

**NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS
OF TAMARAC NWR**

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
35704 County Highway 26
Rochert, MN 56578
www.tamaracfriends.org
Phone: 218-847-2641 Ext. 21

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:
www.fws.gov/midwest/tamarac



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SUMMER 2011

TAMARAC TRACKS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF TAMARAC NWR

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“2010 Tamarac Photo Contest, First Place Youth 13-17yrs, *Black-eyed Susan* by Mathew Fairbanks”

A SENSE OF PLACE

by Don Blanding, President of the Board



The Minnesota Volunteer is a magazine published by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Periodically a reader prepares an article for publication, which describes an especially memorable place in Minnesota

I would venture to guess that all readers

of this publication have at least one special memory that took place on Tamarac. Hiking? Berry picking? Fishing? Morel Mushrooms? There are just toooo many to pick from.

I know that I have benefited from Tamarac in many, many ways over many, many years, but somehow a recent hike into Johnson Lake stands out. The entry to this trail is marked by a mature growth of white pines and there is an eagle's nest close by. A stretch of aspen will often yield a ruffed grouse. (I still call them partridge as I did as a kid but that is another story.) A very large wetland with considerable open water supports teal, mallards, and wood ducks, as well as the ubiquitous beaver lodge. There is a considerable stretch of mature forest. The fall leaves of oak, maple, and aspen are simply breathtaking, especially on a sunny day. When the leaves are down and the visibility improves, deer can be heard and seen at a considerable distance,

but the best part is when the trail ends at Johnson Lake. This gives a whole new meaning to solitude. I have walked just over one mile but I found myself thinking of the distance to any evidence of humans in any other direction. Of course the view is something you need to see for yourself. I have traveled only a few miles from Detroit Lakes, but it feels like a remote spot in western Ontario.

Oh, yes. The experiences described earlier were all mine in a single trip. You just cannot do any better. So what is your favorite place or experience on Tamarac? I encourage each of you to spend 30 minutes describing your favorite "sense of place" on Tamarac. Email your story to me (cdblanding@msn.com) or mail a hardcopy to me at refuge headquarters. We look forward to adding you to the growing list of those who have written for Tamarac Tracks.

Become a Friend

Individual/Family: \$20

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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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THE SUPPORTING CAST AT TAMARAC

BY ASHLEY LOOK, TAMARAC SCEP STUDENT

Tamarac is already well into an exciting summer season. With many seasonal employees returning to Tamarac, long-term projects pertaining to both woodcock and golden-winged warbler continue this summer. Many other employees are new and look forward to learning from the veterans while offering new ideas and insight to Tamarac.

Kyle Daly continues the American woodcock study to evaluate population responses to management. The project may explain reasons for the decline in woodcock populations.



Kyle Daly



Jake Nelson

Donna, Dustin and Earl Johnson use dogs to find woodcock hens and broods. Once located, Kyle and his assistant, Jake Nelson, put radio transmitters on the birds, tracking and monitoring the wood-cock broods almost daily.

Leading a golden-winged warbler study, Henry Streby, Ph.D. is attempting to determine reasons for the decline in golden-winged warbler populations. Alex Fish, Ricky Carr, Justin Lehman, Mike Johnson, Callie Gesmundo and Emily Sinnot assist Henry. Lauren Deets, Gunner Kramer, Roxy Franta and Andrew Rehman also began their summer working in Tamarac assisting with the study and now are researching the warblers in Manitoba. Getting



(1st row, l-r) Alex Fish, Andrew Rehman, Emily Sinnot, Callie Gesmundo (2nd row) Henry Streby, Ph.D., Mike Johnson, Lauren Deets, Roxy Franta, Justin Lehman, Gunner Kramer, Ricky Carr

up every morning at 5 A.M., the golden-winged warbler crew utilizes mist nets to capture the birds. They then put colored marking bands and radio transmitters and track the warblers. Using the data will help them estimate the warblers' productivity. So far this summer, the crew has found 51 nests and radio tracked 38 female and 30 fledgling golden-winged warblers.

