NCTA Hosts Very Successful Grand Opening Event at Tamarac NWR on National Trails Day

The Laurentian Lakes Chapter, NCTA, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service all partnered to host an official Grand Opening event for the new NCT segment in Becker County. The event included a presentation on “The Lives of Wolves, Fox, and Coyote” by noted Minnesota naturalist Stan Tekiela at the High School in Frazee on Friday, May 31st and a full day event at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge on National Trails Day (Saturday, June 1st). Friday’s event drew a great crowd of 150 people very interested in the topic. Stan did a fantastic job educating folks about the ecology of these denizens of the North Country in an entertaining way.

Despite the cool and damp weather (the high temp on Saturday was in the high 40s and there was an intermittent light drizzle), over 125 people attended the formal ribbon cutting ceremony for which NCTA Executive Director Bruce Matthews served as the M.C. About 150 people participated in the day’s festivities which included a guided theme hike every hour. Feedback received from the attendees was fabulous as many locals were very excited to officially get out into new parts of the Refuge via the NCT. Thanks to everyone at Tamarac NWR and the Friends of Tamarac for making the event so successful!

NCT featured in Minnesota Conservation Volunteer article written by Ryan Rodgers

Regular readers of the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer (MCV) will be learning more about the North Country National Scenic Trail thanks to a great article in the current (July-August) issue written by Wisconsin freelance writer Ryan Rodgers (ryan-rogers.com). This is the first ever NCT article in the MCV. If you’re not familiar with the MCV, it is the official publication of the Minnesota DNR and you can pick up a copy at your local State Park or DNR office and they’re also available at all public libraries in the State. We’ll be bringing copies of the article with to the 2013 Annual Meeting in PA. Thanks to Ryan for penning the fabulous article and getting the NCT into the MCV!
Itasca Moraine (ITM) Chapter to again host an Americorps-NCCC crew this September

Bruce Johnson and his ITM Chapter regulars are once again preparing for a volunteer infusion from an Americorps-NCCC crew that will join them starting this September 3rd and working through September. The projects the crew will work include:

- Building the Lake Twentyone loop trail (adjacent to Nelson Lake within the Paul Bunyan St. Forest)
- Building the Horseshoe Lake loop trail (adjacent to the Waboose Lake loop trail)
- Completing several trail improvement projects within the Chippewa National Forest (e.g. relocations, new campsite on Moccasin Lake, etc)

Local volunteers are responsible to work with the Americorps-NCCC crew each day. If you are interested in helping out (it’s a lot of fun to get to know these young adults), contact Bruce Johnson at brucej@arvig.com or 218-732-8051.

The four Minnesota Chapters have already seen a small spike in their membership numbers thanks to the NCTA’s special E-Membership deal. If you haven’t heard, the NCTA is offering for a limited time (through August 12th—DON’T DELAY!), an opportunity for new members to join at a heavily discounted membership rate of just $12 per year. The difference between this and the normal membership rate is that this offer only includes electronic communication—including the North Star delivered to your email inbox. For more info, visit the NCTA website and look for the membership deal banner.

The NCTA is still selling copies of the new NCT Guidebook authored by Ron Strickland and published by the University of Michigan Press. The book features a total of 5 hikes in Minnesota among its 31 profiled hikes. The MN ones include Itasca State Park, Shingobee Rec. Area, Paul Bunyan State Forest, and two in the Chippewa National Forest. Pick up your copy today by visiting the NCTA’s Trail Shop.
An update on the “Guide to the North Country Trail in Minnesota”
By Susan C. Hauser and Linda Johnson, Co-Editors

The guide is on schedule for publication Spring 2014. It will have mile-by-mile descriptions of the NCT from the Tamarac National Wildlife Reserve to Remer.

The editorial team (Matt Davis, Susan Hauser, Bruce Johnson, Linda Johnson and Ray Vlasak) is grateful for the rich and lively descriptions of the trail submitted by trail adopters. Proof pages will be going out to them before too long. The guide will also include essays on flora (Harvey Tjader), fauna (TBA), geology (James Cotter), Itasca (Deane Johnson) and seasons (Bob LaFleur), a preface (Will Weaver), and information about the NCT from North Dakota to Duluth.

You Can Help! The Laurentian Lakes and Itasca Moraine chapters invited trail volunteers and hikers to tell their trail stories on August 8 at Itasca State Park. Many of the stories will be used in the guide. If you have a trail story you would like to share, there is still time. Please send it to Linda Johnson <brokencanoe123@gmail.com> before September 15, 2013. Stories may be edited by Susan and Linda. (What kinds of stories? Sightings, epiphanies, recommendations, exciting encounters.)

