



P.O. Box 6552
Rochester, Minn. 55905

FRIENDS OF OXBOW

www.friendsfoxbow.org

Dec / Jan 2009-10

PARK UPDATE & WINTER WELCOME BY KEVIN CRILLY, PARK DIRECTOR



Photo by Patrick Harris

Most of you are aware of the odd weather pattern this fall. November has been unseasonably mild, but we missed out on those warm, sweatshirt comfortable days that some of us yearn for in October. The harvest was on hold for many, raincoats and umbrellas were part of daily wear, and the sun was hard to find. There were even a few days of white mixed in; an unwelcome hint to many of us that winter might be closing in.

At Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo though, it was business as usual regardless of the weather. With the delay of bitter cold, the turkey vulture and badger were able to spend extra time outdoors on display before they had to be moved to their winter accommodations inside. Both the prairie dogs and woodchucks decided it was time to snooze, and the stupor set in on them as scheduled.

Bear fought hard. Her battle was to eat, eat, and eat, bulking up through October indulging on fruit bucket after fruit bucket. She plumped up quite nicely, winning the battle to pack on the reserves and start her slumber during first part of November.

Bear is still keeping an eye on things, though. The right combination of a mild winter day and warm sun invites her to pop out of the den for a drink and gander at what is happening in the zoo. A surprise visit from her is not at all uncommon in January or February.

The bugling of the big bull elk has been heard all over the park. The whitetail buck hit full rut too, made evident by hearing him grunting at the ladies. On a calm day, you can hear the hollow grunt call while observing the porcupines' gnawing on a fresh cut pine bough.

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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
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 Treasurer - Ruthann Yaeger

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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*

There are no programs for December or January. The park is open all year, though, so you can hike, and once the snow flies, cross-country ski on groomed trails and rent snowshoes all during the winter. The zoo is open daily from 10 AM to 4 PM every day except for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years Day and Easter. Programs will resume in February, 2010.

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.*

The Chester Woods Park program season is finished for the year and the campground is closed. However, the park is open all year so come on out for ice fishing after the lake freezes and cross-country skiing on 8 miles of groomed trails that accommodate both classic and free-style skiing!



Photo by Jeremy Schulz

These elk are dressed for winter and seem to be enjoying it. Come on out to the Park and watch the elk and bison play in the snow and munch their hay.

Park Update & Winter Welcome, cont'd by Kevin Crilly, Oxbow Park Director

Next door to the porcupines are the wild turkeys. They are telling us winter is on the way, too. They can be found roosting-in on the cold mornings, less eager to fly down and begin their day of pecking for corn that was supplied to them by staff and volunteers the day before. They eventually fly down only after a second cup of warmth from the mid-morning sun. And not to forget those wolf pups - not so little anymore. They are eating well and sporting their new winter coats as they prepare to take on their first winter ever.

The signs are all here. Winter is on the way and the animals of Zollman Zoo are telling the same tale they do every year. So does that mean it is time to lock the doors and watch the snow fly? Absolutely not. Let winter blow in, Oxbow is ready. The animals here enjoy the snow and, being good Minnesota natives, are ready for it. One of the most popular phone calls staff receive in November is "are you still open?" The answer is Zollman Zoo is open 361 days of the year (exceptions: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years Day and Easter).

This park update is not to say "winter is here, see you next spring", but to encourage a winter visit, preferably after a fresh fallen snow on one of those quiet "snow crunching underfoot" mornings. Things are just beginning to get good here. The animals are adorned in their plush winter coats, eating good meals, and eager to enjoy winter. They are built for this climate, ready as always.

Visit the zoo on a cold winter day, and be sure to warm up inside while watching the birds visit the feeders and suet cakes. Be the first to hit the groomed cross-country ski trail along the Zumbro after a new snow. Try snowshoeing – a fun way to work off those pesky Holiday pounds. Come on out, it's just getting good!

The staff thanks all the volunteers and visitors for another great year. As 2009 rolls out and we enter 2010, we wish all of you the best and hope to see you here soon. Why wait until spring? Stop out and enjoy winter.

Phenology - or Fun Folklore about Weather

Phenology (fee-nol-o-gee) is the study of life cycle events in plants and animals as they respond to weather, climate, and the seasons.

Native Americans were attentive students of their surroundings and also had names for the months (moons). Their lives often depended on knowing what changes they could expect and when they would occur throughout the year.

December: Snow Moon (Cherokee)

January: Cold Moon (Cherokee)

Weather folklore comes from old sayings derived by observing something in nature, and is often used to determine a forecast. Some may be familiar with these sayings or maybe you've heard other variations of them. Most have not proven to be true but are surely lots of fun!

Here are a few of the more common predictions.

- ◆ If the first snow falls on unfrozen ground, expect a mild winter.
- ◆ Woolly Bear caterpillars predict the winter season... If the brown stripe is wider than the black stripes, the winter will be long and harsh.
- ◆ A warm November is a sign of a bad winter.
- ◆ If an owl hoots in the daytime, a storm is approaching.
- ◆ Hornets' nests built in the tops of trees indicate a mild winter is ahead; nests built close to the ground indicate that a harsh winter is coming.
- ◆ If animals have an especially thick coat of fur, expect a cold winter.
- ◆ When squirrels bury their nuts early, it will be a hard winter.
- ◆ Much rain in October, much wind in December.

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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!

_____ Friend	\$25 - 49	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
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Be sure to ask if your company matches donations!

Name:

Address:

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Make checks payable to Friends of Oxbow.

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Fun Folklore, cont'd from pg 3

- ◆ Onionskins very thin, mild winter coming in; Onionskins thick and tough, coming winter cold and rough.
- ◆ Whether it's cold or whether it's hot; we shall have weather, whether or not!

Weather: what's happening outside your window

Climate: what happens globally, over time



*Photo by
Dawn
Zollman*

January
on the
Zumbro
at Oxbow
park

Help Oxbow Park and Conserve Trees

In an effort to reduce postage costs and minimize our carbon footprint, Friends would like to send out this newsletter electronically instead of by US mail.

Please let us know if you can help us in this simple way. Under no circumstances will we ever sell our mailing list or send you fundraising pleas or other spam - just the newsletter or notice of special events. It will be sent to you in PDF format that almost all computers can open.. By subscribing in this way, you will also be making a little 'extra' donation to your park every month!

Please send your name and email address to friends@friendsofowbow.com. Your next issue will come to you the quick and easy way and you can feel good about it for many reasons!

Thank you for supporting this fabulous park!