



FALL 2011

TAMARAC TRACKS

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TAMARAC FALL FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1ST

UNCLE RAYMOND

by Don Blanding, President of the Board



Uncle Raymond was the archetypical Norwegian bachelor farmer. (Remember Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon?) He also did odd jobs and served as custodian at his church. Over the July Fourth holiday, Uncle Raymond would predictably say something like "Yep, fall's in the air" or "sure starting to feel like fall." And I'm thinking that this guy's got a screw loose because we have two whole months before school starts. As I write this in mid August, most wheat has been combined, the Canada geese are busy in the stubble fields, and now I'm thinking that it's "sure starting to feel like fall." Deja vu all over again!

Fall is a very busy time at Tamarac and I look forward to it every year for many reasons. People are walking the trails for the fall colors and a glimpse of ruffed grouse. Ducks and

geese are on the waters open for hunting. Deer hunters are out in numbers and anglers are gearing up for some fall fishing. There's just so much to do. Those of us who are retired have the special bonus of getting out during the week when there are far fewer people.

Duck hunting, for me, is a favorite. Long before the Tamarac Wildlife Refuge existed, George D. Hamilton, a distant relative, recognized the need for waterfowl sanctuaries. In July 1928 he hosted a weekend at his family's hunting lodge near Balsam Lake to discuss the matter with local and state officials. He acknowledged that 35 years prior (1893?), drake wood ducks were so plentiful that "fifty of these beauties were just a fair afternoon's killing for two average hunters." Moreover he said, "I fear that future generations will curse us for our profligacy." The man was right on both points. It therefore may be said that my relatives have duck hunted Tamarac and surrounding lakes for a long time. Right after World War II, my father and his brother somehow convinced their new wives that securing land for duck hunting comes before buying a house.

But isn't duck hunting an interesting phenomenon? We look forward to the nastiest fall weather. We think nothing of trudging through knee-deep mud and water, dragging a duck boat behind us, all well before

daylight. We then sit out in this weather, backs to the first snowstorms, declaring what a wonderful experience we're having. Waders leak, gloves become water soaked along with other clothing, teeth chatter, and yet we don't quit for fear of missing another opportunity. In our family the early years are spent in the blind but without a shotgun. We then move up to a single shot before going to other options. Nevertheless, I have many fond memories of duck hunting with my grandfather, father, uncle, brother, son, and I expect grandson in just a few years. Hunting is a family tradition I hope will be continued in succeeding generations. Uncle Raymond would be proud.

Our Fall Festival is on Saturday, October 1. The Friends of Tamarac spend countless hours gearing up for this event, which truly does showcase the Refuge. This is a family event and is offered at no charge to participants. (A tax-deductible donation is always welcome, but not necessary.) This year we will encourage visitors to become nature detectives as they explore the refuge. For example, we'll take an up close look at feathers and how they help birds to fly. We'll look at many wonderful wildlife photos submitted to the Tamarac Photo Contest. We can promise a very special day and look forward to seeing you there!

CONSERVATION OF OUR HUNTING HERITAGE

By Neil Powers, Tamarac Refuge Manager



Wildlife and habitat conservation, in one of its most basic forms, is derived from the simple purchase of hunting permits and stamps. Funds generated from the sale of the Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp commonly known as the "Duck Stamp," is one of the primary mechanisms used to acquire parcels of land for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Many of these tracts are open to public hunting, but more importantly, these tracts conserve habitats critical to sustain healthy wildlife populations and provide opportunities for future generations of hunters and wildlife enthusiasts. The majority of Tamarac NWR was purchased with "Duck Stamp" funds, which were generated by concerned waterfowl hunters who witnessed the decimation of continental waterfowl populations on the heels of the "Dust Bowl." While the genesis for Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge was founded in waterfowl

production, I think we would all agree that the refuge offers much more. At present, less than 7% of the U.S. population hunts and this number is downward trending with waterfowl hunters suffering some of the greatest losses. During the past decade, many wildlife agencies that use hunting license fees to support a broad array of wildlife conservation programs recognize this concern and have begun to target a new generation of hunters by adding new and expanded hunting opportunities. Youth hunters in Minnesota and other states have specific dates throughout the season when only they can hunt certain species such as deer, waterfowl, and small game. Mentored hunt opportunities also exist where adults volunteer to take youth hunting. In many states the minimum age requirement to hunt has been reduced as long as an adult accompanies

the youth. Most refuges, including Tamarac, support and highlight youth hunting opportunities. I had an opportunity last fall to participate in the youth waterfowl season with my oldest son. I hoped to provide him with an opportunity to harvest a bird but more importantly to observe the incredible spectacle of migrating waterfowl and the brilliant display of an early fall sunrise over a prairie wetland. We were fortunate and experienced a day that I will not forget, not because of the number of birds harvested or the numbers of shots fired, but because he had joined the ranks of the next generation of hunter conservationists. Like most hunters, his enthusiasm for the outdoors, fostered through hunting, will be an important link in the future of conservation and protection of habitats and wildlife for all of us.

