

WDNR Wildlifer

September 2016



A Tribute to Steve Miller (September 1, 1949 - August 8, 2016)



"Likely, hunting and fishing will always be relevant, but more people should have an intimate relationship with wildlife. It should always be part of the human experience."

Hailing from Parma, Ohio, Steve Miller led an illustrious 42-year career at Wisconsin DNR, starting fresh out of graduate school in 1974 with a Wildlife Management position in Wisconsin Rapids and concluding with the bureau director position in Lands and Facilities (with several upper level administrative positions in between).

Throughout his career, Steve played an extremely influential role in transforming Wildlife Management into a more holistic form through such actions as:

- Establishing a wetland habitat coordinator position;
- Development of the statewide Wildlife Conservation Education and Outdoor Skills Program and Wildlife Conservation Education Centers at Crex Meadows, Horicon Marsh, Sandhill and Mead;
- Conversion of wildlife biologist/technician positions into FTE interpretive and conservation educator positions;
- Codifying the annual deer quota-setting process in administrative rule;
- Revising the management process and hunting framework for Canada geese and other waterfowl across the Mississippi Flyway in collaboration with states, partners and the public;
- Promoting watchable wildlife through the Wisconsin Wildlife Viewing Guide and the establishment of 78 Wildlife Viewing Areas across the state which were all were part of the DOT highway signage system;
- Overseeing development of a wetland and grassland habitat management plan for the state; and
- Mentoring new employees along their DNR career paths.

Beyond his contributions to conservation, Steve was dedicated to family, both in his personal life and work, and had a lifelong passion for the outdoors. His personality and character touched many and have left a lasting impact. Read more about Steve's life and contributions in the August 17 issue of [The Resource](#).

Right: in a surprise LF victory, Steve claims the Partners in Giving trophy pig from Tom in 2014.



Budget and Workforce News

Hiring News

Area Wildlife Supervisors: Andy Paulios has been hired as the new Madison area wildlife supervisor! Congratulations!



Bret and Ken Jonas relax after interviews

Wildlife Biologists: Bret Owsley is coordinating the wildlife biologist recruitment process. First round interviews occurred between August 15 -17, with 50 candidates and three interview panels. The second round of interviews will occur in Madison from September 7-9. Successful candidates are anticipated to start in October.

Migratory Bird Specialist: The position description is currently being revised in preparation for seeking CPR approval. Once CPR approval is obtained the position will be posted for recruitment sometime this fall.

From the Field...

- Forest certification auditors toured an extensive list of wildlife properties in the Northern and Northeastern District as well as the Northern Highlands American Legion State Forest. The department was commended for its systems that enable public input on master planning and annual operations planning. The impressive level of collaboration and consultation between program staff involved in property planning and management decisions was noted. The auditors see land management across the US and commented, "if you want to see forest management in the broadest sense done right, come to Wisconsin."
- NOD and WCD held their district-wide meetings in August. SOD will hold a district-wide wildlife staff meeting in September.
- UW-Madison and state cartographers have almost completed work on the updated Wisconsin Initiative for Statewide Cooperation on Landscape Analysis and Data ([WISCLAND](#)), an initiative launched with the Deer Trustee Report. Data will be housed within [GIS](#) in the Bureau of Technical Services (BTS).

Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan Update

Governor Walker and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) proposed new CWD initiatives and recommendations in separate meetings this spring. The Conservation Congress also presented biosecurity recommendations to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) in June. Recommendations were received in time for the first five-year review of the 2010-2025 [CWD Response Plan](#). CWD Team Leaders held a retreat in mid-July to review and update plan objectives, successes and challenges and opportunities within the next five years; results will be compiled into a plan addendum. A public involvement process will be established to obtain stakeholder, tribal, CDAC and public input on future CWD management options.

Sections

Big Game Section (Bob Nack)

[Bonus tags](#) went on sale on August 15, with few issues. Jeff Walters, WM's lead on the GameReg harvest registration system, is spearheading testing of the system. Earlier, staff across the DNR tested the [GoWild](#) purchasing system.

2016 DMAP workshops have gone well, with good attendance and positive feedback. One was held in the spring and five in the summer.

Wildlife Health Section (Tami Ryan)

Carissa Freeh has been hired as the new CWD Processing Center manager and continues to coordinate the Wildlife Rehabilitation program. The section is currently recruiting for the processing center/wildlife rehabilitation assistant position.

The new chemical immobilization system will soon be in place with designated points of contact.

Tami, Sean Strom, Tim Lizotte and **Mark Witecha** will join the Neonicotinoid Pesticide ad hoc team, along with a representative from NHC, to discuss the use of neonicotinoids on state wildlife areas and state natural areas.

An ad hoc team is working on a revision of the sick deer policy that was put into effect in 2012 because the workload in higher prevalence areas is untenable. The team's recommendation will be a risk-based approach that will eventually be forwarded to the policy team.

Wildlife Implementation Team (John Huff)

WIT members will continue to be involved with the ongoing biologist hire. First round interviews were held on Aug. 15-17. The second round of interviews is scheduled for September 7-9. WIT members will be working with field staff to complete accomplishment reporting, implementation of a new rating system for land acquisition and road/trail mapping on state lands. Performance reviews will be scheduled during August and September to meet HR deadlines.

Natural Heritage Conservation (Owen Boyle)

Staff should be reminded of the rattlesnake hotline: 1-888-74-SNAKE.

