



Near Stop 5, Blackbird Auto Tour

Observation Deck Now Open

The new Blackbird Lake Observation Deck was officially opened during the Tamarac Fall Open House September 30.

Funding was made possible by a National Visitor Enhancement Initiative through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Tamarac's observation deck project was chosen based on a growing public use program and a successful volunteer program. Tamarac was awarded \$40,000 to complete the project.

The deck was designed by architect Fred Drenko and built by David Anderson, Ron Jenson, Allen Turcotte, Brad Bremer, Dean McBride, Neal Engbloom, and Josh Hiltwein. Thanks to the donation of the design and construction work, hundreds of dollars were saved. From these funds, it was possible to purchase three outdoor spotting scopes, one

field spotting scope, seven pair of binoculars for educational programs, and several interpretive signs. Photos of the deck's construction can be viewed on TIA's website(www.tamaracfriends.org).

The deck is located near stop 5 along the Blackbird Auto Tour. A gravel parking area is available on the right side of the road with a short, easy 100' trail up to the hill where the deck sits. This short walk has been named the Woodpecker Trail and has interpretive signs along the path. Accessible parking is available at the top of the hill on the left side of the road where the deck is located. The deck features two benches and one spotting scope. An additional spotting scope is planned. Over the last couple weeks the observation deck has been a perfect place to observe a dozen or more trumpeter swans out on Blackbird Lake.



Barbara Boyle does the honors at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the new observation deck located near stop 5 on the Blackbird Auto Tour. Also present for the occasion were, from left: **Ron Jenson, Alan Turcotte, Boyle, Dave Anderson, and Fred Drenko.**

Newsletter Takes a New Direction

President's Corner by Rosie Greenland

Introducing...

This issue of *Tamarac Highlights* marks a change in the content and management of the newsletter. The TIA Board will now directly oversee these two areas.

Tamarac Highlights, is, after all, your newsletter. We want to strive for a healthy mix of articles and information by and about TIA members, volunteers, and refuge staff. If you have thoughts and ideas about our newsletter or ideas on articles, please e-mail them to the website e-mail address at tamaracweb@yahoo.com. You can also mention your thoughts and ideas to any board member. The list of board members can be found on this page.

Personally, I have enjoyed reading some of the wildlife biology reports by refuge staff; and we hope we can continue this. In this issue we feature an article by Barbara Boyle and her Fish and Wildlife Service delegation trip to China. I also have enjoyed reading the thoughtful prose by George Weatherston, which we again feature in this issue.

The refuge system faces many challenges, even locally, and in this edition Penny Nielsen describes our new Advocacy Committee and recent refuge threats. This issue also marks the beginning of highlighting some of the great books and other items in our Nature Gift Shop and Bookstore. Finally, we will try to use more photographs, even if it's yours truly with the door prize zucchini.

Our TIA newsletter will continue to be mailed only to paid members, but with this issue, an electronic PDF version of *Tamarac Highlights* will be available on our website (www.tamaracfriends.org) which you can download and e-mail to your family and friends. Help us promote TIA and the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge by distributing the electronic version of our newsletter.

Deadline for the Winter *Tamarac Highlights* is November 6. The issue will feature stories by volunteers about their Tamarac volunteer experiences.

—Thank you, Denis Mudderman,
Board Newsletter Coordinator—

Hello, I'm Rosie Greenland.

Nancy Moulden resigned in early August as President of Tamarac Interpretive Association (TIA), so as Vice President, I will be serving as President until the next annual meeting in June.

If you haven't been to Tamarac lately, why not make it one of your destinations this fall? We have several activities coming up as well as many new items in the Nature Gift Shop and Bookstore in the Visitor's Center. If you need something special for a grandchild or a hostess gift for a friend, we have ideas for both.

If you are looking for fall color, Tamarac is beautiful in the fall. Take the Auto Tour where you can see wildlife as well as beautiful color. (No need to take a tour to New England – we have it all right here.) There is a new observation deck along the way, built with grant money and volunteer builders.

If you drive along Tamarac Lake you may see the Trumpeter Swans gathering for the fall migration. I have seen as many as 17 in a quiet area of the lake.

