

The Rivers Edge

To support the Boyer Chute and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuges in their efforts to preserve, protect and restore the biological diversity and their historical resources, while providing the opportunity for wildlife oriented activities, education and scientific research

Secretary Salazar Visits DeSoto

A visit to Desoto NWR by Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar was hosted by DeSoto staff and Friends members.

The brief fall visit included tours of the Visitor Center and the historical Steamboat Bertrand Museum collection. Secretary Salazar expressed amazement at the enormity of the collection and made a connection with the goods being transported to Montana, from where one of his staff members hails. He was awed by the beauty and serenity of the refuge from the viewing galleries overlooking DeSoto Lake.

Friends Group members thanked the Secretary for his visit and his support for the local refuges, and he, in turn, expressed appreciation for their hard work and his opportunity to experience more of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Top: DeSoto's Mindy Sheets gets an autographed cap from The Secretary.
Bottom: DeSoto staff and young guests in the Visitor Center with Secretary Salazar..

Attention: Volunteers

Reporting of your volunteer hours are vital to the success of the Friends/Refuge relationship. Hours worked are used by refuge staff as a credit to the refuge by the NWR administration. Simply keep track of hours worked and turn in to refuge staff. It helps everyone, and everything at the refuge.

2010 Events

Friends of Boyer Chute and Desoto National Wildlife Refuge

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12-15

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Discover a variety of birds through the windows of the visitor center. How many species can you find?

International Migratory Bird Day

May 8

Time TBD

Event dedicated to fostering greater understanding, appreciation and protection of the grand phenomenon of bird migration. Join us for International Migratory Bird Day and learn about our “feathered ambassadors” and get close-up views. Program presented by Raptor Recovery Nebraska, Inc. We will also have field trips and activities for all ages to learn about birds and migration.

Wilson Island Campground Programs

May 22 – September 4, Fridays

8:00 p.m.

45-minute Ranger program held at Wilson Island picnic shelter on Friday evenings.

DeSoto RefugeFest

June 5

5:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

An outdoor family-fun day with a carp fishing contest, boat tours, canoe and kayak rides, fishing and archery clinics, and food concessions. The event is hosted at the South Gate Recreation Area of DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Bike to Boyer

Saturday July 17 (tentative – watch for promotion materials)

7:00 a.m. – 7:45 a.m. – Registration

8:00 a.m. – Ride Starts

8:30 a.m. – Free Family Fun Ride

Bike through scenic Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge and beyond and raise community awareness about Boyer recreational opportunities! Event is sponsored by the Friends of Boyer Chute & DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Email: clamberg@huntel.net Website: friendsofboyerdesoto.org

National Public Lands Day

September 25

9:00 a.m. – 12 noon

National Public Lands Day is the nation’s largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy. In 2008, 120,000 volunteers built trails and bridges; removed trash and invasive plants planted over 1.6 million trees. Join us for the 16th annual National Public Lands Day. For more information about National Public Lands Day, visit: <http://www.npld.com/>

National Wildlife Refuge Week

October 10/9/10-10/16/10

TBA

A special event to connect people with nature and their National Wildlife Refuge System. Explore the refuges and its wildlife through a variety of activities, from bird walks to refuge tours.

Art Of The Wild Show & Sale

November 20 – 21

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. each day

This annual event features artwork, photography, carvings, and more from on-site local artists. Come out and enjoy the day at DeSoto.

Visitor Center Upgrades In Progress

A rude shock is in store for those who think a museum collection in storage is a quiet place where nothing ever happens. A number of projects are underway which will affect DeSoto NWR's curatorial staff and collection.

Contractors are removing the 30 year-old Halon fire suppression system and replacing it with a product called Sapphire. This involves drilling holes through the concrete floor for as many as 19 new nozzles, which disperse chemicals in the event of a fire, and protecting/moving any museum objects that are currently stored nearby

Plans are to replace all windows in the Visitor Center, to include exterior windows in the research library and the curatorial laboratory. New carpet in the library and curatorial offices will follow.

Additionally, lighting is being upgraded in both the exhibit galleries and storage spaces. The existing track lighting network can be used, so no new drilling and mounting is needed, and the old fixtures (there are 75 of them in the storage area alone) will be adapted to use new bulbs that produce much less ultraviolet light and are designed to last 50,000 hours!

To make life even more interesting, the building is also getting a new phone system and server, to be stored in what is now a curatorial room off the lab. Hopefully, day-to-day operations will continue unabated through the summer – especially the Metals Conservation Project and visitor access to Desoto's Bertrand Collection.

