



MINNEOPA

Newsletter of the Friends of Minneopa State Park

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MESSENGER



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Friends of Minneopa State Park • 20499 555 Lane • Mankato, Minnesota 56001

JANUARY ANNUAL MEETING

The annual elections meeting of the Friends of Minneopa will be held on **Thursday, January 15, 2004, at 7 p.m.** in the Community Meeting Room of the North Mankato Police Annex Building, 1004 Belgrade Avenue, in North Mankato. The program will be presented by Ed Brekke-Kramer, resource specialist for the DNR Southern Region.

PARK MANAGER'S CORNER

As we enter the holiday season we are reminded of the beauty and complexity of our natural world and what a blessing it is that Minnesota has preserved these special places called state parks. After two years with little or no snow we now have a few inches and this has provided some marginal cross-country skiing opportunities. Unfortunately we need many more inches before we can provide a quality groomed trail.

Elaine Feikema has passed her probationary period and has now been officially certified as the Assistant Park Manager at Minneopa. She continues to learn the intricacies of the position, most recently how to plow snow! With the beginning of the new year we will begin work on inventories, audits, legislative reports and the other usual fun tasks that come with the season.

In late October Bureau of Engineering completed a boundary survey of the Carl and
[Continued on page 2]

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT LAVONNE CRAIG

Well, here it is 2004 already. My year as president of the Friends of Minneopa has gone by quickly. I have some hopes and wishes for our group and for the park in the upcoming year:

I hope that the DM&E Railroad project fails to get financial backing. The project is bad for Minneopa and for the nation. Those old coal plants should be retired and other sources of energy developed.

I hope the upcoming legislature looks at funding our parks and trails with taxes, not by higher and higher user fees. Parks and trails are areas for the public good and should be paid for by the public.

I hope the funds for the handicapped trail are released and the project is done in 2004. All people should be able to enjoy the falls.

I hope you are all getting our great new postcard of the falls. Also the note cards with pictures of the park, flowers, animals, and birds are wonderful. They make great gifts.

I hope we increase the number of people using the park. Many local people are not using this treasure. Bring a friend along the next time you go to Minneopa.

I hope our organization's numbers also keep growing. Again, bring a friend along to our next meeting on January 15. Ed Brekke-Kramer will be very interesting.

In closing I want to wish all the Friends of Minneopa and the Minneopa Park employees the very best in 2004. **THANK YOU** for all the help this year.

[Park Manager, continued]

Elaine Anderson acquisition and that parcel has now been posted with park boundary signs. Assisting the survey crew was an interesting experience. To locate one section corner-marker nearly seven feet of silt, deposited by the Minnesota River, needed to be excavated. Because a large portion of this property has been enrolled in a perpetual easement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and because much of it is prone to flooding, future development will be very limited. That said, the parcel does provide excellent wildlife habitat and opens the door to connectivity with other parcels farther west if and when they become available. I would encourage you to explore this new area. It will be a while before we can get a map created that accurately reflects these changes, so when venturing out please watch the signs and respect adjacent private property.

Howard Ward, Park Manager

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Free 1 Year Membership in the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota!

You are invited to become a member of the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota (PTC) free of charge for one year.

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota will be 50 years old in 2004, and we would like to spread the news, so we are offering membership to certain friends of the state parks.

The PTC is planning special events for the jubilee year, including a series of bike rides that will hit every state park in Minnesota. We will visit Minneopa the week of June 19-26, 2004. With your free membership you will receive announcements and invitations to our Jubilee events, as well as a subscription to the PTC newsletter "Special Places," and information on parks issues at the State Legislature. Best of all, you will know that your membership increases our clout at the Legislature, helping us to successfully advocate for parks throughout the state [continued, next column].

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, a non-profit organization, has established or expanded dozens of state parks and trails across Minnesota over the last 50 years. The PTC is responsible for creating Afton and Grand Portage state parks and purchasing land and advocating for many other parks and trails. Fueled by contributions from citizens and members, the organization purchases and holds critical property until it can be transferred to public ownership. The Parks & Trails Council works with local park groups, property owners, other organizations, the DNR and the Legislature to create and expand parks and trails across the state.

If you would like to become a member of the Parks & Trails Council, please fill in the following information, clip out the form, and mail it to PTC at 275 E. 4th Street, Suite 642, St. Paul MN 55105-1651. Tel. 1-800-944-0707 (ask for Julia)

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:

Email:

The Parks & Trails Council does not share member information with other organizations.

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THINGS TO DO AT MINNEOPA – TRACKING

Even when the snow is too light for skiing, it can be an opportunity to enjoy the park. Animal and bird tracks show up well in fresh snow, and Minneopa is a good place to study wildlife tracks. A guidebook is helpful. The classic is Olaus Murie's Field Guide to Animal Tracks, and Richard Smith's Animal Tracks and Signs of North America is full of useful tips. Who, when, what? After identifying the maker of the track, estimate how old the track is and try to figure out what the animal was doing. Smith tells how; it can be fun!

Crime, Mystery in the Parks?

Most of us especially enjoy our parks because they are quiet, restful places where you can escape the hectic noise and bustle of the workaday world. Park employees usually feel the same way. Not many people join the DNR to work in law enforcement.

