hometown: Chicago, Illinois*

I was born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago. In May 2013, I will graduate from Wheaton College, where I am a Biology major. In the summer of 2013 I will be an Applied Sciences Intern at Seney National Wildlife Refuge, where I will work with Dr. Greg Corace. I am very excited to gain more field experience in Ecology, and especially to hone my plant and bird identification skills. In the Fall, I will begin my graduate work in Conservation Biology at SUNY-ESF in Syracuse, NY. There I will be working on a restoration project for the New England Cottontail, specifically looking at parasitology and nutrition.



## **Nick Marengo**

*Applied Science Intern*

*Hometown: Port Huron, Michigan*

Hi: My name is Nick Marengo and I am from Port Huron, MI. I recently graduated from Wayne State University with a major in Environmental Science and a minor in Geology. While at the Refuge this summer, I am interested in learning invasive plant management strategies and commercial pesticide applicator techniques. After the summer is over, I hope to find a job with the USFWS.

Photo: Nick Marengo - Jennifer McDonough,USFWS ☼

# Join Seney National Wildlife Refuge on the **Manistique River Cleanup**

Sponsored by: Michigan's Volunteer River, Stream and Creek Cleanup Program: Administered by The Great Lakes Commission for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Germfask Township, Seney Natural History Association and Seney National Wildlife Refuge



© Tom Kenney

**When:** Saturday, July 20th, 2013;  
Two Sessions

**Where:** 10am ~ 3:30pm and 10am ~ 1:30pm

**How:** Manistique River

**Why:**

- Paddling the Manistique River in canoes
- Maintain a healthy Manistique River

**Who:** You! And any of your friends and family

**Cost:** Free! Lunch provided, boats provided, and complimentary t-shirts

To volunteer, call or e-mail the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center.  
(906) 586-9851 ext. 15 - Seney@fws.gov

# Volunteers Lend a Helping Hand

by Jennifer McDonough

Applied Sciences Intern Nick Marengo and several volunteers battled the season's first mosquitoes to assist with the planting of red pine seedlings and the setting up of monitoring plots. This planting was done in an opening along the Driggs River Road, just north of the Red Pine Research Natural Area. The opening was once a mixed-pine forest, but had been cut and replanted with red oak for the purposes of feeding wildlife years ago. The oaks did not survive, and management practices have changed over the years, so we are planting red pine to kickstart some regeneration of this species; nature will slowly fill in the rest. We are not planting in rows and we are not making a plantation. We are attempting to enhance the red pine component of an area that was once red pine-dominated. Seedlings were planted in two circular plots, 250 seedlings per plot. The plots will be monitored to determine the survival rate of the seedlings. Knowing survival rates will help staff decide whether planting is a worthy investment. ☘



Upper Left: Volunteers Katelynn Cordero and Gary Barrett defend themselves against the onslaught of mosquitoes.

Upper Right: Volunteers Katelynn Cordero and Gary Barrett work with Applied Sciences intern Nick Marengo to plant red pine seedlings.

Lower Left: Volunteers Bill and Karen Munding help plant 500 red pine seedlings.

Lower Right: Greg Corace, Refuge Biologist, guides Nick Marengo through the process of setting up a monitoring plot.

# Your Observations Can Help

by Jennifer McDonough

Learning to identify invasive plants means more sets of eyes available for detecting early invasions of these species.

There are hundreds of plants that have evolved elsewhere, but have been brought to Michigan since European settlement. Most of these cause no serious environmental or economic harm, but a small fraction of them can be very aggressive, spread rapidly once established, and outcompete native plants for space and resources. Identifying and responding to these invaders early, while their numbers are few and they are not well established, gives land managers a chance to actually manage them more effectively.

These three invasive plant species are of concern in the Eastern Upper Peninsula and are typically flowering, or starting to flower, around this time. If you see them on the Refuge please report them to a staff member.

## Garlic mustard *Alliaria petiolata*



Garlic Mustard, © Tony Atkin, MediaWiki



Garlic Mustard, © Sannse, MediaWiki



Garlic Mustard, © John Fielding, MediaWiki

This biennial herb is found in forests, roadsides and stream banks; areas with shade to full sun. The four petaled, x-shaped flowers bloom in May and June. During this plant's first year the leaves are kidney shaped, the second year they are triangular in shape. The crushed leaves smell like garlic and the greens are edible when cooked.