Become a Friend

Individual/Family: \$20

Patron: \$100

Life Member: \$250

Student: \$10

As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter mailed to your home and a 10% discount on purchases from *Tamarac Wildlife Gifts & Bookstore*. Download a membership from our website. (www.tamaracfriends.org)



Friends of Tamarac NWR

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The Friends of Tamarac NWR is a 501(c)3 organization whose mission is 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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Layout and design by Angie Dux, Fruitful Designs

Tamarac Tracks is a publication of the Friends of Tamarac serving both the Friends and the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. *Tamarac Tracks* is published four times a year, mailed to members and made available as an electronic PDF on our website. Please discuss article ideas in advance with the newsletter coordinator (jjacobson@arvig.net).

RUFFED GROUSE NUMBERS ON THE INCREASE

By Janice Bengtson, Tamarac Park Ranger

According to a DNR report, Minnesota's grouse population is still near the high end of a 10 year cycle. Populations are surveyed each spring by counting the number of male grouse drumming on established routes. The state has 125 routes including two on Tamarac. Last spring, a combined total of 30 drums were heard compared to 10 in 2010 - a significant increase. Biologist Lowell Deede commented, "despite the cold temperatures last winter, deep snow provided for good roosting." He also noted, "Even though it was a wet spring, hatch success was good. Broods were observed earlier and in larger numbers compared to previous years." 2011 was the first year for grouse to rebound locally. Minnesota is frequently the nation's top ruffed grouse producer. On average 115,000 hunters harvest 545,000 ruffed grouse each year. This may be a good year for hunters. Whether you get your grouse or not, an autumn walk in the woods is a reward in itself.

THAT MYSTERIOUS CYCLE

In Canada during the 1960's a study was conducted on the population cycles of predator and prey which included grouse, fox, snowshoe hare, and lynx. It was found that each cycle was frequently related to the others and usually "in sync." A possible explanation for the grouse cycle goes like this: when snowshoe hares increase in numbers, lynx, fox, great horned owls and other raptors prey on them. The hares reproduce quickly, outpacing the predators. The population of hares reaches a high, their food source is depleted and they



die off. While the hare population booms, grouse numbers go up as they are not the preferred meal. But when the hares die, predators turn to grouse and cause their population to take a dive.

Ruffed grouse populations are cyclical here in the Midwest where snowshoe hares are not abundant. A 1982 study in Wisconsin documented population declines of grouse when northern raptors migrated south because of a decline of hares up north.

The health of aspen trees may also play a role in the cycle. In the 1990's, ruffed grouse refused to eat aspen buds because they had a hard sticky coating, making digestion difficult. Grouse then turned to less nutritious foods, lowering survival.

This occurred in years of tent caterpillar outbreaks because aspen responded to stress by producing this protective layer.

In 2008, a team from the University of MN examined all the research and included hunting data from the Grand Rapids area. They concluded that the predator theory plays a supporting role in the cycle. Ideal winter conditions (cold temps and deep snow) favor grouse. They are less likely to be preyed upon and save energy roosting in the snow rather than in trees. (See www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/sepoct10 for more information)



INTERRUPTION ON THE TEA CRACKER TRAIL



I amble toward the rising sun,
Pause at an honor guard of sapling birch.
Feeling well-secured, I thread the downhill thickness
Through the last stand of thinning soldiers,
Into the old growth air of massive grenadiers;
Scattered stoic double-century sentinels.
I sidle round the valley's vernal pond,
Startled by two tardy teal departing sunward.
I negotiate the ridge, and pause.
The rising sun crawls up my face,
The rippling pond returns to glass.
Here I sit, assassin of all natural sounds.
When last was there such ugly silence here?
I lean against an elder oak who knows,
But does not break the wordless forest code,
Yet I endure their voiceless shouts of "interloper".
A regiment of noiseless ants begins across my boot,
An errant skein of blossom scent dances on the hush.
Far north a raven's chortle echoes through the glen
And mounts the silence, spurs it south.
Then tick-tick chickadee ticking, breaks the valley lull,
The first-to-dare de-bugging bark, re-assuming life.

