



TIMBERLINES

W. J. Breckenridge Chapter
Izaak Walton League
May 2023

www.breckenridgeikes.org



Coming Events

May 2023

- 7 **Pancake Breakfast** 8 am-1 pm
- 9 Board of Directors Meeting 7 pm
- 23 Social Educational Meeting 7:30 pm
Tucker Blythe, MNRRRA Superintendent

June 2023

- 13 Board of Directors Meeting 7 pm
- 27 Social Educational Meeting 7:30 pm
Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, Head Naturalist for the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog

Social Educational Meeting:

**Tuesday, May 23,
7:30 p.m.**

**Tucker Blythe,
MNRRRA
Superintendent**



Tucker Blythe, Superintendent of the Minnesota National River and Recreation Area, will review the Park's history, current programs and plans for the future, especially as it relates to conservation of the Park's natural resources. A native of Memphis, Tennessee, Tucker has served as Superintendent since September 2021. He has been with the Park Service a total of 25 years.

Blythe holds a B.A. in Historic Preservation from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA, and an M.A. in Communication from Wichita State University.

He and his wife live in St. Paul with their dog and two cats. In his free time, you can find Tucker photographing and drawing the world around him, walking his dog, and enjoying his newly found torture method: running.



Izaak Walton League, Breckenridge Chapter
Defenders of Soil, Air, Woods, Waters and Wildlife



Pancake Breakfast

Sunday, May 7, 2023
8 am-1 pm

Adults \$10.00 Children \$5.00

www.breckenridgeikes.org



Raffle \$2

Breckenridge Chapter House
8816 West River Road
Brooklyn Park, MN 55444



Board of Directors Meeting

Highlights: April 11, 2023

- Conservation Issues Committee: (Tim) Native Rough Fish Group (reported in the April *Timberlines*) is following upcoming legislation: Omnibus bill, Gun clubs, Environmental protection, Native rough fish vs. common carp (invasive) are bills up for debate in the MN legislature.
- River Erosion: Spring clean up -- if weather and river allow, potentially get volunteers to assist with willow and red osier dogwood slips planting along riverbank for erosion. (*Ed. Note: This work has been started, but some transplanting will be needed.*)
- By-Laws, Constitution Update: (Karen and Sue) Rules and changes need to be presented to membership twice, before the April and May meetings. Voting to accept them will be at the May meeting. Karen will store these documents and others on a flash drive to be kept in a waterproof, fireproof envelope.

Eagles and Heron Nesting

April's speaker was one of our own members, John Moriarty. He brought us up to date on how our national emblem is doing. Just a reminder, the bald eagle was extirpated in large areas of Minnesota and the rest of the country after the widespread use of pesticides, primarily DDT (starting in 1947), reduced fecundity. Persecution by humans was also a factor. There was even a bounty on them in Alaska until 1952, supposedly to protect salmon and fox farms.

The Bald Eagle Protection Act in 1940 was the beginning of the turn-around in attitudes. But the banning of DDT in the USA in 1972 gave these fish eagles a new lease. When it was listed as endangered in 1978 under the 1973 Endangered Species Act, the eagles were rare across the nation except around the northern Great Lakes. In the 1980s the recovery started as DDT levels in the environment dropped and by 2007 they had

recovered enough to be removed from the endangered list.

Now bald eagle populations have rebounded to near historic levels. John's eagle survey work with the staff of Mississippi National River and Recreation Area since 2008 has covered the MNRRA area along the Mississippi, from Dayton to Prescott, WI. Nests more than a block or so back from the river are not surveyed. In the past, National Park Service personnel also sampled blood from and banded the chicks in some of the nests.

