



# TIMBERLINES

W. J. Breckenridge Chapter  
Izaak Walton League  
March 2023

[www.breckenridgeikes.org](http://www.breckenridgeikes.org)



## Coming Events

### March 2023

- 14 Board of Directors Meeting 7 pm
- 28 Social Educational Meeting 7:30 pm  
**Dan Stark, DNR Large Carnivore Specialist, Wolf Conservation**

### April 2023

- 11 Board of Directors Meeting 7 pm
- 23 Social Educational Meeting 7:30 pm  
**John Moriarty – Report on our eagles**

### May 2023

- 7 **Pancake Breakfast** 8 am-1 pm
- 9 Board of Directors Meeting 7 pm



Social Educational Meeting:  
**Tuesday March 28, 7:30 PM**  
**Dan Stark, DNR – Wolf Conservation**



DNR large carnivore specialist, Dan Stark, will speak at our Chapter House for our March 28th education program on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' finalized updated approach to wolf conservation.

The plan spans a decade and includes guidelines on how to best help sustain the state's wolf population. This includes the history of the wolf population, as well as details on the public attitudes towards wolves, tribal perspectives, as well as ways to help support a thriving wolf population according to the DNR press release.

Dan says “the plan reflects the breadth of input received...to update the 2001 plan. Information in the plan describes current knowledge of the wolf population, Minnesotans’ attitudes toward wolves, and guides the approach to the future conservation and management of wolves in Minnesota.”

## Board of Directors Meeting Highlights: February 14, 2023

- **Congratulations to** Tim Johnson and Jerry Steele for stepping up and taking positions on the State IWL Board at the Division Annual Meeting
- **Upcoming Social/Educational meetings**  
March 28 Speaker: Dan Stark – Wolf Conservation  
April 25 Speaker: John Moriarty – Bald Eagles in our area  
May 7 PANCAKE BREAKFAST
- **Pancake Breakfast:**  
Suggested admission prices will be \$10/adults, \$5/kids because of rising prices of supplies and efforts are being made to keep them biodegradable and compostable.  
Raffle tickets will be \$2.00
- **Hans Nielsen Gift:**  
A committee (Jim, Barb, Steve, Sue, with Tom Breckenridge as a consultant) has been formed to determine the handling and future use of a large gift from Hans Nielsen’s Estate/Annuity, including tax implications and ideas for future use of the funds.
- **Conservation Issues Committee:** (Tim and Larry)  
A motion was passed (Tim/Jerry) to send a letter of support to the House and Senate Companion bills proposed by Representative Vang and Senator Hoffman asking for \$6 Million for SNA’s. Rep Hansen (House), Senator Hawj (Senate). General fund appropriation biennial.
- **Chapter House Rentals:**  
Month of March is full of Scout rentals. One Scoutmaster is interested in holding monthly meetings and will become a Chapter member. Scouts have volunteered to fill the shed back up with firewood. Also, future possibilities to recruit new minority members.



### Wood Duck Program - Greg Hoch

Our February speaker from the DNR with consequential contributors to the study of Wood Ducks: Frederick Leopold (Aldo's brother) Art Hawkins, Walter Breckenridge, Frank Bellrose. For further information on these men visit: <http://www.woodducksociety.com/sochistory.htm>

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## Wood Duck's Housing Plan

If you were one of the perching ducks of Minnesota (wood ducks, mergansers, buffleheads or goldeneyes) and your migration route passed Banfill Island on your way up the Mississippi River flyway, you might want to take a peek, not only at the natural cavities of the island's mature floodplain forest, but also at the wooden boxes another species has mounted on posts along the shoreline with just the right size entryway to what could be the perfect place to build your nest.

Dave Sherva and his brother installed thirteen nest boxes on the island around a decade ago and this year, Breckenridge Chapter members are considering whether predator guards should be added. Raccoons, opossum and squirrels are the chief culprits. In high water years recently, the river level comes up just a couple inches below the houses so it might be an issue with the current ripping a sheet metal cone guard off. Maybe plastic pipe around the posts would be better?

Our February speaker at the Chapter House was Greg Hoch from the DNR who has written a book on Wood Ducks titled *With Wings Extended; A Leap Into the Wood Duck's World*. His talk was well received and we learned a lot from him. We peppered him with questions after the presentation. His answers helped clarify the way forward for our protectorate on Banfill Island.

First, Greg made it clear that current science doesn't indicate that artificial Wood Duck nest boxes are having a significant effect on overall Wood Duck numbers. The species has long ago recovered from its near extirpation in the eastern states due to human activities including hunting pressure. What the Wood Duck houses are more important for is getting citizens, hopefully our younger ones, involved with nature by monitoring the nesting activity each year. Putting up a Wood Duck house and not maintaining and monitoring it (they need to be cleaned out and new bedding added each year) does not help Wood Ducks or the other cavity nesting ducks that sometimes might use it.

