



# PRAIRIE WOODS

## Warbler



A publication of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center in cooperation with Prairie County Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council

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ISSUE 3

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## WELCOME TO THE WEST ADDITION AND TREE HOUSE!

### ADDITIONS TO PRAIRIE WOODS' EDUCATION BUILDING DEDICATED

On the evening of October 16, 2007, we dedicated the Earl B. Olson Addition, the Linder Tree House, the Ruth & Helen Peterson Exhibit Hall and the Strand Rooms (East and West). The naming of a room or building honors those who have made exemplary contributions to the work of Prairie Woods and reminds us all that things at Prairie Woods don't just happen, but they happen because real people cared enough to make real investments of resources and time.



The evening program brought Prairie Woods trustees, staff, and many donors together to share stories about why they became involved in supporting the growth and development of Prairie Woods. It was indeed heartwarming to be in a room full of people who have made a point to share their resources and their good names to get things done at Prairie Woods. Please take a moment to look through the list of contributors and remember to thank them for investing in the future.

We regret that friends of Prairie Woods, Earl B. Olson, Wilt Croonquist, and Ruth & Helen Peterson passed away before we completed these new additions. Each of these people was instrumental in the accomplishment of a goal that came to fruition after their life had ended. We are left in awe by their contributions and inspired to rise to their challenge to make Prairie Woods a great resource for generations to come.

See the complete contributor list on page 3.

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Above: Students use the West Addition and Strand Rooms for the Youth Energy Summit. Above left: The Tree House offers a unique vantage.

## Upcoming Events at Prairie Woods

WINTER FAMILY FUN DAY ..... SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1 PM TO 5 PM  
EARTH DAY & YES AWARDS CEREMONY ..... SATURDAY, APRIL 19  
YOUR GROUP'S FIELD TRIP OR SPECIAL EVENT ... CALL US TO SCHEDULE!

LOOKING FOR WINTER & SPRING COMMUNITY PROGRAMS? SEE PAGE 9.



## Notes from the Executive Director

by Dave Pederson, Executive Director

The news is filling up with stories about global warming, food and energy insecurity, kids out of touch with nature, declining water quality, loss of wildlife habitat and seemingly endless conflict between people of various religions, cultures and political beliefs. It would be easy to become pessimistic if I weren't able to look around and see people working locally on all of these issues. In this edition of the *Warbler* you will learn how Prairie Woods is working daily to address these challenges by developing programs, partnerships and facilities that help people learn to live well with self, others and the environment.



In the following pages you will learn about how 11 communities are participating in the Youth Energy Summit and a year long co-

operation made possible through a partnership between Prairie Woods, Southwest Initiative Foundation and many others. Check out an update on Project Eco-Voyageur which is getting kids out on the water in our 34-foot voyageur canoe through an innovative project funded by Northern Environmental Support Trust. Find out about our popular challenge course programs that once again provided record numbers of participants with community-building and personal development experiences. Other stories include updates on our 2010 goal of 100% renewable energy, the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Special Hunt, kids learning about diversity and heritage through our Time Traveler programs, the dedication of our new building additions and growing numbers of people involved in our youth sporting programs.

Environmental and social challenges in the world today are daunting, and it would be easy to become complacent or fatalistic, but we don't have time to waste on negative thoughts. There has never been a more important time for all of us to be working to make a difference. Please take time to read the updates in the following pages and then recommit to helping Prairie Woods promote an individual and shared commitment to the responsible use, management and preservation of our natural resources.

Thanks, *Dave*



### Save the Date!

## 2008 Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 19, 2008

- ◆ Solar technology
  - ◆ Landscaping and planning for habitat
- ◆ Energy efficiency
  - ◆ Green building
  - ◆ Wind power
    - ◆ Clean water lifestyles

Plus, be inspired and amazed...

Award ceremony and final presentations of Youth Energy Summit teams

Free! All are welcome.



CLASS REUNION?  
FAMILY GATHERING?  
WEDDING RECEPTION?  
OTHER SPECIAL EVENT?



*Prairie Woods:*  
*A Natural Choice*

Proceeds from facility rentals help support youth programs at PWELC.

## 5TH ANNUAL

# Golden Triggers

The Fifth Annual Golden Triggers Event at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center was held on Thursday, September 27, 2007. Thanks to Bill Johnson, Jim Tetzloff, Brad Michelson and Ryan Block for organizing this year's Golden Trigger event. Thirty-two participants helped raise over \$4000 to support youth sporting programs at Prairie Woods. A lot of people are talking about the need to get kids connected to the outdoors. Thanks, Golden Triggers, for doing something about it!

