BEAR IN MIND

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Photo Credit: Dennis Udovich

THE AMERICAN BEAR ASSOCIATION™
Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary

Dedicated to promoting a better understanding of the black bear through education, observation and experience.



Photo of our fund raising thermometer. To make a donation to help build our new visitor center, log on to www.americanbear.org and use the donate button.

BEAR IN MIND
Editor—Dennis Udovich
bears@americanbear.org

BEAR IN MIND (BIM) is published three times a year by The American Bear Association™ (ABA), a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting a better understanding of the black bear through education, observation and experience. The ABA also owns and operates the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary in Orr, MN. To become a member or to learn more please contact us at:

THE AMERICAN BEAR ASSOCIATION™ Mailing:
PO Box 77, Orr, MN 55771
Ph: 218-757-0172
bears@americanbear.org
www.americanbear.org

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ORR – After seven years as president of the American Bear Association, Dennis Udovich is stepping down. Although he will remain on the ABA Board of Directors for two more years, Udovich said he turned down the nomination for president at the board's January meeting to devote more time to family and his other interests.

"When I was first nominated president, I thought I would serve three or four years," said Udovich. "You need a new pitcher once in awhile." Although his wife, Mimi, has been very supportive of his activities, Udovich said he was involved in too many activities. "At one time I was president of four different organizations," he said. "That's when Mimi told me it was time to downsize."

New president is Tom Klingbiel. Klingbiel, who lives in Wisconsin, started as a volunteer at the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary. He worked on the ABA's banquet committee for two years and was nominated to the board and served as the board's secretary. Klingbiel said he has been volunteering at the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary for seven years. "I had some frightening experiences with grizzly bears in Alaska and was trying to overcome my fear of bears and I found out about this amazing place," said Klingbiel. "I was just in awe of what they've been able to do here." Klingbiel said his goal is to continue the ABA's work on educating people about "bears and how to coexist with the mammals. He also wants to continue efforts to improve the infrastructure, build stronger relationships with surrounding communities such as Orr, Nett Lake and Cook, and better serve the public. "There's a lot of misinformation about bears," he said. "We want to change that and teach people how to live in bear country."

Udovich provided great leadership for the ABA, said Klingbiel. "I really respect what he's been able to do. Dennis has given his heart and soul to the organization." Udovich thanked those who supported him and added they had made his journey in life "much fuller and more rewarding. Serving as president of the ABA has been the most challenging and, by far, the most rewarding time I've had and it's been mostly due to the dedicated and passionate volunteers/interns that I've had the pleasure to meet," said Udovich. "Volunteers today will be our leaders tomorrow."

ABA's formation

The American Bear Association was formed in January 1995 by Karen Hauserman, and Bill and Klari Lea to preserve the unique bear-feeding station started by Vince Shute at his logging camp. Shute had begun feeding the bears to prevent them from rampaging through his logging camp. The bears were drawn by the tempting aromas of food cooked at the camp.

Shute became so comfortable around the bears that he walked freely among them and even let some nibble on a piece of toast dangling from his mouth. Word of his amazing relationship with the bears spread and carloads of visitors flocked to the site.

Although association members acknowledge that feeding wild bears isn't advisable, Shute had been doing it so long that the bears had grown to depend on it. In addition, association members saw a rare opportunity to observe black bear behavior with animals normally cautious around humans.

The Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary continues to enthrall more than 20,000 visitors annually who come to observe the bears and other wildlife from a viewing platform and become more educated about black bears. The sanctuary has also served as the site of several bear research projects and attracts volunteer interns from across the globe.

Udovich's history with the ABA stretches back more than a decade. Initially, he was an opponent of the organization, which he perceived as being anti-hunting, anti-logging and anti-trapping. Push came to shove when the ABA sought to create a no-hunting buffer zone around the sanctuary. The

ABA backed off of that proposal in the face of heavy criticism from the area communities and that marked the beginning of a change in Udovich's relationship with the ABA.

When he was first elected president of the ABA Board, some people couldn't understand how a bear-hunting guide could be friends with the ABA.