Our fall open house was September 30, and we had great weather and great crowds. Roland Jordahl presented two photography workshops to a full auditorium. In addition, visitors were able to see and learn about the early life on Tamarac by inspecting an old settler's cabin. Tasting some special teas and jellies made with our native plants was also a highlight at the Open House. Volunteers and refuge staff conducted three refuge bus tours that visited various wildlife habitats amidst fall foliage at its peak in color.

I am looking forward to serving you and TIA for the next several months. We are looking forward to taking the organization in new directions.

—Thank you, Rosie—

Tamarac Interpretive Association, Inc.
35704 County Hwy. 26, Rochert, MN 56578
(218) 847-2641, www.tamaracfriends.org

Mission: To facilitate activities and programs that interpret, protect and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge.

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
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Member Highlight

Welcome Ron Jenson

Ron Jenson of Big Sugarbush Lake is the newest member of the Tamarac Interpretive Association Board. He has retired from an automotive parts distributorship in Moorhead and enjoys fishing, 4-wheeling and snowmobiling.

Each spring he and his wife entertain a men's church group from Moorhead for breakfast and an outing. This year they came to the Visitor Center at Tamarac and, after viewing a movie, Ron listened with interest to possible volunteer activities--including the building of an observation deck. This was just what he had been looking for, and he soon was a project leader on the construction.

On the board Ron will serve as chairman of the Marketing and Fundraising Committee. With a lot of fresh ideas we look forward to a busy new fiscal year!! Welcome, Ron!!



Ron Jenson, new TIA board member, works on the new observation deck.



Denis Mudderman wins a zucchini door prize at the volunteer picnic August 24.

Mentoring Workshop Provides New Understanding of Roles

A mentoring workshop was held August 15, 16, and 17 for the TIA board and refuge staff to better understand their respective roles and responsibilities. The mentors were Molly Krival from Florida, Mentor for Friends Groups in the NWRS, and Michael Blenden, Mentor for Friends Groups and Project Leader, San Luis Valley Refuges, Colorado, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

One of the outcomes of these sessions was the appreciation that there are

tasks that refuge staff have been performing that are the responsibility of TIA. The change in the management of the newsletter and a new Giftshop Committee are a part of a transition that will continue for the next year or more.

In other discussions, two joint TIA and refuge staff committees were formed to explore two priority needs: a space for a TIA office and living accommodations at the refuge for summer interns.



Tamarac Interpretive Association board members listen to discussion at the mentoring workshop held in August. The mentoring workshop provided board members and refuge staff with understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.

An electronic PDF version of *Tamarac Highlights* is available on our website: www.tamaracfriends.org that you can download and email to your family and friends. Help us promote TIA and the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge by distributing the electronic version of our newsletter.

Reminders

The Tamarac Interpretive Association collects grocery receipts from Central Market that show the "We Care" sticker. TIA receives one cent for every dollar you spend. They really add up! So mail or drop off those receipts at the refuge and help us accomplish even more.



Annual memberships are: Student - \$10, Seniors (62 & up) - \$10, Individual/Family - \$15, Patron - \$100, and Life Member - \$250. Membership dues are paid annually October 1st. Check your label to see if you are current. Remember, with your paid dues, you receive seasonal newsletters, invitation to special tours, and a 10% discount in the Tamarac gift shop. TIA is a 501(c)3 organization and your membership is a tax deductible donation.

Boyle Travels to China

By Barbara Boyle, Refuge Manager

In late June I was afforded an opportunity to travel to the People's Republic of China as part of a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) delegation to review wetland management practices. This assignment was in fulfillment of the 2004-2006 Work Plan officially adopted by the USFWS and China's State Forestry Administration under the Protocol on Cooperation and Exchanges in the Field of Conservation of Nature. The first agreement between our two countries was signed in 1986 and has been renewed every five years since then. The delegation consisted of three other Refuge Managers, a Wildlife Biologist, our International Affairs liaison, and me. We covered over 2,000 miles in just 10 days visiting six wetland reserves in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province.

