



TIMBERLINES

W. J. Breckenridge Chapter
Izaak Walton League
October 2020

www.breckenridgeikes.org



Monthly Conservation Speakers

“The Forever Green Initiative”

Our Chapter House has seen no monthly Social/Education meetings since the Covid-19 global pandemic reached us. But an important part of our organization, our conservation topics speakers, have been able to continue to inform us in the virtual world, thanks to modern technology. Instead of having each of our Minnesota Chapters plan and host speakers, now our MN Division can arrange the excellent programs which can be shared to a larger audience. We have been using the Zoom vendor to host the speakers. The interface allows the audience members to choose to turn on or turn off their own video feed while listening and to mute their own microphone during the presentation so household noise doesn't interfere. A chat room allows questions to be submitted in text by the audience members during the talk or alternately, their microphones can be unmuted to ask questions directly if the speaker prefers.



We have had some excellent speakers in the past and the October presentation did not disappoint. Dr. Don Wyse gave us a fine summary of the University of Minnesota's "Forever Green Initiative" which is being carried out in collaboration with the USDA. With cropland being brown (no plant growth) for nearly nine months of each year in our region, our soils and rivers suffer greatly from erosion and chemical runoff. Don confessed that he feels his introduction of new winter cover crops 30 years ago has been somewhat of a failure since it is only being used on about 4% of the farm land. With the majority of Minnesota farm land being tilled by non-owners, the challenge he said, is to find a crop system that adds immediate economic value for this non-owner farmer who has little long-term incentive to protect the soil and water resources. The winter cover crops, annual or perennial, need to make money. To that end the Initiative is advancing the following options:

PERENNIAL CROPS

- Intermediate wheatgrass Kernza™ – wheat-like grain, forage, biomass
- Perennial sunflower – edible seeds, oil
- Native polyculture grassland mixtures – biomass, forage, natural products
- Perennial flax – edible oil
- Kura clover – N-fixing cover crop
- Silphium – edible oil

WINTER ANNUAL CROPS

- Pennycress – oil, biofuel, cover crop
- Camelina – edible oil, biofuel, cover crop
- Winter barley – food, malting barley
- Hairy vetch – cover crop, N-fixation

NATIVE WOODY CROPS

- Hazelnut – nuts, edible oil

- Shrub willow – biomass
- Elderberry – antioxidant-rich fruit
- Agroforestry – woody and herbaceous crop mixtures for feed, food and fuel

The Initiative’s website is

<http://www.forevergreen.umn.edu>

If you would like to sample food products made with perennial Kernza™ you might visit The Birchwood Café in Minneapolis or try a local St. Paul craft beer made by Bang Brewing.

Our IWLA Jaques Chapter is presenting a virtual talk next month (on Tuesday, November 10, 6:30 PM) titled “**Give Me a Home Where the Butterflies Roam**”. The speaker will be Angie Hong. Angie is the coordinator for Minnesota’s East Metro Water Resource Education Program, a local government partnership with 25 members.

HOW TO JOIN THE EVENT:

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5777543510?pwd=SGZhc nFWbCt3c09EcU04UWhRdWtpZz09>

If you’re asked for a password, use MEP. If you’re joining by phone only, call 312-626-6799 and enter the meeting ID 577 754 3510.

Suggestions for future speakers are welcome and can be left on the Breckenridge voice mail number 763-561-5364.

Reported by Tim Johnson

**Opinion:
A Refuge for Whom?**

As a younger person I was always glad when I heard of a new Refuge or an existing one in my vicinity. I envisioned how wildlife would be safe in these small areas from the dominance of mankind. Some refuges are quite large, but small compared to the vast continent that once was their domain.

Recently I read where the Refuge system has been far short of appropriations to keep them as they should be. Reading further I discovered how they “should be”. Instead of complete protection for wildlife, some of the “protections” listed are camping, hunting, bird watching, hiking, fishing, touring, road and bridge building, improved parking lots, rest rooms, interpretive centers, etc.

My dictionary says “Refuge: a place of safety, shelter, safe retreat”. I would say from most of the things listed above. The money saved from not investing in improvements for all these human endeavors would probably pay for improving the environment for the species “seeking refuge”. That money saved could go a long way to increasing the size or amount of Refuges and improving habitats for the ever-dwindling species still existing.

Perhaps the refuge system was meant to be multiple use areas for wildlife and humans. If so, they should be called something else other than Wildlife Refuges.

Dick Brown

MEMBERSHIP ALERT!

