



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Ed Marshall's Gift for 100 Years and More



"I just want the property to stay like it is for 100 years."

- Edward Marshall

Ed Marshall (far right) is joined by NWLT Board members (from left) Ron Eckstein, Mary Schwaiger and John Huppert celebrating the deeding of the new Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area in Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County.

Last September, the Northwoods Land Trust was gifted a new 96-acre conservation area in Vilas County, thanks to the generosity of Edward Marshall of Lac du Flambeau. According to Executive Director Bryan Pierce, the new wildlife conservation area is located just west of the Lac du Flambeau tribal reservation off of Highway 70 in Vilas County.

"We greatly appreciate Ed's foresight and generous contribution to make sure this favorite piece of the northwoods will be conserved in perpetuity for the enjoyment of all future generations," Pierce said.

Ed Marshall spent 30 years flying for American Airlines. "I've been coming up here for years," said Ed. "A crew member I worked with owned a resort on Squaw Lake, and he would come up here and work during the summers. I've owned property on Squaw Lake since 1975. I reached mandatory retirement age in 1996, and decided to retire here."

"I am originally from southern Illinois, but my family had moved to Milwaukee for about 25 years," Ed related. "My grandfather had been a glass blower back in the days when they made bottles by mouth. When they made the automatic machines, he was out of work. He moved and got a job in a steel mill in Milwaukee. He worked his way up to being a foreman until the Depression hit, and then he ended up going back to southern Illinois. He had owned a cabin for about 20 years on Wind Lake, a small lake in southern Wisconsin. When World War II came, you couldn't get the gas any more to drive up there, so he sold it."

"I've always been intrigued with this part of the country," said Ed. "I remember when I was a kid looking at maps of Wisconsin and seeing all the little lakes up here. I had always been interested in this country, so I started coming up here and I bought some land."

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ED MARSHALL'S GIFT FOR 100 YEARS AND MORE
- HEAL CREEK - A COMPROMISE PLAN THAT IS WORKING
- MONITORING COORDINATION
- HIKING TO PROTECTING THE NORTH FORK OF THE FLAMBEAU RIVER
- VOLUNTEER MONITOR TRAINING

MISSION:

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL) promotes conservation by private landowners of natural shorelands, woodlands, wetlands, and other natural resources as public benefits for present and future generations in Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron, Price and northern Langlade Counties.



The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

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Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area - *continued*

“A neighbor asked me to join him on a project,” Ed recalled. “Down the road from our homes, Vilas County owned 78 acres. It was a small parcel that was separate from most of the rest of the County Forest. They had a logger come in and do some logging on it, and then they put it up to sell by bids because they wanted to get rid of some of the smaller, isolated properties.”

“We bid on it and bought 78 acres for \$12,000,” he continued. “That started it. Then through various deals, we added to the property. For a while we also owned land north of Hwy. 70 along what is now called Koernet Creek. We had up to 300 acres at one time.”

“I was trying to buy out my partner, but some big operator moved in and he forgot about my deal,” lamented Ed. “We ended up selling all of the land north of Hwy. 70, and they have now divided it up into little lots. My partner then wanted to get some money for his son who was buying a resort, so I finally bought him out. I ended up with nearly 100 acres, including the beaver pond which must be about 30 acres. The beaver dam is better than 50 years old and it is huge.”

“They tell me that Koernet Creek used to be one of the finest natural brook trout streams in this area, but the beaver took care of the lower part of it,” he said. “Koernet Creek runs through my property, over that beaver dam, and down into Squaw Creek below Squaw Lake.”

“I have had this property for about 16 years all on my own now,” said Ed. “I am 80 years old, so I began wondering what is going to happen to it. I wasn’t interested enough in the money that I could get out of it to do all the work that would be necessary to develop it. It could be developed. You could break it up into little parcels like they did up on Koernet Creek with lots backing up to the beaver pond. I decided I would rather do something so I could ensure it would be there forever.”

“I didn’t know about you guys (NWLTL), but about six months ago John Bates (Naturalist and NWLT board member) mentioned that I ought to check out the land trust in Eagle River,” he related. “I’ve taken a lot of courses from him. He taught me a lot of stuff about the flora and fauna of the northwoods. I have a whole collection of his books.”

