

Friends of Trempealeau Refuge

Friends Focus...

With the amazing work going into the Outdoor Wonders Learning Center (OWL) area, we are thrilled to upgrade and provide new interpretive signage for the playscape. These signs will showcase the unique features of the playscape while providing valuable information about the refuge, including its diverse habitats and wildlife. By blending play with interpretation, we aim to create an engaging, accessible, and interactive space for the community. These improvements will inspire curiosity and offer meaningful learning opportunities for all visitors.

-Adriana Garcia Rivera
Visitor Services Intern



Fun Facts About our Local Wildlife

“To Flood or Not to Flood – That is the Question” - by Scott Lee

With the winters around here comes snow – often a lot of it (well, most winters, anyway). This winter will likely be no different, although Climate certainly has altered expectations and it’s hard to predict just what our winter will be like.

Another pretty sure thing around here is that when that snow melts, we also have to face the fact that we will likely have to deal with the Mississippi flooding at the end of the winter. We’ve had a couple of dandies the past two years.

The 2023 spring flood turned out to be the third worst flood around here in history. At that time, I saw a list of the “Top 10 floods of All Time” in the Trempealeau (La Crosse, Winona) area. It was rather depressing as I read through the years of those floods, as I realized that I had lived through nine of the ten. That is a sad reminder of two things – 1) I am getting old, and 2) again, climate change is NOT a hoax.

The 2024 flood came in the summer, which is much less common. It was not caused by the runoff of the melting snow coming down from the north, but rather due to huge amounts of rainfall. This flood moved into the top ten as well so I have now lived through 10 of the top 11 floods in history (I just missed the 1880 flood).

A Note from the Friends President

Happy 2025! The 2024 Best of the Refuge Photo Contest finished up on December 31st. Judging will take place in January, with the Open House planned for March.

The Friends Playscape Restoration Project next to the Outdoor Wonders Learning Center (OWL C.) began this fall. A Trail and Habitat Restoration plan is also in the works for this spring and summer. This upcoming project will be made possible with donations the Friends received from the Gerald Hiebsch Trust Fund. Stop by to see the Playscape.



The OWL Center also had a big renovation this fall. Acoustic panels were attached to the ceiling to help absorb the ambient noise. They look beautiful, so be sure to check them out when you visit the OWL next time.

On behalf of the Friends of Trempealeau Refuge, I want to thank the Whitehall Area Garden Club

for their donation of \$235.00. I know the funds will be put to good use at the Refuge. Thanks so much!

Katie Simota, from Trempealeau, whose business is SimotaYoungConsulting LLC, is creating a new Friends of Trempealeau Refuge brochure for us. Be sure to watch for our updated brochure coming out soon.

Enjoy the Winter Season at the Refuge.

Val Critzman, Friends President

Yet again, another frightening example of climate change NOT being a hoax.

Fortunately, the refuge has taken some major flood prevention improvements this fall so the entry road will likely not have to be closed due to flooding nearly as often (check it out if you haven't been out there recently). However, if this troubling trend continues and we all don't start making necessary changes, the occasional closing of the refuge road, although sad and frustrating to all of us who love visiting there, will be a minor inconvenience compared to everything else we will face.



Trempealeau River Floodplain

Save the Dates:

Saturday, March 15th – 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. **Best of the Refuge Photo Contest Open House.** Winning photos will be on display. Refreshments will be provided.

Thursday, March 20th, **Friends Annual Membership Banquet,** Social Hour/Buffer at 6 p.m. At 7 p.m. speaker Stephen Winter, Wildlife Biologist, will give a presentation on the Purple Martin.

Saturday, April 5th 10 a.m. Speaker, Richie Swanson will give a presentation on the **Red Headed Woodpecker Recovery Project.** A short hike is planned for after his program. Refreshments will be provided.

All events are at the OWL Center

Birds of Trempealeau Refuge

The annual Audubon Christmas Count for the Trempealeau WI area was held on December 15th. Steve Winter, Lisa Reid, and Kathy Carlyle were volunteer counters at the Trempealeau Refuge that day and recorded 29 species totaling 515 birds. Last year's count also recorded 29 species but had a total of 2,080 birds. The decline was contributed to the large number of migrating waterfowl that had moved south before this year's count date.

Interesting finds in the Refuge and surrounding area included:

- 6 Trumpeter Swans
- 1 Red-headed Woodpecker
- 2 Northern Flickers
- 1 American Kestrel
- 1 Belted Kingfisher
- 111 American Robins
- 20 Cedar Waxwings
- 1 Northern Shrike (during count week)



Plein Air Artists in the Refuge event is scheduled for Saturday, June 7th, 2025. Contact Val Critzman at kvcritz@gmail.com or www.ftrefuge.org Artist entry deadline is March 1st.



Friends of Trempealeau Refuge
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Trempealeau, WI 54661
608.539.2311
<http://www.friendsoftrempealeaurefuge.org>



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](http://www.friendsoftrempealeaurefuge.org) is committed to providing an independent citizen voice for the protection, conservation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.