



STREAMSIDE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF
SUNKHAZE MEADOWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
1168 Main Street, Old Town, Maine

Issue 19 SPRING 2005

Adopt a Duckbox Fundraising Project

Maine's Youth Fish and Game Association is building and maintaining duck boxes for Sunkhaze Meadows Wildlife Refuge.



A Stunning Pair of Wood Ducks on Sunkhaze Refuge

In an effort to further collaboration between the two groups, some of the youth from MYFGA have learned about and built duck boxes that have been placed on the refuge.

MYFGA acquired the necessary permits and is responsible to maintain the duck boxes and collect data. This is an opportunity for area youth to learn more about the refuge and conservation practices. John Meister, who has a wildlife management degree is the master guide for the project. John is employed by the refuge, is also a board member of the youth club.

In preparation for the event, John, David Georgia, Bryan and Pam Wells surveyed and GPS'd the duck boxes on the refuge which now total forty two. Currently duck boxes within the refuge are on Baker Brook, Johnson Brook, Buzzy Brook, Dudley Brook, Little Birch Stream, Big Birch Stream, and Sunkhaze Stream. Data will be collected every year from each box .

Wood ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Bufflehead and Goldeneyes require special nesting habitat. They are cavity-nesters. This means that they construct their nests in hollow trees. This differentiates them from most other waterfowl. Other ducks and geese are ground nesters. Cavity trees are usually not abundant; nest boxes provides supplemental habitat. We hope that the boxes will entice wood ducks to nest in the refuge.

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From The Friend's Vice President

Growing up in rural Maine, I was an avid outdoorsman. I could leave my house and knowing the landowners, I was welcomed to cross their property. As you know, areas once very rural are becoming suburban. Society has changed and today's outdoor enthusiasts must realize that if they wish to continue their favorite outdoor activities, they too, must change.

Granted, some changes are for the better. Today's outdoor recreationalist has more access to information about laws, wildlife habitat management, hunting and fishing methods and an array of new technology, then ever before. While most Maine people do not oppose traditional outdoor activities, they are concerned about the impact certain activities could have on their property or the environmental effects associated with these activities.

In today's world, these types of changes may mean that outdoor enthusiasts **must** change with the times in order to continue to maintain local community support for the **privilege** of traditional land use. Each and every one of us needs to cultivate support in our community to sustain and retain outdoor recreational activity. As a Maine Game Warden, I am very fortunate to have a strong, supportive fish and game oriented community. During the past few years I have involved myself in a Community

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Visit the Friends online at <http://www.sunkhaze.org>



FROM THE FRIENDS' Vice President -
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continued from page 1 Policing project that is supported by the **Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**.

Maine's Youth Fish and Game Association has flourished and offers a potentially immeasurable educational opportunity. The association's board of directors are committed to our community by enhancing our most precious and valuable renewable resources, our youth and our wildlife.



Warden Dave Georgia

Further, we resolve to encourage our youth to use the knowledge we guide them toward, to foster respect for themselves, their neighbors and families, the environment and all we derive from it.

My district is also privileged to encompass one of Maine's irreplaceable treasures, **Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge**. Although the refuge permits traditional activities, including hunting and trapping, there is a fallacy amongst the sporting public that the refuge is for "tree huggers" only.

As an active member of the community, I decided to join "**The Friends of Sunkhaze**". I saw a unique opportunity to foster a positive relationship between consumptive users and non-consumptive users through education and participation. The two groups have worked hand in hand to corroborate goals valuable to both groups.

FRIENDS OF SUNKHAZE MEADOWS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
STREAMSIDE

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"Friends" board members; Bryan and Pam Wells have established a photography project. The "Friends" voted to enhance their project by obtaining some remote sensing cameras. The main objective of this endeavor is to document wildlife on or in close proximity to the refuge and develop an interactive CD that can be used as a teaching aid in Maine schools.

Maine's Youth Fish and Game Association's members have already contributed with building, placing, and will document nesting box activities for the **Adopt a Duck Box Project** within the refuge and hopefully will be asked to assist in future projects. All permits necessary were acquired from the refuge.