“I don’t want to see this piece of property developed,” stated Ed. “There are too few of them like that around any more. This is a pretty, nearly 100-acre spot with frontage on Highway 70. It borders on the Indian Reservation on one side and U.S. Forest Service land on the other side with that good size beaver pond.

A big birder, Ed is doing a block for the current Breeding Bird Atlas survey for the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. “They came out with an *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Wisconsin* book about 5-6 years ago,” said Ed. “The research was done on the book in the late 1990s. We started Atlas II last year and we are going to finish in 2019. I have accepted a nine-square mile block near Fence Lake. There is very little open water, it is heavy forest and a lot of wetlands.”

Ed suggested a great birding tip. “My hearing is shot, but I have found something called The SongFinder. I’ve got two of them and they are great. I went out on a hike with John Bates and he was talking about all of these birds he was hearing. I said ‘John, that is a chipmunk isn’t it?’ I didn’t realize I wasn’t hearing birds. Later I was on a hiking trip with Laura Erickson (*Speaking for the Birds*) and she told me about The SongFinder.”

The SongFinder is a digital bird song hearing aid aimed at bird enthusiasts who suffer from high frequency hearing loss and who are unable to hear high-pitched bird songs in their natural surroundings. Unlike conventional amplifying-type hearing aids, the Songfinder apparently works by lowering the frequency of high-pitched

