
Horton's Clips

100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

September 10th, 2005 was a very warm, breezy late summer day, but it did not stop hundreds of people from attending the Centennial celebration held at the Bridges or the Holland Town Hall.

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VIP's in attendance from the past were Charles Horton, (portrayed by Dick Sacia) builder of the bridges, and Alexander McGilvray (created by Steve Kiedrowski) for whom the road is named. VIP's from the present included : Nancy Hill long time chair of the FMR; Brian Rude former state senator and one of several legislators who helped save the bridges; and Carl Miller representing the La Crosse Historical Society. They, along with the Preservation Alliance, helped the Friends in their campaign to "save the bridges". Ron Lichtie, DNR Wildlife Biologist for La Crosse and Monroe county, represented the Wisconsin DNR. Phil Yehle chaired the event.

The Bridges Celebration hosted musicians and artists. The food and beverages, very much in demand, were provided by The Friends of the Holland Sand Prairie. While it was a very warm day, the mosquitoes cooperated and stayed away from people walking the trail. Trail walkers were also treated to artists practicing their craft at several of the bridges.

Two large yellow school buses were kept busy shuttling attendees back and forth from the Holland Town Hall art fair and the Bridges.

Most of the local artists were located in the Town of Holland Town Hall. Jewelry, photos, paintings and wildlife art were on display.

Many local musicians, artists, FMR members and others gave of their time and talents to make this a memorable event.



Alexander McGilvray and Charles Horton cut anniversary cake



Eddie Allen performs at the Bridges centennial.



Around the refreshment and entertainment tent.



BRIDGE ART

Jensine Wing has an artist's sense of the bridges whether it's captured in her paintings or in her heart.

The love of art and the bridges was fostered by her mother, Delilah Wehrs. Her mother, an artist herself, encouraged Jensine. So, the local girl went off to Madison and earned her degree in art. She soon returned to the area to work in watercolor, oil, and jewelry.

Jensines' mother, now 94, wanted to visit the bridges again as she did in her youth, but that was not possible. So Jensine did the next best thing she could: use her talents in watercolor to take her back over the bridges and down the tree-covered path.

The art series does not take an historical / biological look at the bridges and their environment, but uses a

contemporary approach, illustrating how they appear today on a beautiful September afternoon, with people strolling the trail, walking their dogs or just sitting on the benches.

Jensine's work can be viewed in the Odin Gallery at Monet Flowers in La Crosse, as well as at the La Crosse Community Theater. She has also won several awards for her cat drawings.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ON VAN LOON WILDLIFE AREA

Early in the morning of March 29 a group of wildlife staff from the DNR were packing up their gear getting ready to do a prescribed burn on some of the sand prairies found in the northern part of Van Loon Wildlife area.

Prescribed fire is used to manage our fire dependent communities. Some of these communities include prairies, savannas, and barrens. When fire was suppressed in the early 1900's many of these communities succeeded to other community types.

This prescribe fire had goals of removing invading woody species that shade

out the grasses, sedges and forbs which are the main plants found on the sand prairie.

Sand terraces were formed by our rivers and this is where we find most of the remaining sand prairies today.

Sand prairie is dry native grasslands which provides habitat for some rare plants and animals. Some of these animals include species like; grasshopper sparrow, wood turtle and bull snakes. The main grasses you will find growing on the sand prairies include little bluestem, June grass, and panic grass. Some common flowers or forbs include false heather, flowering and spider-wort.

So if you saw smoke in Van Loon on March 29th it was your local wildlife staff working to protect and enhance the sand prairies.

Ron Lichtie
Wildlife Biologist

Editors note:

Another more easily accessible sand prairie is The Holland Sand Prairie. It is located just west of Holmen on McHugh Road. The parking lot is at the end of Garden Street. Their website is:

<http://webpages.charter.net/holland/>

BLACK RIVER BOTTOM MEMORIES

This is a story as related by Lorraine Hansen in 1980:

In pioneer days the Black River Bottoms were more or less a free-for-all are. The farmers from both sides of the river would pasture cattle there by letting them run free as there were scarcely any fences. The various herds were headed by "bell cows" with a variety of bells and this was the means's of

identification for owners.

