



PO. Box 6552
Rochester, Minn. 55905

FRIENDS OF OXBOW

www.friendsfoxbow.org

February / March 2009

2008 ANNUAL OXBOW PARK REPORT



2008 was a very busy and successful year, but also a very sad one here at the park. The death of our dear friend and supporter Dr. Paul Zollman cast a shadow over the park that will be felt for many years to come. His wit, wisdom and caring will be sorely missed. Memorial donations are pouring in from all the folks whose lives were touched by Dr. Zollman and their kind gifts will be used to construct a permanent memorial to him on the Nature Center grounds. Plans are currently in the works and a draft design has been produced by architect Byron Stadvold. A rendering of the final design will be available for viewing at the Dr. Zollman Day Spring Fest on Saturday, May 16th 2009.

For your enjoyment, this issue is devoted to a summary of the many fine accomplishments this year at your park and Dr. Zollman's Zoo.

Dr. Zollman's Zoo

The construction of the new raptor exhibit consumed much of the time and energy of the staff this summer. At a modest cost of about \$45,000, (not including park staff labor) Oxbow has a state-of-the-art raptor exhibit that everyone can be proud of. It was designed by long-time park supporter and architect Byron Stadvold and built by Construction chief Pat Gerken, with the help of staff, numerous volunteers and Sentenced to Serve crews.

Our elderly animal population continues to require replacements as old favorites pass on and new ones take their place. New arrivals this year include two fishers to replace the old raccoon, some new turkeys, a red-tailed hawk, salamanders and by the time you read this, a barred owl, turkey vulture, beautiful Golden eagle. The turkey vulture deserves mention as she was 38 yrs

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About Our Organization

Friends of Oxbow's mission is to support the educational, environmental and recreational goals of Oxbow Park. Our Newsletter is published 6 times a year. Copy deadline is the 2nd Monday of the month prior to the publication date. All submissions are subject to editing or revision. Copy may be submitted as typed copy to: Ruthann Yaeger, 5731 Co. Rd 105, Byron, MN 55920 or as an email to: ryegr@q.com.

The Friends board meets monthly at Oxbow Park Nature Center on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Everyone is welcome.

Friends Board Officers

President - Peggy Morris
Vice Pres. -Dory Gardner
Secretary - Ruthann Yaeger
Treasurer -Chuck Pavesich

Friends Board Members

Everett Beck	4-09
Jean Davison	4-10
Loren Dehling	4-09
Cindy Krueger	4-10
Jen Rand	4-09
Kristin Hjerleid	4-09

Friends Web page

www.friendsofowbow.org

Olmsted County Parks Information

www.co.olmsted.mn.us

Oxbow Park Hours

Park Grounds: 7 am -10pm

Nature Center & Zoo:

10 am to 4 pm daily

Nature Center, Zoo are closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years Day and Easter

Want to sponsor a zoo animal?

Go to:
www.friendsofowbow.org

Programs and Events at the Parks

Oxbow Park

*In case of inclement weather, call 775-2451 for program details
All programs are appropriate for all ages unless otherwise noted*

OTTER FEEDING – February 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Get set for some fun! Otters can get nasty during dinner, and they usually don't share with one another. Come and watch them eat! They bicker, they growl, they steal each other's food. In the end, none are worse for the wear!

CHILDREN'S ZOO TIME – February 14 at 10:00 a.m.

This is a great time for the youngsters to come in and see a few of the zoo critters up-close. A naturalist will discuss a little of the natural history of the animal and you may even have the opportunity to touch one!

BISON FEEDING – February 21 at 1:00 p.m.

Join park staff as we venture over to the bison paddock at feeding time. This is a wonderful opportunity to view these massive creatures up-close. Don't forget to bring your camera!

OWLS – February 28 at 1:00 p.m.

It's owl courtship time! Come and learn more about our local owl species and their natural history. You may even get a chance to view a few species close-up during the program.