Over the past decade, China's unprecedented economic growth has resulted in new threats to the vast wetland areas of the northeast part of the country. Expansion of agricultural lands, exploration for and development of petroleum resources, construction of housing and commercial buildings and hydroelectric power projects have adversely affected the wetlands. The Chinese government recognizes that its economic success may actually be compromised if environmental degradation is not halted and even reversed. Following the devastating floods of 1998 in the northeastern Heilongjiang Province, the Chinese Government has repeatedly turned to the USFWS for guidance on best practices for the conservation and restoration of wetlands, and river and floodplain management.

After flying into Beijing and then to Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang, we began our visit by meeting with faculty and students of the Northeast Forestry University. We were given an overview of China's land protection and management practices, which it turned out, are very similar to our own – a system of national reserves that are complemented by provincial and local lands managed for

wildlife. China has a relatively short history of setting aside lands for wildlife conservation – just 50 years. Despite its short history, national, provincial and local reserves in China today cover 16 percent of the country's land area with 265 national reserves. The visit to the University also included a question/answer session with students and faculty about the USFWS, our management strategies and our workforce. We were also treated to a demonstration by the students on their skills in animal identification.

From Harbin, we toured, by bus, several different nature reserves which were representative of the different types of wetland management programs. Our first stop was Sanjiang Nature Reserve, an ecologically intact national reserve on the Russian border. The Reserve has made great progress in community co-management and international cooperation with Russia. From there we traveled to Honghe National Nature Reserve, internationally recognized for its work establishing wild populations of Oriental White Stork and Red-crown Crane. Unlike Sanjiang's pristine setting, Honghe is almost completely surrounded by farmlands, creating many water quality and quantity issues for the reserve. Our next stop, Anbang River Provincial Nature Reserve, is a demonstration reserve for wetland restoration and environmental education. A provincial reserve, Anbang showcases restoration of agricultural lands. We had an opportunity to visit a local reserve at Xiaobeihu Nature Reserve, a forested wetland ecosystem home to over 381 species of wildlife including 7 National first-ranked protective species such as the Amur Tiger, Golden Eagle and Red-crowned Crane. The highlight of the tour was the Zhalong National Nature Reserve, designated as a Wetland of International Importance in 1992 for its critical avian breeding habitats. Six of the fifteen global species of cranes can be seen in Zhalong. The Reserve is recognized internationally for its captive crane breeding and research activities. Our last stop was the Longfeng Nature Reserve, a showcase for environmental education, ecological demonstration and academic research.

After visiting the six reserves, we headed

back to Beijing where we met with members of China's State Forestry Administration, the sister agency to the U.S. Department of the Interior. At a round table setting, we provided our observations and comments on their environmental education, visitor services, and wildlife management programs. The tour allowed for some fascinating discussions on the challenges of managing reserves at the different governmental levels (national, provincial and local) – very similar to the challenges we face.

I knew this assignment would be a wonderful experience, but I did not appreciate just how much. International trips can be a great source of inspiration and an excellent source of a little dose of humility. Our colleagues around the world have some incredible challenges and do remarkable things with very few resources. What struck me the most on this trip, were the similarities. The climate is changing in China, just like it is here. The demand for energy is increasingly taxing the environment there, much more dramatically in many ways than here. And people still need clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, which are in short supply in most of the developing world. Yet, people everywhere have an innate connection with wild places and the wild creatures of their homelands. The trip was a highlight of my professional career. Our Chinese hosts were wonderful. They opened their hearts, shared their cultural and natural resource splendors and stimulated many thought-provoking conversations. I hope to have the opportunity to return their generous hospitality.



Advocacy Chairperson Calls for Action

By Penny Nielsen

As the new Advocacy Chairperson for Tamarac Interpretive Association I have already been busy working with legislation that relates to wildlife refuges. The National Wildlife Refuge System has been informed that cuts in funding are eminent during the next fiscal year. We will feel these effects in this area as the Hamden Slough Wildlife Refuge is to be closed and Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge is slated to have a decrease in funding.