## Leafy Spurge *Euphorbia esula*



Leafy Spurge, © Bas Kers, Flickr Creative Commons



Leafy Spurge, © Matt Lavin, Flickr Creative Commons



Leafy Spurge, © Matt Lavin, Flickr Creative Commons

This perennial herb is found in roadsides, prairies, gravel pits and other dry open areas. The small yellowish green flowers form a cup-like shape, are located near the top of the plant, and bloom in June and July. The 1-4 inch long oval shaped leaves are located in an alternate pattern along the stem and are bluish green in color. The stems and leaves release a milky sap when broken.

Continued on page 12

# Seney National Wildlife Refuge

## 2013 Amateur Photo Contest

You're invited to participate in Seney National Wildlife Refuge's Amateur Photo Contest. The sole purpose of the contest is to encourage you to visit and enjoy the Refuge. Up to five entries (total) per person may be submitted - no more than three per category with exception of the youth category. The Special Assignment category will change each year. Photos may depict any of the following categories:

1. **Wildlife (Mammals, Birds, Reptiles & Amphibians, Spiders, Insects, etc.)**
2. **Public Use/Recreation**
3. **Landscape**
4. **Plants/Plant Like Organisms (Wildflowers, Lichens, Mushrooms, Liverworts, etc.)**
5. **Special Assignment 2013: Black and White / Special Assignment 2014: Camouflage**
6. **Youth (18 and under)**

The photos will be displayed at the Visitor Center in September and October and on Seney's Flickr page ([www.flickr.com/seneynwr](http://www.flickr.com/seneynwr)). Credit will be given to each of the contestants once the voting has been completed. The public will vote for their favorites in each of the categories. You may cast your vote at the Visitor Center or online. Voting will begin by September 10th and end on October 15th. To vote online check out the photos on the Flickr website ([www.flickr.com/seneynwr](http://www.flickr.com/seneynwr)) then follow the special instructions. Certificates, ribbons and prizes (e.g. books, t-shirts, posters) will be awarded. See page two for rules and regulations.

For further information please call (906) 586-9851 ext.15.

### The 2012 1st Place Winners

#### **Plants**

Barbara Hysell



#### **Wildlife**

Amy Widenhofer



#### **Special Assignment Macro**

Conrad Warren



#### **Youth**

Sigurd Utych



#### **Public Use/Recreation**

Keri Boothe



#### **Landscape**

John Hysell

# Contest Rules and Regulations

1. All entries must be photographs taken at Seney National Wildlife Refuge or the Whitefish Point Unit.
2. Up to five entries (total) per person may be submitted - no more than three per category with exception to the youth category. Youth may enter up to five photos in their age bracket.
3. Photographers must be non-professional; this is an amateur contest. For the purposes of this photography contest, a professional photographer is considered to be a photographer who has clients, depends on photography for their income, markets their services and/or writes off their expenses as a business owner.
4. All photographs should be submitted as an **electronic copy (please send the highest resolution possible) AND in a printed format 5"x7", 8"x10" or 8"x12"**. Any photos not in accordance with size restrictions are subject to cropping. Black and white or color photos are acceptable. If you are unable to submit an electronic copy of your photo Refuge staff will scan the photo for you. Note that scanned photos are not always as high quality as photos submitted electronically. Photos may not be matted nor should there be any frame or border surrounding the photo (digital or otherwise). Photos may not display the name of the photographer on the front of the photograph.
5. Mail or deliver the printed entries to:  
Seney National Wildlife Refuge  
c/o Photo Contest  
1674 Refuge Entrance Road  
Seney, MI 49883
6. Electronic copies may be mailed with the printed copy or emailed to [seneysvs@gmail.com](mailto:seneysvs@gmail.com), the subject line should read "Photo Contest". Entries are accepted year round.
7. On the back of the printed photo, please attach a signed permission form with your contact information. Photos lacking the signed permission form will be disqualified.
8. All entries must be received by August 31, or they will be entered in the following year's contest.
9. Digitally altered photos - other than slight color correction (i.e. brightness or contrast) or a shift to black and white - will be disqualified.
10. Anyone whose photo has been disqualified will be notified before the voting begins.
11. If a minor is pictured in a photo an "Agreement of Use of Likeness in Service Products" (USFWS form 3-2260) must accompany the entry forms can be found at (<http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-2260.pdf>), copies can also be found at the Visitor Center or mailed to requesting individuals.
12. All entries will be retained by the Refuge and may be used for a variety of reasons including but not limited to non-profit publications, webpages and presentations.
13. While extreme care will be taken in handling all entries, the Refuge cannot be responsible for any damage to photographs.