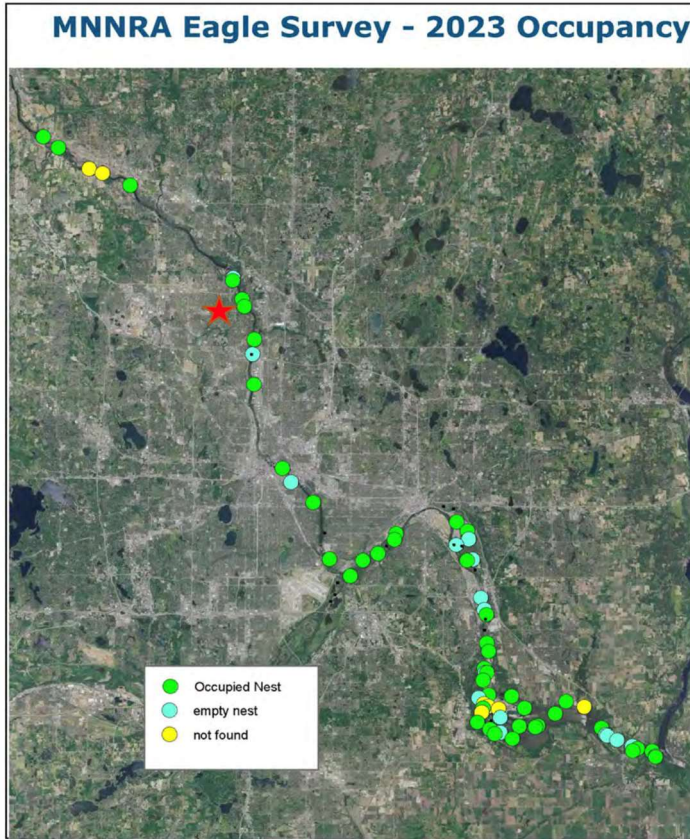
The nests are counted from a helicopter before the trees leaf out in April. After that, it becomes difficult to see most of them. The weight of the nests increases yearly (can weigh over a ton) if they are used so it takes a strong cottonwood or pine tree crotch to hold them steady over many years. Last year 21 nests from previous years were not found. One famous nest, followed on the internet by many, fell earlier this year soon after the chicks hatched.

Numbers were up this year from last but they have been fluctuating mostly in the same range since 2016 when the NPS gave the responsibility for the survey back to John. While surveying eagles, heron rookeries have also been monitored. As is often the case with herons, rookeries grow and decline with natural events. In some cases, it is not clear why they decline. Those in the flood plain are cleansed of guano build up by annual spring floods and the trees stay healthy. But the rookery in the Pigs Eye SNA which once held 1,000 nests, of several species, is down to 50. It is possible that the human infrastructure surrounding the rookery is causing the decline.

Our closest local heron rookery is in the cottonwoods on Big Island, just south of the Coon Rapids Dam. It has grown to a dozen or more nests this year. Many cormorants have been seen roosting in the nearby trees, perhaps sizing things up for a nest for themselves next year? When driving to downtown Minneapolis in the spring and summer from our area it is almost certain one will see a heron in the sky flying across I-94. They are heading from one of their 70+ nests on the Lowry Bridge Island out to various wetlands to find prey for their chicks.

From our overlook of the Banfill Island channel or the deck on the shore, we should be able to continue to see our national birds coming and going from their nests, one on either end of the island. We are lucky to have this symbol of our nation and our riparian ecosystem so close by. And we are lucky to have John Moriarty serving as a steward of the eagles of MNRRA.

Reported by Tim Johnson



Wildlife Section
Revised Date: 4/24/2023

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This is not a legal document and it is provided without warranty.
Data represented in this map is from a variety of sources, and is dynamic.
The user acknowledges and accepts these terms.

