



Fall 2025

friendsofmaplewoodstatepark@gmail.com

<https://friendsofmaplewood.org>

The Maple Leaf

Volunteers Make a Difference

Greetings and Welcome to Autumn! As we head into cooler temperatures and shorter days, Maplewood State Park turns on its charm. If you spend any time in the park during the autumn season, you will see it, smell it, and feel it. The same holds true for the winter season.

As a volunteer for the Friends of Maplewood State Park, I have to say, we have fun and exciting opportunities for people to get involved. We will be hosting the annual Candlelight Trek, Maple Syrup Day, Maple Syrup Education Days, and Leaf Days. Our "Sugar Daddies" will be out tapping maple trees, gathering the sap, and making maple syrup in the Sugar Shack. We are also planning some park beautification projects.

Volunteers are such an essential part of making these events a success. All the events that we host or participate in are done by dedicated and hard-working volunteers. Volunteers who love Maplewood State Park. If you are a person who loves being outside (sometimes getting your hands dirty), putting smiles on the faces of others, making new friends, and being a part of a group of people who really love Maplewood State Park, then please join us!

To all of our volunteers, past, present, and future ... thank you!! Your time and talent truly make a difference, and our projects and events would not happen without you!

Beth Pladson, Treasurer, Friends of Maplewood



Jeff and Beth Pladson are members of the Friends of Maplewood. The two often visit the park with their 6-year-old Mustelander, Chiro. Photo: Barbie Porter/Perham Focus

Upcoming Events

First Day Hike – January 1, 2026 – DNR Sponsored

Candlelight Trek – February 28, 2026

Maple Syrup Days – April 11, 2026



Maplewood Magic

Dora O'Brien, Park Naturalist

There is magic all around us. I find it in abundance around Maplewood. I've found it comes in many forms. It lives in salamanders hunting under rain-soaked logs in the woods. I've heard it in the wail of a loon as it echoes across the many lakes of Maplewood. I see magic when I see two trumpeter swans flying low over the land against the background of changing leaves. It can be found at the end of your fishing line when you get the first tug of a fish on your hook. It's in the hum of pollinators' wings as they fly between the wildflowers of the prairie. Magic beats against the ground in the hooves of a horse walking the trails with a rider on its back. I've tasted magic in the foraged wild Morel mushrooms that grow in the county. Magic glistens on the slime molds growing on decaying branches in the Fall. It clings to the snowflakes as they stick to the ground on a quiet winter day. Magic is the orange glow of an autumn sunset illuminating a forest full of trees. But most of all, I see magic reflected in the visitors of Maplewood. You can see it in their eyes; it's a mixture of wonder, peace, and excitement.

Magic isn't just for children and fairytales. It's for us, too, adults, wanderers of any age. You might ask yourself, what is the source of all this magic? Well, that's for you to decide. Some people give credit to their God or several gods. While others claim magic comes from the processes and cycles of the natural world. Others think that it is the human connection that is magic. Some people believe the magic of life is just that, to be alive is to be a part of the magic of the world. Either way, you view it, magic exists all around it can be found in Maplewood State Park in all its forms.



Now, if while reading this article you thought to yourself, "I have no idea what she is talking about? I've never experienced this type of magic." I encourage you to pick your favorite trail in the park and sometimes, when you feel like it, take the time to walk it and try to notice something new. It could be taking a closer look at the moss and lichen growing on a rock you always stop at. Or wondering how that rock ended up here in the first place? I'll give you a little spoiler to answer that last question, chances are it was dropped by a glacier when they passed over the land more than 10,000 years ago. Those very same glaciers molded the hills of the park. The geologic word for those hills is Kames, which are piles of sand and gravel deposited at the end of the glaciers. Once you begin to wonder about the land and what lives on it you will slowly unlock a whole new world. I invite you to follow your curiosity throughout the park.

(continued on page 5)

Ranger Update

Bill Anderson, Park Manager

I sincerely thank all who have supported the park this year and in previous years. Friends of Maplewood is arguably one of the most active, involved, and supportive Friends Groups in the State of Minnesota. A testament to that is being the first Friends group in the State to have a fully executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DNR. This will guide our work moving forward, not just clarifying roles and responsibilities between the DNR and the Friends, but will provide opportunities that previously were impossible. More to come as we figure out what impacts this will have, but I am confident this will set the stage for more great and even larger accomplishments in the future.

Many projects, large and small, are currently happening in the park, and significant effort is being given to planning and strategic thinking to maintain and improve it in the future. What follows is a sampling of some of the projects underway and those under consideration.

Bass Lake access improvement project: We expect this project to occur in 2026. It will replace the straight downhill access to Bass Lake with an accessible switchback path and dock. In anticipation of this project, we are currently not taking reservations for the group camp in 2026.

Glacial Edge Trail: This is an Otter Tail County project, like the Heart of the Lakes Trail that was completed in 2025. The Glacial Edge Trail will eventually connect Fergus Falls to Maplewood State Park and the Heart of the Lakes Trail. The first segment is expected to be constructed along the western edge of the park in 2026.

Road & trail brushing/pruning: The Park has contracted with a local company to remove vegetation that has grown into our road and trail corridors. This two-year contract covers all our roads and all trails that their skid steer and/or tractor can fit on.