The editorial team has also started to look at photographs for the guide. They must be good quality, pixel-wise. The covers of the book will be in color. Interior, including photos, will be black-and-white. (What kinds of photos? The trail, scenery, landscapes, hikers, campsites—photos that will encourage new hikers to try the NCT.)

The Minnesota NCT Guidebook’s editorial team. From left: Linda Johnson, Susan Hauser, Bruce Johnson, and Ray Vlasak.
When I first crossed the Chippewa National Forest on foot I saw what was and was hopeful it would be as much of an adventure as it was when the first members of the Star of the North crossed it. Surely the nature of adventure hasn’t changed since they first crossed it in the yester year. It was a trail with armpit tall ivy, grass and weeds. In the morning dew you could be certain of one thing: soaking wet shoes by 10 a.m. Twisted debris wrapped around the trekking poles. Pioneers in the woods. Not seeing a soul or an animal except at trail heads. Pretending we were the first to see it all and enjoying every minute of it. Over the years with help of one of those pioneers I see things differently. Selective deforestation has taken place. A significant use of tools shared, mowers and gas spun out across the forest floor. Miles have disappeared beneath us all. Many miles beginning at four and five A.M. (or worse trying to leave after work and arriving at camp before 10 p.m.) Who made these schedules? Who separated us by the miles? By chance who or what brought us together? In the tired nights I look to the heavens and thank the stars. Under those stars I laughed so loud and cried so hard and thanked those who show me the way to one of my greatest adventures.

The Star of the North began a hard fight this year with Mother Nature who began with good rains and strong growth. The first STN trip was the second week of May. A hike and write up for the upcoming MN NCT Hiking Guide took place, three days later we returned to clear debris off the trail just west of MN 84, and re-blaize a section that had been cut. Using rakes, saws, and paint, the trail was rerouted and back in business. Returning the following weekend, we mowed our section of trail from west Macemon to the Boy River. It was four weeks later a crew of three attacked from Cass 125 to the Boy River mowing, clearing and lopping. In a half dozen spots we weren’t able to cut larger trees nor did we want to due to the trees final resting spot was something we respected. The trees one may have to hop over is good way to commune with nature and show children of the woods obstacles in life begin with our attitudes toward all living things. The wet lands brought in nature’s second most destructive animal next to man: the beaver. As the wetlands grew so did the beavers interest in stopping the sound of running water. Here is hoping to a slightly drier fall. All in all it is a little slice of heaven, and nature is doing a fine job keeping it that way without much help form the tireless volunteers of the STN.

The STN Nomads of the North took on other adventures in the North Country including Phil Nimps’ work at Lonetree Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in west-central ND. If you are not familiar with Lonetree, it is where God rested on the seventh day. Other Nomads headed to WI to help Bill Menke and his BSC Chapter Roving Trail Crew (or Rovers) continue his push to the west. Today in the woods on the weekends, I see people and critters using this hand built trail as a freeway. Speed not to exceed four mph. It is indeed different today and as it evolves by nature and mankind it will be not only different but it will be better. I am sure of that as it made me a better man.

As chapter president of the STN I want to thank you all for you support over the last several years. Matt and Stacy Davis for putting up with me (and my spelling and grammar). To all of the STN leadership and those who called me friend...thanks for such great adventure. Lastly, my thanks to the Nomads of the North (STN) and the Rovers who have left such great memories on my heart. On Sept 22nd please save the date, stop by for a chapter meeting and meet your new chapter president. Meeting, meet and greet, and fellowship with food at our home here in Maple Grove, please RSVP at stn@northcountrytrail.org. As I move on, our new Chapter president (Kim Fishburn) will be seeing things differently and building a stronger and a better trail community.

A little about Kim Fishburn...

Kim lives in Plymouth and works in the wastewater industry. He has been a Star of the North Chapter member for the last 3 years. Before recently getting involved with the STN Chapter, Kim was a very active volunteer with the Superior Hiking Trail Association including being a trail adopter. Some of you may have seen Kim during one of his frequent presentations on the SHT at REI stores in the Metro area. Welcome aboard Kim and thanks for getting involved as a leader!
Round one of maintenance on the 3.9 mile Waboose Lake Loop Trail was completed the second week of July. Adopters, (see photo) Matt, Erika, Noah and Reed Johnson (Itasca Moraine Chapter members) have teamed up with the Sustainability Office at Bemidji State University (BSU) to do the work. Caitlyn Schuchhardt, a GreenCorps member hosted at BSU, and Collin Sainio, a BSU graduate student, helped with the effort. It was Collin’s first time on the trail as well as his birthday! Both Caitlyn and Collin hope to explore more of the North Country Trail.