**Online Voting:** Cast your vote for your favorite photos from September 10th to October 20th. See the website for information on how to cast your vote. [www.fws.gov/refuge/seney/events/photo\\_contest.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney/events/photo_contest.html)

Detach Here

Detach Here

Title of Photo: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle Category Entered: **Wildlife; Public Use/Recreation; Landscape; Plants; Special Assignment; and Youth**

I, the provider, affirm that the photo described on this sheet, was taken by me alone in my private capacity and automatically qualifies for a U.S. copyright. I agree to irrevocably dedicate those copyrights to the public domain. As a result of the image being in the public domain, the USFWS, or anyone else, may freely publish, reproduce, use and/or distribute this image in any media without your approval or permission, with no monetary compensation to you and without temporal or geographic restriction. However, if the USFWS uses this image, it agrees to credit the provider where possible. I, the provider, understand that if the foregoing representations concerning copyright ownership is determined to be incorrect or false, resulting in the USFWS, the U.S. Government, or Seney Natural History Association being sued for copyright infringement, I agree to indemnify the USFWS, the U.S. Government, and/or the Seney Natural History Association for any resulting expenses arising from defending and/or settling such litigation. If you would like to grant restricted usage rights to your photo you may fill out FWS Form 3-2259 available on the internet (<http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-2259.pdf>). Please attach a copy of the form, as well as the information listed above, to back of each hard copy photo you submit.

I agree to the above full copyright release - Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If a minor (17 & under) has taken the photo a parent or guardian of the minor must give their permission by signing above. If a minor is pictured in a photo an "Agreement of Use of Likeness in Service Products" (USFWS form 3-2260) must accompany the entry forms can be found at (<http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-2260.pdf>), copies can also be found at the Visitor Center or mailed to requesting individuals.

# Nature Nut Column

Dear Nature Nut,

Lounging on my back porch Sunday morning I noticed a groundhog in the backyard. I'm wondering how deep do groundhogs burrow?

Signed,  
Sunday Lounger

Dear Sunday Lounger,

What an excellent question, Sunday Lounger. Groundhogs tend to be very busy rodents digging their way around in the dirt. In most cases there are limited access points to one den. Usually groundhogs, often called woodchucks or whistle-pigs, will live on their own. While groundhogs may have 2-5 entrances to their dens, they tend to use one main entrance leaving the other entrances for emergency getaways.

Although groundhogs are very active during the spring, summer and fall, they don't do much in the winter. As a hibernating animal, the groundhog will eat large amounts of vegetation in order to gain enough body fat for the winter hibernation. In a cozy little corner of the den the groundhog will blockade itself in a self-containing den. While hibernating, between 3-6 months, a groundhog will survive alone on stored fat built up from the fall. In early spring the groundhogs will once again make their appearance in our yards,



Groundhog - Jonathan Crowe,  
Flickr Creative Commons

foraging for newly sprouted plants and vegetation. During the summer months they will work on their dens which can be between 5 and 14 feet deep with over 40 feet of tunnels.

Best,  
The Nature Nut

Dear Nature Nut,

As a fellow corvid, I have taken an interest in the American crow and common raven. In doing so, I have discovered that I have great difficulty distinguishing differences between the two species. Also, I've never been invited to a house warming party, so I would like to know where they build their nests and how I can find them. What are the key differences between the two and where do they nest?