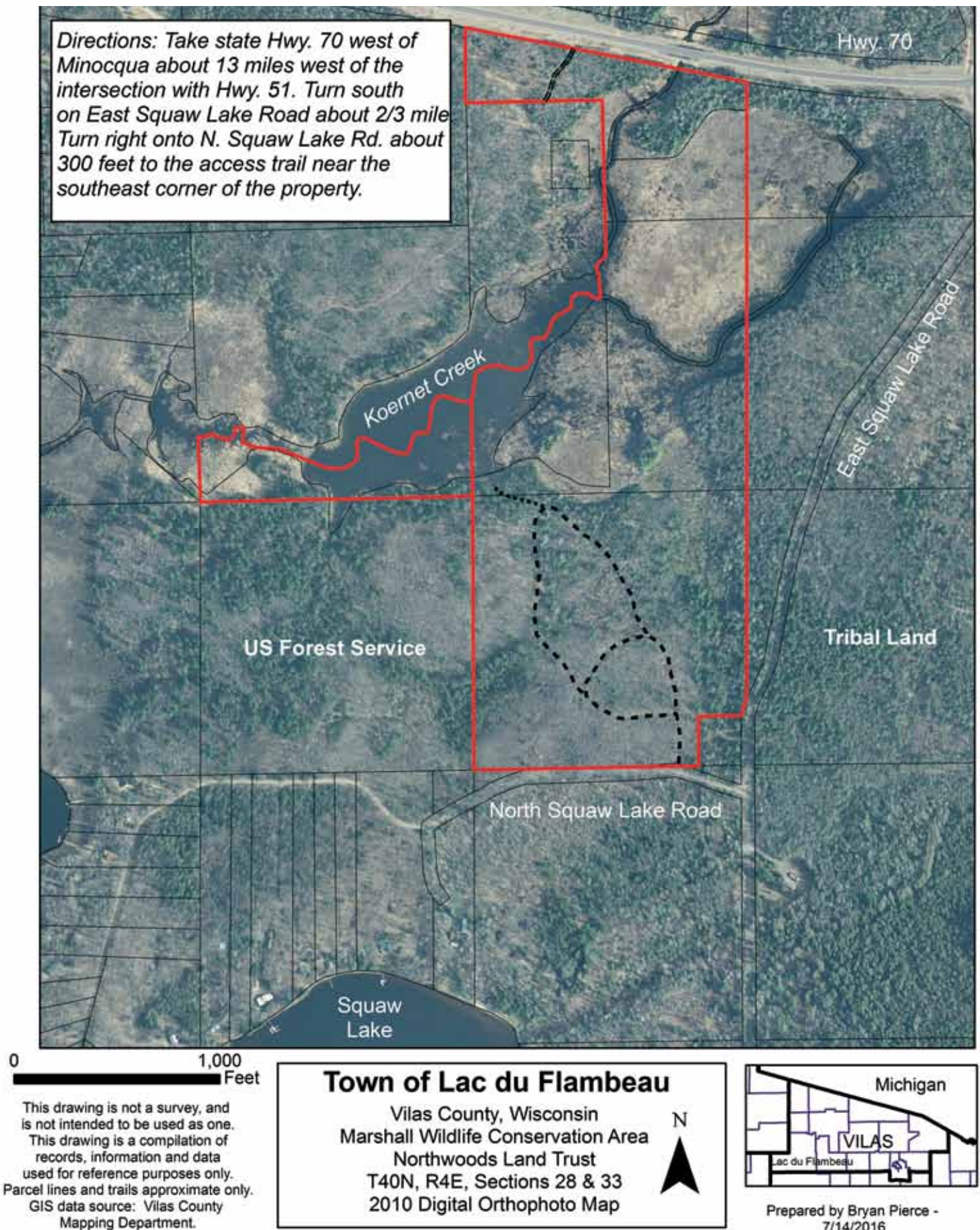


Ed Marshall shows off one of the super-canopy white pine trees remaining on the conservation area property.



The Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area in the town of Lac du Flambeau, Vilas County, is the Northwoods Land Trust’s newest outright donation of conservation land and includes a large, nearly 30-acre beaver pond.

Map of the new Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area



Heal Creek - A Compromise Plan that is Working!

It was a unique process with so many parties involved, but the compromise plan prepared for the Heal Creek property is meeting the needs and interests of all of the diverse groups involved. In early 2015, NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce was approached by Oneida County Supervisor Bob Mott to see if he could facilitate discussions around a 272-acre property west of Rhinelander that Oneida County was looking to sell. Already interest in the land was expressed by the City of Rhinelander, Northwood Golf Course, Town of Crescent, Hodag Sports Club and the Northwoods Nordic Ski Club. The sale was also a concern of neighboring private land owners.

Through a series of facilitated meetings, a compromise plan was negotiated among the parties. "It didn't take long to realize that the interests of all of the parties were compatible," said Pierce. The result was the City of Rhinelander acquiring 62.8 acres adjacent to the Northwood Golf Course as an expansion area, additional recreation land and as a way to buffer the golf course. The Hodag Sports Club purchased two of the tracts in order to protect their shooting range from future conflicts due to encroaching development - an 82.47-acre tract adjacent to the shooting range and a 127.2-acre tract.

Under the plan, the City granted an access easement to the Hodag Sports Club to provide permanent access to the 127-acre tract. The Hodag Sports Club also granted a perpetual conservation easement to the Northwoods Land Trust to ensure the 127-acre tract will remain undeveloped for conservation and public recreation purposes. The Hodag Sports Club conservation easement was completed in 2016.

A trails management agreement (TMA) was also negotiated to allow for continued use of the Northwoods Nordic public ski trail system and for expansion to other silent sports. In a second phase, the TMA and conservation plans are also being extended to 460 acres of adjacent private land.

Pierce recognized the following individuals who were key to negotiating the compromise plan, which was unanimously approved by the Oneida County Board: Joel Knutson (Town of Crescent & Northwoods Nordic Ski Club), Blaine Oborn (City of Rhinelander), Virgil Davis and Joe Priebe (Hodag Sports Club), Joe Andersen (Northwood Golf Course), and Dr. Lee Swank (private landowner).

"It didn't take long to realize that the interests of all of the parties were compatible."

- Bryan Pierce



Hodag Sports Club representatives Tom O'Rourke and Virgil Davis overlook a beaver dam on Heal Creek now protected with a conservation easement.

Sandy Lotto takes on Monitoring Coordination



Sandy Lotto shows off one of the eight new Garmin touch-screen GPS units acquired thanks to a recent donation.

Annual monitoring of every private conservation easement property, and annual inspections and management activities on every conservation property owned by the Northwoods Land Trust, are required in order for NWLT to maintain our national Land Trust Accreditation status. With over 80 properties needing to be monitored or inspected every year, that is a big job.