Many of us in the area will feel the impact from these changes. Hamden Slough is a very important area for successful restoration efforts regarding waterfowl and shorebirds and has served as an excellent model for land and water stewardship. Many adult and school age groups have benefited from the recreation and environmental educa-

tion that has been offered there.

We sincerely hope that the proposed funding cuts for Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge will not happen as this area is unique in the fact, that it is a transitional zone; deciduous hardwood forest, coniferous forest and tall grass prairie are all found within the refuge boundaries. This setting provides a wonderful opportunity for restoration of natural life in many forms, including large beds of wild rice and resident grey wolf packs.

Providing resting, nesting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and migratory birds, TNWR has successfully served as a reintroduction and reproduction site for trumpeter swans and bald eagles. Birding club members from all over the United States come to this refuge to enjoy the sightings that are available.

Along with the recreational

opportunities for area residents and visitors, refuge staff and volunteers have developed a coordinated effort between classroom and hands-on education that takes place on a regular basis. This is priceless to our children. Wildlife photography options at the Tamarac are endless. Add in the hiking, hunting, fishing and observation possibilities that this refuge offers, and one cannot help but realize that any cuts in funding will have a huge, negative impact on the present and future status of this area.

Each and every one of us TIA members will need to help at this critical point in time by becoming involved. Contact the Minnesota Congressmen in Washington, D. C., now, and urge them to take positive action when voting for funding regarding the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Barbara Boyle stands before the Great Wall in the People's Republic of China. Barbara traveled to China in June as part of a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) delegation to review wetland management practices in that country. (See story on page four.)

If you are into a little web-surfing...

Check it out!

New Photo Collections on the TIA website

www.tamaracweb.org

- * Aerial photo tour of Tamarac NWR
- * 2006 Fall Open House
- * 2006 Photo Contest Winners
- * 2006 Photo Contest Submissions
- * Observation Deck Construction Photos

The Tree Shows the Way

By George Weatherston

The curious-shaped conifer stands almost by itself on a spit of land jutting from the shoreline of Pine Lake. A majority of its kinfolk forest the landscape across the road. The guide/brochure touts this neighborhood of the refuge as Pine Lake Lookout. It is station nine on the Black-bird Auto Tour.

The solitary pine catches the man's attention well before he spots the congregation of swans and pelicans further out on the body of water. What seems odd about the tree is the distribution of its branches. From his vantage point, the right side of the trunk sprouts very few of them, except for the very top where its limbs are the thickest. In comparison, the left flank of the tree is fairly dense and appears more healthy with its pine-needle greenery.

While he studies the tree, the wind interrupts his concentration, for a gust suddenly hoists the cap from his head and deposits it on the ground near the bench where he is seated. He lunges for the headgear, grabbing it before it rolls down the embankment in front of him. Looking up with cap in hand, he eyes the tree again. Then it clicks, the strong wind is blowing towards the side of the pine

with the fewest branches.

"Interesting," he mumbles while tucking the cap in his belt. He rises and fetches a compass from his pocket. Thoughtfully, he lines up the directional arrow of the instrument with the tree and orients the outer case while the magnetic needle lines up with the correct compass points.

Sure enough, the almost stunted flank of the pine faces north, where colder wind and temperatures, along with less sunlight, prevail. The

healthy-looking side obviously faces south where the wind and temperatures, overall, are warmer.

Then a memory of a story the man has read years ago pops into his head: It is about a hunter who got lost on a sunless day without a compass. But the outdoorsmen in the story knows how to orient himself by locating a solitary tree and using the configuration of its branches to find his "direction." Eventually, the outdoorsman walks his way out of being lost.



Tamarac Hosts Two Perham Schools

By Nancy Moulden

On September 20 and 21, Tamarac hosted two schools from Perham. There were five activities and the class groups rotated from station to station. There was a nature walk focusing on using binoculars to view wildlife; a hike along North Tamarac Lake; a beaver movie; a beaver adaptations activity; and the spot I manned, recording observations in a nature journal.