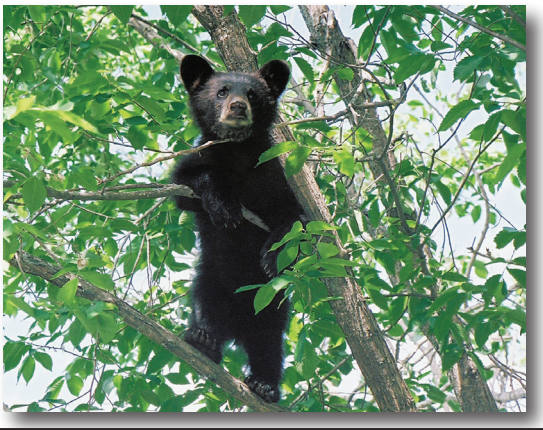
But Udovich said the sanctuary provides a common ground for people with different views to learn together about bears. "We made it more about ethics," he explained. "Hunters and anti-hunters alike respect the sanctuary and feel comfortable there because they are not being judged." Udovich also helped improve relations between the ABA and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources by changing the nature of the sanctuary. "We don't allow any hand feeding of the bears and we use negative conditioning outside the sanctuary boundaries to differentiate between the sanctuary and the rest of the region," he said.They've also incorporated local culture and history into the sanctuary, with exhibits on logging alongside information on bears.

Udovich also helped the ABA get a firmer grasp of its finances and develop stronger ties to local communities. Visitors are now bused to the site and a handicapped lift has been added to the viewing platform. "This is a team effort," he said. "We've got an awesome board." He singled out current and former board members such as Karen Hauserman, who runs the gift shop, and Brian Galusha, who brought several good resolutions to the board, as examples. He also cited the contributions of Carl Racchini, a retired wildlife biologist from Michigan, who is serving as the board vice president.

Udovich also noted that the sanctuary is not designed to serve as the bears' main source of food. When berry crops flourish, bear numbers at the sanctuary drop. But when the berry crop is poor, the sanctuary helps keep nuisance bear complaints down in surrounding communities by providing an alternative food source.

Klingbiel admits that feeding the bears is controversial, but they try to strike a delicate balance. "We never want to create welfare bears or problem bears," he said. The sanctuary, which relies heavily on volunteers and donations, needs continued support, Udovich stressed. "We will still need help in the coming years to keep the lights on," said Udovich. Those who wish to help can contact program coordinator Nancy Glass at the ABA's office in Orr by phoning 218-757-0172 or emailing her at bears@americanbear.org. Meanwhile, Udovich said he will stay involved with the sanctuary, but is content to turn the leadership reins to Klingbiel. "It's like a marathon run," he said. "I'm just handing the baton to Tom to carry now."

Story courtesy of Tom Klein and the Timberjay Newspaper



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MOOSE CALVES APPEAR TO BE HOLDING THEIR OWN

By Brian Larson and the Cook County News-Herald

First the bad news: only nine out of the 49 moose calves fitted last spring with radio transmitting collars containing, among other things, GPS signaling devices, remain in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) calf mortality study. Now the good news: only one calf has been killed in the last three months.

"The most recent [calf] was a collared male, wounded by wolves, then about three weeks later it died on November 26, 2013 from a fatal infection caused by the wounds," said Glenn DelGiudice, Ph.D., Research Scientist/Moose Project Leader, Forest Wildlife Populations and Research Group.

"This brings the total natural mortality rate to 74 percent (25 of 34 calves)—22 of these [killed] by predators,"added DelGiudice.

Very early on researchers found that 11 calves' deaths could be attributed to the trauma of being collared. Most were fitted with collars within 36 hours of their birth. Should the

study be funded next spring, researchers are contemplating waiting longer before capturing and collaring the calves.

The calf study dovetails with an adult study of 103 moose also fitted with collars that also contain GPS tracking devises. When moose stop moving for a period of six hours researchers assume it is dead and a crew is dispatched to retrieve it. The goal is to do so within 24 hours so they can determine why the moose has perished. If they wait longer, predators will almost certainly have eaten the moose carcass.