Signed,  
Nosy Blue Jay

Dear Nosy Blue Jay,

Being from the same genus, the American crow and the common raven look very similar. However, there are a few key differences that set the two apart. If you happen to see the two together, the common raven is, on average, 1.5x larger than the American crow. When the species are separate, behavior, calls, and tail shape can be used to distinguish the two. American crows are more social and continuously beat their wings in flight. Common ravens appear almost hawk-like in flight because they tend to soar. In the air, the species can be identified by tail feather arrangement. Ravens have longer central retrices (tail feathers) and shorter outer feathers giving their tail a wedge-like appearance. In contrast, a crow's tail feathers appear to be squared off. The distinctive vocalizations of the species make them easy to identify. Crows are known for their characteristic "caw" and ravens produce a hoarse call, "cr-r-ruck".

In regards to their nesting behaviors, American crow nests are often found in conifers that are over thirty feet in height and are built close to the trunk in a location that is near the crown of the tree. Nests can be up to two feet wide and are often constructed using bark fibers, moss, leaves, fur, and grasses. American crows rebuild their nests every year. The common raven nests commonly in pine trees and along cliff ledges. Their nests can be up to four feet in di-

Continued on page 15

# Wolves in the Upper Peninsula

by Sally Western

Say “wolf” in the Upper Peninsula, and, like a candle abruptly doused with gasoline, laid-back conversation erupts into heated argument. Some respond with disdain, scorning the wolf as a livestock-murdering, deer population-decimating killer. Others love the wolf for its mystique and important presence in the region’s ecological web. But what are the facts? Since the 1960s, wolves have gone from near-extinction to a now-flourishing population in the Western Great Lakes region. Along the way, every point of their existence has been scrutinized, debated, and researched. These strenuous efforts have revealed the importance of understanding wolves’ place in America’s ecosystems and their relationship with humans.

The gray wolf, also called the timber wolf, is a particularly large species. Adult males measure up to six feet long, and average 70 to 115 pounds. Females are only slightly smaller. That’s roughly twice the size of a coyote! A hardy and adaptive species, the gray wolf originally roamed throughout nearly all of North America. But humans—Europeans and their descendants in particular—have historically hated wolves. Americans proved to be no exception. In the 1800s, the U.S. wolf population declined as the human population grew. Wolves turned to eating domestic cattle and sheep as new settlers diminished their once abundant food sources of beaver, deer, bison, and moose.

Wolves were no match for armed humans. Considered a pest and a threat to economic prosperity, wolves were hunted, trapped and poisoned. The growing demand for wolf pelts, buoyed by the European fur market, drove many to kill wolves for profit. Federal and state governments even offered bounties for dead wolves, a practice that continued in to the 1960s. By this time, with the exception of a small population on Isle Royal and in far northern Minnesota, the gray wolf disappeared from the Western Great Lakes region and the entirety of the lower 48 states.

Fortunately, the decimated wolf population caught congressional attention. Shortly after the Endangered Species Act (ESA) passed in 1973, wolves received official endangered status. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the agency charged with managing federally endangered species, joined

with state agencies to establish management plans and research operations that would increase the gray wolf population. Killing a wolf, except under special circumstances overseen by management agencies, was declared illegal.

Wolves, though, were never formally reintroduced in Michigan. Local DNR biologist Kristie Sitar rebuts conspiracy theorists, saying, “there were no black helicopters delivering wolves on covert midnight missions.” Instead, as the decades passed, Minnesota’s tiny surviving packs grew, dispersed, and migrated through Wisconsin. In the 1970s, biologists began to report sightings of single wolves in the Upper Peninsula. Finally, the first wolf couple arrived in the late 1980s, and birthed a litter in 1991. Wolf populations have steadily increased ever since.

Wolves in the Western Great Lakes region have made a strong comeback. Indeed, outside of Alaska, the wide majority of U.S. wolves now live in the Western Great Lakes region. By 2010, there were approximately 687 wolves in Michigan alone. In response, the FWS delisted the gray wolf as an Endangered Species for the Western Great Lakes region in January 2012. Here in Michigan, our state wildlife management agency, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), continues to monitor the gray wolf population to ensure its success.