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Art of the Wild A Wild Success

On November 20 and 21, DeSoto National Refuge hosted the ninth annual Art Of The Wild art show with a total of nineteen artists displaying their works throughout the Visitor Center. Funding was through the Friends Group.

A wide variety of mediums were represented, including woodcarving, painting, photography, ceramics and jewelry. Photographer/author Ty Smedes held a book signing and gave two presentations each afternoon on eagles and Iowa wildlife, all of which was supported by the Friends Group.

Approximately 500 visitors viewed the art each day, with several pieces sold by the artists.

Friends member Steve Tyler served up breakfast Sunday morning for the artists, and Friends Board members Randy Mays, Deb Hunsberger and Todd Wick were on hand to assist artists in bringing their displays to and from the building, which was greatly appreciated by the artists.

Say Hello to . . .

The New Year brought new faces to DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges. Two positions were filled and another new face is scheduled to arrive in late March.

Tom Cox is the new Project Leader for DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges. Tom assumed his new position as refuge manager at the beginning of the year. Mr. Cox has worked at several refuges during his career; Port Louisa NWR in eastern Iowa being his most recent assignment. The family, wife and two children, moved to Blair just before Christmas.

Ashley Berkler returns as a permanent employee. Ashley, who worked at DeSoto NWR as a STEP student, has completed her college education and started her full-time career in January with the Fish and Wildlife Service as a Visitor Services Specialist. Early plans are for her to concentrate especially on the Blair Schools outdoor partnership.

A new Visitor Services Manager is slated to begin work at DeSoto March 28. **Ken Block** is coming to Desoto from Effigy Mounds National Monument in Northeast Iowa. Prior to that assignment, Ken was with the National Park Service at various locations. Ken brings with him a burning desire for conserving our natural resources.

Say hello these fine folks who will be great additions to the refuge staff.

. . . and, So Long to these good people

DeSoto's loss is the Pacific Northwest's gain as two vital and vibrant staff packed their bags last fall for the Mid-Columbia NWR complex in Washington.

Desoto and Boyer Project Leader **Larry Klimek** and his family headed northwest in September, well before the first Midwestern snows.

Sue McDonald and her daughter followed in October. Sue retains her Visitor Services Manager title as she supervises outdoor recreation activities there.

The two will be greatly missed for their contributions to the refuges here, and their cooperation with, and guidance to the Friends Group.

The Bertrand Collection Getting Clean-Up

The Bertrand Collection at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge has been receiving a lot of tender loving care in recent months. Thanks to funding by the Friends Board, **Chris Harman**, a recently retired National Park Service employee, has been hired to perform special cleaning of objects in the storage spaces. Harman was finishing up his 25-year Park Service career in the regional office in Omaha when he became aware of the Bertrand Collection, and approached DeSoto NWR staff with an offer to volunteer his services.

Harman's most recent field assignment had been at Apostle

Islands on the Great lakes where he was responsible for their museum collection, consisting largely of archeological artifacts. Using skills learned while with the NPS, Harman is individually cleaning Bertrand objects and shelving in the storage area. The cleaning process consists of gently vacuuming each object, then applying what is called a "soot sponge" – essentially a very dense, soft piece of rubber to the surface of the object, and then re-vacuuming the object.

The wide variety of objects, their various sizes, composition and fragility make this a very labor-intensive process, and Harman's

efforts allow the refuge's full-time staff to concentrate on the ongoing metals conservation project — which involves selecting, documenting, packing and transporting metal collection objects at risk of rusting for treatment at the Gerald Ford Conservation Center in Omaha.

Since arriving last fall, Mr. Harman has made great progress in cleaning the objects in the high humidity storage area. When he has completed his work with what remains there, he will move on to resume the same process in the low humidity area – with its hundreds of glass and ceramic bottles.

Snowy News From Boyer Chute NWR

The staff at Boyer Chute reports abundant animal tracks that continue to show up following each (and yet another) snowfall. As of the first part of February, the refuge snowfall is approaching 40 inches.

Boyer Chute refuge completed two **antlerless deer hunts** (muzzleloader) last quarter on **Oct. 24-25** and **Dec. 5-6**, 2009. Quality hunts were provided to the 120 hunters participating over the two weekends. The hunting areas included the Boyer Chute Island, Nathan's Lake and Horseshoe Lake tracts, in addition to the Headquarters Area. A **third antlerless deer hunt** was held **January 9-10**, hosting 75 Nebraska hunters with Area 21 licenses. Deer hunting opportunities have increased favorably in scope and popularity over the last several years.