Monitoring while the hens are sitting on the nest is not necessary and Greg says he stays away from



them during that time (about a month). However, Breck's daughter Barbara (our *Timberlines* editor) mentioned that Dr. Breckenridge would sometimes actually reach in and lift the hen off the clutch to examine the eggs without causing the hen to fly off. Examining the eggshells after the birds have left, it is possible to differentiate if they were hatched vs. predated. Predation and parasitism can reduce breeding success in such artificial nest boxes.

Studies of the species, including those done by our namesake Dr. Walter J. Breckenridge, have revealed many fascinating facts about *Aix sponsa* (woodies).

- Wood Ducks are the only North American duck species to regularly produce two broods.
- They are mostly paired up when they arrive in Minnesota in March.
- The drake sits nearby as the hen enters, examines and chooses the nest site. They preferentially use natural cavities in upland forests over floodplain forests and although they prefer nesting near water, the average distance from water is over 1 km. The nests average 7 m up from the ground. They have a high degree of nest fidelity and those who do return to the last year's nest will begin nesting earlier.
- They lay around a dozen eggs and egg dumping by other Wood Ducks and other cavity nesting ducks is common, especially in nest boxes when the next box is visible from another.
- They begin incubating 3-4 days before clutches are completed, spending about 12 hours at night on the nest. This is probably to prevent predation more than speed up incubation. It is thought that developing embryos may synchronize hatching by adjusting

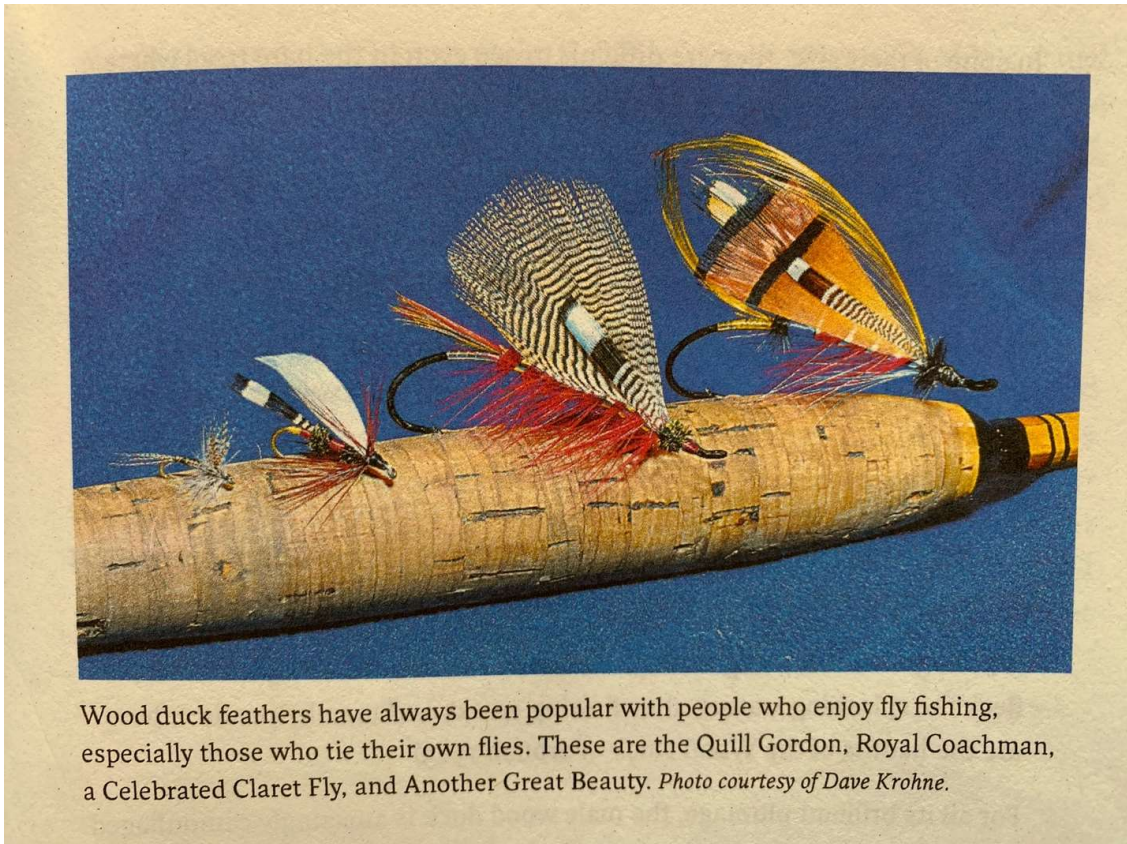
developmental rates using intraclutch communication.