Though wolves have gained more support since their days of mass extermination, they are still widely vilified as killers. No denying, the wolf is an apex predator of carnivorous appetites; it must kill or perish. As a result, some livestock farmers in the U.P. have struggled with wolf depredation issues. But the DNR attends carefully to these cases, providing assistance with guard animals, fences and other protective strategies.

Tensions also rise when wolves intermittently wander on to someone’s porch or down a suburban street. Yet close proximity to humans does not mean imminent danger. Sitar asserts, “It isn’t as though they’re stalking people, licking their chops, waiting for an opportunity to strike.” But, since wolves can pose a threat to livestock (and the occasional dog), the DNR has approved wolf hunting to carefully target these areas and instill a fear of humans in over-curious wolves.

When wolves do grow curious of their

neighbors, an attack on humans is highly unlikely. There is not a single report of a human wolf attack in the contiguous U.S. Far more often, wolves shy from close human contact. In truth, people are more likely to be attacked by a bear or cougar.

Despite the stigma wolves carry, they do play an important role in the Western Great Lakes region's ecology. Like other indigenous species, they are a vital part of a natural system, and there is a particular reason for their existence. Wolves target the weak members of deer herds, ensuring that primarily healthy genes are passed on. Eagles, ravens, coyotes, and foxes thrive on the leftovers from wolf kills. Seney National Wildlife Refuge manager Mark Vaniman states, "wolves are not the enemy...they have a place."

Several small wolf packs use the Seney refuge throughout the year. Some migrate with deer herds and others dip in and out of the Wilderness bordering Seney's western end. "We don't manage for one species here," says Vaniman. "We manage for the suite of species one would find in a healthy habitat." The DNR collars and tracks the Seney wolves for study,

but otherwise, as Vaniman says, "we let them have the run of the place."

Not all regions of the U.P. have the luxury of letting wolves run uninhibited, but a vibrant wolf population goes part and parcel with the wildness that people treasure here. Humans must both prosper and cause less harm to the natural world; wolf controversy is but one facet of this struggle. "Even little fuzzy animals have conflicts with humans," reminds Vaniman. The wolf, a larger fuzzy creature of the animal kingdom, simply demands stronger attention in order to exist alongside humankind in its modern complexity. ❁



Gray Wolf - Karen Palmer, SNHA

**Your Observations Can Help  
Continued from Page 7**

**Wild parsnip *Pastinaca sativa***



Wild Parsnip, © Magnus Manske, Flickr Creative Commons

Wild Parsnip, © Steven Cross, Flickr Creative Commons

Wild Parsnip, © inaweofgodscreeation, Flickr Creative Commons

This herb is found in pastures, fields, fens and other open sunny areas, it does not tolerate shade. The five petaled yellow flowers, which bloom in June and July, are arranged in a flat cluster like many other members of the carrot family. Often times the side flowers are taller than the central one. Leaves are arranged alternately along the stem and are pinnately compound, each leaflet that makes up the compound leaf is smooth, oval and toothed along the edges and there are 5-15 leaflets per leaf. **WARNING:** When on your skin, the sap from this plant can cause rashes, blisters and skin discoloration in the presence of sunlight.

# Seney National Wildlife Refuge

## 2013 General Calendar

### Amateur Photo Tours

Thursdays June - August

7 to 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. **Preregister by noon the previous day by calling 906-586-9851 x 15 or at the Visitor Center.**



Photographer - Julie Christiansen, Photo Contest

### Wildlife Wednesdays

Wednesday Nights June – August

7 to 9:30pm

Join us Wednesdays this summer for an evening guided auto tour of the Refuge backcountry. We'll be on the lookout for a variety of wildlife, while sharing Refuge history and management practices.

### Children's Fishing Day

Saturday, June 22

9am to 4pm

Join us for the 24th annual Children's Fishing Day. Youth 17 and under are invited to fish the Refuge pools. Youth 16 and under do not need a fishing license. Certificates will be awarded to the largest perch and pike. A limited number of poles will be available at the Visitor Center. Activities include games, arts & crafts, presentations, etc. Registration begins at 9am and entries are accepted until 2pm. A free fish dinner and awards ceremony will conclude the festivities.