The Boyer Chute Shop Project was completed in January. A new concrete floor and building apron was poured in late November with building insulation and installation of a Geo-thermal heat pump system in January. A series of 28 wells were drilled last fall for the geothermal system. The heated facility to maintain vehicles and equipment is a welcome addition.

Don't miss the Boyer Chute Brochure — a high quality piece with updated maps/trails, regulations, etc. When visiting the refuge, they are available at both the Main Entrance and Main Parking lot kiosks. There are some wonderful photos from **Friend's Board Member Randy Mays**.

River Restoration Projects on Boyer Island/ Missouri River:

The flow-through channel on the north end of the island (Boyer Bend Side Channel) is nearly complete. Dredging is finished, and the contractor is placing rock/rip-rap at the inlet to armor that area. **The Boyer Bend Backwater** on the east side of the Island is progressing well (approximately 85% complete). Three dredges working in the project area are now static due to ice and reduced river levels over the winter. The project is likely to be completed in Spring 2010, as anticipated. Both projects are to benefit the endangered pallid sturgeon and other river fish species.

Friends Group members are vital to the success of the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Thanks again for all you do to assist Boyer Chute NWR.

Michael Ellis
Refuge Manager, Boyer Chute NWR

Friends President Moves On

After a short, but productive term as president of the Friends Group, Ralph Guetersloh was forced to resign the position in favor of a move to retirement living in Arkansas. Here is his farewell letter to the Friends Board and its members:

December 2009

Friends of Boyer Chute and DeSoto NWR

Dear Members of the Board,

I regretfully submit my resignation as President and as a member of the Board of Directors for the Friends of Boyer Chute and DeSoto NWR. I request that my resignation would be effective immediately. As I have previously explained, the reasons for my resignation relate to moving from the Omaha area down to the Branson, Missouri area which would prohibit any further active and substantive participation on the Board.

I have been highly privileged to become involved in the activities of the Friends Group and have received enormous pleasure and rewards from this participation. I have been deeply honored to be selected to serve for a short term as the President of the Board. I have also been profoundly impressed with the dedication and depth of experience and ability of you fellow Board members. It is a privilege for me to work with you. I am deeply committed to the Friends' mission to provide volunteer opportunities, funding resources and educational programs which help to preserve the natural treasures and the rare beauty of the Boyer Chute and the DeSoto NWR.

I wish you the best success in your efforts through the Friends' group.

Ralph A. Guetersloh

The Friends group will miss Ralph and his wife, Susan. They have contributed much during Ralph's relatively short active membership on the Board. We wish them all the best during their move and retirement. And, they may have some visitors from up here in the Frozen North from time to time. . .

With the resignation, Vice President Todd Wick took over the President's post.

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Priorities From The Bertram Exhibit's Dean Knudsen

Number one priority is to get the soot cleaned off the metal objects. His second priority is to reorganize the cataloging system. The third is to put the collection on-line in a systematic manner. This will necessitate a server with a 7-terabyte memory, new software and a huge amount of re-organizing and re-entering.

Knudson has also visited Dana College to explore internships for students. Interns at the Bertrand site would not only help out with the museum work load, but would expose those students to opportunities in the field of museum work.

What's Happening With The Friends Group

A brief look at projects underway or under consideration by the Friends Group. Proceeds from fund-raising efforts and volunteer hours by Friends members are dedicated to the betterment of Desoto and Boyer Chute National Wild Life Refuges.

Touch Screens. The Friends Board is actively pursuing Touch Screens as an enhancement to the educational experience at the refuges. A sizeable amount of money has been earmarked to make the touch screens a reality, and possibilities are being pursued.

Funding. 1. Funds from the 2008 Bike to Boyer has helped pay for new kiosks to be set up at the entrance and main parking lot at Boyer Chute. They should be installed soon as they have been in the planning stages for two years.
2) Funds from the 2009 Bike to Boyer paid for new roofs to be placed on the shelters on the Boyer Chute Trails.
3) In addition to the funds from a grant to restore the Oriole Trail Prairie, memorial funds for **Chris Allred** will pay to have markers and kiosks installed along the trail. Chris was a young man who loved his time spent at Boyer Chute.

A Fergus Falls Visit. Board members Steve Tyler and Todd Wick ventured to Fergus Falls Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota last fall to examine educational successes at that refuge. At only 80 acres, the refuge is noted for its educational successes. A Federally owned four-classroom building is attached to the Visitors Center, but the Fergus Falls schools take care of and use the building. There are eight classes for 4th and 5th graders held there every day. The district hires the teachers but the refuge supplies interns. The town of Fergus Falls has a population of only 15,000 but manages to support this program with enthusiasm. Kids were collecting flower seeds when Steve and Todd visited. Classes there are part of the official school curriculum. Tyler and Wick are urging the new Refuge Manager, and the new Blair School Superintendent, Dr. Staven to visit there soon and hopefully follow that refuge's successes in partnering.