Monica Schmidt begins her first summer at Tamarac, but this is already her third summer with the Service. Monica stays busy as the Administrative SCEP (Student Career Experience Program) and spending her time familiarizing herself with tasks required to run our office smoothly. In charge of finances, employee travel, filing and paperwork, Monica looks forward to expanding her knowledge of the Administrative Officer position. Despite spending most of her time in the office, Monica is also interested in nature photography, which in part led her to work for the Service.



Monica Schmidt

As the Law Enforcement SCEP, Ashley Look has the opportunity to explore several entities of Tamarac.



Ashley Look

One day she may be counting ducks with the Tamarac's biologists, and the next she's teaching 3rd-graders how to journal about nature. And whenever she gets the chance, Ashley will be working with Tamarac's law enforcement officers.

You may find Cody Okeson, Tamarac's Biology STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) anywhere on Tamarac. He may be marking culverts or historical points on GPSs, planting trees, surveying swans or working to control invasive species. Like many of the seasonal employees at Tamarac, Cody's work consists of tremendous variety.

Photo contest winner, Pam Lehmann, is Tamarac's Park Ranger STEP for Visitor Services. Pam has been journaling and taking photos at Tamarac for years. Now she's putting her talents to work and will be increasing Tamarac's photo library with both stills and video. She is also sharing her talents with young people from the area in workshops.



Cody Okeson

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) began their work in early June. Gina Kemper is this year's YCC crew leader and is Tamarac's Biology Technician for a third year. Returning from last summer is Waubun High School graduate Annie Erickson, who will begin the University of Minnesota Crookston for Veterinarian Medicine.



Pam Lehmann

New members of the YCC crew are Detroit Lakes High School student Stephen Sinclair, and Frazee High School student Dalton Utke. They are kept busy with invasive weed control, facility maintenance, trail maintenance, water quality wildlife surveys, and any other tasks that benefit from their assistance.

Already gone for the summer are Lindsay Shartell and her assistant Max. Lindsay is attending Michigan Tech to earn her Ph.D. They are traveling to two more refuges throughout the summer while collecting data on earthworm populations. Lindsay will interpret the data to determine the relationship between forest health and earthworm prevalence. A group of students from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point will be surveying the forests on Tamarac in continuance of the project.



(l-r) Stephen Sinclair, Gina Kemper, Dalton Utke, Annie Erickson

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Sunday August 7, 2:00 pm A Trumpeter Triumph

Discover the world of trumpeter swans, North America's largest waterfowl species. Learn how this bird was nearly decimated and how Tamarac played a critical role in its amazing recovery. Then we'll head out on the refuge in search of these beautiful birds and their young.

Thursday August 11, 10:00 am Wildlife Excursion

Friday August 12, 8:00-10:00 pm Twilight Walk

Join us for an evening of discovery. While most critters are settling in for a night of rest, others are just waking up! Learn about Tamarac's night life and how they adapt to the darkness of night. Use your senses and become part of their world. Meet at the visitor center to carpool to hiking location. Bring a flashlight and insect repellent.



1st Place *Plantlife, Nature's Nector* by Claudine Grove.



2nd Place *Wildlife, Going Home* by Kathleen Curphy

Sunday August 14, Movie 2:00 pm Is That Skunk?

Utterly recognizable yet still mysterious, these black and white creatures inhabit woods and neighborhoods all across America. What is like to be a skunk? Find out as scientists track them day and night to reveal some smelly secrets!

Thursday August 18, 10:00 am Wildlife Excursion

Saturday August 20, Nature Photography Workshop 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Discover the fun and adventure of photographing wildlife, plant life and the ever changing scenes of nature at Tamarac. Learn the basics of taking good photos and some secrets as well, then we'll head out into the field to capture images. Bring your own camera and sack lunch. Presented by Steve Maanum, instructor for the *Digital Photography Bridge to Nature* statewide workshops. **Please sign up in advance by calling 847-2641 ext.16 (Janice)**

Sunday August 21, Movie 2:00 pm American Eagle

Take an unprecedented look at a year in the life of North America's most recognized aerial predator. From the pristine wilderness of Alaska to the Upper Mississippi River Valley, go behind the scenes and into the nest to discover the eagle's struggle to survive. 55 min.



