

# Friends of Seney National Wildlife Refuge Annual Report 2023

## What do you think of...

when Seney Refuge crosses your mind? A leisurely evening on the Marshland Wildlife Drive? That stunning photo you captured? The solitude of skiing the Northern Hardwoods trails? Seney fans experience the wonders of the refuge in different ways, but all of us experience a sense of wonder when we touch the refuge, and the refuge touches us.

Friends of the Seney NWR has existed since 1987 for the sole purpose of connecting people with the awe and wonder of the refuge. In 2023, Friends helped to share the awe and wonder with members, refuge visitors and the community in many ways. There were family-friendly nature films in the winter and a refuge Bioblitz and local school tours in the spring. Then there was an amazing celebration of loons at an event called Loonapalooza in the summer. Bus tours and a 5k Walk for the Wild in the fall. All year, we've kept in touch and spread the word via our new monthly newsletter and through our website and Facebook page. We shared the Seney story with our state and federal public officials. We invite you to explore the stories inside to learn more about the impact of your support this year.

The beginning of 2024 has us in a state of hopeful anticipation, awaiting the completion of the new visitor center/headquarters. Though we miss the old, familiar visitor center, its exhibits, and the nature store, the new facility is going to be absolutely awesome! The nature store, which is operated by the Friends of SNWR, has been a significant source of revenue for Friends for decades. We are so grateful that our members and donors have stepped up to fill that funding gap while the nature store is closed. Because of your generosity, we've supported over \$100,000 in exhibit enhancements for the new visitor center in the last two years. We know you'll love the new and improved nature store when the new visitor center opens.

Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, with your help, we will continue to support the refuge in ways that protect and preserve habitat and wildlife and connect people to the resources of the refuge. We'll continue to offer opportunities to bring our members together to celebrate and help the refuge meet the needs of the future. We look forward to partnering with you for another great year.

*Friends of Seney National Wildlife Refuge  
Board of Directors*



**FRIENDS OF SENEY  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Ron Annelin	Bill MacLachlan
Barb Frazier	George MacLeod
Bernie Hubbard	Polly Sheppard
Tom Kenney	Marilyn Zick

## *In Memory*

We lost a great Friend and long-time board member this year. Tom Kenney passed away in August, 2023. Tom served on the board for 18 years, serving as president of the Friends' board from 2014-2018. His many contributions were instrumental in building the strong organization that we are today.

# State of the Refuge

**Sara Giles**

SNWR Visitor  
Services  
Manager



The refuge was a busy place this year. The Marshland Wildlife Drive reopened in May after being closed the previous season for major improvements to visitors' great enjoyment. The official groundbreaking for our new facility was May 10, and the site at Refuge Entrance Road has been a hive of activity since then. Crews have spent most of their time this year preparing the site for the new building, laying underground utilities, and completing improvements to existing buildings. Due to our UP winters, most activity has been suspended, and will gear up again as soon as the weather permits in the spring.

Visitor Services staff spent many hours working with the project's design firm to finalize the visitor center exhibit space. The exhibits will focus on the diverse habitats on the refuge and the variety of species that thrive in them. One of the many exciting exhibits is a pool habitat that will be

embedded below floor level in the main exhibit space. A clear surface covering the exhibit will enable visitors to get a glimpse into the fascinating life below the surface of the pools on the refuge.

Refuge staff also completed working with Argentine Productions on a new welcome video. "Discovering Seney" will orient visitors to the wonders of the refuge when they arrive at the visitor center.

In addition to the main campus construction activity, we added a new outhouse and changed the parking lot layout at the Showpool Shelter site. A breach in the dike that had closed the Showpool Connector Trail was repaired and the trail was restored. Work also began to decommission the Delta Creek water control structure.