Besides the 11 calves abandoned by their mothers (due to being trapped and collared), four other calves slipped their collars and one was abandoned for unknown reasons. Over the summer researchers discovered 16 calves eaten by wolves, four killed by bears, one dead from drowning, one abandoned by its mother, one killed by an unknown predator and one dead from unknown reasons, leaving 10 left to be tracked.

Wildlife researchers are in a mad scramble to figure out what is killing Minnesota's moose. In 2006 the Minnesota DNR estimated there were 8,840 moose in northeastern Minnesota. That figure dropped to an estimate of 2,760 for 2013. In the northwestern part of Minnesota, the moose herd plunged from 2,000 in the 1990s to less than 50 today.

With the moose dying so fast of unknown causes, the DNR suspended the bulls-only moose hunt for 2013. The Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and the Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa also canceled their subsistence moose hunts on lands covered by the 1854 Treaty. Both bands work hand in hand with the DNR on moose research and help fund portions of the various studies being conducted.

In an effort to help restore the population, Grand Portage is also currently managing 47,000 acres of moose habitat and the U.S. Forest Service is managing 40,000 acres for moose in the Greenwood Lake area.

On August 19, 2013, the DNR announced that for the first time moose had been added to the state's endangered species list and placed in the "species of special concern" column. A species of special concern is one that is considered threatened but is not seen at immediate risk.

At the end of the summer DelGiudice was asked what he expected the study to show at the conclusion of one year. He answered, "Can't say, we're already at 71 percent natural mortality rate [24 of 34 killed by predators]—that's close to what we were expecting over the entire year. What happens by next May depends on winter severity, etc. …So the mortality hit by predators has been fairly significant, but this is just one spring-summer, so these data can only be interpreted within the context of this year and the environmental conditions and variability that occurred this year.

"Also, we don't know for sure how representative of the populations this study cohort is. That's why multiple years of study are needed. Additionally, documenting calf/cow ratios during the annual moose survey in January may give us a better idea if this calf survival rate is representative of the population," said DelGiudice.

BEAR RESCUE AT SILVER LAKE



By Lyle Conaway

At the time this incident took place, I was working in the capacity of Animal Control for the City of Virginia for Virginia, MN. Every Fall we would have several "happening" that included complaints from home owners from all types of animals - from skunks to moose! But the most common were bear invasions.

For the most part, the bears did not harm anyone, but well known to most, they certainly had the potential. We, being myself and the police department personnel, were not really certain how to handle these creatures… even though we tried a few times to use a tranquilizer gun. A device I came to despise and refuse to use. To minimize the risk, in many cases the bear was shot - with no other resources available to handle a nuisance bear - also one wrong aim with a firearm in a congested area could turn out in an undesirable way.



So about the time this "happening" at Silver Lake took place, I had mentioned to the mayor of Virginia that I thought there had to be another way to take care of bear problems I suggested hiring professional trappers… well nothing was definite at that time. When I arrived on the scene, two wardens, McHugh and another warden were holding on to a rope that they had somehow managed to get around the neck of the bear. The bear, with the two wardens holding the rope, had run off into the south shore of the lake and hid itself in a large willow bush. Also, there were two Virginia police officers there with a canoe. I could see that the two wardens had a sort of "a tiger by its tail" – they couldn't let go of the rope and were reluctant to shoot because of about 15 on-looking citizens in attendance.

Where the canoe came from I do not know, but I gathered a 20 ft length of 1.2" hemp rope from my vehicle and loaded 2 rounds into the 12 gauge and suggested we go and take a look at this bear. Sitting in the canoe, about 20 yards from shore, I could pretty much make out that the bear, though not a cub, was not full grown – about 130 pounds. Big enough to break my neck with one powerful blow of a paw, but I also felt strongly that the bear was young enough, I could run a bluff. It was in no way challenging us.



I gave my wallet to one of the officers to keep it dry, asked them to lean over the canoe so I could slide over the side toward the shore. As they asked, "What are you going to do?" My reply was "going to rope a bear!"