John Moriarty's 2023 map of eagle nest occupancy in MNRRA

Occupancy by year

2008	18
2009	25
2010	32
2011	36
2012	34
2013-2015	NPS
2016	44
2017	75
2018	48
2019	53
2020	--
2021	47
2022	44
2023	54*

Moriarty eagle nest occupancy data by year in MNRRA

Moriarty 2022 eagle nest data in MNRRA

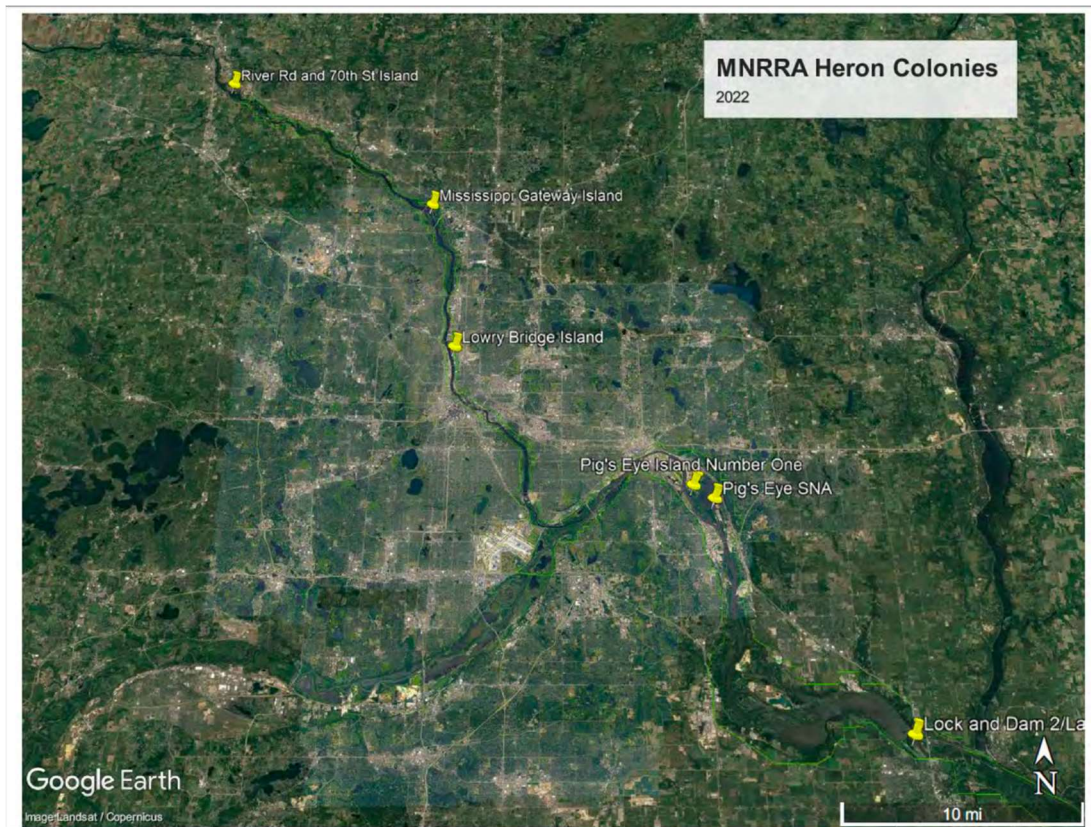
2022

Occupancy count

- 44 Occupied
- 26 Empty
- 21 Not found from previous years.

Productivity count

- 13 Failed
- 10 Not Found
- 21 Productive
- 32 chicks



Moriarty map of 2023 active heron rookeries in MNRRRA

2022 survey

Wright Co. – River Rd and 70th St. Island

50+ nests - mixed Great Blue and Great Egret

This colony has appeared stable for many years.

Hennepin Co. – Mississippi Gateway Island

10 to 20 nests – Great Blues

This is a new colony for 2022. There have been several small colonies on various islands in this area over the last 10-15 years.

Hennepin Co. – Lowery Bridge Island

70+ nests - mixed Great Blue and Great Egret

This colony use to be 1.25 miles upriver, but the trees on North Mississippi Park Island were severely damaged by a tornado in 2011. Egrets starting nesting here a few years ago.

Ramsey Co. - Pig's Eye Island Number One

30 nests – Great Blues with 1 Great Egret

This is a new colony for 2022.

Ramsey Co. -Pig's Eye SNA

50 Great Blue nests, 35 Great Egret Nests.

This colony has been in decline for many years. The number of nests counted on the June flight were higher than what was seen on the April flight but that does not make this colony “okay” or “healthy” as mentioned by a responder to my April Report. This colony use to be around 1000 nests with cormorants and Black-crowned Night Herons. **This colony should be checked on and monitored by the DNR and/or NPS.**

Dakota Co. – Lock and Dam 2/Lake Rebecca

35+ nests - Great Blue

This is a new colony in the last few years.

Moriarty notes on 2022 MNRRRA heron rookeries

Breckenridge Chapter Memorial Bench

The Breckenridge Chapter has lost some valuable members in recent years. The board has often talked about how we can recognize the contributions these people made to our organization and to the environment. We finally decided on a bench overlooking the river with plaques for those folks we wish to honor. These are the first to have plaques added.

Betty and Floyd Anderson – Both were long time board members. Betty was secretary and rental chair. Floyd wrote a number of resolutions. Both were active fund raisers.

Walter Breckenridge – A naturalist with the U of M for his entire career and Director of the Bell Museum for 35 years. Breck moved to the area because of Banfill Island, where he studied the natural history of the island for all the years he lived near the river. In 1996 the Chapter was renamed the Walter J. Breckenridge Chapter after our most well known member.

George Decker -- George and Mary Lou Decker came to the Breckenridge Chapter in 1995. George served on the Board of Directors for several years, and he and Mary Lou traveled to several State Division Board meetings representing our chapter as a State Director.

Louis Dinzl – Louis was building and grounds chairperson of our chapter for many years. Among the many projects he built was much of stairway to the river and a raptor platform on the island. He also represented the Breckenridge Chapter at several state directors' meetings.

Wes Hendrickson – Wes was an active board member, served as rental chair and was always on the lookout for new members. He was a lover of nature which showed in his beautiful artwork and creative skills as an architect.

Gene Knopp – President for a number of years in the early eighties, Gene was very active in the getting the North Minneapolis Chapter (as it was then known) involved in the bluebird recovery program at Elm Creek Park.