The Waboose Lake Loop Trail runs concurrent with the North Country Trail for about 0.75 miles in the Paul Bunyan State Forest, 7.5 miles north of Nevis, MN. It was completed last September with the help of an AmeriCorps-NCCC Team.

The Campsite on Waboose was recognized as “one of the coolest” on the NCT in Minnesota by Todd McMahon (aka Tman) and it was also featured in an article appearing in the July August 2013 MN-DNR publication, Minnesota Conservation Volunteer (http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/julaug13/north_country.html). Editor’s note: Thanks to this group for all of its hard work on the NCT. It’s exciting to get the next generation(s) involved!

ITM- BSU Waboose lake loop trail work crew July 2013. Back row: Collin Sainio, Caitlyn Schuchhardt, Erika Bailey-Johnson, and Matt Johnson; front row: Reed Johnson and Noah Johnson

An update on the North Country Trail in North Dakota
By Matthew Davis, Regional Trail Coordinator for MN & ND

There is currently a lot happening on the NCT in North Dakota...the most unique of all the seven NCT states because of its prairie landscape. Future issues of the Call of the North will include Chapter updates from the two Chapters and other stories / pics from elsewhere along the NCT in the Flickertail State. The current highlights include:

- Under the leadership of Gail Rogne, the Dakota Prairie Grasslands Chapter is re-organizing as the Dakota Grasslands Chapter and is taking on more trail development projects in southeastern North Dakota between the Red River and Sheyenne River State Forest (where the SRV Chapter takes over). The Chapter has been successful in reaching a new audience and promoting the NCT via the Red River Valley Outdoors Meetup group.

- The Sheyenne River Valley Chapter is still building their new trail segments on lands for which they’ve acquired 99-year trail easements. These new trail segments are located between Fort Ransom State Park and Valley City.

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Photo key: Rep. Rick Nolan gets a blue blaze painted on his face during the Governor’s Fishing Opener in Park Rapids, Stan Tekeila talks about wolves in Frazee, the Volunteer Vacation crew in the Chip, the finished causeway in Tamarac NWR, NCTA’s Bruce Matthews and Andrea Ketchmark visit with Paul Bunyan in Akeley, Hikers enjoy the NCT, Mayor Hank Ludtke stands with Eagle Scout candidate Roger Thorp, working on the causeway, the finished product, the NCTA’s booth at the GFO, Bruce Matthews MC’s in Frazee, and hikers enjoy the bogwalk in Tamarac NWR.

Arrowhead Re-route Update by Matthew Davis, NCTA’s Regional Trail Coordinator for MN & ND

Unfortunately, Rep. Rick Nolan and his staff have been unable to find a way to advance the Arrowhead Re-route legislation within the House’s Natural Resources Committee which has jurisdiction over National Trails issues. Sadly, this committee is home to severe partisan gridlock. Indications received from Democratic committee staffers are that the same negative amendments that were introduced in the 111th Congress would again be introduced this time. Because of this fact, Rep. Nolan is unwilling to introduce the bill and thus make it a partisan target. Sen. Amy Klobuchar is waiting on re-introducing the bill in the Senate until the House issue is resolved.

Stay tuned. Keep track of the issue at northcountrytrail.org/get-involved/advocacy/arrowhead-re-route/ or via Facebook at facebook.com/ArrowheadReRoute.
7th Annual Hiking Fest
Schedule of Events

10:00  **Morning Natural activities:**
- "5 in 5: Minnesota State Symbols." **NOTES:** Meet at the Headwaters of the Mississippi. This walk up activity takes approximately 5 minutes and is done at noon.
- "CCC Walk." **NOTES:** Start near Douglas Lodge. Finishes by 10:30am.

12:00 – 1:00  **North Country Welcome - Jacob Brower Visitors’ Center Classroom**
*Information on the North Country Trail will be available inside the Jacob Brower Visitors’ Center Classroom along with more info on the day’s hikes and activities and volunteer opportunities*

12:45– 1:00  **Organize for hikes & car shuttles - Jacob Brower Visitors’ Center Classroom**
*Hikers should bring the following: a day pack, raingear, good boots, bug spray, water, and your own trail lunch.*

1:00  **Depart for Trailheads**
- **Hike from the South Entrance Trailhead out to Iron Corner Campsite and back** – 2.4 mi. round trip.
- **Hike to Douglas Lodge!** Hike from the South Entrance Trailhead to Douglas Lodge via the NCT & Ozawindib Trails – 3.9 mi. (optional extension of also hiking the Brower Trail north to the Bear Paw Campground for another 2.2 mi. with shuttle back to the Visitors’ Center or up to the Picnic Area. You can also walk north on the paved bike trail up to the Picnic Area, approximately 2 miles). Shuttles will return hikers to Forest Inn by 5:00pm