Honorable Mention, *On the Lookout* by Pam Lehmann

Thursday August 25, 10:00 am Wildlife Excursion

Sunday August 28, Beginning Birding Workshop 2:00 pm

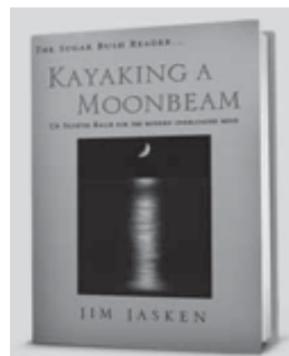
Discover the world of birding! Join avid birder Patsy Teiken and learn the basics of bird identification, how to get the most out of your binoculars, and experience some fun birding "apps." Practice your skills outside and identify some common species.

Friday, September 16

Tamarac Photo Contest Entries are Due!

Saturday, October 1, Tamarac Fall Festival 10:00am – 4:00pm

Become a Nature Detective at this year's Fall Festival! Examine the natural world up close. Children's activities are scheduled throughout the day. Take a refuge tour behind the Tamarac gates into the wilderness to learn the detective techniques of a biologist. Lunch will be available for purchase. Come celebrate the fall season at Tamarac!



New Book Released by Tamarac Tracks Contributor

Jim Jasken, whose poetry and prose has often appeared in these pages, has just released his new book of mostly Up North stories, poetry and philosophy. *Kayaking a Moonbeam* can be purchased at the Tamarac Wildlife Gifts and Bookshop.

YOUTH IN CONSERVATION – THE FUTURE OF TAMARAC

By Neil Powers, Tamarac Refuge Manager



Where was your first magical connection with the outdoors that stirred an appreciation for wildlife or wild places? Maybe it was the smell of a dewy summer morning during a walk in the woods, the sparkle of the sun on a gently rippling lake, or the tug of a frantic sunfish on your line. For each of us the spark that creates this connection to our natural world is different. For me the connection was simple-- fishing. It really didn't matter what species or what lake or what time of the day; just being outdoors with the chance to catch a fish was enough to cultivate a life-

thousands of youth and young adult employees. In 2010, more than 2,400 young people, between the ages of 16 and 25, were hired to assist with the myriad activities and programs. Youth and young adult employees are hired through three main hiring programs: YCC or Youth Conservation Corps, Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). These positions typically do not last for more than 6 months; many last 3 months or less. This coincides well with the heart of our field season (May-August) at Tamarac and the

long passion. While many who share this appreciation are satisfied with the security that wild places exist for our enjoyment, others look for ways to quench their curiosity by pursuing careers in the natural resource field and ultimately job opportunities through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service annually hires

availability of employees, many of whom return to school in the fall. While each of these programs has the same end result--employment opportunities with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service--they are each geared toward different phases of growth and development of individuals for potential future career opportunities.

Tamarac is fortunate to have a new crop of youth employees as well as seasoned young adults; you may have noticed some new faces have joined the Tamarac NWR Team during the past few months. Some are veteran employees returning from years past to bolster their experience while others are embracing their first experience working for a conservation agency. We rely heavily on their skills and abilities to accomplish tasks that would otherwise not be completed. While the experience gained is critical to the development of their careers and provides them with the critical building blocks to take on the tasks of future employment opportunities, these employees also represent the future of conservation and potentially the next generation of U.S Fish and Wildlife Service managers, biologists, and public use specialists. These employees represent the future of Tamarac and the future of the Refuge System. From our perspective, the future is bright!

NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Jodi Olson
Ruth Solie
Bill and Deb Wickum
Jim and Deanna Sinclair and family

John D. Peterson
Tim and Mary Wiebew
Stacy and Matthew Davis
Mark Beug

THE COMMON LOON

MINNESOTA'S STATE BIRD



Good news from Tamarac NWR: an annual July count of nesting Common Loons found 68 adults and 14 chicks. "That's the refuge's third-highest total in ten years," said refuge biologist, Lowell Deede. Some observers thought last year's Deepwater Horizon oil spill might harm loons wintering in the Gulf of Mexico, leading to fewer birds in the North Country. Statewide results aren't ready yet, but Deede said Tamarac's loons appear to be doing well.