FEED THE CRITTERS – March 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Join park staff as they feed a few of the zoo critters. This is a perfect opportunity to see these critters in action and get any of your zoo and animal questions answered.

MAPLE SYRUPING – March 14 and 21 at 1:00 p.m.

Would you like to learn a few historical facts about sugaring, and perhaps how to get started on your own? Let us show you. After a brief history we will take a short hike to Oxbow's very own sugar bush. Dress for outdoor conditions and top the afternoon off with a taste of Oxbow's own maple syrup! Limited quantities of Oxbow syrup will be available for sale by Friends of Oxbow.

SPECIAL PROGRAM!

BLUEBIRD WORKSHOP – March 28 at 1:00 p.m.

This hands-on activity will prove to be informative and fun! A short video will delight you with the life history of the Eastern Bluebird. Bring a hammer, because after the video we'll get you started on your very own nesting box, as well as suggestions on where to place it. Only 20 boxes (\$5.00 each) are available, so call 775-2451 to reserve one soon! (Ages 5 and up)

Chester Woods Park

*A \$5.00 daily or \$25.00 annual vehicle pass is required to enter Chester Woods Park.
Call 287-2624 for program information, registration and in case of inclement weather.*

ICE FISHING – Sat. February 7th at 2:00 p.m.

Attention, Kids! Ice fishing at its best! For beginners and experts, join us for a fun and exciting afternoon catching fish through the frozen tundra of Chester Lake. Dress for the weather. Please call ahead for ice conditions and to register with Park Staff at 287-2624. Meet at the Kiosk by the boat ramp. All ages welcome.

ANIMAL TRACKS & SIGNS – Sat. March 7th at 2:00 p.m.

Have cabin fever? Get out on a cool, crisp afternoon for a fun, informative hike. Receive answers to questions like: "What do animals do in the winter?" and "How do they survive?" Dress warmly and wear good boots. Meet at the kiosk by the boat ramp. All ages welcome.

2008 Park Wrap-Up, cont'd

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old (as is her surviving sibling) and had suffered two bouts of severe lead poisoning that occurred before she came to us, resulting in the loss of her toes. The staff is still trying to find a replacement for our lovely male kestrel.

All the animals on exhibit in the Zollman Zoo are injured or otherwise unreleasable into the wild for various reasons.

We would also like to thank our loyal supporter, Mr. Robert Eustice, for the loan of his fine dairy calves every year to our summer domestic exhibit as well as his help in harvesting the hay that feeds all our hooved animals over winter.

Other zoo maintenance included painting the grating on the badger pen and prairie dog pen, ongoing veterinary care, and the endless animal husbandry and recordkeeping tasks.

General Park Projects

The original park water supply system was not up to the new code requirements, so this year, the park spent a considerable amount of time and effort installing new Reduced Pressure Zone devices (RPZs) to bring it up to code. Each of these devices then required building a protective cover and insulation – you may have noticed the several new ‘mounds’ about the park. Other projects included painting the 2nd Bridge railings and many signs, repairing picnic tables and the usual endless mowing and clean up.

Prairie Restoration

This year the prairies really showed their true colors as continuing restoration efforts are beginning to pay off. It often takes at least five years for results to show, since native plants spend their early years putting down roots rather than producing blooms. Unlike short lawn and crop roots, their enormously long root systems (up to 15 ft!) allow them to sequester tons of carbon and survive dry periods that damage the shallow-rooted, quickly blooming exotics that most people plant in their yards and gardens. Native plants support many, many more birds and the harmless insects that birds need to feed their young, than exotics do. This year a total of 47 acres was carefully burned to suppress cool season invasives and enrich the soil.

Education

As ever, school classes are a crucial part of what your park does to serve your community. A total of over 7300 students representing 35 schools and daycare groups were served. Park staff taught 3242 students various aspects of their Minnesota natural history. An additional 4237 students were brought to the park by their teachers as part of their school curriculum.

Over 7600 members of the general public participated in a variety of programs such as tree and flower identification, bird watching, making maple syrup and building bluebird boxes, a 47% increase over 2007 attendance!

