

eNEWSLETTER



An informational e-newsletter for the friends of the Douglas County Wildlife Management Area

September 2003

What's in a name?

By Fred Strand, Department of Natural Resources

Is it the Bird Sanctuary, the grouse area, or the Douglas County Wildlife Area?

Most people know it by or call it the Bird Sanctuary. So what is the origin and history of the various names for the area?

I found some of the answers to these questions in old files and memos in my office. Other answers and history awaits further investigation.

I've wondered: What did the use of the word 'Sanctuary' in the name mean? An area set aside for or dedicated to birds and their habitat? Or an area where birds were protected...where hunting was not allowed? In 1935 Douglas County dedicated the 'Bird Sanctuary' and Club House. In 1948 the Wisconsin Conservation Commission ordered closing of the leased lands and surrounding

area (5440 acres) to all hunting and trapping except for deer hunting. This closure was apparently lifted in about 1954. Hence, use of the word Sanctuary appears to historically refer primarily to an area dedicated to birds and management of habitat for birds.

In a 1953 memo A. E. Smith, who was a game manager for the Wisconsin Conservation Department, gave his recommendation for a name of the area. Names that Mr. Smith considered were: St. Croix Conservation Area, Douglas County Bird Sanctuary, Douglas County Conservation Area, and Douglas County Grouse Area. Mr. Smith states that "it has been known as the Douglas County Bird Sanctuary or the Douglas County Grouse Area for so long that the use of Douglas County with the name has been accepted."

Smith recommended the name Douglas County Conservation Area. However several other memos during this time period refer to it as the Douglas County Grouse Area.

In a 1970 memo and in the 1985 Master Plan for the property the name is Douglas County Wildlife Area. In 2003 in negotiating a new land lease with Douglas County the Department of Natural Resources calls it the Douglas County Wildlife Management Area.

Whatever you know it by or choose to call it, it is truly a special place for wildlife and for humans.

Douglas County Rejects Bird Sanctuary Scramble Area Proposal

By Al Cambronne

On September 18, the Douglas County Board of Supervisors unanimously rejected a proposal to build an OHV scramble area in the Douglas County Wildlife Management Area. The state-managed wildlife management area, known to locals as simply "the bird sanctuary," includes about 3,000 acres that the state leases from Douglas County; that lease expired in August.

Rather than renewing the lease for the entire parcel, motorized recreation proponents had asked that 320 acres of it be converted to a scramble area for ATVs, dirt bikes, four-wheel drive trucks, and snowmobiles. The proposed scramble area would have been totally within the sanctuary's current boundaries. It would have also been adjacent to the Douglas County Ski Trail, a short distance from the North Country Hiking Trail, and just over a quarter mile from a marshy backwater of the Saint Croix River. The site would have included a drag strip, two loop trails, and a mud bog.

Once area residents learned of the scheme, however, they began making their voices heard. Most felt this sort of facility didn't belong anywhere in or near a bird sanctuary; they were also concerned that illegal ATV use had



already been causing serious damage in the sanctuary.

During the past few months, the County has received petitions with over eight hundred signatures from local voters who strongly opposed the proposal. The county and state have also received thousands of letters, e-mails, and phone calls from concerned citizens.

On September 18 it became official; Douglas County and the Wisconsin DNR renewed the lease for the entire acreage, without setting aside a single acre of the sanctuary for other purposes. What's more, the County Board unanimously approved an additional resolution intended to clear the air and send a strong message about its intentions. The resolution read as follows:

Subject: Wildlife Management Area Lands Not Appropriate Site for ATV Park

WHEREAS, during negotiation of the Douglas County Wildlife Management Area Lease with the State Department of Natural Resources, it was requested that a portion of the land included in the lease be withheld for purposes of an ATV park, and

WHEREAS, the committee established to negotiate terms of the lease listened to proponents of locating an ATV park in the wildlife management area, as well as opponents of locating an ATV park in this location, and

WHEREAS, the negotiating committee determined that use of land within the



Wildlife Management Area for an ATV park was not appropriate and presented this recommendation to the Land and Development Committee.

Today, the Bird Sanctuary needs friends

Friends are needed to protect it against new threats and new dangers. In 2003, when the lease between the county and the state was renewed for another 25 years, it became apparent that only a strong voice of advocacy could ensure the continued preservation of this unique resource.

In the decades to come, on the other hand, more and more visitors to this corner of Wisconsin will want to enjoy the peace and solitude of the Bird Sanctuary. But with education, outreach, and advocacy, **Friends of the Bird Sanctuary** will be there to help ensure that we don't "love it to death."

And when the Bird Sanctuary lease is renewed again in 2028, **Friends of the Bird Sanctuary** will be there.

Your support is crucial

The Friends of the Bird Sanctuary is a non-profit conservation organization that has been formed to help protect and preserve the Douglas County Wildlife Management Area. Our mission is to connect people to the sanctuary, to

United States Chicken Champion???

Believe it or not... Back in 1937, the Sanctuary hosted the first United States Chicken Champion dog trial. The term "chicken" referred to prairie chickens, which are no longer present in the area.

increase community involvement and support, and to provide stewardship for this priceless resource. This requires fundraising, education, outreach, and just plain hard work.

Help spread the word. Your gifts of time and talents is crucial. The Bird Sanctuary is a legacy worth preserving for future generations. When you support the **Friends of the Bird Sanctuary**, you'll know you're doing something concrete to help preserve an irreplaceable part of Wisconsin's living landscape.



Help support Friends of the Bird Sanctuary. Complete and mail this form today.

YES, I would like to help.

Mail this form along with your annual dues to:
Friends of the Bird Sanctuary, P.O. Box 116, Gordon, WI 54838

- \$15 Individual \$25 Family \$50 Sustaining \$100 Patron
- Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Telephone _____

e-mail _____

Privacy: We will not share your name, address, phone number, or e-mail address with anyone.

Volunteer Interest (use a separate sheet of paper if needed):



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