



# BLAZING STAR

## Newsletter for the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District

Welcome to the Blazing Star, the newsletter for Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District. Stay up to date on our current projects and events while learning about conservation and management efforts, endangered species, and habitat restoration. Let's come together to protect our precious local flora and fauna.

## Update from the Board: President's Report

Welcome to spring in the St Croix Valley, my friends. As I write this, icy sleet has turned to rain and the early April drear is real, despite it being 70 degrees and sunny just days ago. Even so, the stage that is our prairies and wetlands is preparing for each character to play their part. While wandering on the bicycle this week I heard frogs peeping their spring chorus for the first time this year. I think even more than the warm sun that day, it affirmed spring is here. Shortly after, I spied a bluebird, and numerous very chunky robins. How does a robin get fat in March? Things to ponder. Presently we have buds; soon we will have blooms, the wind rattled browns of last year will turn to green, and the pace of life will pick up with the length of our days.

There is a lot going on in the world right now. Remember the little things that make this our world.

Plant a tree, cast some seeds, and most of all stop and watch now and then so you may grow too. Thank you for being with us and here for what we do.

Long days and pleasant nights, as I once read.

**Brian Headlee,**  
*President, FSCWMD*

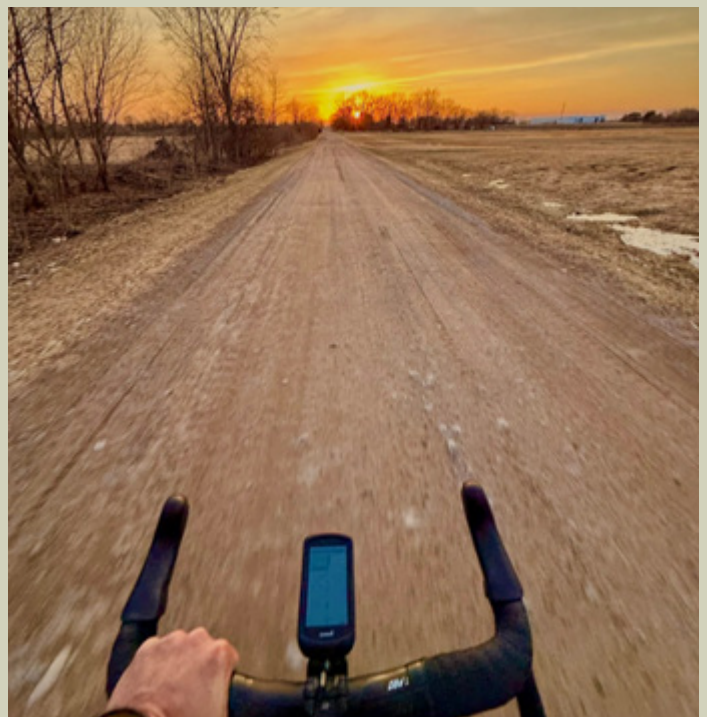


Photo Credit: Brian Headlee

# “Seasons of Wild” Photo Contest Enters Prime Time

By Tom Lindfors—Volunteer

With spring just around the corner, the district’s inaugural photo contest, “Seasons of Wild,” is entering prime time. Ice on the waterfowl production areas has melted and both waterfowl and grassland birds are migrating back onto the properties. Whether you’re trying to match wits with a merganser or creep up on a crane, early in the season is the perfect time to capture birds in action while the tall grass is still low and before foliage begins to leaf out fully.

Workshops are being offered in conjunction with the contest, Naturescape Photography, recently took place on Saturday, April 11, at the district headquarters in New Richmond. The session was led by professional photographer Tom Lindfors. He discussed approaches to composition including the rule of thirds and how the interplay between light and shadow contribute to the strength of a photograph.

Learn about what to expect when you explore a waterfowl production area (WPA) including terrain, water features, parking, signage and commonsense strategies for finding wildlife. Additional workshops are planned for Wild Flower Photography on June 13 and Bird Photography on September 19, 2026. Watch the Friends Facebook page ([fscwmd.org](https://www.facebook.com/fscwmd.org)) and postings from the website for details on how to sign up.