### Thank you, Golden Triggers Contributors

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dan Ahlquist              | Bill & DeeDee Johnson     |
| Mr. & Mrs. Tom DeBoer Sr. | Mr. & Mrs. Dean Lindquist |
| Lee Duinick               | John & Mary Lindstrom     |
| Norm Duinick              | Steve Martinka            |
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| Phil Iverslie             |                           |

### 2007 PWELC Building Project Contributors

(listed alphabetically)

- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Affiliated Community Medical Centers | Jim & Colleen Michels          |
| Wilt & Betty Croonquist              | Doug Mossberg                  |
| Jeff & Sue Danielson                 | Dennis & Ruthanne Neeser       |
| Engan Associates                     | Dave Pederson & Ruth Fairchild |
| Ron Erpelding                        | Eleanore Pederson              |
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| Jennie-O Turkey Store                | Joel Schmidt & Amanda Raetzman |
| Bill & DeeDee Johnson                | Sentence to Serve              |
| Bob & Patricia Kaiser                | Denise Smith                   |
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| Marcia Kleven                        | James & Marilyn Tiede          |
| Lake Region Bank                     | C. & M. Vollan                 |
| Steve Linder Family                  | Paul & Sandra Vollan           |
| H. Willard Linder                    | Paula Vollan                   |
| Steve & Becky Martinka               |                                |

## Volunteer Opportunities

*Share special talents and interests at PWELC!*

- ◆ Help to design and build the first student cabins
- ◆ Help to design and construct displays for the exhibit hall.
- ◆ Recruit new members
- ◆ Become a member of the Site Committee, Program Advisory Board, or Promotions & Fundraising Committee
- ◆ Join the prairie restoration and prairie burn crew
- ◆ Volunteer to host in the Trailhead during ski season
- ◆ Assist with cutting and splitting wood

## Giving Opportunities

- ◆ Electric golf cart
- ◆ Support American Indian History of Corn exhibit
- ◆ 25-40 hp tractor- diesel preferred
- ◆ Flatbed trailer in good condition
- ◆ 250-500 gallon tank for storing bio-diesel
- ◆ Interactive trails map for phenology reports, \$450
- ◆ Student sponsorships or scholarships, \$1 to \$20 per student.
- ◆ Gifts to the Sustainability Endowment, any amount.

*At Year-end, Please Consider Prairie Woods*

IN YOUR ANNUAL CHARITABLE GIVING, AND IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING.



## NICE THINGS DONE FOR PRAIRIE WOODS. . . *by people like you*

- ♦ John and Mary Lindstrom donated artwork, waterfowl mounts and outdoor gear
- ♦ The family of Herman Mankell donated an antique duck call made by Oscar Quam.
- ♦ Dave Meutzel, Ryan Newville, Mike Gjerde, Mark Mertens, Mike Anderson, Joey Wangen, Larry Kleinhuizen and others put together another special deer hunt.
- ♦ Little Crow Area Snowmobile Club donated a TrakTruk for grooming ski trails.
- ♦ Luke and Allison Geiger, Prairie Woods Trustees, arranged for Michael Monroe to perform at the Youth Energy Summit kickoff event.
- ♦ Pat's Signs and Graphics donated signage for the new building additions.
- ♦ Kandiyohi Power Co-op hosted a turbine tailgate party and donated signage for the shed at the base of the wind turbine.
- ♦ Jeff Bredberg donated 2 sets of cross country ski gear.
- ♦ West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership is funding two interns from the U of M-Morris for the Youth Energy Summit.
- ♦ The Center for Small Towns at the U of M-Morris is providing office space for our YES! interns.
- ♦ The West Central Clean Energy Resource Team is contributing \$6000 to help fund Youth Energy Summit team projects, in 11 communities.
- ♦ Lake Region Bank contributed \$500 to sponsor awards for the YES! Coopetition.
- ♦ Otter Tail Power Company also contributed \$500 toward YES!
- ♦ Peterson Bus Service of New London continued to offer a great deal on bus transportation for the PWELC Open House in September.



## 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SPECIAL HUNT ANOTHER BIG SUCCESS!

A tradition deepened as the annual special deer hunt marked its seventh year. Thanks to Dave Muetzel, Mark Mertens, Ryan Newville, Mike Gjerde, Mike Anderson, Maria Fischer, Larry Kleinhuizen, Mike Olson, Nathan Defoe, Joey Wangen and a host of other volunteers and contributors, seven hunters participated in this year's accessible deer hunt. Hunt coordinators Dave Muetzel and Mark Mertens worked throughout the year preparing blinds, building equipment and fundraising in order to



make the two-day hunt a quality experience. This year the hunt was dedicated to Randy Fischer, a regular participant who died in a car accident last summer.