Well, from the canoe, the lake bottom looked like 4 feet deep – as it turned out – what I saw and measured with the rope was large pieces of concrete that had been dumped into that part of the lake by contractors whenever they tore up a street or sidewalk complete with re-rod sticking in every direction, including up! At first I wondered if I could make it over those slabs and chunks… my feet getting caught and almost pulling my shoes off… the re-rod poking into my flesh and catching my clothes! But going slow and careful, I made it.

As I approached the bear, I could see him or her trying to back further into the willow and watching me very intently. And I too watching for any sign it may decide to attack to get out. Even a few feet

could have put me at a disadvantage, if I thought at the time I even had an advantage!

When I got within a few feet, McHugh was saying repeatedly, "Be careful! Be careful!". I believe I was talking softly to the animal hoping it would help keep it calm as it eyed every move I made.

When I was about arms length, I very slowly spread the noose and holding it up to where I could slip it over its head, while I could see the bear was very frightened and nervous. When the rope touched it's body it responded with a hissing snort as it lashed out at me with a swipe of its paw. My reaction was instinctive and effective as I let go of the rope and landed a punch right on its nose. The bear jerked its head back and as luck would have it, I slipped the noose over its head. Until some few seconds later… I did not know that was the climax.

I backed away a couple of feet and gave a little tug on the rope, turned and started walking towards shore, and the bear came along as would a little puppy. It followed me to the bear cage… and there it ended for me.

I had cut my ankle and I was soaked from head to foot. I retrieved my shotgun, unloaded it and drove home.

I really didn't give it much thought. The next day, the warden whom I did not know, came out to the airport where I was with 3 other buddies – Dale, Charlie and Brian- and he personally thanked me for saving the bear.

Living in Black Bear Country

The ability to adapt is central to the black bear's survival in the wild. As our growing population continues to encroach upon wild areas, these intelligent and versatile animals often fall prey to intolerant human attitudes. Understanding the needs and behaviors of bears is paramount if we are to coexist peacefully.

GUIDELINES

- Do not leave garbage cans outside; store in a secured building.
- If you have bird feeders, bring them in at night or hang them out of reach of bears at least 10 feet in the air suspended between two trees.
- Store pet food and bowls inside.
- Grease and food caught in barbecue grills can attract bears. Clean grills regularly and dispose of grease as you would garbage.
- Bears like to sniff, claw or sample petroleum products including tarpaper, paint, turpentine, rubber and charcoal fluid. Store these items in a secure place.

What should I do if a bear comes in my yard?

- Pick up small children so they do not run, scream or panic.
- Restrain dogs! Remove from scene by putting them in the house or close building.
- If a bear:
- lunges;
- snaps his jaws;
- or slaps the ground or brush with his paw;

the bear feels threatened - you are too close.

- DO NOT RUN. Back away slowly with arms overhead giving the appearance of being bigger.
- Avoid direct eye contact. Speak in a calm soothing voice.
- If the bear stands up he is NOT preparing to attack but is trying to get a better look or sniff you. If the bear is treed, he is probably afraid. Leave him alone. Remove all threats by leaving the area or going inside the house. Give the bear time enough to feel secure and come down, which he may not do until nighttime.

REMEMBER: WILDLIFE + DISTANCE = SAFETY

Passenger Pigeon 1914

By Carl Racchini

A few years ago an unusual visitor showed up at the Sanctuary and decided it would make the place it's new home. This new resident was a bird we commonly refer to as a pigeon but it's official name is Rock Dove. It is commonly found within cities and around towns but not in woodlands. The bird was named Pablo. Each day we expected to see Pablo leave, a band on the leg told us that he was someone's homing pigeon. Rock Doves were domesticated six thousand years ago. They were brought to North America by Europeans over 350 years ago, and are considered a feral species. Pablo would spend the day at the Sanctuary but leave at dusk to roost in the woods. I was always surprised to see Pablo return in the morning. One evening as Pablo left I watched him darting through the trees avoiding a hawk in hot pursuit. The next day he was back. As I watched him dodge through the trees I imagined that he was a Passenger Pigeon. Unfortunately, I will never get to see a Passenger Pigeon because they are extinct.

