

Fall  
2023

# Friends of Trempealeau Refuge

## Friends Focus...

### Pelicans are a thrilling sight for Refuge visitors...



#### “What Can You Tell Me About Pelicans?”

The American white pelican is hard to miss. It stands about four feet tall, has a wingspan of approximately nine feet and can weigh up

to 20 pounds. It is one of the largest North American birds. Adding to its conspicuous stature are its beautiful snow-white feathers, long neck, flat orange bill with expandable throat pouch, short orange legs and large webbed feet.

**In the air**, pelicans fly on wide wings outlined by their signature black flight feathers. With their necks bent back over their bodies, they take advantage of thermal updrafts that help them stay aloft for long distances. Flying in precise lines, V-shaped groups or circling overhead, they glide silently – often by the hundreds.

**On the water**, they are strong swimmers and capable predators. Unlike their smaller cousins, the brown pelican, they do not dive plunge from the air to catch their fish. Instead, American white pelicans paddle in the water, sometimes tipping up like a duck, to scoop up fish. They often work cooperatively in groups to corral fish toward the shore. There the pelicans sweep them into their huge neck pouches, filter out the water – nearly three gallons – then swallow their prey.”

Excerpts from Migration of the American White Pelican  
by Carla Rich Montez  
<https://www.fws.gov/story/2022-04/pelican-pitstop>

## Fun Facts

### “Be On the Lookout!”

By Scott Lee

There’s been a couple of unusual sightings at the refuge in recent weeks so it’s time to be on the lookout. I have never seen a bobcat in the wild (and I spend a lot of time in the wild) so I’m pretty excited! They have been known to be in the area so it certainly is not unheard of, but it is a pretty rare sighting. A former 5th grader of mine at Trempealeau Elementary accidentally got one while trapping just north of here so that one is mounted and “living” at the school. Another was found dead on the road while plowing just outside Trempealeau a number of years ago so, again, they are out there waiting to be spotted. If you see what seems to be a big cat at the refuge, take a second look – it may just be that bobcat!



The other sighting was not quite so exciting, but definitely has potential of being exciting. On at least three different occasions, people have come across what seems to be bear droppings. One recent hiker at the refuge had an app on his phone called “WhoPoo” that is used to identify animal scat and it showed it as being from a bear (Geez – there’s an app for everything, I guess!). Bear scat is either blackish or brown and will contain vegetation such as berries. It also is often kind of sweet smelling, in case you want to take a real close look. Bears are

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## Note from the Friends President

Welcome Fall! It is fun to hike the trails at the Refuge this time of year. Recently, the Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau first graders did just that. Their teachers along with Friends volunteers Scott Lee, Jane Wernecke, and I helped lead small groups on hikes to observe signs of fall. They were excited to explore around the OWL Center and along Pine Creek Dike to discover milkweed pods, grasshoppers, Egrets, hear Sandhill Cranes, and even observe a live garter snake. The students adopted a tree that they will check on when they return in winter and spring. In other news, the Friends group applied for and was awarded a mini grant from USFWS Retirees Association. The \$843 we received, along with money from the Friends, was designated to purchase archery equipment. Trained staff will now have their own equipment to use for youth and adult archery programs at our Refuge. The Friends hosted five events at the Outdoor Wonders Learning Center from July through Sept. Topics included bats, dragonflies, cranes, outdoor photography and landscape artistry. We look forward to offering more events in 2024! Come visit and explore your Refuge! It is Nature's Playground!



-Val Critzman, Friends President

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The Plein Air Artists in the Refuge event is scheduled for Saturday, June 1, 2024. Contact Val Critzman if you are interested in participating. [kvcritz@gmail.com](mailto:kvcritz@gmail.com)

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### Best of Refuge Photo Contest – deadline Dec. 1st

Brochure/Entry forms are in kiosks at Refuge or available at [friendsoftrempealeaurefuge.org](http://friendsoftrempealeaurefuge.org) Photos can be dropped off at the Refuge during open hours, mailed to TNWR W28488 Refuge Rd. Tremp., Wi 54661 or mailed to Val Critzman N25525 French Creek Ln. Ettrick, WI 54627.

not unheard of around here (one was even spotted here a few years ago by refuge staff) but are rather rare this far south in Wisconsin or Minnesota. It would likely be a young one wandering through. Again, I have never seen one around here but have seen them further north. Both critters are going to be much more afraid of you than you are of them. You do not need to hike the refuge in fear, therefore, but rather do some hiking with 'excited anticipation' of possibly discovering yet another natural wonder of this incredible place called Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.



Friends of Trempealeau Refuge  
W28488 Refuge Road  
Trempealeau, WI 54661  
<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Trempealeau-Refuge-100276838553902>  
<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/](https://www.facebook.com/TrempealeauNWR)

[TrempealeauNWR](https://www.facebook.com/TrempealeauNWR)

And "Like" us!

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The [Friends of Trempealeau Refuge](http://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.