Recently Bryan Wells encountered a hunter on his property at the camera site. This hunter asked if he could hunt coyotes over the bait pile. Bryan Wells advised this hunter of the photography project and politely denied permission to hunt there for obvious reasons detrimental to his study.

The coyote hunter could only see one side of the issue, his side. It is this backwoods mentality that continues to divide Maine and its traditions. Since this encounter, I have had lengthy conversations with the Wells and know that they themselves are not hunters; however they do understand Maine's rich traditions and do not wish to alienate the sportsman. For this, I thank them. The Wells have, and will continue to allow outdoor recreational activities, including hunting on their property. They have communicated that they do not wish to "post" their land.

Understanding "the change" is imperative for both the consumptive and nonconsumptive user. All Maine citizens **own** the wildlife. It appears that the licensed outdoorsman, purchasing fishing, hunting or trapping licenses to take their share, is now a minority. The majority prefers their share alive. The delicate balance between these two groups rests with solving an equitable sharing of the resource and the use of private land for outdoor pursuits.



Eric Venturini

Remember Eric Venturini, summer intern of several years ago? Well, Eric has given us an update on his studies and whereabouts.

"I was able to get a job as a research technician on board a vessel operated by NOAA through the University of Alaska Fairbanks. It looks like I'll be doing work in order to determine the behavioral interactions between wild and hatchery reared chum salmon. The work involves sampling of chum salmon using commercial fishing methods such as hand trolling. I'll be on the water for 4 days a week in the Taku inlet up here in Southeast Alaska. I'm extremely excited about it! Thanks for all your help! Have a great summer, Eric"

Congratulations Eric. It sounds like your hard work has paid off.



Arctic Refuge

Senate Votes to Drill in Arctic NWR

On March 16, the Senate voted, for the first time in a decade, to allow oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Due to a larger Republican majority in the Senate, drilling supporters defeated an amendment by Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) to strike from the fiscal year (FY) 2006 budget resolution language that assumes \$2.5 billion in revenues that would be realized from Arctic oil leasing. The amendment failed on a 49-51 vote. Two years ago, drilling opponents were able to strip out an Arctic leasing measure by a vote of 52-48.

Congress must take further action before the Arctic provision becomes law. The leasing proposal for drilling in the Arctic Refuge would become law only if it is included in a budget reconciliation bill that President Bush signs. Currently, the House and Senate are working on reconciling the differences between their two versions of the FY06 Budget in a conference committee. Since the House did not include an Arctic provision in its budget, a final conference report may or may not include drilling revenues.

With a potentially crucial vote looming in Congress on the FY06 Budget, weighing in on Arctic drilling with members of Congress is critical. The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) has posted an Action Alert on the Refuge Action Network (RAN) that allows you to contact your elected officials in Congress about Arctic drilling. You can take action by visiting <http://refugenet.e-actionmax.com>.



Exciting News!!!!

Tom Comish, Refuge Manager, has recently received news from Maine's Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department that there is, for the first time in the history of the refuge, a pair of Bald Eagles nesting on Sunkhaze Refuge Milford Division.



What awesome News!!!!

The location of the pair will be kept secret so that they will not be disturbed. This will help insure that they will return again to nest next year.



Sunkhaze Website Forum

Yes...a forum. For those of you that don't regularly surf the web, a website forum that can be accessed, entered into, and read by website visitors. In this instance, the Friends would like to encourage visitors, to the refuge, to enter their experiences and thoughts about what they see when they visit the refuge.

Are you a NSF Fellow with a class doing research at Sunkhaze? How about an Audubon birder? Feel free to add into the forum what fun things you saw and did. You can even add photos.

You can find the forum by going to www.sunkhaze.org and clicking on the "Forum" link



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John Meister finds an egg

The Friends of Sunkhaze have come up with a unique fund raising project where an individual, school, or organization can, for a monetary donation, adopt a duck box on the refuge. The money (\$ 25.00) generated will be used for supplies and materials to continue upkeep of the boxes. In addition, each donor will receive an annual summary of their duck box activity.

Examples of activity reports might include...

