



Friends of Boyer Chute and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuges

December Newsletter

President: Todd Wick
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Big News!!

DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges will reopen to the public on Monday, January 2, 2012. DeSoto has repaired flood impacts that damaged the north entrance gate and public driving roadways; the refuge will reopen the full paved and gravel driving loop for winter season public access - including the ice fishing. The visitor center is still undergoing utility system repairs and will remain closed. Visitors to Boyer Chute will be able to park at the main entrance gate and access the refuge by foot only; high levels of silt deposited during the flood will prevent driving access to Boyer Chute indefinitely. Both refuges will be closed to public use January 11th to January 18th for a muzzleloader deer hunt.

Ranger Spotlight: Brittany Deeds

Brittany Deeds is currently helping Dean Knudsen inventory the entire Bertrand Exhibit. The Friends Group is paying her salary for six months to help Dean get this enormous project done.

I am working towards a master's degree in Public History from Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. This field prepares students to present and preserve history to the public in non-academic institutions, such as museums, historical societies, archives, and national parks. I am a bit unusual in the museum world, in that my undergraduate degree was in Biology. In

2005, I started volunteering as a docent at the Indiana Medical History Museum, where I gave tours of an 1896 Pathological Research Building used by Indiana's first mental institution. Through this experience, I realized that science could integrate very well with the museum field, and I decided to enroll in graduate school.

In 2008, I became a Collections Assistant at the Indiana State Museum in the natural history department, where I catalogued the bird egg and insect collections and participated in four archaeological and paleontological digs. Through my graduate program, I was also able to intern with Indiana Landmarks and the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. In June of 2010, I moved to Elk Horn, Iowa to accept 15-month collections assistant internship at The Danish Immigrant Museum. There I inventoried the museum's textile collection. During my internship, I was able to inventory 1,959 artifacts, including a staggering 236 doilies!

I first learned about the Bertrand collection in July of 2010, when my supervisor at The Danish Immigrant Museum arranged a tour of the collection and its storage with curator Dean Knudsen. I really admired the Bertrand collection, not only because it has a wide variety of artifacts that reflect the expansion of the American West in a very concrete way, but also because the collection is by its nature a time capsule preserving the material culture of a specific point in history. So after a few background checks, Dean graciously allowed me to start volunteering two Sundays a month in September 2010.

So far in my museum career, I have been "fortunate" enough to participate in two collection evacuations. In fall of 2010, The Danish Immigrant Museum removed and stored the Lauritz Melchior collection for safekeeping after the closure of Dana College. **Lauritz Melchior** (March 20, 1890 – March 19, 1973) was a [Danish](#) and later American



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opera singer. He was the pre-eminent [Wagnerian](#) tenor of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, and has since come to be considered the quintessence of his voice type.

A year later, during the flood of 2011, fellow intern Beorg Rasmussen and I were given permission from our museum director to come and assist with the Bertrand evacuation for one day. Seeing the outpouring of public support for the Bertrand collection, which I had grown rather fond of, was very gratifying.

On a positive note, the 2001 flood has given the Bertrand museum staff an opportunity to conduct an inventory of the collection and improve much of the record-keeping of the individual artifacts. This inventory project will ultimately strengthen the collection and allow it to be more accessible to the public and to researchers in the future. I really appreciate the generosity of the Friends of Boyer Chute and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuges for funding my 6-month position, as it will allow me to see how such a massive project is undertaken and will move me towards my career goal of becoming a collections manager. Thank you.

Notes from Dean Knudsen

The Bertrand Collection in Temporary Dry Dock

In case you were wondering what had become of the artifacts evacuated from the DeSoto visitor center last June, here is what is happening. The collection is snug and secure in a warehouse located in the Omaha area. As we do not know when the collection can be returned to the refuge, we are making the most of this opportunity to conduct a thorough inventory and upgrade the catalog records of the objects. As we open each box, we also inspect the artifacts for any damage that might have occurred during the evacuation, or

any other conservation issues that had previously gone unnoticed.

I am glad to report that so far we have not found any breakage at all, and we are slowly learning how to more efficiently approach the task of describing, measuring and photographing the thousands of objects that were aboard the steamboat *Bertrand*. We are also filling in information that had been incomplete or incorrectly entered. We are also adapting a uniform method of assigning locations and conditions for the objects, and we have eliminated lots of duplicate catalog numbers.

We are also about to embark on improving the access to individual object information by having one catalog record for each object. This process will bring us into compliance with Department of the Interior standards and make it much simpler to keep track of which objects have received treatments, are on loan or exhibit, as well as answer researchers' questions more fully. We will also be able to attach digital photographs of the objects directly to the computerized catalog record.

There is still much work to do, but Museum Specialist Bill Cantine, Museum Technician Brittany Deeds and I are eager to see this project through as it will be an extremely useful tool for more effectively managing the collection. In the meantime we are preparing for the day when the collection can be brought back and once again be placed on public display.

Dean Knudsen is Curator of the Bertrand Museum

Eagle Emporium

The Eagle Emporium is in the process of getting put back into the DeSoto Visitor's Center. A big thank you goes to Barb Nielsen! She has been hard at work inventorying the merchandise and putting it



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back on shelves and hangers. Remember, when the visitor's center opens back up, your membership entitles you to 15% off all of the Eagle Emporium merchandise. As an added bonus, you never pay sales tax at the Eagle Emporium. Come on out, enjoy nature and support the DeSoto NWR while you save money on quality books, toys, clothing, etc.

See the attached photo by Randy Mays.

Friends Educational Support

Cooperation between The Blair Community Schools and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge remains active in spite of all of the flooding. Many of the trip destinations were moved to the elevated parts of the refuge. A key concept taught this year to multiple grades was the impact of flooding on various habitats.

Events

DeSoto and Boyer Chute will be having a muzzleloader deer hunt January 11th to January 18th.

Ice fishing is a popular pastime on DeSoto with the season running this year from January 2nd to January 10th and January 19th to February 29th. Ice fishing on the refuge will be closed along with other non-hunting activities during the white-tailed deer hunt January 11th to January 18th.