Throughout eastern North America there are numerous places that carry names like Pigeon Ridge, Pigeon River, Pigeon Lake, Pigeon Roost Mountain, and Pigeon Forge. These landmarks were named after the once abundant Passenger Pigeon. The Passenger Pigeon was a native North American species that was once the most common species on the planet. It is estimated that Passenger Pigeons once accounted for 25-40% of all the birds in North America. In 1813, John James Audubon saw a flock of Passenger Pigeons moving overhead at sixty miles an hour and obliterating the noonday sun. It took this mighty flock 3 days to pass. Another well known bird observer of time, Alexander Wilson, estimated a flock he saw moving from Kentucky to Indiana in the early 1800's to have 2,230,272,000 (yes billion) birds. Historians and biologists have estimated the population at the time of European settlement to be 5 billion pigeons.

The Passenger Pigeon was a species that nested in mature hardwoods forest in the Northeast and Midwest United States on up into Canada. The bird fed on a variety of seeds, their preferred food was acorns, beechnuts and chestnuts. While some of the birds nested in small groups the majority of the population would nest in one of the two large colonies. One of the large colonies was in New York/Pennsylvania while the other took place in the Midwest, normally Wisconsin or Michigan. The birds changed their nesting colonies annually because their droppings that covered the ground up to a foot thick were toxic to the understory and the trees that supported their nests. The birds only laid one egg.

In the fall the birds moved south for the winter. They would roost in mature trees in such large numbers that their weight was known to break the limbs and even to cause large trees to fall. The Passenger Pigeon played a very important ecological role by changing landscape and its importance to the food chain.

The good tasting pigeons provided the early settlers with a very important food source. There are historical records of settlers having to survive on pigeons when their crops failed. The birds were pursued year round and young would be collected from the nests. The birds would be trapped using large nets and shot. Into the early nineteenth century settlers and Native Americans did not pose a serious threat to the population even though they had started selling the birds to markets. Things began to change in 1850. This was when market hunting became profitable. The development of 30,000 miles of railroad tracks provided an easy way to ship the birds. The telegraph Also played an important role, because it allowed for quick communication on the location of nesting sites or roosting sites for the marketers. One market hunter in Wisconsin was known to ship 2 million birds in 1883. The Eastern nesting population of New York/ Pennsylvania was gone by 1860. At the same time as the increased market hunting was going on there was also an increase in the logging industry. The intense logging was destroying the mature woods that the birds needed.

Wisconsin and Michigan started passing laws to protect Passenger Pigeons while on their nesting grounds, but officials rarely enforced the regulations. Subsistence hunters who hated the market hunting industry formed Game Protection Clubs. These groups pushed for more protection and attempted to protect nesting sites. Some of these men died at the hands of the market hunters.

The bird disappeared from Minnesota by 1895. The number of birds left in the 1890's was down to 1000's. In the early 1900's the last wild Passenger Pigeon was killed.

A handful of birds were kept in private collections and zoos. but there was never a co-operative attempt to breed these birds. In 1909 only three birds were left in captivity. All at the Cincinnati zoo, two males and one female. One of the males died that year. This left only the pair that had been named George and Martha. George died in 1910. Martha lived another four years her only companions being mourning doves. On September 1, 1914. The Passenger Pigeon was extinct.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the most common bird that we have ever known. As we look to the future lets hope that we have learned from our past mistakes and that we will do a better job of protecting the wild things around us. Passenger Pigeon rest in PEACE.

DONATIONS NEEDED

To help secure the future of the sanctuary, donations are needed for the purchase of critical habitat. Lands that are major wildlife travel corridors and bear habitat need to be acquired for the security of the bears that frequent the sanctuary. Some of these properties have already been logged off and some are being leased and could be sold at any time. We need your help to fund these major acquistions as they become available for the safety of the bears that visit the sanctuary. Remember the American Bear Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your donation is deductible to the full extent of the law. We will provide you with a document for your tax records.