We are getting ready for another great year for the Ike's. Your 2021 dues renewal form will be arriving soon. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mary Ellen Vetter

Proceedings - Breckenridge Chapter IWLA BOD meeting October 14, 2020

Members present on Zoom meeting: Steve Schaut, Tim Johnson, Barb Franklin, Dick Brown, Wendy Steele, Karen Ostenso, Dennis Leslie, Larry Kennebeck, Jim Arnold, Joe Klohs.

We received donations to Wes Hendrickson's memorial fund (totaling \$740). Discussion led to two ideas, a bench or a picnic table. Members will investigate next steps before next month's board meetings. Winter weather is coming; this project may not be completed yet this fall.

Informational kiosks outside Chapter House may need revamping/replacing – they are fading. Displays are 15 years old. Karen and Joe will meet to assess.

Tim discussed Rentals – there are some cancellations for the holiday season due to COVID-19.

Steve reported that our membership director, Mary Ellen Vetter, has recommended working on membership, noted that the website is excellent and that the Breckenridge Chapter is listed in the BP Community Guide; entrance signs at the Chapter House are very good. Recruitment flyers and membership application forms are available online. Carrol Henderson, Minnesota's first non-game wildlife program supervisor recently rejoined the Breckenridge Chapter. Joe encouraged us all to be thinking of ideas for membership recruitment, especially during this slack time for monthly programs.

Discussion was had by all of things we can do to fill the gap while social distancing requirements are in place. New ideas are welcome.

Interim Treasurer's Report: Rentals should cover our ongoing bills, heating and utilities. If no rentals are scheduled then plowing is not a high priority. Joe moved to give the snow-plower a free weekday rental as incentive, Tim seconded – all agreed.

Deer hunters have done one hunt on Banfill Island (no deer taken) and will be hunting twice more at end of October and mid November.

Tim proposed an idea for a new project: We should fence off a small section of our property to exclude deer and prevent over-browsing, a problem John Moriarity identified earlier this summer. Some native plants would probably come back from the remaining seed bank. We could plant others including some maples, a species that is missing from our forest for the most part. Fence would have to be at least 8' high and must have a door to release any animals that get trapped inside. Steve thought that Midwest Fence might have used material that we could get a deal on or even have donated to our cause. Joe knows the owner and will inquire. Tim will explore and bring back notes to our next meeting.

Karen suggested a lending library at the Chapter House or a Little Free Library. Some thought that due to the remote location of our building – out of sight of the public – a Little Free Library might suffer vandalism, but once our Social Events start up again, this could be done indoors. It was noted that someone dumped a load of yard waste last week next to the Louis Dinzl bench across from our front door.

Steve encouraged members to show up for even just an hour or so when they have time to keep up our property by pulling weeds, buckthorn, etc. Dick has a buckthorn-weed wrench that we can borrow. High school students will not be pulling buckthorn this year due to COVID-19 and social distancing.

Tim mentioned the maple tree that was planted as a memorial in the SE corner of the property near the bluff was deeply damaged by beaver – can we try to save it by putting mesh around it? He will try.

Steve mentioned he might be able to find a good log on his property for new geocache containers to replace the old ones that are falling apart.

We need two new Board Members and a permanent Treasurer. Volunteers may contact any board member or leave a message on our voice-mail.

Late Summer Purple Beauties

Downy Gentian (Photo by Tim Johnson)

Here are some Downy Gentian blossoms I found at Butternut Valley SNA surrounded by corn and soybean fields on all sides, as far as the eye can see. Outside of these tiny refuges there are virtually no pollinator plants for insects in much of SW Minnesota. Not one bug on my windshield after driving a couple hundred miles there last week. Some people may not understand how quickly we are destroying nature.

“All of Minnesota's other native Gentian species are more of less associated with moist soils, often bordering into wetlands, but Downy Gentian can put on an unexpected showy display of deep blue-violet on open dry prairies and hills. It is always a pleasant surprise in late summer and early autumn when much of the prairie is putting out golden fall colors. Though we've not been there ourselves, we've been told that along hiking trails in the sandy hills of Glacial Lakes State Park south of Starbuck is an excellent place to view this in September.”
(K. Chayka – MN Wildflowers)



Stiff Gentian (Photo by Larry Kennebeck)

“Another native species that demonstrates a wide range of habitat tolerance from the rich moist lowlands of a wet prairie to the high rocky ridge tops as seen at Whitewater State Park. Species such as this often perform well in the home garden and are well worth experimenting with.” (K. Chayka – MN Wildflowers)