Four blue-patched wings with white rims flashing,
Arrow down the draw, the teal reclaim their real estate.
The nuthatch resumes its pecks and pounds
While chickadees send zzz-zzz voltage
Down the draw, inspiring the teal to dip and pick.
The flicker returns to territorial squawks,
A molasses-jointed porcupine begins
His downward labor, bent on trading chewing trees.
I slap a hiker/tick from its slow ascension
up my sun-warmed neck.
The teal re-rocket east, retrace their recent route-returned.
The ticking, zzz's, poundings disappear,
The feathered calls, now cloaked by silent wings;
Silence spawned by interruption.
A solitary upward movement meets my eyes,
Amidst a world now deathly stilled,
The lonely porky picks his reverse path,
Slowly, slowly, ever slowly upward.
A careful foot, a pause to think, another foot,
Deciding not to trade his massive grenadier,
For a double-century sentinel, after all.

Jim Jasken © 2011



JIM'S MARSH BEAVER MYSTERIES

Last fall we installed our beaver lodge camera and were rewarded with great video of a pair of beavers. In November as the weather trended towards winter the beavers seemed to disappear. With a beaver lodge on the south end of Jim's Marsh, it almost seemed that the same family of beavers used both lodges. Over the winter the camera quit working. After Denis Mudderman's return from Texas USFWS winter/spring volunteering he went out to the lodge in July to check things out. He found the hole into the lodge, but no camera assembly. The lodge end of the PVC conduit from the shore had chew marks on it. With no evidence of human intervention over the winter, the beavers must not have liked the foreign object of the camera assembly as they made spring improvements to the lodge. An extensive search in August found nothing. We are purchasing a replacement camera and hope to have the camera systems running again this fall - but using a different camera assembly design.

TEAM QUEST

IN SEARCH OF THE WORM

by Samantha Gulon, DLMS 7th Grade Team Quest Language Arts Teacher

Like most of you, I grew up without Wii, laptops, gaming systems, and an array of television stations to choose from. I spent my daylight hours outside and fortunately my neighborhood bordered acres of woods. Winter hikes to sled down the hills, cross-country skiing on the trails, searching for treasures, investigating the habitat, and building forts are fond memories of mine.

Entering my twentieth year at the Detroit Lakes Middle School, I again look forward to trying to connect students with nature. The teaming aspect of the middle school allows me to work with a group of talented nature-lovers. Karla Cummings (Math), Danielle Schmitz (Social Studies), Jon Freeman (Science), and I (Language Arts) all have experience with GPS navigating and enjoy the outdoors in a variety of ways.

Purchasing GPS units through a grant received from Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning five years ago inspired my team to look for additional uses of the units to increase our students' awareness of nature and the world around them. Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge has provided us with valuable and authentic experiences over the past few years, from locating dangers and marking concrete structures at the Job Corps site to marking location and collecting data on cavity trees throughout the refuge.

This year we look forward to continuing our contribution to The Great Lakes Worm Watch which collects data on the invasive earthworm. The data our team will collect throughout Tamarac will be entered online and will contribute to this ongoing study (<http://www.nrri.umn.edu/worms/>).



The students use a mustard solution to bring the worms to the surface of the soil. The students document the occurrence of these invasive worms on Tamarac through the data collection site of the Great Lakes Worm Watch.

Before entering the field, students must learn and practice such skills as marking locations with a GPS unit, filling out a detailed data sheet, identifying geographic properties, and writing descriptions of location, habitat, and soil. This project allows us to make connections to state standards in each of our curricular areas.

Tamarac offers us a real-life experience. This is not fluff; this is the real deal. Our students feel empowered and proud to be part of research that means something. Team Quest looks forward to an ongoing connection with Tamarac where nature becomes part of education.

EARTHWORMS

INVADE TAMARAC



Last year more than 150 Detroit Lakes Middle School students took worm samples from several different habitats on the refuge.

Research scientists at the Natural Resources Research Institute of the University of Minnesota Duluth have studied and documented the dramatic and harmful effects of an exotic earthworm invasion in the sugar maple, basswood, and hardwood forest ecosystems of the Great Lakes Region. No native earthworm species exist in our area and it was only after the European settlement of the 1800's that the lowly earthworm made its appearance. Much more research is needed to study the destructive effects of this invasion, which include the potential loss of native understory plants and trees, changes in soil structure and nutrient availability, the injurious impact on small mammal/bird populations, and the possible invasion of other exotic species (European slugs) and exotic plants (buckthorn and garlic mustard).