Lee J. Ball, Cindy, Spencer and Sanctuary Manager Keith Doefler

The Bears

By Cindy Ball

After 15 years, I was kind of nervous and I knew The Bear Sanctuary had to be far from the utopian bubble that I once knew it to be. To be sure, many changes had occurred since Lee J. and I left the American Bear Association. We got married and had a wonderful son, Spencer who is now 13. Unfortunately, Vince was no longer around to greet us and he would never meet Spencer. The original observation deck, that we initially helped build, was now beautifully expanded. They even charged admission to see the bears and bused in people to the deck (caging people had always been our goal). There was also an amazing store and a RESERVE feed shed! They charged extra money to enjoy a unique "Breakfast with the Bears" experience, which used to be a routine experience for me 15 years ago.

What if I no longer loved this place? What if this tribute to Vince Shute turned out to be something that I knew he would not stand for? What if I don't recognize any of the bears? If this place didn't prove to be even better than it was, maybe I didn't even want to go. I could just hold on to the good ole' days that were 15 years ago but, I had to find out. How could any place be as magical and wonderful as it was in my memory? Surely, no place like that actually exists, right?

Wrong! I am happy to report that The Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary is better than ever! And yes, a place that magical and wonderful does exist. Clearly, a lot of love, hard work, blood, sweat and tears went into this operation. Many of the visions that we had in the beginning were carried out by other volunteers. I was overwhelmed with the feeling of pride as I saw each improvement. I was proud of what the VSWS had become and I know Vince would be too. He would love sharing this magical place with so many people. I wish he were alive to enjoy it. It even proved a false fear that we wouldn't know any of the bears. Amazingly, we saw five bears that were alive when we lived there: Handsome, Biscuit, Jenny, Crystal and Peanut. Also there is enough familiar DNA floating around the bear yard that I felt like I was visited by ghost bears of the past. I could see the mark of these "ghost bears" in the faces of their children. I fell in love with plenty of new bears. They were all

new bears to my son, Spencer. He was blown away! I noticed that he took more than 200 pictures.

Thanks to Dennis and Keith, we were able to attend "Breakfast with the Bears". I must say that it is a different perspective when you are observing from the deck, rather than being on the ground feeding day in and day out. It's so peaceful and easy. The sanctuary staff and volunteers clearly have put a lot of hard work and loving energy into the sanctuary. They all worked hard and were very dedicated. The whole experience seemed like a really grand dream. I was disappointed not to see familiar faces of loved ones that I worked with 15 years ago, but I know that I was lucky to meet all the new faces that make the sanctuary what it is today.

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David & Sue Buist at the ABA Banquet.

In Memory of David Buist

By: Klari Lea

It was in the mid-nineties during the tumultuous beginning of the Sanctuary that I first met David and Sue Buist. Vince had guided the sophisticated couple in during our closed time—through the heavy rusting gate and down the dusty bumpy dirt road that led to the main bear viewing area. Vince used his signature walking cane to show the strangers around and to introduce them to the bears that had curiously gathered around them. I had to smile as I watched with amusement how mesmerized the couple seemed as they listened attentively to Vince's colorful descriptions of the individual bears. They remained surprisingly calm while bears of all sizes began to surround them. I finally made my way closer to introduce myself. I can only imagine what they thought upon seeing my haggard appearance. I was winding up a typical 12 hour work day. My tattered coveralls were ablaze with the colorful remnants left behind from scooping poop, mixing bear food, moving garbage, and an assortment of other daily tasks involved with operating the Sanctuary. My hair fanned out wildly in all directions from underneath my crooked cap…I surely must have been a sight to behold. Nevertheless, the smartly attired couple both carrying expensive photo gear graciously held out their hands to greet me with such genuinely warm enthusiasm. Little did I know that day how David and Sue would become major influences in my life and resilient supporters of the Sanctuary.