Also during July our refuge partnered with USGS in conducting a new study of loon health and movements. Three female loons at Tamarac were given a special geo-locator device, while four males were fitted with satellite transmitters. This research project will provide more information about the feeding habits of loons at Tamarac and their migration to the Gulf of Mexico.

According to Aubrey Lang and Wayne Lynch in Loons, most loon families disperse as summer draws to an end. Sometimes adult groups of twenty or more migrate together. Immature birds leave later in the year to spend much of the next three years on the ocean. They do not return north the next season, but only when they are ready to breed. These birds rarely are found on land, except during the nesting season. They even sleep on the water. Their large webbed feet are adapted to propelling them under water when escaping predators or feeding. They have been known to dive more than 200 feet deep.

Loons have lifetime mates, but they don't necessarily spend their winters together. They find each other again by coming back to the same nesting territory. Their haunting calls are combined with visual displays to help them communicate. On land they

have difficulty moving about because their legs are far back on their body. They incubate eggs for about thirty days. Both parents take turns sitting on the nest and turning the eggs.

Loons "run across the water" to get into flight. They need lakes large enough to fly low over the water for as much as a quarter mile, till they pick up enough speed to get aloft. Loons have been reported at flight speeds up to seventy-five miles per hour as compared to ducks which fly between forty-five to sixty miles per hour.

Common Loons distinctive shape and striking black/white colors make them unmistakable on the water. Occasionally during mid-summer loon families can be seen swimming on the lakes at Tamarac NWR, and sometimes during early fall mornings, groups of non-breed birds can be seen together on our lakes.



SPOTLIGHT ON JANICE BENGSTON

BY JUSTINE BOOTS



She is on the staff at Tamarac; she has a twin sister; her Facebook page proudly proclaims "I love my wiener dog, mountains, and nature." she is passionate about Tamarac's mission to protect the habitat and wildlife of our northern Minnesota woods. **Meet JANICE BENGSTON.**

Janice grew up in Long Prairie, MN and later majored in biology at Concordia College. She always knew that she wanted to be a naturalist, so after graduation she volunteered and later worked for the U.S. Forest Service on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in Idaho. After that, she pursued a secondary education certificate at Boise State University and then found herself at the Grand Teton National Park where she remained for six years. In 2002, she accepted her present position as Tamarac's coordinator of volunteers, a job which allows her to

work with a large number of people who love Tamarac and its mission as much as she does. She is well suited for this position and enjoys the variety of work experiences it offers. She appreciates the commitment of her fellow TWR staff members to protect the area's treasures for future generations; she sees that "they all truly care about the place." Her happiest days are those when she can connect children with nature in order to build good attitudes and thereby ensure respect for the environment. She believes that with appreciation come important lifestyle changes: people



will think more about their carbon footprints, will care more about preserving the beauty and diversity of the world around them, will reduce dependence on herbicides/pesticides, and will recycle more.

She credits her love of and respect for nature to one of the important influences in her life-- her father. As a child she worked with him in the garden; with her twin sister Julie she went on nature hikes; the entire Bengtson family spent memorable weeks together on summer camping trips out west. As an adult she discovered the essays and stories of Sigurd Olson and has incorporated his wisdom and love of nature in her own life. As a child of the seventies, she always loved the poetry and songs of John Denver. As he did, she believes that to preserve the wilderness is a spiritual necessity. In all her presentations and environmental education programs, she stresses the importance of the development of an ecological conscience in all those who hear her message.



VOLUNTEER VIBES

BY JANICE BENGTON, TAMARAC VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Summer is in full swing and volunteers are busy presenting programs and tours, assisting visitors, surveying wildlife, mowing trails and grounds, tending wild gardens, monitoring our lakes and streams, writing articles, conducting visitor surveys, planning the fall festival, and more. Whew! As we are busy working on the refuge, please remember that safety comes first! Be aware of your surroundings and think through the task you are about to do. Wear the appropriate clothing and protective gear for the job at hand. Do not rush because even the most routine task can be unsafe if you're in a hurry.