Extra! Extra!
Read more about it.



This book makes an excellent classroom research tool. Methods for collecting worms and keys to identifying your finds are included.



Volunteers work with small teams of students as they collect the necessary data.

VOLUNTEER VIBES

VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The annual volunteer recognition picnic was held on August 18. Over 70 volunteers, staff, friends, and family came out to enjoy the evening. After visiting the Wild West last year, we returned to the popular Tropical Luau theme. Dinner was catered by Central Market and included chicken, fresh fruit, salads, baked beans, and cake and ice cream. Special music was provided by Larry Krosko who is our maintenance mechanic and is very good at Karaoke! Refuge manager Neil Powers welcomed everyone and recognized specific accomplishments of 2011. Awards were then presented to those who had reached key milestones (see complete list below). Linda Hunt received the Assistant Regional Director's Award for surpassing the 500 hour mark. Tom Hunt and George Read were presented the Regional Director's Award for surpassing the 1000 hour mark. The picnic also provided the opportunity for all the staff and volunteers to recognize the accomplishments of Denis Mudderman. Last March, Denis received the National Wildlife Refuge Association Volunteer of the Year Award. He was congratulated with a standing ovation for this huge achievement. To conclude the evening, Vonnie Jacobson, last year's volunteer of the year, presented the 2011 Volunteer of the Year Award to Fran Mattson.

In 2011, 169 volunteers contributed nearly 7000 hours to the refuge. That's amazing. Thanks so much for sharing your talents with Tamarac. Whether you greet visitors, teach children, test our waters, count loons, mow our trails, pick up trash or plan and host events, you are much appreciated. You are great ambassadors for the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Fran Mattson accepts the 2011 Volunteer of the Year award from last year's winner Vonnie Jacobson.

Tamarac's 2011 volunteer of the Year – Fran Mattson

Fran began volunteering in 2007 as a visitor center host. Soon she became part of the environmental education team. She has led weather observation activities for 3rd graders, read wildlife stories to kindergarteners, led walks in the woods looking for hidden creatures, and has assisted middle school students in counting invasive worms! Last February, she led a marathon of snowshoe walks out on Jim's Marsh! During 2011, she contributed over 80 hours to the Environmental Education program. She is an inspiration to hundreds of children as she shares her enthusiasm for the wonders of nature. She is a Friends of Tamarac board member and secretary, and has donated a significant amount of time in the last year to the "new and improved" newsletter. She is truly building a legacy of new conservationists for wildlife refuges. Congratulations Fran!

Keystone Hours:

25 HOURS

Harry Halvorson
Rick Holbrook
Ed Janzen
Howard Lohman
Mary Sein
Denise Warweg
Kyle Kessler
Nancy Whitehead

50 HOURS

Betty Gunderson (25)
David Mueller
Nancy Olson
Steve Midthune
James DuBay

100 HOURS

Cathie Ferguson (25,50)
Justine Boots
Howard Fredine
Rick Pechmann
Donna Dustin

200 HOURS

Don Blanding
Diane Reff
Jeanine Ehnert
Luverne Ehnert
Justin Lehman
Doug Page
Earl Johnson

300 HOURS

Shirley Read
Jan Larson (25,50,100,200)
Rocky Larson (25,50,100,200)

400 HOURS

Nancy Brennan (100, 200, 300)
Connie Carlson
John Hovdenes
Ken Teiken (25,50,100,200,300)
Patsy Teiken (25,50,100,200,300)

600 HOURS

John Jacobson
Fran Mattson

700 HOURS

Lois Brantner
Linda Hunt (500,600)

1000 HOURS

George Read (800,900)
Tom Hunt (700,800,900)

8000 HOURS

Denis Mudderman (7000)
(11,000 combined with Brazoria NWR in Texas)



A special presentation and cake honored Dennis Mudderman as the National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer of the Year.

VOLUNTEER NEEDS:

October 1 is our annual Fall Festival. In the past, we have had over 35 volunteers work this event. Please consider spending a few hours of your time and sharing your enthusiasm for Tamarac with the local community. School field trip season is just around the corner! It would be great to have a few more environmental educators to assist or lead activities. Training is provided. We now offer a year round program for Kindergarteners and 3rd graders. The Friends are still looking for a Gift Shop manager. A retail background with computers skills is desired.