Events & Groups

Again this year, your Park played host to several group functions and special events, including the annual Friends of Oxbow Spring Fest, the Volunteer Recognition dinner, and the ever popular Friends Halloween Party. A partial list of the organizations using the park for meetings and events includes: Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Zumbro Education District, Prairie Smoke, Rochester Olmsted Council of Government Bike & Pedestrian Affairs Committee, Community Education classes, DNR Hunter education, Zumbro Valley Audubon, and Photo Safaris by Karen Davis.

Volunteers

The invaluable Oxbow volunteers again donated over 4240 hours to the upkeep, maintenance and improvement of your park. Their work included but was certainly not limited to assisting with habitat maintenance and construction, zoo cleaning and care, prairie restoration, trail maintenance and record keeping. The park simply could not function without them. Their contributions will be increasingly important in the current financial crisis.



Donations

As you know, your park has never charged an admission fee – a key philosophy that enables all people to return often and learn more about their Minnesota natural heritage. This policy, in addition to the current county park budget crisis, make the generosity of the surrounding community critical to the park's survival as a top tier resource and attraction.

To preserve this special gem of a park, grateful and generous visitors gave over \$21,000 in unrestricted donations this year. So far, another \$17,000 from park visitors and Friends of Oxbow members has been specifically earmarked for the new Wildcat Exhibit. Friends has ‘broken ground’ on our new Be a Builder campaign to promote this project. In the Nature Center, an upcoming display will enable you to see how the display “construction” is coming as our donations come in. Actual construction will not begin until the entire \$90,000 cost of the exhibit is in hand.

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FRIENDS OF OXBOW
PO Box 6552
ROCHESTER, MN 55903-6552

Friends of Oxbow

Yes, I'd like to be a Friend of this great Park!

<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	\$25 - 49	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
<input type="checkbox"/> Partner	\$50 - 99	
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$100 - 249	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ranger	\$250 - 499	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	\$500 - 999	
<input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropist	\$1000 - 4999	
<input type="checkbox"/> Director Circle	\$5000 and up	

Be sure to ask if your company matches donations!

Name:

Address:

C/S/Zip:

Make checks payable to Friends of Oxbow.

Mail to: Friends of Oxbow
PO Box 6552
Rochester, MN 55903

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FRIENDS OF OXBOW

Welcome to a New Board Member!

Friends is pleased to announce that a new member has joined our Board of Directors. Kristin Hjerleid lives outside of Byron and is raising triplets (two boys and a girl) who are nine years old, and attending school in Byron. Her husband is an Olmsted county attorney.

Before becoming such a busy mom, she was heavily involved in Public Relations as the Executive Director for the Community Youth Mentorship in Rochester. She has a BA degree in Communications, a Masters degree in Human Development and has served on the board of Directors for Ronald McDonald house, assisting with their capital campaign efforts to build a new house.

She and her family love to come out to Oxbow and enjoy the park, so she is looking forward to taking a more active part in the vision for our fine Park. We are delighted to have Kristin on board and hope to tap her PR talents to help us promote this little gem of a Park!

Friends of Oxbow Annual Meeting

Friends will hold it's Annual Meeting on Tuesday. February 10th at 7 PM in the Oxbow Nature Center. As always, all members are welcome and are encouraged to attend and get an update on your park's issues.

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More 2008 Wrap-up



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Visitation

Since your park does not charge admission it is difficult to obtain an totally accurate count of the tens of thousands of visitors welcomed during the year, but an estimated 60,000+ people explored the park hiking and skiing trails, nature center and zoo.

In addition, there were over 1680 campground site and group camp rentals and of course, each site generally has more than one occupant.

This is just an overview and obviously doesn't cover everything the staff has accomplished, such as cleanup, damage repair and countless other routine necessary tasks and maintenance duties that would take a whole book to document!

The staff would like to thank all the volunteers and visitors without whom there would be no Oxbow Park!