All hunters and guests reported seeing multiple deer, and one stand reported seeing 18 deer in the first three hours! Six hunters successfully harvested deer, and judging from lunch conversations in the Barn, everyone had a memorable hunt.

Hunters (shown above) were Mark Mertens, Aaron Cross, Jeremy Carlson, Fred Paul, Chuck Roethemeier, Al Hoffman, and Dick Theuringer. If you know of someone who would like to participate in or volunteer to help with the special hunt next year please notify the Prairie Woods office at 354-5894.

The blinds constructed for the hunt are available for wildlife viewing throughout the year. Take advantage of the blinds on your next hike at Prairie Woods.

*Special thanks to the Lakes Area Review for the photo, by Dori Moudry.*

*Enjoy a Unique Setting  
For your Event. . .*

Westby Observatory, Earl B. Olson Addition,  
Linder Tree House, Barn, or Yurt.

Consider adding exciting options: guided naturalist walks,  
Big Canoe, Climbing Wall, Sporting Clays, & more!





## Youth Energy Summit: Put Energy into Our Future

### YES! WOW!

YES! stands for Youth Energy Summit. If we can get the acronym right, we may need to change the name to WOW!

YES! teams are working away in eleven communities trying to reduce our carbon footprint, save money through energy conservation and



efficiency and learning about career options in the emerging renewable energy economy.

We recently had the pleasure of listening to the Milan YES! team present their work at the annual West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership meeting. If you have any doubts, as most

generations do, about the next generation's ability to care for the world, the Milan YES! team gives more than enough reason for hope. The Milan YES! team is working on an LED



Christmas lighting display to encourage people in their community to conserve this holiday season, planning ways to convert the entire town over to compact fluorescent light bulbs and working with their mayor to get a wind turbine installed.



We are hearing other inspiring stories from YES! Teams around the region as well. Keep your eyes open for future updates on all the teams' efforts.

### MICHAEL MONROE PERFORMS FOR YOUTH ENERGY SUMMIT KICK-OFF

With infectious rhythms and lyrics with a message, musician Michael Monroe brought home the message of the Youth Energy Summit to the 88 youth participants and member of the public on the evening of September 20. Having set up his own solar-powered music studio at his Grand Marais, Minnesota, home, Monroe spoke to the concerns and hopes at the heart of the YES! program.

In addition, J. Drake Hamilton of Fresh Energy spoke to the crowd, first on the challenges presented by climate change; then on opportunities for green energy in our region. These dramatic opportunities were brought further into focus by presentations from young people who had participated in CURE's (Clean Up the River Environment) Appreciative Inquiry project. Each speaker highlighted an "energy pioneer" in west-central Minnesota.



YES! participants themselves also took the stage. As part of their teambuilding experience at Prairie Woods during the Summit, each team had come up with a slogan that encapsulated their team identity and their hopes for a clean energy future.

To learn about the outcomes of the YES! team efforts in their home communities, plan to be at the 2008 Earth Day Celebration to see the YES! Award Ceremony and final presentations.



Cheryl Glaeser of the Southwest Initiative Foundation was instrumental in planning the evening. Special thanks to Allison and Luke Geiger, of AliLu Studios and Right on Canvas, for arranging Monroe's performance.

**WOW! YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YES!**

**BRING THE BENEFITS OF YES! TO YOUR YOUTH AND YOUR TOWN. CALL 320-354-5894.**



## Special Guest Column

### TRAIN OF THOUGHT

By Marie Pederson

Do you believe in global warming? I do, but I'd never really seen its effects first hand until this summer. My family and I took a 1000 mile train trip from Winnipeg, Canada, north to Churchill, Manitoba, on Hudson Bay. While we were on our trip I learned many things I didn't expect to learn. We were expecting to be on the train for about 35 hours. I thought that it was a long time but I decided it would be worth it to see the polar bears and beluga whales that reside there, I was really excited.

It ended up taking us 48 hours on the train to get there. I was exhausted! The reason it took so long was that we could only go 10 mph for several hundred miles over tracks laid on permafrost across the tundra. We couldn't go any faster because it wasn't safe. Global warming has caused the permafrost in the tundra to start melting. This makes the tracks a little wobbly.