Eligible contest photos must be made between January 1, 2026 and October 31, 2026 on one of the district’s numerous WPAs located in St. Croix, Polk, and Dunn counties. The fee is \$20.00 per submission. Find your secret award winning spot at <https://www.fws.gov/media/legacy-wpa-maps-st-croix-wetland-management-district>.

Photographers have their choice of five categories in which to enter: Flora, Fauna, Naturescapes, People and Trailblazers (for photographers under 16 years of age). Upload photos using the tab on the Friends website at <https://www.fscwmd.org/photocontest>. There is no limit on the number of photos you can submit.

Participants and guests will vote to determine the winners at an Exhibition/Reception, February 6, 2027 at the 45th Parallel Distillery in New Richmond.

WPAs are “wild” lands managed for wildlife and habitat. They provide extraordinary opportunities to witness the wonders of wildlife on nature’s terms while fulfilling the district’s mission to protect, restore and manage wetlands, prairie and oak savanna for the benefit of migratory birds and by doing so, protect other wildlife.

The intent of the contest is to:

- public awareness of these readily accessible wild lands in our backyard.
- raise funds to support USFWS conservation efforts and educational programs during an especially challenging time.

The contest is sponsored by Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District, Think Tank Photo, National Camera, West Photo, and 45th Parallel Distillery.



Photo Credit: Tom Lindfors

## Volunteer Corner

# A Decade and a Half of Service with Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District

## Ron Roettger–Volunteer

Since the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District was formed in 2010, I have had the privilege of volunteering alongside others who care deeply about our local waterfowl production areas (WPAs). What began as a simple desire to help has grown into more than a decade of steady, hands on stewardship—quiet work that supports the wetlands, prairies, and wildlife that make this region so special.

My efforts over the years have focused on the PRACTICAL tasks that keep these public lands healthy and accessible. Collecting trash before it can harm wildlife, mowing parking lots and access points, and assisting with building maintenance have all been part of the routine. I have also helped construct information kiosks, giving visitors a clearer understanding of the habitats around them and the conservation work happening behind the scenes.

Some of the most meaningful moments have come from participating in waterfowl counts, watching seasonal patterns unfold firsthand, and contributing to seed collection efforts that support ongoing restoration across multiple sites. These activities may seem simple, but together they strengthen the long-term resilience of our wetlands.



Left to Right: Ron Roettger, Craig Matthys, Warren Irle, Chris Trosen.  
Photo Credit: Chris Trosen

What keeps me returning year after year is the sense of purpose that comes from caring for a place that belongs to all of us. I hope others will consider joining in. Even a few hours of volunteer time can make a lasting difference. With continued community involvement, our waterfowl production areas will remain vibrant, welcoming, and full of life for generations to come.

## Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) Histories

### By Mike Reiter–Volunteer

The St. Croix Wetland Management District (SCWMD), located in eight contiguous west-central Wisconsin counties, manages 48 waterfowl production areas (WPAs) incorporating roughly 8,700 acres of habitat located predominately in St. Croix, Polk, and Dunn counties. These public lands include wetlands and grasslands which are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and are open to public activities such as hunting, fishing and hiking.

The Friends of the St. Croix Wetlands Management District (FSCWMD) has started to provide history write-ups of selected waterfowl production areas that include pertinent information on the makeup of each WPA. These write-ups contain information on previous owners, historical events, geological and natural features,

personal stories, and observations plus numerous other interesting facts that help define the uniqueness of each WPA. Several WPA histories have been completed including Oak Ridge and Ten Mile WPAs, which form a template for future write-ups of other WPAs.

FSCWMD is looking for folks who have an interest in a specific WPA and would like to help with these documentations. We are also looking for older county plat books from Dunn and Polk counties which would help trace the landownership when these WPAs were being formed.

If you or anyone you know might be interested in helping with this important project, please contact the office or one the FSCWMD's board members!

# Plugging Away on the Prairies

By Alex Bouthilet–Seed Farm Manager

This winter, we kicked off a pilot project through the St. Croix Wetland Management District and the Friends group to try growing native plant plugs for future restoration work. In February, volunteers planted and then took home trays of species like wild lupine, cream indigo, white indigo, prairie dropseed, and prairie brome and are growing them out themselves. The overarching goal is to produce plugs that we can use in restorations or plant into our seed production areas.