It was the task of the teenage youngsters of the pioneer farmers to find their respective herds and bring them home in the evening. When the weather was pleasant and the herd readily found, the task was easy. However, when the weather was stormy with lightning flashing, thunder rolling, darkness coming on and no familiar clanging of the

family cowbell to be heard, it sometimes caused young hearts to quake with fear. There were times also where the Black River overflowed its banks and the rising water made necessary the fording of creeks and streams making these sojourns positively dangerous. However, there were no tragic accidents in connection with this feature of pioneer life on the Prairie

BIRDING WITH BOB

The Seven Bridges plays host to numerous species of songbirds during migration. These include sparrows, vireos, thrushes and flycatchers. One group of songbirds, the warblers, are of particular interest to avid birders. Twenty plus species of warblers use the Seven Bridges areas during migration. Four species, the prothonotary, yellow, common yellowthroat, and American redstart com-

monly nest in the river bottoms. The prothonotary warbler nets in cavities, and only in the river bottoms near or over water. This beautiful bird, which eats lots of insects and caterpillars, prefers a habitat with brushy open areas, ponds and mature forest. A good place to spot these warblers is from the 3rd to the 5th bridges. Warblers, like so many of the migrant songbirds are small. A good pair of binoculars

and bird book are a must to spot and identify these beautiful birds

Good birding!

Bob

Editors note:

Bob Cottrell is a birding and outdoors enthusiast who frequently hikes the bridge trail.

More information on great birding locations in the state of Wisconsin can be found



Prothonotary warbler -Head and breast yellow to almost orange. The wings are a blue-grey.

at the local DNR office or you can go online and visit : <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/birds/trail.htm>

APRIL SHOWERS BRING....

Unlike Paul Bunyan's lumber camps up north that had mosquitoes so large they could straddle streams and pick off passing lumber jacks, the McGilvray bottoms has its share of equally hungry small mosquitoes. So it is best to be prepared for them during the spring and summer months.

Mosquitoes are at their hungriest at dusk and dawn. Probably because those are the calmest hours of the day and mosquitoes don't handle the wind very well. So that means it's probably best to stay away during those hours.

Otherwise, if you must go out at these hours an insect

repellant containing DEET will be your best bet for survival. Higher concentrations generally last longer, but be sure to always use as directed. Light colored long sleeve shirts, pants and hats are also recommended.

Mosquitoes can lie dormant for years. About two weeks after immersion from flooding or

rainfall, they will hatch. And it is the female that must take the blood meals.

WHAT'S A HORTON CLIP?

Next time you take a walk on the bridges, take a closer look at the bridge structure.

The hook clips, as you can see in the photo, are used to attach the top chord to posts and diagonals via eye bolts. Each clip was uniquely numbered and had a specific spot on the bridge to be attached.

Charles Horton felt bridges that were drilled for rivets and bolts, weakened the structure. It was his thought that hook clips as well as the sleeves, hangers and socket supports used on the bridge would eliminate that problem. These bridges were also supposed to be a easier and

simpler to set up in the field away from the power tools of the day.

These bridges were to be light yet durable and strong. That was the theory, but present day engineers are skeptical. However, they are definitely a unique bit of American engineering.



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The primary purpose of the Friends of McGilvray Road, Inc. (FMR) is to preserve, protect, and help maintain the historic McGilvray Road and its unique bridges which are located in the Van Loon Wildlife Area, in the County of La Crosse, in the State of Wisconsin. The Van Loon Wildlife Area is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). McGilvray Road is more commonly known as the "7 Bridges Road. "

For more information go to our website at www.7bridgesrd.org or contact any of the board members

Bridge Want Adds

If you are looking to buy or sell Bridge art contact Phil Yehle at rustyzip@charter.net for a free posting in the next newsletter.

Wanted: Raccoon and pheasant plates. 608 488-6406 ask for Dianne

Special Thanks!!

The Board of Directors and membership would like to thank Mariel Carlisle for editing this newsletter over the past few years. She has a very busy schedule, but she always got them out. Thanks Mariel.

Thanks to the new members who signed up at the 2006 "Yes Holmen".

Denice Allen
Fred Brinkman
Janet Buley
Michelle Kneifl
Jim Lakey
Edward and Cindy Mettille
Mary and Dean Nugent
Lisa Risch
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Janet Slaught
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2006 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Yes, you can count on me. I'd like to continue supporting the bridges and receive the newsletter and notices form time to time.

I would like to make a contribution to FMR for the endowment fund. (State if you wish it to be in honor of or I memory of someone else so we can respond appropriately.)

I may be interested in FMR as part of my estate planning.

Corporate or business: \$100.00

Lifetime: \$100.00

Supporting: \$25.00

Single/Planning \$15.00

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

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Mail with check to:

F.M.R.

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