Fringed Gentian (Photo by Larry Kennebeck)

“For centuries, poets and artists have considered the Fringed Gentian's rich beauty which has inspired such writers as William Cullen Bryant, Emily Dickinson, and

Henry David Thoreau. Infrequent throughout much of its native range, its populations are generally in small and scattered groups that depend on adequate seed production to persist from year to year. The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers produced many specimens before the developing metropolitan area and introductions of non-native species extirpated them.” (K. Chayka – MN Wildflowers)



Sugar Maples in Full Glory

Our Chapter House sugar maples were definitely at peak color the second week of October. Beavers have almost chewed through one maple on the SE corner near the bluff so protective hardware mesh was wrapped around others. There is a suggestion that we set up a deer enclosure somewhere on the property where new maples could be protected from excessive deer browse.

Does anyone recollect who provided these beauties and what year they were planted?



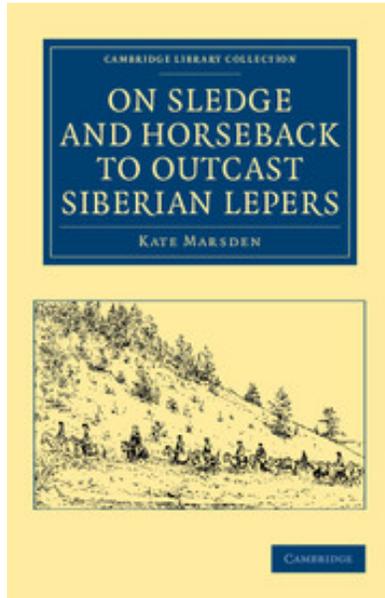
To strive for the purity of water, the clarity of air, and the wise stewardship of the land and its resources; to know the beauty and understanding of nature and the value of wildlife, woodlands, and open space; to the preservation of this heritage and to man's sharing in it.

I pledge myself as a member of the Izaak Walton League of America.

Lest we complain: a book review

by Karen Ostenso

In 1890 Kate Marsden, a British nurse, began a journey from London to the far reaches of Siberia. Her mission was to alleviate the dire conditions of people with leprosy who were banished from living in villages with other people. She also wanted to find an herb purported to cure leprosy that could be found only in Yakutsk.



Various modes of transportation were needed to go those thousands of miles through swamps, forests, ice and snow without railroads, or even any type of road or trail. She traveled through cold, dark winter months; and hot mosquito ridden months.

A sledge, which is a large vehicle on runners used to carry cargo, was pulled by horses. It was piled so high with gear and supplies that Kate had to be lifted onto it by several men. Because of the many, many layers of clothing she was wearing, she could not bend and climb to get in. The sledge had no type of suspension, so it bounced over the very rough terrain. During the melting season, the horses sometimes sank into mud up to their haunches. The last 2000 miles or so had to be traversed by horseback.

Overnight they sometimes camped in tents. Other times they stayed in what she called post stations, which were small, filthy, and required sleeping on the floor with everyone who happened to be there. The air was thick with smoke and the odor of people who had no access to washing. Occasionally, she slept with villagers, again on the floor with them and just as unclean.

Throughout the trip, she ate supplies they brought with them, such as tinned meats. They also carried a hard bread which had to be soaked in tea in order to

be eaten. There seemed to be a constant supply of tea and sugar. At times, her guides and drivers shot fresh game.

Eventually, she did find small groups of people with leprosy. They were totally banished, and food was provided them irregularly. Their clothes were cast off animal skins and furs that were totally inadequate for the cold temperatures. Because of the cold, they spent lots of time in small, filthy yurts huddled together for warmth. She ran across one small group that included a teenager who had been born to a woman who was banished, and the girl had no signs of leprosy.

She was back in England by 1892 when she wrote the book. She continued to raise money to build hospitals in Siberia to house those afflicted. She does not mention any attempt to find the supposedly curative herb.

The fact that she made the trip at all is amazing and beyond belief. The weather and the terrain and I can only admire her tenacity to travel so far in such trying circumstances. If I ever complain about the difficulty of getting somewhere, please reprimand me.

The full title of the book is *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers*, published by Phoenix Press.



(By permission of the Owatonna Ikes and Nels Thompson, author)



THOMPSON'S TAKE

12 - 9 - 2019

Hunting with chickadees is one of my most favorite things to do. Actually, I am *supposed* to be deer hunting. When I talk to people I *tell* them I am deer hunting. That's a pretty noble thing to be doing this time of the year and, they believe that!. I get funny looks if I mention chickadees.