"Nesting boxes have proved to be homes to a variety of wildlife species including a pair of flying squirrels that continue to live free of rent at Buzzy brook."

"In 2004, at Johnson brook, box# 26 contained 2 unhatched Wood duck eggs, but successfully hatched 2 wood duck eggs and 1 buffle-head egg." Does the story of the ugly duckling come to mind?

"On Sunkhaze stream, box# 4 in the spring of 2004 contained evidence of successfully hatching 17 hooded mergansers." Now that's quite a brood!



Dave Georgia services a Duckbox

We would like to have youth volunteers help us to maintain the boxes. This would mean going out with someone, in the winter, probably by snowshoe to clean out the boxes and record the data. If you know a group of youth who would like to participate in this project (Girl scouts, Boy scouts, Science Class, etc.), please contact Bryan Wells at 827-1942 or bwells@abac.com





From The Refuge Manager

was affecting refuge lands under my care. Now that spring is here, the pace of development will only increase. Not all news is glum, however.

Over the past year, Friends members Bryan and Pam Wells have purchased two sizeable properties located just north of the Milford Division of Sunkhaze Meadows NWR. In the process, they have protected an additional three miles of Sunkhaze Stream, including the "Sunkhaze Gorge." This additional protection is an incredible gift to the refuge which was not solicited, but which is truly appreciated. Thank you, Pam and Bryan!

Since the original refuge was acquired in 1988, almost 2,000 acres have been added to the lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Milford, Maine. A quick look at the refuge lands superimposed on the town of Milford shows that about 35 to 40 percent of the town is part of the refuge. This is an incredible resource that many local residents are only beginning to understand. The fact that the new subdivision on the County Road is called "Sunkhaze Heights" will bring additional awareness of the refuge to many people. As the world becomes increasingly crowded, living adjacent to protected lands is becoming ever more popular.

In spite of 17 years of slow land acquisition for the refuge, three stretches of Sunkhaze Stream between the Stud Mill Road and U.S. 2 remain officially outside the refuge boundary. Although two of these properties have been offered to the refuge, no additional lands can be purchased by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service until the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the refuge has been completed. This plan is currently scheduled to be written between 2010 and 2012.

Because 5 to 7 more years might be too long for the current owners of the two properties to wait, I am hopeful that alternative means can be found to protect the last remaining stretches of Sunkhaze Stream within the refuge. The Forest Society of Maine has shown some interest in working with the Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows to protect additional lands around the refuge in Milford. Perhaps this is the next big project for the Friends to undertake. After all, what is more important to refuge management than ensuring that lands in the heart of the refuge remain undeveloped for the enjoyment of future generations?

Finally, I wish to welcome Elisabeth Ayers and Daniel Smith as summer interns. Liz and Dan will begin work on May 16, thanks to funding received from the Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows. Bird expert Jillian Glover will be returning in May to lead the annual inventory of warblers and other neo-tropical birds which make the refuge their home during the late spring and early summer. Be sure to say hello to Liz, Dan, and Jill if you see them around the refuge.

In the last issue of the newsletter, I talked about how the recent tide of development



Tom Comish

The Friends of Sunkhaze would like to thank Dee and Lisa Dauphinee for allowing canoers and kayakers access to Sunkhaze Stream at Route 2. We also ask that all who put their canoes into the stream, be respectful of Dawn 'Til Dawn by not blocking their drive.



DAWN 'TIL DONE
Greenhouses & Farm Store

Dee and Lisa Dauphinee
Owners

697 Main Road
Milford, ME 04461

Phone: 207-827-5552
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Volunteers needed!!!!

Looking for some positive outdoor activity? This coming year, Tom will once again be looking for help with surveys, maintenance and a variety of other activities necessary to keeping up the refuge. Have a day to give to the refuge? Call him at: Tom Comish - 207-827-6138 ext. 17 or Tom_Comish@fws.gov



Annual Work Day on the Refuge

This years annual work day will be held on May 7th on the Milford Division of the refuge. Projects could include trail trimming, building a kiosk for the new parking lot, and getting the new parking lot ready for summer.

