

LOONAPALOOZA LECTURES 2025



SENEY REFUGE REFLECTIONS: PLACE, PEOPLE AND THE PATH FORWARD

SPONSORED BY:

FRIENDS OF SENEJ NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 2025
2-6PM  **DOORS OPEN AT 1:30PM**
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
PINE PERFORMANCE CENTER, CURTIS



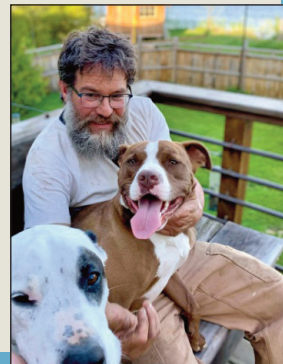
90 Wild
YEARS AND COUNTING!



Dr. Russell M. Magnaghi
Professor Emeritus of History,
Northern Michigan University



James Myser,
Retired Archaeologist, U.S.
Fish and Wildlife Service



Joe Kaplan,
Director, Common Coast
Research and Conservation



Robin Wall Kimmerer,
PhD, SUNY ESF and the
University of Wisconsin
Recorded lecture introduced by:

2:10-2:50 PM SENEY BEFORE THE WILDLIFE REFUGE

Dr. Russell M. Magnaghi

**2:55-3:35 PM THE LONG AND FASCINATING HISTORY OF THE
SENEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

James Myser

**3:50-4:50 PM RESTORATION AND RECIPROCITY: HEALING
RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE NATURAL WORLD**

Pre-recorded, Robin Wall Kimmerer with intro by Dani Fegan

4:55-5:45PM THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF LOONS?

Joe Kaplan

Danielle Fegan,
PhD candidate,
Wildlife Program
Manager for the
Sault Ste. Marie
Tribe of Chippewa
Indians



**SPEAKER BIOS & LECTURE SYNOPSSES
ON REVERSE**

PLEASE RSVP TO ATTEND THE LOONAPALOOZA LECTURES:
CALL 231-333-4199 OR EMAIL FRIENDSOFSENEY.ORG/LOONAPALOOZA
LOONAPALOOZA CELEBRATION FOLLOWS AT 6:30 PM



Dr. Russell Magnaghi

Seney Before the Wildlife Refuge 2:10–2:50 pm

Synopsis: Dr. Magnaghi will share the rich history of the Seney area, from its Indigenous roots to the present. Skipped over by French explorers, Seney was first visited by land surveyors in the 1840s and developed into a rail depot by the 1880s. Seney earned a rowdy reputation, but it was also home to families, businesses, a public school, and a church. In the early 20th century land developers tried to drain the land and attract immigrant farmers but this failed. In 1919 it was visited by Ernest Hemingway, who fished on the Fox River. Over the years the town has declined in population but still has a gas station, motel and restaurant on M-28. Through stories and scholarship, Dr. Magnaghi will bring Seney's layered past to life, revealing the enduring spirit of this historic gateway to the refuge.

Bio: Dr. Russell Magnaghi is Professor Emeritus of History at Northern Michigan University, where he taught American and regional history from 1969 to 2014. He served as Director of the Center for U.P. Studies and is currently University Historian. He is also editor of *Upper Country: Journal of the Lake Superior Region*. Best known for his book *Upper Peninsula of Michigan: A History*, Dr. Magnaghi has authored numerous works on Native Americans, immigration, Prohibition, foodways,

and regional culture. His public lectures are well known throughout the Upper Peninsula. In recognition of his scholarly contributions, he has received several regional and academic awards.



James Myster

The Long and Fascinating History of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge 2:55–3:35 pm

Synopsis: James Myster's talk will explore the transformation of Seney's cutover timberlands and failed land development schemes into a haven for migratory birds. In 1935, the Roosevelt administration designated the area as a refuge, recognizing the ecological value of its wetlands. The Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration played a vital role in the construction and early development of Seney National Wildlife Refuge during the 1930s, transforming it from cutover, swampy land into a managed wildlife sanctuary. During World War II, the former CCC camp housed US conscientious objectors, whose labor continued to sustain and improve the refuge. Following the war, the refuge grew into a model of wetland management and became a crown jewel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Recent facility upgrades have blended its historic legacy with modern conservation goals.