The spring school field trip season was super busy! We hosted over 1000 students during the month of May. Thanks to our volunteer environmental educators! We simply could not have done it without you: Connie Carlson, Jeanine Ehnert, Denise Warweg, Dave Schneider, Ron Jenson, Nancy Brennan, Linda Brockman, Rick Pechmann, Fran Mattson, Del Larson, Cathie Ferguson, Jim DuBay, Ken Mattson, Luverne Ehnert, and Betty Gunderson.

Welcome aboard our new volunteers: Howard Lohman, Harry Halvorson, Pam Anderson, Ken and Patsy Teiken, Jan and Rocky Larson, Cathie Ferguson, Jim DuBay, Steve and Diane Midthune, and Janine Schneider.

Time to Party! The annual volunteer recognition picnic will be held on Thursday August 18. It is always a fun time for everyone to get together to celebrate our accomplishments and to recognize the Volunteer of the Year. Details to come.

Welcome our new Resident Volunteers!

Ken and Patsy Teiken are from Livingston, Texas, but travel a lot in their RV. Patsy was a high school counselor at Houston's largest school, which was quite challenging because of its extremely diverse student body. She also taught a class called Marriage Preparation, which was very popular. Previous to that, she was an English and special education teacher. She is a true Southerner having grown up

in Mississippi. Her hobbies include birding, photography, hiking, golfing, and she loves to read. She is also an award-winning water-color artist! Patsy has two children, a daughter in Hawaii and a son in Austin, Texas. She also has one very talented and sweet granddaughter. Ken is a native of Minnesota who grew up in Ogema. He left there over fifty-two years ago to join the Navy. Growing up in a family of 13, he says that he is related to all Teikens in the area. After retiring from the Navy he worked for the Fluor Corporation, one of the largest engineering and construction firms in the country. He taught supervisory and management workshops in the corporate setting and out in the field. Later, he managed training centers in the U.S. and internationally. His career took Patsy and Ken to some exotic locations including Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, Papua New



Ken keeps the visitor center and maintenance grounds looking sharp.

Guinea, and Kazakhstan. Ken's hobbies include golfing, singing, and playing guitar. Patsy and Ken also enjoy their furry children, Bailey and Rusty, and traveling. They have volunteered at other refuges including Pea Island NWR in North Carolina. Patsy will be covering the Visitor Center, leading tours, and sharing her enthusiasm for birding. You will also see Ken at the visitor center, presenting tours, out on the riding lawnmower taking care of the Visitor Center grounds, and more. We are so excited to have Ken and Patsy as part of the Tamarac Family!



Ken and Patsy Teiken are RV volunteers for Tamarac.

LANDOWNERS AND WETLANDS

By Vonnie Jacobson,
Friends Board Member

Kurt Svendsgaard, FWS wetland restoration expert, and Jimmie and Lucille Nelson, private landowners in Clearwater County, formed a partnership to restore a wetland on the Nelson's property. Through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program they restored one wetland encompassing nearly ten acres.

Without financial assistance, many wetlandsthiswouldremaindrained. The resources for the partnership included the USFWS contribution of \$3,800 and the Nora township contribution of \$1,000. MNDNR and Jimmie Nelson contributed by the seeding/dragging of the dike. The project was completed last summer and provides important waterfowl habitat (over water nesting for ring-neck ducks) and other migratory birds. Besides providing important waterfowl habitat, wetlands like these are critical for flood reduction and water quality.



Kurt Svendsgaard with Jimmie Nelson during the wetland restoration work on the Nelson property.

Since 1988 through the Partners Program, over 1,300 wetlands like this one have been restored, which provide over 2,600 acres of restored wetland habitat. Much of this work has centered on Clearwater County (Koochiching, Beltrami, Hubbard and

Cass Counties).