MEET JAN AND ROCKY LARSON

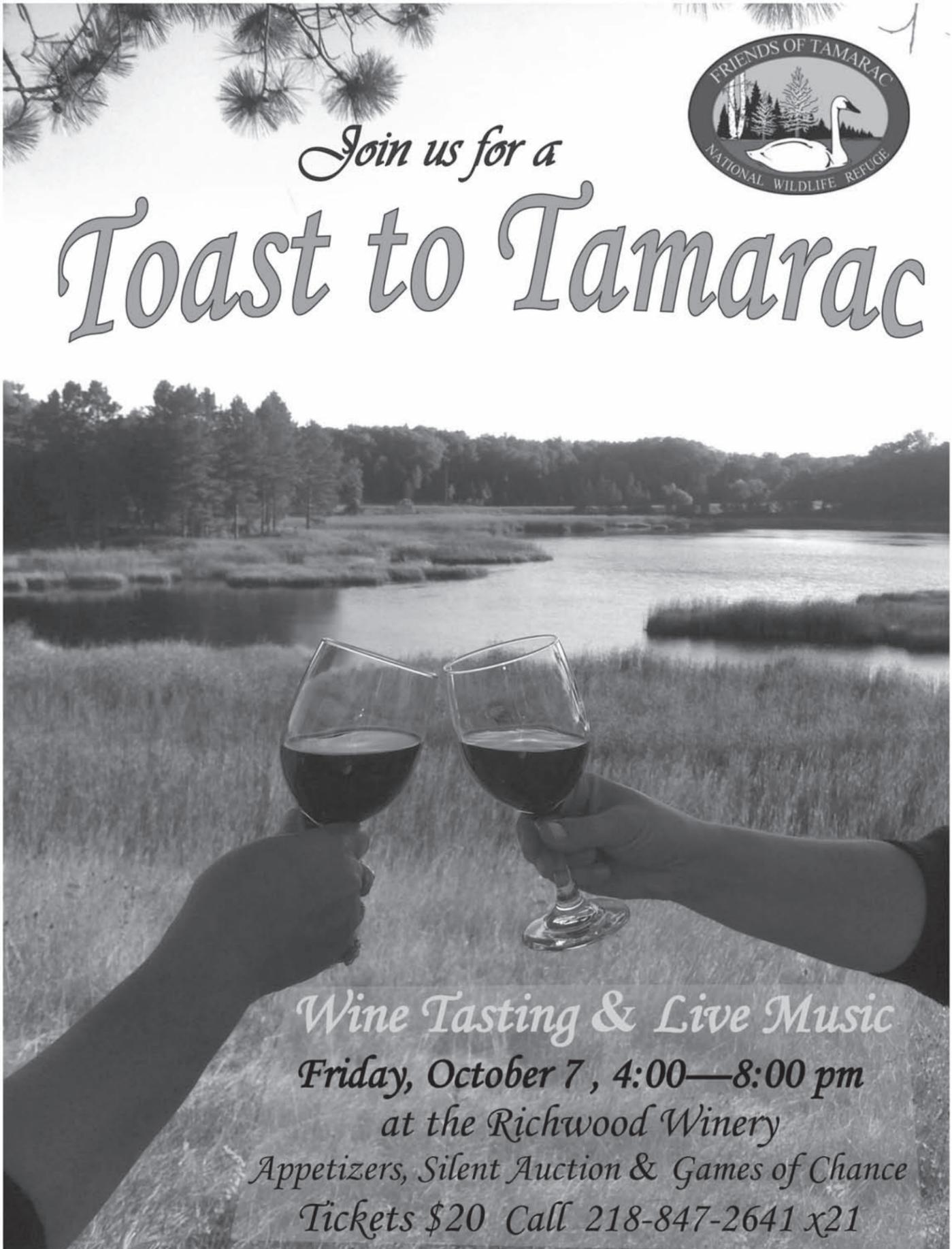
Jan and Rocky are resident volunteers from Toms River, NJ. Having volunteered at nine refuges, they came with a wealth of experience! They have led canoe floats on the Rio Grande River at Roma Bluffs NWR in Texas, were campground hosts at Tetlin NWR in Alaska, and spent last "winter" in the high desert of Arizona at Kofa NWR. Both have over 3000 hours of service.