Boy with fish - Dawn Marsh, Intern.

### Junior Duck Stamp Art Exhibit

July 3 to the 28

9am to 5pm, Daily

Community members and visitors alike should mark their calendars for this exhibition of original art work by kids from across the country. The first place winners from each state and U.S. territory will be on display.

### Nature Programs

Various dates & times

Staff and interns will present programs and tours on a variety of topics. Check the website monthly for locations, times and dates. ([www.fws.gov/refuge/Seney/Events.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Seney/Events.html))

### Monday Morning Tours

Mondays, July & August

9am to 3pm

Would you like to get more out of your trip to Seney National Wildlife Refuge? Some wildlife can be difficult to see, but trained staff and volunteers know where to look or listen. Join us Monday Mornings at 10:00 am to experience a guided tour of the Refuge. The tour will take approximately 2 to 2 ½ hours. We will be on the lookout for a variety of wildlife while sharing information on the animals we see, the history of the Refuge and current management practices.

### Amateur Photo Contest

Last day to enter is August 31

The purpose of the contest is to encourage you to visit and enjoy the Refuge. When on display for voting the entries create an incredible array of Refuge experiences. Details can be found in the Visitor Center or on our website.

### Youth In the Outdoors

For elementary age boys & girls

Saturday, September 29th

9am to 4pm

On September 28th, 2013 the refuge will host "Youth in the Outdoors." This event is a spinoff from our annual "Scout Activity Day." The day is designed to get youth out into the refuge to explore and learn. Participants may choose from a variety of sessions. The event is open to kids ages 7-17. Pre-registration and a \$5 registration fee are required. Some activities may have an additional charge.

### Fall Color Float

Saturday, October 5

11am to 4pm

Join our staff for a 4-5 hour canoe/kayak trip down the Manistique River. Boat rentals are available locally.

**Preregistration is required.**

Call for details.



Float on the river - Tom Kenney.

### National Wildlife Refuge Week

Week of October 13 to the 19

Lace up your hiking shoes, strap on your bike helmet, grab your binoculars, launch your boat in the river, drive your car.... whatever your passion, come to the Refuge and enjoy your great outdoors!

# Behind the Scenes...

## Summer Lecture Series at Seney National Wildlife Refuge

This summer, the Refuge is offering a series of evening programs from guest presenters. This series of evening presentations covers a variety of topics including research and monitoring projects occurring on the Refuge. All presentations will be located in the Visitor Center auditorium.

### JULY

Thursday July 18th. 7:00pm - 8:30pm

#### COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF INVASIVE PLANTS

##### IN THE CENTRAL U.P.

What is a cooperative weed management area and what does it do? What is the top priority non-native plant species in the Seney National Wildlife Refuge and the central Upper Peninsula? This presentation will answer these questions as well as discuss local cooperative weed management goals, partners, activities and accomplishments.

**Presenter: Allyson Dale, Coordinator, Central Upper Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area**

#### FILMING TRUMPETER SWANS

This mix of behind the scenes observations and stories will provide an inside look at what it's like to create a wildlife film along with fantastic footage of the swans at Seney National Wildlife Refuge. The Harrymans have been filming swans at Seney for three years now and will be using this footage for their film "Return of the Trumpeters".

**Presenter: Steve & Char Harryman, Filmmakers, Wildlife America Films**



Trumpeter Swan & Cygnet,  
© John McDowell

### AUGUST

Thursday August

15th. 7:00pm - 8:30pm

#### A COMPARISON OF CURRENT AND PRE-SETTLEMENT JACK PINE-DOMINATED ECOSYSTEMS IN NORTHERN LOWER MICHIGAN.

The federally-endangered Kirtland's warbler nests in young jack pine-dominated ecosystems of Michigan, which were historically maintained by large, frequent wildfires. However, fire suppression has made the management of jack pine plantations necessary since the 1970's. We used survey data to map 19th century jack pine forests to compare with current plantations in northern Lower Michigan in order to determine ecological changes resulting from plantation management. Recent population increases of the Kirtland's warbler may create an opportunity to reconsider current management practices

in favor of ecologically-based management that more closely emulates the pre-settlement landscape modeled by this study.