Drinks will be provided but please bring your own lunch.

We'll meet at 9:00AM at the refuge office. Bring any hand saws and loppers that you might have available. For more information contact Bryan at 827-1942.

Welcome New and Renewing Members

Renewing Members

- John and Janet Alexander
- Jim and Penny Basford
- Tom and Dawn Comish
- Grace Cust
- Laurel M. Gould
- Dr. Anne Hess
- Sally C. Jacobs





Remote Sensing Camera Project

Spring is finally here! I am really excited about the new assortment of critters I will have visiting my cameras once it warms up and the snow melts.

In anticipation of the inevitable melt, I decided to do something bold. One of the animals I am very interesting in capturing on video is a Pine Marten. I have heard that Pine Marten live in Sunkhaze, though they are more common further north. I purchased Marten lure that smells as bad as a skunk. And I read that a good attractant for Marten is strawberry jelly, so I put out a dab, thinking it might help attract these elusive carnivores.



White-tailed deer



Bald Eagle and Competition

I heard of a good potential Marten site on Buzzy Brook, about a mile down the stream at its narrowest point. I decided since it was the last weekend of packed ice, that I would haul my camera out onto the stream, pulling it behind me on my little red plastic sled. I was gambling that in another 3-4 weeks, the ice would be gone and I could take a canoe out to the site.

It makes me nervous to put one of my remote video systems at a location where I might not be able to walk until next winter. There is always a risk of a flood in the spring.

I secured the camera at a height of 3 feet up a tree, aiming down at the beaver dam that blocks the stream enough to form a narrow bridge. My hope is that a Marten might cross the natural bridge. So here I am, weeks later, hoping I can paddle my canoe out to the camera. Unfortunately, the ice is still in the stream, but it's too thin to walk on. And of all things, I understand from the weather man that the rain coming this weekend will be the worst flooding in 20 years. My camera case is water proof. I have a dream that the camera at Buzzy Brook will stay tied to the tree and not leak any water if the water level rises above the camera. Maybe if I am really lucky, I can even get some under water video of beaver and otters. But I will just be happy if I can get the camera back in working order at this point!

My other stream side camera saw the first raccoons of the season in March. It's always exciting to see a new face on film! The raccoons were crossing the ice covered stream, and the very next day, an otter (finally) walked in front of my camera. Because of the possibility of floods, I have raised this other stream-side camera up to the top of the ledge looking down at a log crossing the stream. I am guessing I might catch some critters that use the log as a natural bridge to get across.

My camera at the spring has revealed a favorite hunting spot of the Bared Owl. This owl sits on the branch over the spring and waits until it sees a mouse and then dives down to the spring and ends up back on the branch with a morsel to feast on. I have video footage of him doing this for nearly an hour in the early evening on several days.

I was out on my property this morning and was pleased to see that an old carcass pile is now free of snow and exposed to the elements, and more importantly, exposed to the carnivores. I found part of the pile had been dragged off about 20 feet and there were plenty of coyote tracks.. But my camera only got the shadows of the sun and trees blowing before it used up my 2 hours of video. It's always a balance between aiming the camera away from the carcass pile so I don't get hours of crows and ravens, while at the same time, not aiming into the trees to only get sun-triggers and shadows. Because the pile smells ripe, I plan to move 3 cameras on the site this week because I expect to get a lot of activity.



Otter Ready To Slide Back Into Sunkhaze Stream

Today when I was quietly tending my cameras, I heard a crunching noise in the snow behind me, and I turned to be face-to-face with a large moose! The moose did not notice me because I was so quiet and crouched low, and I did not hear him until he was upon me. I struggled to quietly remove my video camera and put film into the camera, but the moose was not willing to wait and he took off in the other direction.

Well, that about wraps it up for now, so stay tuned for another installment of my remote sensing camera experiences in and around Sunkhaze! To see samples of the video collected so far, go to <http://www.sunkhaze.org/movie>



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Next Board Meeting:
The second Wednesday of each month....
7PM—Call for location..
All are welcome

This is your Last Issue (if box is checked)

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