Jan grew up in Toms River and was a Rutgers University extension educator in natural resource management. She was instrumental in getting Barnegat Bay (the largest bay in NJ) into the National Estuary Program through the Environmental Protection Agency. Within this program, she was responsible for working with partners in developing and presenting programs to the public. The goal was to encourage folks to make small changes to improve the environment, such as decreasing the use of fertilizers and maintaining vehicles to prevent the leaking of oil and other fluids. She was involved in many local organizations, including the Ocean County Shade Tree Commission and the Barnegat Bay Citizens Watershed Board. She also had statewide responsibilities

with the Department of Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee and the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. Jan hosts the visitor center and assists Rocky out in the field with maintenance projects.

Rocky has a Minnesota connection. He was born in International Falls. Because his father was in the Navy, the family moved often, finally settling in Toms River. Rocky is a retired hospital pharmacist and was a director at several hospitals. In his younger years, Rocky enjoyed duck hunting with his dog. In fact, before they took on volunteering, Rocky and Jan raised Chesapeake Bay Retrievers. Having spent many hours working indoors in the evening, he now appreciates the time he can spend outside in the sunshine, mowing and troubleshooting maintenance issues.

Jan and Rocky enjoy traveling, canoeing, and birding. They have photographed polar bears in Churchill, kangaroos in Australia, and lemurs in Madagascar. They have two daughters and two granddaughters. Jan and Rocky retired in 2006 with the goal of "failing at retirement." They are off to a good start!



Join us for a

Toast to Tamarac



Wine Tasting & Live Music
Friday, October 7, 4:00—8:00 pm
at the Richwood Winery
Appetizers, Silent Auction & Games of Chance
Tickets \$20 Call 218-847-2641 x21

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Sunday September 25, Movie 2:00 pm

The Man Who Planted Trees
This film tells the story of a solitary shepherd who plants and nurtures a forest of thousands of trees. This Academy Award winning animated film is one of great beauty and hope. 30 minutes.

Sunday September 25, 3:00pm–5:00pm

Fall Color Nature Photo Safari
Experience autumn on the refuge through the lens of a camera! With the fall colors nearing their peak, we will travel by car caravan to some very scenic and perhaps less known areas on the refuge. Discover how Tamarac's wildlife and plants prepare for winter. Meet at the visitor center for a brief photo composition refresher.

Saturday October 1, 10am-4pm

Tamarac Fall Festival
Become a nature detective! Discover how biologists use the latest technology in their search to unravel the mysteries of nature. Refuge excursions, children's activity trail, photo contest display, wild rice demonstrations and more! Early bird tour with biologists at 9:00am. Guided 2 mile hike at 10:30am. More tours at 11am and 1pm. All activities are free.

Sunday October 2, Movie 2:00 pm

Whitetails in America— Discover the intimate details of a deer's life through the seasons. 60 minutes

Sunday October 9, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

The Big Sit, 2:00 pm Movie Join us for this international birding event. This is the perfect opportunity to see migrants that pass briefly through our area. Take this opportunity to spot as many of them as you can. Blinds will be set up near the visitor center and snacks provided. **Movie – A Murder of Crows, Birds with an Attitude, Crows do not have the best reputation – sometimes dismissed as spooky! But that image is changing. They are among the most intelligent and social animals in the world. See captivating footage and hear their praises from experts. 55 min.**

Sunday October 16, Movie 2:00 pm

Great Migrations: Race to Survive
Great Migrations tells the formidable, powerful stories of many of the planet's species and their movements. In this episode: Travel to Botswana where hundreds of zebras make a desperate 150-mile slog so their bodies can take in much-needed minerals. Take in the heartbreaking struggle of Pacific walrus that have become victims of earth's changing climate. Watch a herd of pronghorn antelope follow its ancient migration through Wyoming. 55 min.

JOIN US FOR A TOAST TO TAMARAC

Wine Tasting & Live Music | Friday, October 7
4-8pm | At the Richwood Winery

27799 County Hwy 34, just around the corner from the Richwood Store

Appetizers, Silent Auction, & Games of Chance

Tickets are \$20 & available from any board member or by calling 218-847-2641x21.

HELP THE FRIENDS OF TAMARAC CONNECT PEOPLE AND NATURE AT TAMARAC NWR.

**NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS
OF TAMARAC NWR**

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
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www.tamaracfriends.org
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*Friends of Tamarac NWR's mission is to
facilitate activities and programs that
interpret, protect and restore the natural
and cultural resources of Tamarac Wildlife
Refuge.*

Refuge Website:
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Jaden Powers and Clark Bolin are a few of the newest members of the duck hunting and conservation community.