I also learned more about how global warming is affecting the polar bears. They ride down past Churchill on the ice flows and then they get off and are land-bound for the summer. During this period they raise their young

and the moms don't eat much. Once the ice forms their young are old enough to go with them and hunt seals. Imagine that you haven't eaten much all summer. Would you be hungry? I know I would. I get hungry after a couple of hours. Now imagine that you have to wait even longer because there isn't any ice to get to the seals on. This is what is happening to the bears. The ice is forming a month later because of global warming and putting more stress on the bears. Some bears are drowning because they are having to swim much farther to get to the ice. As you can see global warming is real and we need to do something about it or we will lose things in nature that can never be replaced.

Every small thing we do can help. One simple way is to turn off the lights when you leave a room. We can all drive our cars less. Cars emit carbon which is helping to warm the atmosphere. Next time you're going to run to the store for something you forgot, think about if you really need it. These are a few of my thoughts from the train trip back from Hudson Bay.

*Marie Pederson is a 9th grade student at New London-Spicer High School.*

## Time Travel Update

by Teri Wermerskirchen

The PWELC Time Travel Program offers students the opportunity to 'feel' what it was like to live in this place in the 1880s. For a recent group of participants, the experience was even more poignant.

A group of English Language Learners from Willmar Senior High reenacted a day in the real life of homesteader Anders Danielson. For these students, the scenario of immigrants who have left their homes for a new life in a new land was very real.



These students from Honduras, Somalia, Mexico, and other countries could

commiserate with the issues that faced many of our forefathers: a new language, unfamiliar culture and adjusting to a new way of life. For students who are just learning English, learning by doing—making dinner, cutting wood with a two-handed saw, doing chores, learning crafts, watching how to make knives or load a muzzle-loading gun—was a great way to learn about American History. For the PWELC staff as well, hearing the student's stories that day made the program all the more unique and special.

The Time Travel Program continues to depend on donations for living history props. If you have any items that you think will make the experience more real for the students, we will put them to good use. Also, some of the costumes are showing their wear. If you would be willing to help with some mending or sewing of costumes we would love to hear from you. Finally, the program is a wonderful opportunity to share stories or skills with the students. If you think you may be able to help please call 354-5894.



*Immersed in Learning,  
Morning, Noon, and Night. . .*

**ASK ABOUT MULTI-DAY, OVERNIGHT  
PROGRAMS FOR GROUPS OF ALL SIZES.**



## Challenge Course

by Deb Anderson

*"Picture yourself here. . ."*



*"Individual commitment to a group effort--that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work."*

*Vince Lombardi*

## Think Snow!

Winter is a *great* time to bring your group to Prairie Woods.

- ◆ Ski rental
- ◆ Snowshoe rental
- ◆ Groomed cross-country ski trails
- ◆ Beautiful meeting and retreat facilities,
- ◆ Excellent programs for schools and organized groups.

Check out our winter program offerings at  
[www.prairiewoodselc.org](http://www.prairiewoodselc.org)

## Learning the Essentials

### WATER EDUCATION WITH PWELC'S EcoVOYAGEUR

Water is a lifeline that connects us all. It is essential to life—human and wild. Water shapes landscape and society.



Even though 71% of the Earth's surface is covered by water, less than 1% of the planet's water is fresh, fluid water; more than 99% is salt water in oceans or frozen in icecaps and glaciers. Learning to care

for this limited supply of water is essential.

PWELC's EcoVoyageur Program entered its second year in the fall of 2007. With the help of a 34-foot, 16-passenger canoe, students explore a lake or river in their own neighborhood. EcoVoyageur introduces students to the central role that water plays in our environment, how and why we depend on it, and how our water use can be more sustainable. With the help of local water resources personnel, students learn how native plants, intact wetlands, and buffer strips improve water quality. They investigate the creatures living in the water, and test the water for quality. They also learn how most of our water is used.

So if a student near you comes home to report that 70% of the **whole world's** water use is dedicated to agriculture, take the time to listen and learn. How can we be good stewards of the essential resource? Begin by buying your food from local producers. Get acquainted with the watershed you live in, and ask how you can help.

For information about providing an EcoVoyageur experience for a student group, call 320-354-5894.

EcoVoyageur is made possible by Northern Environmental Support Trust, Marjorie and the late Charles Dickman, and Willmar Area Community Foundation. Local sponsoring organizations can help schools fund their EcoVoyage.



*Thanks to Jim Williams, Wayzata, for the painted turtle photo.*





## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED: 354-5894

### Partners in Climb (3 sessions)

It's all about teamwork. Find a friend and head out to Prairie Woods ELC. This program will be using the climbing wall and games to explore teamwork and what it takes to be a good friend.