For the past 8 years, that coordination work with staff and our many volunteers has been handled by Conservation Specialist Trisha Moore. However, due to a family medical issue, Trisha won't be able to continue that coordination work. No - Trisha will not be leaving NWLT entirely, but she will only be working in a limited capacity so she can attend to her family needs at this time.

Fortunately, Sandy Lotto is willing to take on the extra work load. Sandy will now be NWLT's Outreach & Monitoring Coordinator, so landowners and volunteers can look forward to seeing a familiar face during this year's volunteer training and many site visits.

Thanks to a donor who prefers to remain anonymous, our conservation easement monitoring equipment packs also received a major upgrade. We recently purchased eight new Garmin Montana 680t GPS units with touch-screen technology to send out with the volunteers. If you are more comfortable with the older units though, don't worry. They will still be available to use. We will look forward to the training (see page 8) with the new units. 🌲

From Hiking to Protecting the North Fork of the Flambeau River



Alden Geisness saved a special part of the North Fork of the Flambeau River from being further split up and developed.

Alden Geisness' love of the northwoods came from growing up here. But his love for keeping places wild was enhanced by lots of backpacking trips in the mountains of the west.

Having grown up in Price County, Al knows just how special the North Fork of the Flambeau River truly is. Now, thanks to Al, another 52.82-acre property on the North Fork has been protected in perpetuity. Further, this new conservation easement is immediately adjacent to the 223-acre conservation easement granted in 2015 by Bill Lynch and Barbara Manger.

Al's property includes an estimated 2,130 feet of frontage. Contiguous with the extensive shoreland already protected previously by Bill and Barbara, the two conserved properties now protect over two miles of natural shoreline on the river and its backwaters west of Fifield, WI.

This section of the Flambeau River is a flowage. Water levels and flow are controlled by the Pixley dam upstream and the Crowley dam downstream. This area of the North Fork of the Flambeau River is also popular with anglers. It was listed in *Wisconsin Sportsman* magazine (June 2014) as one of the best areas in Wisconsin for river fishing for muskies. The main river channel, its backwaters and the extensive shoreland-wetlands all provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat.

"I grew up in Phillips, in a family with seven kids," said Al. "My parents were Alvin and Helen Geisness. They moved here in 1933. They were from Baldwin and Emerald, Wisconsin. Geisness is Norwegian, but my mother is German – her maiden name is Peters."

Al noted that the family farmed, and his dad did a lot of pulping as well as working for the town and doing other jobs. Al went to school in Phillips. After high school, he moved to the Milwaukee-Hartland area where he lived from 1960 to 2002. "I worked at a golf course for five years, then I went to work at AO Smith Corporation. I was a press operator stamping out steel parts for car frames and truck frames."

"I had a Hartland address, but lived in the city of Delafield," said Al. "I was on the opposite side of Nagawicka Lake from Delafield. The sewer went all the way around the lake, so I was part of the city."

"I retired, and my parents were both deceased, so I moved back onto the family property," he related. "I had a choice to get rid of one or the other properties, so I got rid of the one in Hartland."

The farm Al lives on north of Phillips is the same 430-acre farm he grew up on. His dad had milking cows and then beef cattle, but Al doesn't raise any livestock now. Four of Al's siblings live in southeast Wisconsin – West Bend, Hartford, Sussex and Watertown. "My brother is deceased and my oldest sister lives in Park Falls," he said.

While in southeast Wisconsin, Al got connected with people through a downhill ski club he joined in 1966. Some of the people he met (including NWLT members Greg and Paula Hillmann) invited him along on a backpacking trip.

At first Al wasn't particularly enthusiastic. "I initially said 'I've got land up north, I'm going up there all the time and I'm in the woods all the time, I don't need to be hiking way out in the mountains.' But then I thought, you shouldn't say no to anything without trying, so I said I'll try it. I started getting all my equipment for hiking and went – and I was hooked."

That first trip was a five-day backpacking trip into the Weminuche Wilderness Area in the San Juan National Forest in Colorado in the early 1970s. "We pulled up within 10 feet of the roaring river," he recalled. "We jumped out, put on our boots and entered the water."