2:00  **Shorter Afternoon family hikes / activities**
- **The Great GPS Photo Amazing Chase Challenge** **NOTES:** Adults must accompany children. Meet at the picnic shelter area. Finishes by 3:30pm.
- **Jr. Naturalist: Who made these Tracks?** **NOTES:** Meet at the Picnic area amphitheater. Finishes by 2:45pm.
*On your own hikes:*
- Health challenge to Aiton Heights fire tower - "Earn an exclusive Royal Order of the Squirrel card"
- North Country scavenger hike on the self-guided nature trail

4:00  **Afternoon hikes/activities – Meet at Forest Inn**
- **Curious Kids: X Marks the Spot** - Kids, come follow the treasure map and see if X really does mark the spot! Explore different maps and see how they can lead you on your next adventure. Make and take home your very own treasure map. **NOTES:** Parent/guardians are asked to accompany their children. Please bring insect repellent along. Meet at the Picnic Shelter area. Finishes by 4:45pm.
- **Cemetery Stroll** **NOTES:** Start at picnic shelter area). Finishes by 5pm.

4:30 to 5:30  **Social time with trail mix and drinks available at the Picnic Shelter**
*Come and relax at the Picnic Shelter following your afternoon hike or activity. Snacks and drinks will be available along with information on the North Country Trail, hiking on it, and volunteer opportunities.*

5:30 to 6:30  **Cookout dinner at the Picnic Shelter catered by Douglas Lodge and available for purchase for $7. Menu: Bison Burger and/or Garden Sandwich with a Fruit Tray, Vegetable Tray and Chips. Bring your lawn chair and/or a blanket for sitting outside.**

6:30 to 8:00  **Free concert by Fran Gack (pictured at right) at the Amphitheater/Picnic Shelter. A local musician, Fran plays a mix of Celtic, Folk, and Cajun. Fran played last year’s event as part of Home grown Tomatoes.**

**Questions?** If so contact Matthew Davis at 701-388-1883 / davis@northcountrytrail.org
Fall 2013 activities schedule

- August 12-17: NCTA Annual Conference—Slippery Rock, PA
- August 17: SHTA’s late summer hike—Duluth, MN
- August 24: 7th Annual NCT Hiking Fest @ Itasca Park
- September 21: SHTA’s hike—Grand Portage, MN
- September 21: ITM’s Fall is All hikes—TBD
- September 21: LLC’s Fall Color hike—Rochert, MN
- September 22: SHTA’s hike—Grand Portage, MN
- September 22: STN Chapter meeting—Maple Grove, MN
- September 28: National Public Lands Day workday in the Chip—Remer, MN
- September 28: DPG’s National Public Lands Day workday at Ekre Preserve—Kindred, ND
- September 28: SHTA’s Fall Color hike—Lutsen, MN
- October 5: SHTA’s hike—Two Harbors, MN
- October 6: ITM’s Hike for Hope—Nevis, MN
- October 19: Joint ITM-LLC End of Season meeting—Park Rapids, MN
- November 22-24: Outdoor Adventure Expo—Minneapolis, MN

North Dakota, continued from page 5

- In July, an American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation crew mowed, re-set trail marker posts, and installed mileage marker posts on 16 miles of the NCT within the Sheyenne National Grassland. This crew attracted two volunteers from Chicago and Washington, D.C.
- STN Chapter volunteer Phil Nimps and Matt Davis mowed part of the NCT at Lonetree WMA before mower problems derailed their efforts. The ND Game & Fish Department has subsequently finished mowing the NCT.
- The U.S. Forest Service has recently completed building the new 4 mile loop trail at the east trailhead in the Sheyenne National Grasslands and this fall will begin constructing the nearby Jorgen’s Hollow Campground. Both should be great in increasing use of the NCT.

Editor’s Note by Stacy Davis

A few weekends ago our family enjoyed a beautiful hike on the North Country Trail in the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. While we were driving to the meeting place, I was wondering how our four sets of little feet were going to keep up on a hike designed for grown ups. We arrived at the trailhead to find that our family and some family friends that we brought with us were the sole participants in the tree identification hike. My worries about us slowing everyone down faded as our kids ran down the trail and kept looping back to see what was taking so long. When they slowed down long enough to glean information from the hike guides they learned about trees nuts, ferns, tamarack trees and much more. We enjoyed seeing all the hard work put in by NCTA volunteers to construct an extensive boardwalk through a beautiful area. Thanks to all those who have been working tirelessly to make the NCT in Tamarac a reality!