Besides managing the projects being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act, refuge

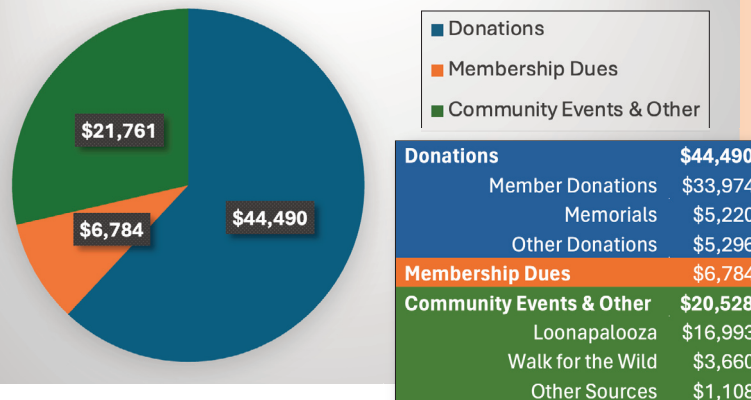
“We are grateful to the Friends for all of the support we have received with the exhibits, programs, and raising awareness about the refuge and what we do.”

staff hosted several school tours, a Bioblitz event, the annual Photo Contest, a new storybook trail at Northern Hardwoods, and volunteer events with the help of Friends.

## Financial Highlights

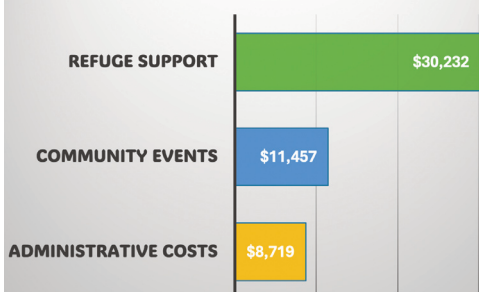
Total expenditures this year were \$50,498. Refuge support will enhance habitat exhibits at the new visitor center, supplementing our \$75,000 gift in 2022. Community events expenses supported our 2023 outreach efforts. We received \$1.80 in revenue for every dollar spent on community outreach events. Member communications, including development of a new website, comprised over 50% of administrative costs.

### 2023 Sources of Funds



Together, we raised **\$73,035** in 2023. Donations and dues accounted for 69% of revenue. Income from events and other sources contributed 31%, demonstrating the success of our diverse fundraising initiatives.

### 2023 Expenditures



Substantial cash assets of **\$190,209** give us a solid foundation to continue our support for SNWR operations. We anticipate additional refuge requests for support in 2024 as the new visitor center becomes a reality.

### Financial Position



Liabilities include \$17,700 in restitution funds held for protection of the Kirtland Warbler Wildlife Management Area.

# Community Outreach

Engaging the community in the stewardship of Seney National Wildlife Refuge is one of our most important goals. That means joining together with people who love the wildness of the refuge and who want to preserve and nurture it into the future. In 2023, Friends reached out to the community with opportunities to experience the refuge, to understand it, and to participate in activities that support it.

## 2023

April

### Earth Day Celebration led by Seney NWR staff



25 citizen scientists "bio-blitzed" the refuge, photographing refuge species and uploading their discoveries to a national database for research use.

August

### Loon tales on the trail

"Little Loon Finds His Voice" by Susan Vande Griek and illustrated by Karen Reczuch was the featured Trail Tales story book at the Erickson Center for the Arts, sponsored by the Friends.

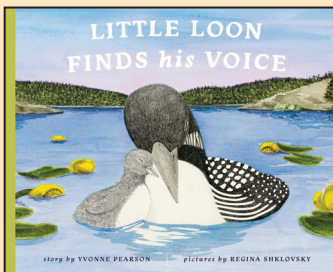


Photo Credit: Sharon Lumbert

August

### Over 100 entries for this year's SNWR Photo Contest

The competition returned in 2023 after a pandemic pause and was co-sponsored by Erickson Center for the Arts and Friends. Photos were exhibited at the Erickson Center in August.



October

### Walk for the Wild!

#### 75 refuge enthusiasts

gathered for a 5k walk on the refuge to raise funds for a summer youth camp in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. The event was part of a national celebration of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

March

### 57 people attended the 2023 Friends' Winter Film Fest

Three weeks of Wednesday night fun, free, family films at the Pine Performance Center.