This is something new for us, and it builds on the seed program by adding another way to produce plant material. It also gives volunteers a chance to be part of the whole process and see these species from seed to established plants.

We're still early in it, but this is the kind of work that can pay off long term. These plants will support biodiversity for years to come and help build more resilient habitat across the district. We're planning to bring participants with their trays of growing plugs back together for a larger volunteer planting event later this spring or fall to get these plugs in the ground. We are all excited to learn more about our native plants through this program as well. Thanks very much to all of our wonderful volunteers!



Photos this page courtesy of Alex Bouthilet

# Birds on a Stick Takes Wing!

Greg Scheder—President, Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District

Many of you know that the Friends Group has an awesome collection of birds on a stick, known as “The Birds.” But do you know just how many there currently are? Any guesses? Well, if you guessed ##, then you are correct! Add to that the six to ten other critters, including the badger, floating around the district office, and the collection totals over 70. But if you guessed 62, you would be a winner. Sixty-two beautiful birds to help supplement youth and general public education about these WPA residents and the mission of a wetland management district.

## How is that important?

So, how is that important? While the Friends group has been fortunate to share these previously, use has dropped. We are looking for a small team to help us increase their use and visibility. Historically, we’ve provided access to the collection to schools, libraries, Farm City Days, The Great Lakes Education Center near Ashland, and more! This year, they were presented at Earth Fest at UW-River Falls on April 25, as well as a group traveling to Madison for the Future Farmers of America Wildlife CDE Exam on April 24, supported by the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. It’s part of their “Waterfowl and Bear” segment.

## So here’s what we are looking for:

First, the “Bird Share Team” to help get the word out to local organizations and programs about their availability, as well as to manage scheduling, distribution, and pick-up. We know libraries and schools are interested, but we have to build awareness, provide access, and coordinate scheduling. This role would be a once- or twice-a-month commitment for an hour or two, picking up and transporting mounts from one location to the next, and, if needed, circling back to the office for replacements.

To help with this, Randy Newton has been developing some awesome informational materials to include with the mounts and is doing a great job! They are simple, youth-level informational guides on our friends of the wetlands. (Please see the example on the right.)

Second, while volunteers have handled these birds with love and affection, time takes its toll on them. On that note, we need everyone’s help, and are looking for replacements for the following:

- Mallard – Drake & Hen
- Wood Duck – Drake
- Gadwall – Drake
- American Wigeon – Drake & Hen
- Northern Shoveler – Hen
- Green Wing Teal – Drake & Hen
- Blue Wing Teal – Drake & Hen
- Canvasback – Hen
- Redhead – Drake
- Bufflehead – Drake
- Hooded Merganser – Drake & Hen

While there are other gaps in the collection, we need to replace these so we can continue providing touch-and-feel opportunities to participants.

Interested? Contact Greg Scheder (Schedenator@gmail.com) or Jean Gfall (JEGfall252@gmail.com).



Blue-winged Teal Information Card: Randy Newton

## Calendar of Upcoming Events and Programs

2 Jun, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
9 Jun, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
10 Jun, Wed, 6 – 7:30pm	Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District Meeting 1764 95th St, New Richmond, WI 54017
13 Jun, Sat, 8 – 10am	Photo Session 3 TBD
16 Jun, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
23 Jun, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
30 Jun, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
1 Jul, Wed, All day	Wild Photo Opportunity <a href="https://www.fws.gov/media/legacy-wpa-maps-st-croix-wetland-management-district">https://www.fws.gov/media/legacy-wpa-maps-st-croix-wetland-management-district</a>
7 Jul, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
8 Jul, Wed, 6 – 7:30pm	Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District Meeting 1764 95th St, New Richmond, WI 54017
4 Jul, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
21 Jul, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
28 Jul, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
1 Aug, Sat, All day	WILD PHOTO OPPORTUNITY <a href="https://www.fws.gov/media/legacy-wpa-maps-st-croix-wetland-management-district">https://www.fws.gov/media/legacy-wpa-maps-st-croix-wetland-management-district</a>
4 Aug, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017
11 Aug, Tue, 6 – 8pm	Weekly Seed Collection Star Prairie Seed Nursery, 1616 County Rd H, New Richmond, WI 54017