Al's hiking boots were brand new and not broken in. "I had done a little hiking around to see how they fit, but they were so stiff they felt like a downhill ski boot." The soaking and then letting the boots dry while wearing them helped conform them to his feet though and he never got any blisters.

That was how it started for Al. "I hiked the Big Horns three different times. The first time I hiked it was with John Mack who originally got me started. Another trip was planned by Paula and Greg."



Over two miles of natural shorelines along this scenic and popular stretch of the North Fork of the Flambeau River have now been protected with the two adjacent conserved properties.

North Fork of the Flambeau River - *continued*

“We hiked three times in the Wind River Range and the Bitterroots twice,” continued Al. He also backpacked on Isle Royale National Park. “Some of the last hiking I did out west was the Sawtooth Mountains,” Al remembered. “That was fantastic. I loved the Sawtooths. I hiked that area twice.”

Al’s love of hiking led him to look for more land. “I always wanted to have river and lake property as an investment,” he said. “The values grew faster. I was already invested in the stock market, but I just wanted something to be able to walk on.”

Al related how he found the property. “I knew the paper company was selling the land because it was listed by a realtor in Park Falls. I started hiking all over that property trying to decide which chunk I wanted. I picked my parcel and tried to find other people to buy in. If I could have bought the next property to the north that would have stopped the developer because it had prime lots. I didn’t pick that one because five or six years before that a tornado went through and laid all the big pines down. It had just scrubby little popple coming up and I wasn’t impressed with that. No tornado had hit where my land is.”

A long, steep esker ridge and tall pines attracted Al to the property. “That nice big ridge right along the river is so high and I like the whistle of the wind through the white pines, it is a beautiful whistle. It is better than the Norway pines or Jack pines, they don’t have that sound. White pines are so smooth feeling too. The branches are just graceful and smooth. I have pretty nice shoreline too. Those were the main reasons for picking that property.”

“I wasn’t looking for a place to build, it was mainly to keep it away from developers,” said Al. “I had an easement road to get into my land and I put a gate on it right out by Highway 70.”

“About the third or fourth year, Taylor Investments came along and all of a sudden my gate was missing,” Al continued. “That is where I made my mistake - in signing off on my road easement.” The development company put in a town road and utility line. Eventually 28 small riverfront parcels were platted to the north and another 16 lots across a small bay to the south.

A few years later Bill Lynch and Barbara Manger purchased the 223 acres adjacent to Al’s property on the south. “Bill always asked me if I was ever going to sell my land, because he would be interested in buying it,” said Al. “I asked Bill if he was ever interested in developing his land, because I was not interested in developing mine. I had heard about conservation easements on shows on Public Radio and TV, and Bill said he would look into it, so he did. I learned later that his son was also involved in that (with the Conservation Fund in Wyoming).”



Bill arranged a meeting with NWLT Executive Director Bryan Pierce and consultant Tim Jacobson to walk the properties with Al. Bill and Barbara closed on their project in December of 2015. As an attorney, Bill also helped Al review the easement language.

Reserved rights in Al’s conservation easement include the right to build a limited size residence within a one-acre building zone. “I measured all of my buildings on the farm and I could fit all of them and half of my garden in that zone, so I figured that was enough.”

“I just didn’t want to see it developed,” continued Al. “It irritated the heck out of me when Taylor Investments told me the paper company had no business selling me that chunk of land. That is what they said right to my face.”

“All my life I’ve been against development,” stated Al. “When they start subdividing and putting in lots, I don’t care for that.”

“I would sooner have had it (the conservation easement) done on the day of my death so I have full control of it yet,” Al concluded. “I don’t like to give up control of any part of it. But I’m glad that it can never be developed and will be protected.”

Special Thanks

The Northwoods Land Trust would like to extend our sincere thanks to Sue and Don Kratsch for the donation of fifteen children’s nature books for the Kid’s Corner section of our visitor center. This area is filled with “Please DO Touch” objects for kids to enjoy. Don and Sue have granted two conservation easements to NWLT to protect their properties.

The North Fork of the Flambeau River was listed as one of the top river muskie fishing areas in Wisconsin.