Fergus Falls Refuge Ranger Chad Raistz was recently an invited guest at a Friends board meeting, sharing further insight.

Grants & Projects

A **grant of \$3,500.00** from the NFWF for environmental education has been received. Later than expected, but appreciated.

Also received is a **\$5,000.00 grant** from the Iowa West Foundation, which will be used for the Eagle Cam project and environmental education.

Money from generous contributions to **Gary Caldwell memorials** is also earmarked for the Eagle Cam project. (See Eagle Cam story)

Also **anticipated is a \$5,000.00 grant** coming from the NFWF for prairie restoration on the Oriole Trail at Boyer. The work on this will start in the spring of 2010.

Eagle Cam

Friends Project Chair Larry Jensen reports that fiber optic cable will be used from the nest site to the line of sight to the Visitors Center. The cable requirements, as well as early, harsh weather affected the critical timing for completing the project for this Spring. Additionally, and more important, the mature nest was the victim of the weather in late January, being blown from the treetop on Iowa gales. Reports are that the eagles are busily hauling giant “twigs” to a nearby treetop in their remodeling efforts. If the project’s timing had not been altered, the planned camera would have been capturing outstanding images of . . . an empty nest. Make that non-existing nest.

Junior Naturalists

Former Friends President Steve Tyler has started a Junior Naturalist Project at Edison and Arbor Park Schools in Omaha. Eight sixth graders were active from the start, meeting on Saturdays, keeping journals and bird lists, and are learning bird identities and other outdoor lore.

What follows is an introduction about the program from an Arbor Park teacher, and two essays by participating students.

Arbor Park 5th Graders first outdoor classroom trip to Desoto was a trip where students were to Search for Wonders. Our young naturalists, along with their parents were to look for wonders such as beauty, awesome, questions, and surprise. The students were to take notes about their experiences in their naturalist journal. The following report is by Margo Wrich, an Arbor Park 5th grader, and another from Nick Deyden.

Sense of Wonder at Desoto National Wildlife Refuge

By Margo Wrich

On the Desoto trip my dad came along. We saw a great blue heron. It was making some calls. We also saw a lot of spiders. My dad being with me on this field trip was special because my dad never goes with me on field trips. We heard an animal fighting with something. We heard and saw lots of birds. We found some red berries. We saw a log with mushroom-like things on it. The mushrooms had dust-like stuff in them. One of my questions was "How do squirrels bend twigs to make their nests?" We also saw little daddy long legs. We also saw vines that twisted up trees, which were one of my big questions. The last thing we saw was a fisherman. It was very surprising.

Our Beaver Adaptations Trip to Boyer Chute Wildlife Refuge

By Nick Deyden

The Beaver Demonstration

First Mrs. Johnson's class and Mr. Wick's class started out with a brief talk about a beaver's home and habitat. We talked about the beaver's body such as its flat tail, sharp teeth, its double eyelids, and its sharp nails. After the demonstration we took a short hike to the field where all the beaver cut trees were.

What We Saw

We separated into groups of three or four out of both classes. Who would think we would see so much? The first thing I noticed on the beaver cut trees was the very sharp tip. Inside the tip of the tree was the wet imprint of sticky sap. Beavers made several trails that led to their lodges in the chute. Below the bigger cut down trees were many chips of bark and wood. It was not rainy that week, so there were no tracks on the trails. The only place where people found tracks was in the dung of the beaver. On the big logs on the way to the lodges, there were faint scratchings from the beavers climbing over logs. There was tunnels in bunched up thorn bushes. It looked liked it led underground tunnels to the chute. But who knows? There were large sticks that looked like they had been dragged for a while, but then dropped. Then each group showed the classes what they liked best. It all lasted for two hours and forty-five minutes (continued)

The Beaver's Body

The only other mammal to change its habitat is a human. They keep their fur waterproof with special oil. Beavers are the largest rodents in North America. Beavers use their tail like an alarm by slapping it on the water. The hard orange covering on their teeth is made of iron. That is why their teeth are so strong. Beavers' babies are called kits. Beavers have webbed feet used for swimming. Beavers eat leaves, bark and twigs. Beavers' teeth never stop growing until they die. Beavers can stay underwater for up to fifteen minutes. The toenails on a beaver's back feet can comb the beaver's fur. Beaver's have double eyelids, so the beaver can see underwater.