**Presenter: Madelyn Tucker, Doctoral Student, Wayne State University**

#### WHAT CAN DNA TELL US ABOUT SENEY LOONS?

The long-term research on the loon population at Seney National Wildlife Refuge has provided novel insights into loon biology, but it also resulted in an archive of hundreds of blood and feather samples collected over 20 years. Those samples - along with samples from other loons from across North America - have now been genetically analyzed, and this information provides some new information regarding loon breeding, migrating and wintering biology. This talk will cover some of these new results, and place them into context of what we already know about the Seney loons given the important ongoing loon research efforts at the refuge.

**Presenter: Dr. Alec Lindsay, Biology Professor, Northern Michigan University**



Common Loon - © Teresa McGill

### SEPTEMBER

Thursday September 12th. 7:00pm - 8:30pm

#### WETLAND RESTORATION EFFECTS ON HYDROLOGY, WATER CHEMISTRY, AND GAS FLUX IN SENEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Seney National Wildlife Refuge is dominated by wetlands interspersed with upland forests and other cover types. The wetlands have been heavily impacted by human activities, such as the series of dikes constructed to create pools for waterfowl habitat. The dikes have intercepted normal ground and surface water flow and have changed the

hydrology and carbon dynamics of the system. This study is examining current hydrology and carbon dynamics and how they change when hydrologic function is restored to pre-dike conditions. Results to date will be presented.

**Presenter: Meral Jackson, Doctoral Student, Michigan Technological University**

### WHAT'S IN THE AIR?

Most visitors expect clean air and good visibility in wildlife refuges but Seney is affected by regional urban and industrial areas and biomass burning. Air pollutants can harm natural and scenic resources in the refuge such as surface waters, plants, soils, fish, birds, animals, and visibility. In 1978, Congress acknowledged the uniqueness of the Seney Wilderness by naming it as a Class I air quality area and since 2000 the US Fish and Wildlife Service has worked with several other programs to monitor and better understand air quality at Seney National Wildlife Refuge. This presentation will provide an overview of the air quality monitoring program at the Refuge.

**Presenter: Jim Patton and Don Gardner, Air Monitoring Station Volunteers, Seney NWR**



Fire Tower,  
© John Hysell

### **Nature Nut Continued from page 10**

ameter and are loosely constructed out of broken branches. Raven nests are generally discovered because of the increased number of fallen branches around the base of a tree and common ravens have been known to return to previous nest sites.

I hope this helps!

Best of luck,  
The Nature Nut

*The questions in the Nature Nut column come from questions posed by visitors. This month the nature nut column was written by Ronald Allen (ground-hogs) and Dawn Marsh (crows and ravens), Visitor Services Interns. If you have a question you would like the Nature Nut to answer email Sara\_Giles@fws.gov. ❁*

# Removal of Pine Plantations

by Sara Giles

Several years ago pine plantations were planted near the Conlon Farm and Sub-Headquarters (Robinson Road) to serve as a visual block to portions of the Refuge. These pines were planted on soils that support hardwood forests and the Comprehensive Conservation Plan of 2009 has called for the restoration of those fields as well as the area planted to pines. To jump-start this process the pines will be removed this summer. Other efforts to speed the field's transformation from grassland to hardwood forest include disking the turf so seeds will be able to reach the soil without drying out and cutting aspen to increase suckering. Hopefully, over the decades these fields will return to their former hardwood forest ecosystems.



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



## 24th Annual Children's Fishing Day!

Bring the whole family to Catch the Excitement at Seney National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday June 22nd, 2013



Children 16 years of age and younger can participate  
Free Fish Dinner for Participants and their Families  
Limited amount of Poles and Bait Available  
Raffle Prizes, Games, Activities, and More!

9am-2pm: Registration, Fish Measuring, and Fishing Stations Open  
12pm-3pm: Games and Activities  
3pm: Fish Dinner and Awards Ceremony

Photos: Jan Barrett and  
Jeremy Maslowski.