Bio: James Myster recently retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where he served as Region 3's Regional Historic Preservation Officer and Archaeologist for over 14 years. He previously worked with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and holds degrees in archaeology and soil science from the University of Minnesota, and in historical archaeology from the University

of Tennessee. James has worked extensively with Seney National Wildlife Refuge, documenting its history and helping to establish it as a historic district eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. He also collaborated with refuge staff and Friends groups to develop preservation proposals and pursue project funding.



Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer

Restoration & Reciprocity: Healing Relationships with the Natural World 3:50–4:50 pm

Synopsis: Robin Wall Kimmerer's recorded presentation invites us to view ecological restoration as a reciprocal relationship—giving back to the Earth in return for its gifts. She explores the evolution of restoration philosophy and practice and considers how integration of indigenous knowledge can expand understanding of restoration from the biophysical to the biocultural. Kimmerer's talk will explore how reciprocal restoration becomes not just a physical act, but a way to heal our relationship with the land.

Danielle Fegan, Wildlife Program Manager for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, will introduce the presentation and lead a post-video discussion that connects Kimmerer's themes to local restoration efforts and Anishinaabe values.

Bio: Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer is a scientist, author, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology and founder of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. Her bestselling book *Braiding Sweetgrass* blends Indigenous wisdom with ecological science, while her earlier work *Gathering Moss* won the John Burroughs Medal for nature writing. She holds degrees in botany from SUNY ESF and the University of Wisconsin and is a respected scholar in plant ecology and restoration. Her work centers on healing both ecological systems and our relationships with the land. In 2022, she was named a MacArthur Fellow.

Bio: Danielle "Dani" Fegan is Wildlife Program Manager for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, where she leads conservation and restoration efforts through the Tribe's Natural Resources Division. Previously, she served as a Coastal Program biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dani is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University, pursuing dual degrees in Fisheries and Wildlife and in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior. Her research focuses on fire ecology, grouse habitat use, and decision analysis for prescribed fire management. A lifelong nature enthusiast, Dani enjoys seedkeeping, gardening, backpacking, and searching for loons at Seney National Wildlife Refuge.



Danielle Fegan

The Past, Present and Future of Loons? 4:55–5:45 pm

Synopsis: As co-founder of Common Coast Research & Conservation, Joe is in a unique position to offer his thoughts on the opportunities and challenges facing Common Loons. He will share his knowledge and thoughts about the loons at Seney based on his decades-long research on the refuge. He will discuss environmental and other trends that may affect Common Loons' future. The research conducted by Common Coast has provided some of the most detailed life histories for the species, leading to greater understanding of population dynamics, migration patterns, contaminants, and conservation needs.

Bio: Joe Kaplan is a director of Common Coast Research & Conservation, a non-profit that specializes in migratory bird conservation. For over 30 years Joe and colleagues have monitored color-marked Common Loons to understand this iconic species' life history, population dynamics, and conservation challenges. As a former director of the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory he was instrumental in securing an extension of Seney National Wildlife Refuge at the Point. Joe also established and stabilized the 93-acre Manitou Island Light Station Preserve (Whitefish Point's sister light) through the Keweenaw Land Trust. Joe lives in Delta County with his wife Chris where he coordinates the Escanaba Migratory Bird

Enhancement Initiative to create stopover habitat and recover a dwindling Purple Martin population in the City's waterfront parks. He also leads an agency partnership with Audubon Great Lakes and the Michigan DNR to conserve populations of Black Terns in the Bay de Nocs and the US Forest Service to improve stopover habitat at Peninsula Point for migratory birds and butterflies.



Joe Kaplan