May

### Groundbreaking celebration for the new visitor center

was held in May. Led by the Seney NWR staff with Friends, volunteers, community members and media in attendance. Sara



Siekierski, refuge manager, made the news!

August

## Loonapalooza

was our signature event this year, blending fun and science to create a magical evening.

200 attendees.  
71 new members.  
11 business sponsors.  
Countless volunteer hours!

The evening celebrated Seney NWR as a unique sanctuary for many species, including our famous loons. A partnership with Common Coast Research and Conservation, SNWR, the Michigan DNR and Erickson Center for the Arts, Loonapalooza highlighted the importance of community involvement in the long-term stewardship of the refuge.



### SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS

Carmeuse Port Inland | Highline Internet | IQ Designs  
Northland Outfitters | Helen Newberry Joy Hospital  
SISU Print Solutions | Astrea | Newberry News  
Bowman Gas | Jamadots | Loon's Nest Resort  
Schoolcraft Memorial Hospital | True Value: Curtis  
State Savings Bank of Manistique | Rahilly's IGA

## 2024

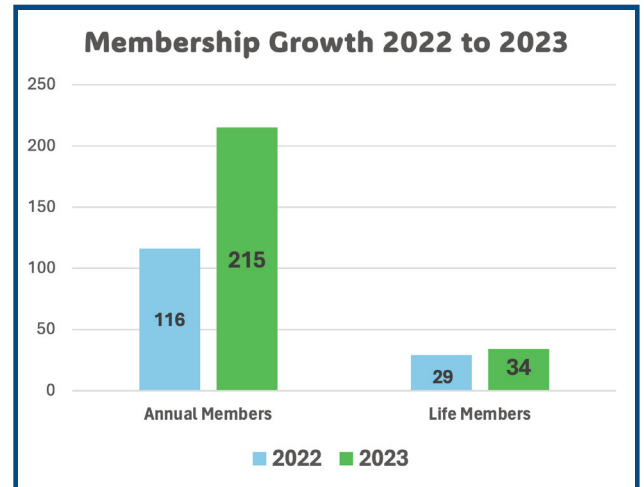
# Membership Update



Our members are the heart and soul of what we do. Our passionate and generous members make it possible to carry out our mission to support the refuge. Look how we've grown!

**Members donated \$51,274 to support the refuge in 2023**

**249 Members in 2023; a 71% increase over 2022.**



## Advocacy

### NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE EXPO

NOVEMBER 15, 2023  
RAYBURN FOYER  
WASHINGTON D.C.

Invite your US Representative and Senators to attend the annual event to learn more about the value of our nation's wildlife refuges.



The Friends of Seney participated in the National Wildlife Refuge and Coalition of Refuge Friends and Advocates-sponsored Expo on Capitol Hill in November. The annual event offers members of Congress the opportunity to learn more about the value of our nation's wildlife refuges. Friends members contacted state and federal public officials with messages about the importance of supporting refuges and invitations to our events. We received good news that the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus has recently been reconstituted, a bipartisan group that has historically played a vital role in preserving the national wildlife refuge system.

## Connecting with Members

We've worked extra hard this year to stay connected with our members. In addition to the many fun face-to-face events Friends hosted this year, we stayed in touch by distributing our monthly newsletter, *The Trumpeter*, to over 350 email addresses and mailboxes. Our

social media engagement increased significantly, and our website was completely redesigned with new functionality added to make it easier to join, donate and stay informed. Ninety-three members have renewed or joined using our convenient and secure online

function since April.

The annual membership meeting will be held in May 2024. It's another great opportunity to meet our members and learn what is important to them. A date for the meeting will be announced in April.

***We hope you will connect with us too!***



Sign up for monthly e-newsletters: <https://friendsofseney.org/the-trumpeter-newsletter/>



Email: [snhafriendsofseney@gmail.com](mailto:snhafriendsofseney@gmail.com)



Website: [www.friendsofseney.org](http://www.friendsofseney.org)



Facebook: [www.facebook.com/friendsofseney](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofseney)