



Friends of Trempealeau Refuge

Friends Focus...

Fun Facts About our Local Wildlife

Save The Date!

Thursday, January 23rd – Friends of Trempealeau Refuge Annual Meeting

Friends members are invited to attend the annual meeting on Thursday, January 23rd. The event will be held at the Refuge's Outdoor Wonders Learning



Center. Join us for a social hour from 6:00-7:00pm with complimentary appetizers, desserts, coffee and beverages. The program entitled "Colors of the Refuge" will begin at 7:00pm. Bruce Bartels, a Friends member and avid photographer will share his amazing photos featuring birds, plants, and other creatures of the Upper Mississippi Refuge in Brice Prairie and the Trempealeau Wildlife Refuge. In case of inclement weather, please check the Friends website for scheduling changes.

www.friendsoftrempealeaurefuge.org



By Scott Lee

Our whitetail deer have a lot of incredible adaptations. One myth about deer needs to be straightened out, however. Most of us are going to look at the size of a deer's track and assume "the bigger the track, the bigger the deer". This is not necessarily true. The track of a small deer in the mud or in melting snow is going to appear to be bigger than that of a large deer on hard ground or "cold" snow.

An adaptation that deer have while walking is to bring their back foot up to where their front foot had landed. This helps them walk through the woods more quietly as they can see where their front foot is landing, assuring a quieter spot, but not their back foot. Because of its length and stride, a large deer's back foot will often not quite hit the front foot's track exactly in the middle, but rather just a little short of center. A small deer's back foot is just the opposite, landing more towards the front of center. Look for the overlap of the track; if the top track is hitting the back - large deer, if it's hitting the front - small deer, if no noticeable difference - likely a medium-sized deer.

The size of a deer does not necessarily determine age. Size is much more determined by the general health and food sources of the deer. The corn-fed deer around here tend to be larger than deer in the north woods. A deer will hit peak size and health between the ages of 4½ and 6½, including antler growth. In its later years, the size, general health, and antler size tend to get smaller as that is approaching old age for deer. If they are lucky enough not to die earlier, they rarely live beyond about 12 years. In fact, the average age of a buck in Wisconsin is only about 1½ due primarily to hunting.

The only way to get a fairly accurate age of a deer is to look at their teeth. They keep their baby, or "milk" teeth until they're 1½. At that age they get rid of these milk teeth and grow their permanent teeth. After that, if they are "lucky" enough to live that long, their teeth slowly wear away until by about age 12, they have worn down to their gums and will likely starve death. During those years (1½ to 12), aging gets to be more of an estimation of age by looking to see how much the teeth have worn down. The reason aging always uses halves is because deer are born in May & June and most die during the deer season and winter – at the age of 1½, 2½, 3½, etc.



Animal Tracks - Winter is a great time for discovery. Even if an animal stays out of sight, you can find clear signs of its presence by its tracks and imprints in the snow. Snow prints may reveal clues to an animal's size, diet, gait and habits. Some prints even tell stories of resourcefulness and struggle.

A Note from the Friends President

As we approach the end of 2019, it's always good to reflect on the past year and all that the Friends have been doing to help out at the Refuge. It's been a good year in many ways.



The Friends have purchased some new educational items for the OWL Center. We bought a Portable Digital Microscope and a Scat Replica Collection that teachers and Refuge staff can use with elementary and high school students when they come out to the refuge for their outdoor education days. We also purchased 25 children's binoculars and several resource books for Bea's Bags. These are backpacks that students are encouraged to use at the refuge with their teachers and Refuge staff for outdoor education. We hope they will get used a lot by children to help them learn about everything from reptiles, birds, mammals, and animal tracks.



The Friends helped to sponsor some events at the refuge this past year. We had a reptile hike, dragonfly hike, night hike for owls, and most recently, a winter birds in Wisconsin program, which were well attended. We are in the process of planning future events for 2020, so be sure to check the Refuge's website to see what's coming up in the new year.

We thank everyone for their continued support to Friends Group. Be sure to get outdoors this winter and visit the Refuge. It's a great place for a winter hike to help us enjoy the snow and cold of Wisconsin.

Have a Happy Holiday and Happy New Year!!

Val Critzman, Friends President



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 Would you like to contact the refuge?
 Here's how! Call 608-539-2311
 For more information visit our website:
<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/trempealeau/>
 Or the refuge Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/TrempealeauNWR>
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Though otters are often seen feeding or basking where an icy shelf meets flowing water, they are primarily nocturnal (active at night) or crepuscular (active at dawn or dusk). They live in abandoned beaver lodges, woodchuck burrows, muskrat dens, holes in the bank, or beneath the roots of upturned trees. Dens do not have to be near water for otters to use them. Watch for evidence of otter tummy slides in the snow.