Wildlife Ecology (Mark Witecha)

The wild rice season is ramping up, with some date-regulated lakes opening on Sept. 2 and others soon. The general season forecast is poor, more so on rice lakes in the northwest part of the state, with many rice waters closed. To learn more, visit the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission's (GLIFWC) [website](#) or [sign up](#) for gov delivery emails.

Taylor Finger, Kent van Horn, and Brenda Kelly attended the Mississippi Flyway Council Meetings in Kentucky from Aug. 22 - 26, where decisions were made on the framework for the 2017-2018 waterfowl seasons. Goose and dove banding has finished, with 808 mourning doves and 4,548 geese banded; duck banding will wrap up soon. Early goose, mourning dove and early teal seasons opened on Sept. 1. This is the third and final year of the 3-year early teal season experiment for which data must be collected.

The Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative will meet in Wausau from October 27-29 under the theme of "Protecting Birds through Action & Art". The program will explore the major hazards facing bird populations and the impact of art on bird conservation efforts, with a private viewing of the fantastic "Birds in Art" exhibit at the Leigh-Yawkey Woodson Art Museum! Details and registration at <http://www.wisconsinbirds.org/annualmeeting2016.htm>. Partners in Flight recently released its 2016 Landbird Conservation Plan as an update to the popular 2004 plan. It presents new assessments, tools and recommendations to address continental threats, reverse long-term population declines, and prevent landbirds from becoming at risk. Download this outstanding conservation document at <http://www.partnersinflight.org/>.

Name Correction



In the August issue, Brenda Hill was printed in error. It is actually **Brenda Kelly**, our Mississippi River wildlife biologist who, incidentally, also just spent a holiday in the Last Frontier celebrating her 8th anniversary with husband Scott Kelly.

District Updates



SOD (Eric Lobner)

SOD staff met with a large landowner adjacent to Avon Bottoms WA to discuss interest in selling their property to the state. The property was completely restored to grassland, wetland and forested habitat through the Emergency Wetland Protection Program through NRCS and consists of a total of 1967 acres on the existing southern boundary of Avon Bottoms WA. If this acquisition is finalized, it will require dedication of all of the acquisition funding for the program.

Game farm staff are moving equipment into the new hatchery, which is almost completed. The DLT inquired about plans for a ribbon-cutting event this autumn, which could coincide with pheasant stocking. A spring hatching event may also be considered.



WCD (Kris Johansen)

Erin Grossman led a pasture walk event at Buena Vista. A grazing field day was held with tours of four wildlife areas where managers implement grazing. The group convened at Hook Lake Wildlife Area to discuss the first year trials and successes.

The 2016 elk cohort has stayed within the elk range thus far, but has moved away from the pen. A calf from a 2015 elk cow continues to roam the landscape. A prison crew tore down the quarantine/processing facility in a single day, and pens are starting to be dismantled. WM staff and volunteers will transport them to the Flambeau River State Forest, where they'll be reassembled.

CWD biologists were hired in Eau Claire and Wisconsin Rapids to assist with monitoring deer for CWD.



NED (John Huff and Jeff Pritzl)

Duck banding is progressing well. Some of the dove quotas have been filled and other banders are well on their way to completing their assignments. Banding is going well at Navarino on wood ducks and mallards. At Collins, early rocket net shots were light in terms of the number of ducks captured but activity is picking up and they are planning for two netting sessions per week as weather allows. The Berlin crew started banding by the week of the August 22. Water conditions are fairly good at their banding site.

A successful [piping plover nest](#) on the dredge spoils placed during reconstruction of the Cat Island chain produced three chicks, which were banded and monitored throughout July and into August. One chick has already started south and was seen and photographed on a beach near Two Rivers. The other two remain in lower Green Bay but are expected to leave soon. This is the first successful nest on the Lake Michigan shoreline of Wisconsin since the 1950s.

NED welcomed the new Plymouth Area Wildlife Supervisor on August 22. **Dan Lekie** returned to his native state from Kansas.

After-Hours Response Process

Discussion on developing a response plan for wildlife situations occurring outside normal work hours is underway. The Bureau has several options which will provide support to the public and to our partners inside the Department. Possible options include a year-round Wildlife Duty Officer, seasonal staffing during periods of high demand or better coordination with existing on-call services. Options will be developed by the Wildlife Implementation Team and acted on by the Wildlife Policy Team prior to March 2017.

Law Enforcement and Wildlife Program Focus Areas

The LE Special Investigations Unit and Wildlife Management discussed the following work priorities for 2017:

- GameReg harvest registration compliance
- Captive wildlife duties
- Hunter harassment, including access to lands on which we have easements
- Animal trafficking (tribal and non-tribal issues)
- Guided trapping for furbearer harvest
- Investigations of large-scale wildlife die-offs (potential poisoning)
- Potential bias in wolf surveys due volunteer bias in data. Is this a research issue or are laws being broken?
- Anti-hunting efforts and activities
- Tampering with DNR survey and management equipment
- Illegal drug use and trafficking in parking lots
- Animal damage program and access compliance
- Public land dumping
- Deer carcass disposal
- Incidental trapping where an animal is given to someone with a permit rather than being reported
- Compliance with baiting and feeding bans
- Use of drones in wildlife areas
- Inappropriate use of shooting ranges (need for rules)
- Boundary encroachments



Mark your calendar: September 24 is [National Public Lands Day!](#)