

Spring  
Issue  
2026

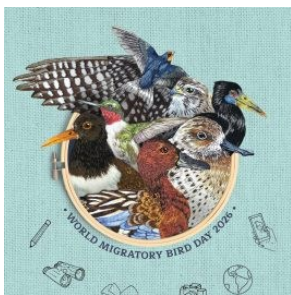
# Friends of Trempealeau Refuge

## *Friends Focus...*

### *Fun Facts About our Local Wildlife—by Scott Lee*

## On the Refuge...

**World Migratory Bird Day**  
**Saturday May 9 - 7:00 am – 12:30 pm**



The theme for this year's celebration is "Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!" Join us at the Refuge for a few hours or stay for the entire event! Fun activities for all ages.

The complete schedule can be found at [www.fws.gov/refuge/trempealeau /events](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/trempealeau/events)

**Artists Along the Trail - Plein Air Event**  
**Saturday June 6 – 7:00 am – 1:00 pm**

Come celebrate National Trails Day with us! There will be 24 artists creating plein air art along the trails from 7:00 -11:00am. Visitors can walk, bike or drive through the Refuge to observe and engage with the participating artists as they create their works. Everyone is invited to the OWL Center between 11:30 -1:00 to enjoy lunch, connect with the artists and view their work. This 4th annual event is sponsored by the Friends and made possible through donations from the Michael Owecke Memorial Fund.

### *"A True Sign of Spring???"*

The robins are back so it must be spring, right? That's what I was always told growing up. They eat worms and how do you find a worm through all that snow and frozen ground around here through the winters. Wouldn't they freeze and/or break their poor little beaks if they stayed? So has something changed? It sure seems so, as I've been seeing robins all winter long around here for years. So how can they be considered a true sign of spring?

Some will stick around through the winter, so how do they eat? Actually, the robins that stay survive by changing their diets. Instead of worms, they find berries to dine on. The ones in our yard, for example, hang out in a couple of big hackberry trees. Others will find fruit-bearing trees such as crabapple.

But, hey, they actually still can be a "true sign of spring" if you look carefully. For one thing, it is the male robins that are the first to arrive, assumedly to check things out and find their territories for potential nesting, well before the females show up. It's not as easy with robins as it is with many other birds to tell the males from the females. The breasts of males are much more distinct, dark orange color than the females, with their paler breasts (I'm still trying to figure out where that whole "robin red breast" thing came from – must have been some color blindness involved with that!).

Also, when you start noticing robins around the first part of March, pay attention not only to their breasts, but also as to where they're hanging around. Those returning from a winter in the south still prefer worms so you will see them optimistically hanging out on your lawns. The winter robins, which will also include females, are still feeding on berries up in the trees. They are likely the ones that suffer the least when these big, March snowstorms come along, but even those poor worm-eaters seem to somehow manage to make it through. Yet another spring marvel!

## A Note From the Friends President

Since this is the **90th anniversary of the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge**, I thought you might like some historical background of our Refuge.

### Key Historical Points:

- **Establishment (1936):** Created through an Executive Order by President Roosevelt to serve as a breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife.
- **Initial Size:** The original refuge consisted of a 706.9-acre upland portion.
- **CCC Camp:** Temporary facilities for a [Civilian Conservation Corps \(CCC\) camp](#) were located on the refuge lands until World War II.
- **Expansion (1979):** The refuge significantly increased in size when the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) purchased 4,778 acres from the Dairyland Power Cooperative.

**Habitat Restoration (1990s):** In 1999, [a habitat restoration project](#) was completed, which included installing dikes and pumps to manage water levels in the [6,808-acre area](#) more effectively for waterfowl.

The refuge serves as an "isolated backwater," largely separated from the main channel of the Mississippi and Trempealeau rivers, protecting a diverse ecosystem.

### Economic Impact of National Wildlife Refuges

Visitor spending on and around National Wildlife Refuges generates major economic benefits for local communities. According to multiple reports and economic analyses:

- **Refuge-related visitor spending contributes roughly \$3.2 billion annually to local economies.** This figure comes from the *Banking on Nature* report, which estimates the value of economic output tied to recreational visits to national wildlife refuges, including spending on lodging, food, fuel, guides, equipment, and other local services.
- That spending **supports more than 41,000 jobs nationwide** and generates about **\$1.1 billion in employment income** in communities near refuges.
- These economic benefits stem from millions of visits each year, with hundreds of refuges drawing visitors for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and nature recreation.

Jim Welander - President of The Friends of Trempealeau Refuge



Photo courtesy of Scott Lee



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Would you like to contact the refuge?

Here's how! Call 608-539-2311

For more information visit our website:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/trempealeau/>

Or the refuge Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/TrempealeauNWR>

And "Like" us!

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The [Friends of Trempealeau Refuge](#) is committed to providing an independent citizen voice for the protection, conservation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats at Trempealeau Na-