Partnerships like these with Jimmie and Lucille are very beneficial for wildlife conservation. A fifteen year agreement was signed with Jimmie in which he agrees to keep the project intact. Throughout the agreement Jimmie retains all hunting and fishing rights to the property.

Jimmie is delighted with the new wetland on his property. This summer the pond is a duck hatchery and home for a pair of swans. He feels it is "the best government money ever spent." He is planning a fall planting of winter wheat that he will bale and leave for the wild turkeys, sharp-tailed grouse, and geese. His method of harvesting leaves seed on the ground that will renew the field next year. He feels that with wetland restoration and renewable farming methods, Minnesota could have abundant birds and game. The wetland is a place of beauty, function, and a living legacy for the future.



The new wetland on the Nelson farm is now home to a variety of waterfowl and other wildlife.

AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

By Rhonda Fode, Detroit Lakes 3rd Grade Teacher

The third graders of Roosevelt Elementary in Detroit Lakes were blessed to learn at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge three times during this school year. The students got to experience first-hand the differences in the habitat during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. The energy of their learning has been incredible!

In the fall, the students first started their encounters with the GPSs when they had to locate specific points in the refuge using these devices. The students feel empowered to be able to operate these pieces of technology in order to explore nature. Another of their fall favorites was exploring the coverings of the various mammals found right here in the Tamarac area by touching and even wearing the furs. They especially found it educational to learn the amount of food that the animals must eat to store up enough energy for hibernation.

In the winter, the students came back to Tamarac for a gorgeous winter day adventure. As with all three trips to Tamarac, one of the stations was to take photos of a specific location and record the weather data of that location in all three seasons. The data collected was used back in the classroom to accentuate our learning about weather. The students again got to be the experts using the GPS devices to solve a question about different creatures. Kelly does an excellent job getting students to feel successful using the GPSs and make it educational with animals as well. They enjoyed the story "Stranger in the Woods" as they watched the movie in the Visitor Center. We created a new activity station where the students came up with questions about the environment. They decided how to test that question by collecting data. This station was also partnered with a journaling



Feeling the warmth of fur.



Winter journaling



Celebrating nature in winter

I learned what G.P.S. means. It means Global Positioning System. I learned what the temperature of an igloo is. I learned how to use a G.P.S. Thank you for teaching me these things.

By Riley, 3rd Grade Roosevelt.

type activity. They really got into sitting in the snow and drawing and/or writing.

By the spring trip to Tamarac, the students were really fired up to go outside and learn again. There was another surprise when the Hutchinson family showed up with "team uniforms"-- a great keepsake of their third grade learning experience at Tamarac. Following a movie depicting the signs of spring, they enjoyed the camouflage hike trying to spot animals hiding in the forest. They looked like true scientists as they collected



and documented data about the weather. The natural questioning process as they took photographs of the same location for the third time this year led me to believe that they are truly starting to think about nature--why and how the natural world is so full of wonder. It does not seem like a good idea to send twenty-five students loose into the woods, but with their newly acquired skills with the GPS devices, it was possible. I could tell that beyond their ability to actually operate the devices, they understood the basic concept of how satellites provide guidance to locate an exact position on the earth. It was interesting to observe that the students were able to produce a chorus of birds, frogs, and toads; they were so eager to share stories of how they had heard a particular bird or frog and could now put a name to that animal. Another belief that I had was that it would be nearly impossible to take many students, place them in an outdoor environment and expect them to sit quietly and journal for 30 minutes. Again, I was delighted to see that the students were so fired up about the outdoors that this feat was easily accomplished. They sat quietly, wrote their observations, and were excited to share their journaling when time was up.

There is no better way to teach students about habitats and natural environments than to put them right in the midst. One of the true signs of learning is the transfer of knowledge. It was often during lessons in the classroom

that the students themselves would make references to observations made at Tamarac. It is overwhelming for me to put into a few words the magnitude of learning and excitement that occurred with this opportunity. Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge was the perfect learning classroom for our students.

Thank you!
I loved going hiking in the woods and getting to see camouflaged animals.



By Marisa, 3rd Grade Roosevelt.