Actually, I really *am* deer hunting. Ol' 54 is sitting on my lap, ready to go. But "go-ing" rarely happens. I get plenty of deer on my trail camera next to my blind, but only at night! The rascals have figured it out. No shooting before sunrise. Actually, a half hour before sunrise is shooting time. The other day I had 3 deer in range. I could have taken my pick. But it was ten minutes before shooting time. There is plenty of light to see deer at that time. But small details are still tough to see, like .. the sights on the gun! And, bottom line, it is still illegal to shoot at that time so ... even if I could see sights the deer are safe. As soon as light and law allow shooting, they have melted away into the trees and brush, not to be seen again until the infra-red flash lights them up for the camera. 5 nice bucks were taken from my land by other hunters this year. We boned them out and the bone pile is just a few yards from my blind ... and the camera! So far, a cat, a possum, a coyote, and 3 crows have been caught by the camera feasting on the bones. As many as 4 deer have also been putzing around by the bones. But, alas, all at night!

So, to keep me entertained (and awake) in my blind I have placed a small board at the intersection of two of the panels that make up the blind. On it I scatter about 30 sunflower seeds, a favorite winter food for chickadees! At that magic half hour before sunrise, cardinals start chipping and in doing so remind me its time to arm Ol' 54. Ol' 54 is a muzzle-loading rifle. After putting the powder and ball in the barrel it needs a primer cap to be placed on the nipple. Then, the gun is armed and ready to make a lot of noise and smoke. So cardinals remind me to arm the gun but they also tell the chickadees that Thompson has put seeds on that board that need eating. In they come. There are between 3 and 10 depending on the chickadee social director. Only one gets to eat at a time (small board) but the time is on the order of a second as they come in, land, select a seed and are gone with it. The next chickadee is hot on the tail of the previous one. Then, there is a quiet time while they pick that seed open and eat the contents. Soon the parade starts again. And this goes on until I leave the blind for the morning or, if there are many birds, they eat up all the seeds.

If I am going to stay longer I put out more seeds and the feast goes on.

While sitting in that blind there is a ton of time to think about things. One thing I thought about was ... that tiny little beak ... how can that little bird (less than ½ oz.) "slam" that beak into a seed as hard as a sunflower seed is, on a springy twig, and crack it open? Experiment time! After I am in the house, coffee-d up and oatmeal-ed down it is time to become a 190 pound chickadee! That's the same as 6,080 real chickadees! I grabbed Marilyn's tweezers to make chickadee toes with, then pick up a pointed nail for a beak with a pair of needle-nosed pliers, line everything up and slam! By golly, the nail poked into the seed husk better than I thought. Then I thought, well, chickadee beaks are tiny and pointed but not *that* sharp. So I took the nail, scratched it on a concrete block (in the basement) to make it duller and slammed again. It worked again, but even better! The sharp nail punched a hole through the seed husk and skewered the nut inside. The duller one opened the seed without bugging up it's contents! The chickadee then has a whole nut it can pick out and swallow. Guess that's better than having pieces fall to the ground or ... having it stuck on the end of its beak!

Now I have to admit I didn't repeat the experiment a thousand times and then submit the results to a panel of my peers for further review, but I did convince myself that chickadees and that beak have something going, here.

But ... the thought that I weigh as much as 6000 anythings makes me even more conscious of my belly bulge.

Well, alright then ... NFT

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**If you would like to submit an article for the Timberlines,
please send it to
Barbara Franklin at: bbfrankli@gmail.com
Deadline is the 10th day of each month.**

All articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the position of the Breckenridge Board of Directors. The Editor reserves the right to edit material as necessary.

...More from Larry

American Bittersweet fruit is round, about ½ inch in diameter, initially green, the outer casing turning orange to red in late summer, splitting open in fall to reveal the 3-sectioned, bright red, berry-like fruit inside. Fruits persist through winter.

Similar is Oriental Bittersweet, a highly invasive species that is a relative newcomer to Minnesota. It is most easily distinguished while flowering (*C. orbiculatus* flowers are in the leaf axils) or fruiting (fruits have yellow casings). Buyer beware: American Bittersweet is available in the nursery trade and some vendors advertise selling it, but it turns out to be Oriental Bittersweet instead. This isn't necessarily intentional, but just shows that those selling it can't always tell the difference, either.