Marshall Wildlife Conservation Area - *continued*

songs into a range where the birder has normal or near-normal hearing. "I got on the computer and bought one. It changed everything. I can hear the little birds now," claimed Ed.

He also shared some of the wildlife he has observed on the property. "Wherever you go up here you are going to hear ovenbirds, but try to see one. They make a little nest on the ground that looks like an oven. You hear those all the time." He has also noted chestnut-sided warblers, black-throated green warblers and red-eyed vireos.

"Trumpeter swans have tried to nest on the beaver pond, but I've never seen any cygnets," he stated. "They are there every spring, but in the middle of the summer they disappear."

"We've got a variety of wildlife," commented Ed. "Red squirrels are all over. I've seen coyotes and we've had wolves around the property. Deer are really down, but that is probably healthier for the forest. There were too many."

Pierce noted that the property will continue to be enrolled in the state's Managed Forest Law program and managed for sustainable forest products under the land trust's ownership. "This new wildlife area is open to the public for wildlife watching, hiking, ungroomed cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, fishing and trapping."

"There is a three-quarter mile looping trail that includes a spur overlooking a large beaver pond," said Pierce. "Besides swans, that pond has been the site of nesting wood ducks and other waterfowl, and is a good place to see otters and many other species of wildlife."

He indicated that this summer the land trust will be restoring a wildlife observation pier overlooking the beaver pond.

"This is almost going to be like I still own it, except you will be paying the taxes," claimed Ed. "I can still go in and hike it and watch for wildlife at the beaver pond. I haven't hunted in years, but if I change my mind I can still do that too. I just want the property to stay like it is for 100 years."

Ed also made a monetary contribution to NWLT's dedicated land stewardship fund to help ensure the property will be managed and legally defended for those 100 years and more. Thanks Ed!



A small pier and observation platform will be repaired by NWLT this summer to enhance the birding opportunities on the beaver pond.



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Leave a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

- ☐ Individual\$25
- ☐ Family.....\$35
- ☐ Supporter\$50
- ☐ Founder.....\$100
- ☐ Conservator\$250
- ☐ Steward.....\$500
- ☐ Land Legacy\$1000
- ☐ My additional contribution of
\$_____ is also enclosed.

INTERESTS

- ☐ I have property I may wish to conserve, please send me the free landowner's guide.
- ☐ I am interested in becoming a volunteer to assist the NWLT.
- ☐ I am interested in contributing to NWLT in my will.

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*Please remember the Northwoods Land Trust
in your annual and planned giving.
Give a gift that will last forever!*

Leaving a Lasting Legacy for the Northwoods

Volunteer Monitor training set for May 4th near Lake Tomahawk

The NWLT 2017 Conservation Easement Monitor Training session will take place on Thursday, May 4 at 2:00 pm on a privately-owned conservation easement property near Lake Tomahawk. Owned by Carol Ritter and Michael Eaton, this 82-acre tract protects 2,905 feet of shoreline on three different lakes, including an un-named bog lake and a WDNR classified "wild lake."

Their land is one of 84 different properties that NWLT either owns or holds a conservation easement on that must be monitored on an annual basis. The annual visits help ensure that regular contact is kept with landowners and that the conservation agreements are being upheld.

We invite and welcome any new volunteers to the training who are interested in visiting these sites. Volunteer monitors have the unique opportunity to explore private lands that generally are not open to others. New to this year's training will be the addition of several new GPS units with touchscreens. Forest ecology will also be highlighted.

An alternate training date in case of inclement weather is Tuesday, May 9 at the same time and place. If you are interested in participating in the volunteer monitor training, please contact Outreach & Monitoring Coordinator Sandy Lotto at (715) 479-2490.



The 2016 volunteer monitor training session conducted by Trisha Moore was hosted by Bob Martini at his conservation easement property by the Deerskin River.

Directions to the Eaton/Ritter property:

From Lake Tomahawk, go about 4.5 miles south on Hwy. 47, turn south on Fox Road and follow for one mile. Turn west (right) on Fawn Lake Road about 0.75 mile, then turn south (left) on Beaver Lake Road about 1.75 mile. Turn west (right) onto Pike Road about 0.75 mile to Fire #7861.