- ◆ Thursdays, January 17, 24, 31
- ◆ 3:30-5:00 pm
- ◆ Grades 3-7
- ◆ \$30 per person (\$27 PW member price)

### Winter Adventure Club (4 sessions)

Get outside and explore this winter! Skiing, snowshoeing, nature activities, and games will be led by Prairie Woods staff. Have an adventure with new friends and try new things you always thought would be fun.

- ◆ Tuesdays, January 22, January 29, February 5, and February 12
- ◆ 3:45 pm to 5:30 pm
- ◆ \$40 per student (\$35 PW member price)
- ◆ Grades 3 through 6.

### Nature Watercolor and Drawing (4 sessions)

Join the adventure of seeing with the artist's eye. Individual and group instruction using various techniques and art exercises for learning to shift into the creative mode of thinking. Outdoor, nature-based locations will stimulate creativity.

- ◆ Mondays, March 3, 10, and 17; last date TBD
- ◆ 3:45 pm to 5:30 pm
- ◆ \$50 per student (\$45 PW member price)
- ◆ Grades 3 through 8



### Climbing Club (4 sessions)

This is a favorite. Join the climbing club and get to climb walls, learn to belay, learn about safety and equipment used for rock climbing. This is a great time!

- ◆ Tuesdays, March 18, 25, April 1, and 8
- ◆ 3:30-5:00 pm
- ◆ Grades 2-6
- ◆ \$35 per person (\$30 PW member price)

### Base Camp (4 sessions)

This is where it all begins. At base camp we will experience and train on Prairie Woods' exciting challenge course. As we have a great time challenging ourselves on the challenge course we train to help others and receive a Junior Facilitators certificate.

- ◆ Thursdays, April 3, 10, 17, and 24
- ◆ 3:30-5:00 pm
- ◆ Grades 5-9
- ◆ \$40 per person (\$35 PW member price)

### Spring Adventure Club (4 sessions)

Now that spring is here, let's get out and enjoy it! Canoe, rock climb, play new outdoor games, and do other nature activities, all led by Prairie Woods staff.

- ◆ Tuesdays, April 8, 15, 22, and 29, 2008
- ◆ 3:45 pm to 5:30 pm
- ◆ \$40 per student (\$35 PW member price)
- ◆ Grades 3 through 6



### Family Climb

I'm bored! The kids are tired of being inside. Come share some quality family time and get some exercise after the holiday feasts. Prairie Woods' climbing wall is open and waiting for your family to come and have some fun.

- ◆ Thursday, January 31
- ◆ 6:00-9:00 pm
- ◆ All ages
- ◆ \$10 per climber

### Survivor-Prairie Woods

The tribe has spoken. We want you here to challenge yourself at Prairie Woods. See if you can survive the challenge course and be a Prairie Woods survivor.

- ◆ Tuesday, April 29
- ◆ 3:30-5:30 pm
- ◆ 3-6 grade
- ◆ \$12 per person (\$10 PW member price)

### Full Moon Canoeing

Enjoy a spring evening with a relaxing paddle on peaceful water. Equipment and basic instruction provided. Children must be at least 7, and accompanied by an adult.

- ◆ Monday, May 19
- ◆ 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
- ◆ \$6 per person or \$10 per pair
- ◆ All ages 7+ welcome.



**PRAIRIE WOODS  
ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER**

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Spicer MN 56288  
1-320-354-5894  
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**PRAIRIE WOODS** Warbler  
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pwelc@co.kandiyohi.mn.us Spicer, Minnesota

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**WHY BE A MEMBER?**

- ◆ Know you are supporting programs you believe in at an organization that is important to your community.
- ◆ Receive information and invitations to special events at PrairieWoods.
- ◆ Benefit from discounts on equipment rentals and programs.
- ◆ Continue to receive the *Warbler* newsletter three times a year.

*Thank you for  
your support.*

*Join Us!*

**PRAIRIE WOODS ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER**  
*Annual Membership for 2008*

- New Member
- Renewing Member

**SUPPORTER'S MEMBERSHIP**

- Individual Membership ..... \$25.00
- Family Membership ..... \$40.00
- Organization/Business Membership ... Please call for rates.
- I / we are interested in volunteering at Prairie Woods.

**BENEFACTOR'S MEMBERSHIP**

- \$100 to \$499
- \$500 to \$999
- \$1000

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose payment to Prairie Woods ELC, and send to:

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center  
12718 10th Street NE  
Spicer, Minnesota 56288

Questions or comments? Please call us at 320-354-5894 or e-mail us at pwelc@co.kandiyohi.mn.us