But as population and crime have grown in recent years, the parks have not been spared. There is more crime in the parks, including sensational crimes that draw national attention, such as the murders on the Appalachian Trail and in Sequoia National Park. There was a killing at Blue Mounds State Park in Minnesota. Like it or not, park managers have had to focus attention on dealing with crime in the parks.

And could a writer of murder mysteries in the parks be far behind? No surprise then, that since 1993 Anna Pigeon, law enforcement ranger in the National Park System, has been breaking one tough case after another in a series of mysteries written by Nevada Barr. Anna is a middle-aged widow with a hard-nosed attitude that covers up a soft spot for animals and wilderness. She is smart and determined enough that she can deal with the disturbing variety of criminals who violate the parks – toxic polluters, drug dealers, big game hunters, thieves, and ruthless schemers with devious plans to suck money out of the parks.

The books offer exciting plots with intricate solutions to the crimes plus enjoyable descriptions of the parks, natural life, and also park employee life (author Nevada Barr worked as a National Park ranger for about 10 years). Anna Pigeon is the hero, and there are many other interesting characters too, some reappearing in several stories. Barr has created a whole world for Anna, where events and people from different novels are intertwined and minor characters in one book become important in others.

There are 10 Anna Pigeon mysteries in print at this point, with another scheduled to come out in 2004, and a lot more after that, I hope. They are available at the Blue Earth County Library (but they move in and out fast), and you can get paperback editions at book stores.

We all love the grace and intelligence of the outdoor classics – Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Sigurd Olson, Annie Dillard, and others. If you also like to read mysteries set in the beautiful out of doors, you should make the acquaintance of Ranger Anna Pigeon.

FRIENDS NOTES

Photo Contest. Once again Deb Gruhlke dominated the Minneopa Photo Contest, this year winning first, second, and two honorable mentions. To this observer she deserves it all – her photos of the mossy rock above the water and close views of the water rushing over the falls make you stop and appreciate the beauty of Minneopa. Our own Merrill Frydendall took third place with a close view of two Painted Ladies (butterflies) on a flower head. In addition Merrill received two Judge's Awards, one for a striking shot of the park sign in the dark with a moon hanging on its side. Member Norma Carstensen received two awards for lovely pictures of wildflowers and grasses in the park. Newcomers Bob and Kris Douglas won Honorable Mention for a dramatic shot of water pouring over the lip of the ice-encrusted Upper Falls. The contest shows again what talented photographers we have in this area, and what good material the park can provide. The photos will be on display at the Blue Earth County Library until the week of January 12, and they will be shown at the January 15 meeting as well.

2004 Elections. Under the Friends By-Laws the annual elections are held at the January meeting. The two-year positions to be filled this January are President-Elect and Treasurer. The nominating committee has selected Merrill Frydendall as its candidate for president-elect and Tom Weigt for treasurer. Merrill was president-elect in 2001 and president in 2002. Tom has not held an office with the Friends. At the meeting nominations from the floor will be welcomed, and then the election will proceed.

Parks and Trails Council. In recognition of the good work they do for parks and trails in Minnesota, the Governing Board decided to give the PTC space in this newsletter to make their membership offer (see page 2). In fact, the PTC played an important part in establishing the Friends of Minneopa organization in 1998. We encourage everyone to take them up on their free membership offer.

Dues Due. Annual dues for 2004 membership are due. Use the form on page 4, and thank you for your support.

2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[This is a preliminary listing. Additional events may be added, and details will be filled in when possible.]

Jan. 1, Thursday. 2004 Minneopa Photo Contest begins.

Jan. 15, Thursday, 7 p.m. Annual Election Meeting of the Friends of Minneopa. North Mankato Police Annex Building, Program by Ed Brekke-Kramer, Resource Specialist.

April 15, Thursday, 7 p.m. Spring meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, details later

May 15, Saturday, 7-12 a.m. Bird Banding with Merrill Frydendall. Prairie side.

June 5, Saturday, 7-11 a.m. Annual Resident Bird Count, meet in prairie side picnic parking lot.

June 6, Sunday, afternoon. State Park Open House Day, Friends of Minneopa have displays in pavilion, offer hikes and programs on the prairie, details later.

June 19, Saturday. Parks & Trails Council state park celebration bike ride starts at Minneopa.

June 20, Sunday, Walk on the Prairie with Merrill Frydendall, "Birds and the Bluebird Trail," details later

July 15, Thursday, 7 p.m. Summer meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, details later.

August 15, Sunday, Walk on the Prairie with Merrill Frydendall, "Vegetation and Animal Life," details later.

October 21, Thursday, Fall meeting of the Friends of Minneopa, details later.

November 30, Tuesday, 2004 Minneopa Photo Contest entries due by this date.

Note: The Governing Board of the Friends of Minneopa meets monthly, normally on the first or second Thursday.

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Volunteer opportunity: As LaVonne points out in her President's Message, we have a new postcard of Minneopa Falls, nearly 1,000 of them in fact. And we need someone to take charge of selling them or placing them in stores that will sell them for us. Could you do that? It would be a great help. Contact any officer.

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The Minneopa Messenger, 20499 555 Lane, Mankato MN 56001, is edited by Brand Frenz, who is responsible for any unattributed material. If you have comments or questions or want to submit material, call Brand at 947-3268.