Hans Nielsen – Hans believed in the Ikes' principles and enjoyed using his skills as a carpenter on many of our projects, including the folding chair racks, contributions to the silent auction and the woodcarvings that adorn our mantelpiece at

Christmas. Hans left a large contribution to the Chapter when he died.

Grant Merritt – Grant is perhaps best known for his work fighting Lake Superior pollution as executive director of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. He was a long-time member of our chapter and a frequent delegate to state conventions. He presented his memoir, *Iron and Water*, at a Chapter meeting in 2018.

Darby Nelson – Darby made many important innovations to our natural heritage as a college instructor and as a two term Minnesota legislator. We were fortunate to have Darby as a 20 year member of our chapter. He supported many of our concerns on local environmental issues and was a valuable member of our scholarship committee. After his retirement as an ecology instructor at Anoka Ramsey he wrote two highly regarded books, *For Love of Lakes* and *For Love of a River: The Minnesota*.

Erica Sitz – Over the years Erika was active in many environmental causes with her first and best love being for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. She was an avid birder with fond memories of watching the sand hill cranes over the Platte River in Nebraska in the spring and at the Sherburne National Wildlife area in the fall. A long time member of the Izaak Walton League, she served on the boards of both the state and Breckenridge Chapter.

Betty and Bill Stein – Both were long time board members. Betty was secretary of our chapter and also of the state board. Bill used his artistic talent to create posters for the Wetland Conservation Act.

Larry Swanson – Larry's parents (Carl and Irene) were active IWLA members. When Irene died Larry learned that our chapter was considering starting a scholarship endowment. He donated a large portion of the family's inheritance to start the endowment. He continued to donate a thousand dollars or more for twenty years. His wife continues to donate to the endowment.

Opinion: Alleviating the shortage of wildlife funding

There is considerable concern about the dwindling number of hunters to pay for licenses and sporting goods taxes that support our natural environment for wildlife. Having hunted for many years (starting in the 40s) and not hunted for many, I can see some of the reasons why:

1. Sadly, the disappearance of choice hunting areas due to expanding farming and development, mostly from increased population.
2. Changes in the law that have made it illegal to hunt without written permission on unposted land that is neither fenced nor cultivated.
3. The scarcity of many species compared to the 1940s and 50s and therefore the reduction of limits on small game.
4. Establishment of zones restricting hunters from hunting deer in various areas during the season.
5. The feeling of many that a better ethic is to watch and photograph wildlife than to kill it.

Observers of wildlife are more numerous as many species become scarce and people prefer species not to be so lethally harassed.

One way to compensate for the loss of funds by dwindling numbers of hunters would be to triple (or ?) the wildlife heritage part of the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Very hard to pass, but does anyone notice the tax as it is? The people's interest in understanding our Outdoor Heritage is changing in this overcrowded State and Nation. Observation is gaining over extraction.

Humans have always had the instinct to hunt, but to augment their diet. The idea of hunting as a sport happened a few centuries A.D. The time has come to seek a better way to enhance the abundance of our Native Wildlife through a more accelerated and substantial financial means. At the same time existing type taxes on hunting equipment and hunting licenses should remain.

Dick Brown

Champlin Garden Club Spring Plant Sale



**Saturday, May 13th,
2023**

8 am - 3 pm

**Willy McCoy's Parking
Lot
Hwy 169 & Hayden Lake Rd**

**Annuals/Perennials/
Natives/Veggies/Herbs/Hanging Baskets**

***Pollinators love that our plants are from
local reputable nurseries that do not use
neonicotinoids!***

Cash, Checks or Credit Accepted

***Come and support this local group that
plants and maintains the gardens at Doris
Kemp Park, the Champlin cemetery and has
provided support to the horticulture
programs at both CPBA and Champlin Park
High School.***

***If you are interested in joining our group,
please contact us on our Facebook page.
We would be happy to have you join us!***

W. J. Breckenridge Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
8816 West River Road
Brooklyn Park MN 55444



If you would like to submit an article for the Timberlines, please send it to
Barbara Franklin at: bbfrankli@gmail.com
Deadline is the First 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.

Chapter House Rental Rates

Non-Members:

(Damage deposit: \$300.00; \$200 for previous renters)

Monday through Thursday \$300.00

Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Holidays..... \$400.00

Members:(damage deposit \$100.00)

Monday through Thursday\$150.00

Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Holidays..... \$200.00

Scouts:(damage deposit \$50.00)

Overnights.....\$50.00*

*Rates and terms subject to change without notice; please contact the Chapter for special circumstances.

The Rental Agreement and Renters Checkout List are available on our website

Rental Chairperson: Tim Johnson

(Leave messages at johns860@mac.com)