Although one of the most asked questions, "What time is lunch?" was easy to answer,

most questions were more serious and showed how excited the students were about their field trip. It was a great way to enjoy nature. One of the most impressive sights was the trumpeter swans flying between Jim's Marsh and Flat Lake. Mallards and Canada geese also flew by. The crows were vocal but never made an appearance. We also heard blue jays, chickadees, and nuthatches and the chirps of unseen warblers high in the pines. Early in the morning a large hawk soared overhead.

Despite the chill in the air, several insects joined us. A few zigzagged around. One fellow landed on a flower decoration on

Megan's hat then flew away in disappointment. A little moth resembling a leaf landed on my knee during my introduction – much to the delight of my audience. A large chartreuse dragonfly landed on Brittany's arm and was content to stay there the whole time. Lots of spiders stumbled by on our tarp sitting-mat and more than one furry caterpillar was spotted on some leafy stalks.

Not many people get to sit quietly in the woods for hours on a crisp, sunny fall day observing nature. I feel very fortunate.



Tamarac Interpretive Association

Nature Gift Shop and Bookstore



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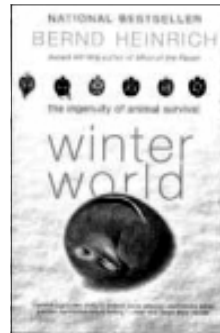
By Stan Tekiela

Professional naturalist and wildlife photographer Stan Tekiela has been fascinated with Common Loons for years. “They’re one of my favorite birds because they’re so beautiful. Their calls can send shivers down my spine, and they have incredible parenting skills.” For three years, Stan intensely studied loons, recording their calls and capturing their behaviors in photographs. On the water and shore, he observed every aspect of their lives from egg to adult. He not only studied major life events such as migration and courtship, but also daily activities including feeding, bathing and sleeping. The resulting combination of images and information is a revolutionary portrayal of the Common Loon.

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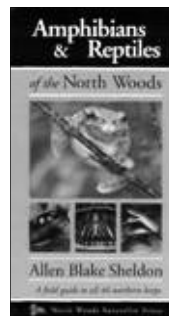
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By Lindsay Barrett George

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The woods are cold and desolate as Cammy and William hike through the snow, yet signs of animal life are everywhere. Help them find the clues – a pellet of feathers and bones, a fish head by the brook, a patch of bark rubbed off the trunk of bird tree, and more – and join in guessing, “Who’s been here?”

NEWSLETTER OF THE
TAMARAC INTERPRETIVE
ASSOCIATION

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
35704 County Highway 26
Rochert, MN 56578

Phone: 218-847-2641

Tamarac Interpretive Association's mission is to facilitate activities and programs that interpret, protect and restore the natural and cultural resources of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge.



2006 Photo Contest Winners

Wildlife

First Place: *Sweet Nectar* by Richard Hickner, Lake Jackson, TX.

Second Place: *Stop and Smell the Flowers* by Dick Henry, Bemidji, MN.

Third Place: *Solitary Sandpiper* by Chris Kathy Steidl, Fargo, ND.

Plant Life

First Place: *Three Sisters* by Kathy Kehrberg, Shoreview, MN.

Second Place: *Solitude* by Dick Henry, Bemidji, MN.

Third Place: *Lady Shoe* by Michelle Baltus, St Paul, MN.

Scenic

First Place: *Winter Day* by Pam Lehmann, Callaway, MN

Second Place: *Evening Sunset, Tamarac Lake* by Yvonne Johnson, Detroit Lakes, MN.

Third Place: *Pine Lake Fog* by John Dermody, Frazee, MN.

Nature's Abstract

First Place: *Ready for Takeoff* by Dick Henry, Bemidji, MN.

Second Place: *Wings* by John Dermody, Frazee, MN.

Recreation

First Place: *Shady Hollow* by Sue Kostynick, Detroit Lakes, MN.

Second Place: *Nature's Jungle Gym*, by Sue Kostynick, Detroit Lakes, MN.

Third Place: *Self Portrait Shadow* by Andrene Myrum, Iron, MN.

Winning photographs are on display at the Visitor Center or they can be viewed on our website at www.tamaracfriends.org



Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge 2006 Amateur Photo Contest Grand Prize Winner, *Sweet Nectar*, by Richard Hickner, Lake Jackson, TX.