- Only females incubate the eggs (for about 30 days) and they take two recesses a day, one early in the morning and one in the afternoon for between 1-2 hours to feed. Once the eggs begin pipping, the female does not leave the nest and she begins vocalizing.
- All the ducklings hatch within 18 hours after the first egg has pipped. Ducklings usually leave the nest in the morning about 24 hours after hatching. The mother begins softly calling *kuk, kuk, kuk* at the base of the tree and the ducklings immediately jump down to her. Ducklings have been known to jump 89 m to the ground without injury.
- Hens then lead the ducklings to the rearing areas, averaging about 2 km away (longest move recorded 9.2 km). I wonder where our Banfill ducklings end up? Surely the river's fast current is not the ideal place for them to be reared.
- For the first 2-3 weeks they eat mostly invertebrates before gradually changing to plant foods.

One of our longtime members, Dick Brown, maintains several Wood Duck houses around his home on the Mill Pond in Champlin. Due to his long experience with these birds, he is also a good source of advice. He has one house whose post is mounted in the water and he says it is always used by the hooded mergansers. Of course, river level changes on the Mississippi would make doing that impossible on Banfill Island.

Even if you never make it out to walk on Banfill Island, you can observe these beautiful shy ducks from our riverside deck from ice break up in March on into the summer months. You might agree with Thoreau who wrote in 1855, "What an ornament to a river to see that glowing gem floating in contact with its waters!" In fact, Wood Duck feathers are so beautiful they are prized in fly fishing circles for tying flies.

*By Tim Johnson*



Wood duck feathers have always been popular with people who enjoy fly fishing, especially those who tie their own flies. These are the Quill Gordon, Royal Coachman, a Celebrated Claret Fly, and Another Great Beauty. *Photo courtesy of Dave Krohne.*

## Scientific and Natural Area Appropriation Bill

The following was sent from the Chapter to Rep. Rick Hansen, Chair, Env. and Natural Resources Finance and Policy

Dear Chair Hansen,

Breckenridge Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, IWLA, is writing in support of a bill before the committee, Rep. Vang's HF 1834, *Scientific and Natural Area Maintenance; Appropriation*. This is a bill that would allow the DNR to maintain our SNA's to the degree needed to ensure they continue to exist in an undisturbed natural state.

Over 25% of Minnesota's rare plant and animal species and native plant communities are found on these SNAs. Unfortunately, **state general funds have declined** since the early 2000s - to the point that some of their key attributes are being lost.

An SNA in the Twin Cities north-metro area, Blaine Preserve, has the best remaining example of wet prairies and rich fens in the Anoka Sand Plain. It has not seen a controlled burn in many years. The rare and threatened species there are being overwhelmed by buckthorn and aspen.

IWLA member and University of Minnesota Prof. Peter Sorenson is extremely concerned about protecting SNAs, which he considers to be "great treasures and invaluable reservoirs of genetic material in a future world threatened by climate change". He states that the threat of invasives is especially ominous.

Our recent MN IWLA President, Ted Suss writes "When I lived in Redwood County, I was quite close to four very unique SNAs (Gneiss Outcrops, Swedes Forest, Cedar Rock SNA, and the Morton Outcrops SNA in the city of Morton). These SNAs appear to be virtually ignored from a maintenance perspective, especially invasive species control, unless local people bring pressure to bear. Morton Gneiss was totally overgrown with invasive Cedar

until a group of us demanded it be cut. Cedar Mountain is quickly becoming a buckthorn heaven. My guess is lack of maintenance is common across virtually all SNAs."

**Less general funds results in a dramatic reduction in the number of permanent staff** available and necessary to carry out and direct maintenance on these sites. Less permanent experienced SNA staff, to direct and monitor essential maintenance activities in the SNA program, **results in an inability to fully utilize special and temporary funding sources** such as the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Outdoor Heritage Fund. While **LCCMR and OHC funds are important**, there is **no assurance they will be directed to the SNA Program every biennium**.

In order to have EXPERIENCED staff, it is necessary to **assure an employee that their position will continue beyond a 2-year funding cycle**. Only General funds can be depended upon to provide continuity from year to year by **allowing the retention of knowledgeable, trained and experienced staff**.

In summary, **an ongoing \$6 million of state general funds each biennium**, would provide the necessary staffing, equipment and management supplies to adequately protect and manage Minnesota's most important and sensitive natural resources for present and future generations.

If there is anything we can do as an organization in support of these bills, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for your efforts to promote conservation of Minnesota's natural resources. We strongly encourage the committee to approve this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Tim Johnson  
Conservation Issues Chair  
Breckenridge Chapter of the IWLA

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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](mailto: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 .....\$275.00  
Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Holidays..... \$350.00

Members:(damage deposit \$100.00)  
Monday through Thursday .....\$125.00  
Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Holidays..... \$175.00

Boy Scouts:(damage deposit \$50.00)  
Overnights.....\$50.00\*

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

Rental Chairperson: Tim Johnson  
(Leave messages at [breckcal@yahoo.com](mailto:breckcal@yahoo.com) )