Their passion was driven by their sincere interest with Vince's story and his dream of securing a future for "his" beloved bears through the creation of a sanctuary--a special place of learning about the true nature of bear behavior. Their energy sparked an enduring relationship with the Sanctuary that spanned almost two decades. As gifted photographers

they set out to create a visual journal of Vince and the many volunteers who selflessly dedicated their time and efforts to make Vince's dream a reality. Hundreds of hours of video footage were collected over the years. Some of the best footage was then reviewed and edited to produce an archival treasure--the DVD documentary titled THE BEAR MAN which was narrated personally by David and available for sale at the Sanctuary.

David and Sue Buist dedicated many years towards the establishment of the Sanctuary and their boundless generosity extended from providing a helping hand when we were short of volunteers, donating hearty meals, providing equipment, as well as financial support. Rarely did a moment go by when they were not advocating for the Sanctuary and our educational mission. Without a doubt, their tireless efforts and inspiring enthusiasm kept us all going during many challenging times.

Sadly, on January 1, 2014, David Buist passed away at the age of 81. All of us at the Sanctuary mourn the loss of this beloved guardian and our heartfelt condolences go out to Sue during this exceptional time of pain. We have all lost a close friend and dedicated Sanctuary volunteer. His generous spirit will always be remembered as well as his unshakeable devotion defined by his compassionate strength and humble wisdom. David's legacy will live on through his monumental work in producing a timeless video journal about Vince and the development of his dream… the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Sue. We will always be here for you just as the both of you have always been there for the Sanctuary. Farewell dear David…



Becoming a Wildlife Professional

By: Melissa Boehmer



Growing up spending time in the Minnesota north woods has been instrumental in the development of my interest in the outdoors and the wildlife that call it home. The foundation of my experience in northern Minnesota is built upon my experiences at my family cabin located near Kabetogama, Minnesota. When I look back, I remember visiting the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary (VSWS) as a child. Although it was not officially a sanctuary at that time, it was THE place to go if you wanted to walk with the bears. Throughout the years, visiting the bears became a family tradition. As I grew, I observed the growth and evolution of the VSWS into the establishment is has become today. As a teenager, I determined that I wanted to work with wildlife. And at that time, I hoped that I would one day have the opportunity to work with bears…

I joined the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary team in 2008, the summer after my freshman year of college. As a new student excited to begin my professional journey in wildlife ecology and management, I was thrilled to intern at a place that I had grown up with. As a Wildlife Education Intern at VSWS, I spent a great amount of time creating educational tools, displays, and presentations. Speaking with the public was by far the most rewarding part of my internship. Some of my best memories at the sanctuary revolve around interpreting wildlife behavior and inspiring visitors of all ages to be excited about wildlife and their ecology.

When I decided to pursue a career in wildlife ecology and management, I knew that it would be an extremely competitive field. As a student at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, I proactively pursued internships and technician positions. My internship at VSWS served as a great way to get the ball rolling, where I learned how to interact with the public. I feel that my experiences at the sanctuary helped me become more comfortable communicating with diverse audiences. Whether I was simply speaking with a child about how tiny a bear cub was when it was born, or perhaps explaining the process of delayed implantation to an inquisitive adult, the experience was valuable with regards to professional development.

Following my internship at the sanctuary I wanted to expand my wildlife research and management experience. I did this by working with Michigan Tech University as a Wild-

life Research and Restoration Technician and working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as a Wildlife Research and Monitoring Aid. After graduating college in the winter of 2011, I accepted a position with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as a Lead Wildlife Technician. For anyone who is considering a career in wildlife management, I strongly recommend traveling out of your comfort zone in order to diversify your experiences. Not only did I work with a new variety of wildlife species, I learned to adapt to different sets of stakeholders and human dimensions of wildlife management.

After years of developing my career in wildlife management, I am now an Assistant Area Wildlife Manager with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In my position I help manage wildlife and the habitats they depend on. My position is both challenging and rewarding as I work FOR wildlife and the many stakeholders affected by wildlife. Although my work with bears is somewhat limited now, I continue to emphasize the importance of learning to live WITH wildlife. As I build my experiences with the MN DNR, I am grateful to be working in my home state where my love for wildlife and the outdoors first developed. I am also happy to say that I started my professional development with the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary, thank you!







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