# The Store is Open!

Hey everyone! Just a reminder that it's time to get geared up with your favorite prairie duds. Take a look at the online store for hats, shirts, hoodies and more. You can sport the latest Friends prairie wear and wow your friends at volunteer events! Each purchase supports the programs of the Friends. <https://www.fscw-md.org/shop-1>



## Blazing Star

Newsletter for the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District

### How to get involved

#### 1. Volunteer

We're always looking for volunteers to help with our conservation projects and events. Contact us by sending an email to [StCroix@fws.gov](mailto:StCroix@fws.gov) or visiting our website to learn more (link below).

#### 2. Upcoming Events

The Friends Group holds monthly meetings at the headquarters office on the second Wednesday of the every month at 6:00 pm. See our calendar for more events!

Thank you to our many partners! For more information on our partners, please visit [fscwmd.org](http://fscwmd.org)

#### 3. Donate

Your donations help support our conservation efforts and make a difference. All donations to the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District are 100% tax deductible. Donate here through PayPal.

#### 4. Follow Us

Please stay up to date on our latest projects and events by following us on social media. Find us on [Facebook](#), join our email list, and check out our website (link below).

FriendsOfTheStCroixWetlandManagementDistrict

# Strategic Plan Review – Looking for Your Input

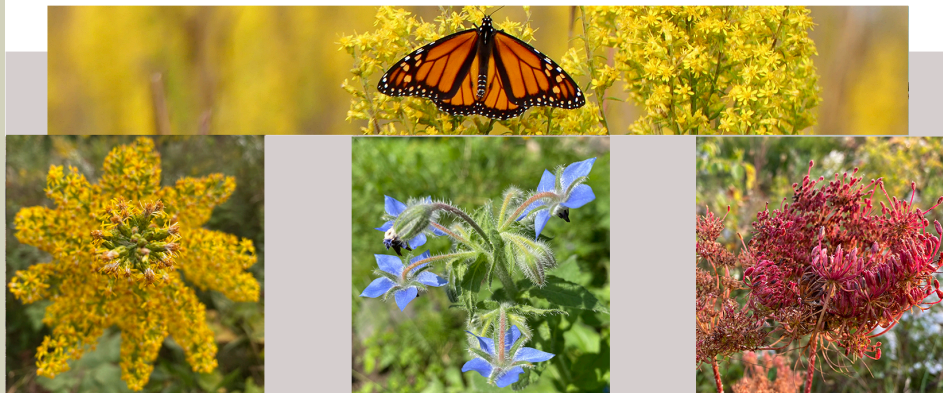
By Greg Scheder

The FSCWMD Strategic Plan was launched in January 2024 to provide a roadmap of the organization’s goals and objectives. As a number of these targets have been achieved, we are looking for five to six members to join board members Greg Scheder and Will Mahler, as well as Acting Project Lead Chris Trosen to review and update the Plan. We are anticipating two to three working sessions of an hour and a half to two hours starting in mid to late June to review and update the plan. Whether you are an active member, or involved in some of the volunteer events, your input is key to the FSCWMD offering a vibrant program. But, we need your input to be successful.

Please contact Greg Scheder at [Gregory\\_Scheder@fws.gov](mailto:Gregory_Scheder@fws.gov) to volunteer no later than May 31.

## Free Flower Photography Workshop Saturday June 13, 2026.

### FLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP Saturday, June 13, 2026



All images © Jean Maher

Photographer Jean Maher will be sharing tips on how to capture intricate and interesting perspectives of flowers that bloom throughout the growing season, sometimes along with the small visitors that land on them.

Learn about what to expect when you explore a Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) including terrain, water features, parking, signage and commonsense strategies for finding wildlife.

Where: USFWS St. Croix Wetland Management District Headquarters  
1764 95th Street, New Richmond, WI 54017  
Time: 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.  
Pre-register at (612) 599-5356

\*This workshop is geared toward amateur or enthusiast caliber photographers and young photographers (10-16 yrs.)

This workshop is being offered free of charge in conjunction with the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District’s “Seasons of Wild” photography contest. For more information about the contest or to enter, go to <https://fscwmd.org/photocontest> or scan the QR code