Sustainable trails: Two of the ten planned trail reroutes occurred in 2025, and more are planned for 2026. These reroutes address erosion and other “problem” areas on the Park’s trail system.

Horse Camp upgrade/expansion: Thanks to the FOM, the Park was connected to a class at NDSCS that will be surveying the existing horse camp and adjacent fields, then preparing conceptual designs for an improved/expanded horse camp – which would address all the issues that have been raised

in the past, level roads and campsites, electric hookups, mounting platform, water access, and more. Once we have some conceptual designs, we hope to start seeking approval and funding to make the project a reality. This first phase of the project is funded with horse pass dollars and in-kind donations from the college.

Other things we are thinking about and laying groundwork on now, for potential projects in the future, include:

Bike rentals: The park is exploring options to have a concessionaire provide bike rentals at Maplewood State Park, like what Glendalough offers, although starting at a much smaller scale.

Knoll Campground improvements: The Park is considering options to address erosion issues on the road leading into Knoll, and to potentially convert site 46 to its originally intended use – access for campers to get on Grass Lake, including watercraft rentals and a dock.

Outreach: The park continues to look for opportunities to engage with underserved communities and non-traditional park users, including potential partnerships with local governments and organizations.

The Park is also taking a proactive approach with the Friends of Maplewood to provide you with more opportunities to help improve the Park. I met

with the board recently and shared a list of projects for the board's consideration and a list of projects that could be considered for fundraising, from small \$500 to multi-million-dollar projects. For example, here are some things that are currently underway:

Picnic shelter gardens: Following a Friends beautification volunteer event earlier in the fall that helped clear out a lot of the overgrown vegetation around the shelter, plans are now being made for the long-term plantings and landscaping.

Entrance sign: The entrance sign and garden around it were a Friends project, I believe, around 2001. The garden has become overgrown over the years and needs a full rehab. FOM volunteers have cleared the initial overgrowth, with plans to turn the garden into prairie plantings next season. The sign is also due for cleaning and re-painting, which we hope to accomplish in 2026.

Equestrian Volunteer Day: Plans are being made for a volunteer workday on April 25, 2026, with the idea of engaging with Maplewood's trail riders to

accomplish some miscellaneous projects in the horse campground and on the horse trails.

Volunteer training: We are piloting a new volunteer training program with some members of the Friends of Maplewood's maple syrup team that will allow them to utilize certain park equipment, including vehicles, UTV's, trailers, and the park's tractor. Once graduated from the training program, which will require each participant to log nearly 20 hours of online and hands-on training, they will be able to safely operate this equipment, following the same rules and requirements that park staff follow. A lot is going on, and there is much more to come! We appreciate the partnership and look forward to continued success in our stewardship and improvement of Maplewood State Park.



Scenes from Leaf Days 2025!

Magic (cont'd from page 2)

Perhaps, as you walk down the trails, you will begin to notice or feel a little bit of the world's magic all around you, calling to you. Maybe you'll be walking down the trail and hear the calls of the last of the Canada Geese as they migrate in search of open bodies of water, and think to yourself, "Where do the geese go?." Perhaps you'll come up with several answers to that single question. It is nothing a good ponder and a wander in the woods can't solve, with perhaps a little internet searching once you return to your car. I will let you find the answers to the question of why birds migrate on your own time.

I hope you enjoy your time wandering around the park, however you decide to enjoy it. For now, I will leave you with the last few lines of the poem 'Wild Geese' by Mary Oliver:

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*



MAPLE SYRUP SCHOOL EDUCATION

Next spring, after the sap season ends, approximately from April 24 to May 20, the Friends of Maplewood offer free maple syrup education to schools, usually grades 4–12. However, we also have a second-grade group that comes every year, so we can be flexible. The education consists of five stations where kids learn how to identify maple trees, tap a tree and collect sap, how Native Americans collected and made maple syrup, how to cook sap into maple syrup, and what is in maple syrup, along with a chance to taste sap and maple syrup.

Our education season occurs after sap season because the weather is generally nicer, usually free of snow and mud, making it more enjoyable for students. Schools send one grade level at a time, and they spend the day engaged. The morning is dedicated to educational activities, after which they enjoy lunch at the picnic shelter, topped off with a cup of ice cream drizzled with maple syrup. They finish their day with a hike up Hallaway Hill before heading back to school.

If you have an interest or questions, would like to volunteer to help teach children, or would like to schedule a visit, contact John Nordstrom nordlake7@hotmail.com or 218-841-7673. Don't worry; you don't have to know anything about how to make maple syrup. We will have you observe first, and all information is printed off to make it very simple. Volunteers are the backbone of this education project. Give us a try.

Board of Directors

Denise Laymon, President
Linda Today, Vice President
Beth Pladson, Treasurer
Kim Nelson, Secretary
Lynn Carlson
Judi Engebretson
Ruth Holmgren
Tom Schultz
Brian Nelson

DO YOU ENJOY THE OUTDOORS? The Friends of Maplewood are seeking volunteers to help tap and process maple syrup. If interested, contact Brian Nelson at 218-790-5541 for additional information.

Leave a Legacy! Planned gifts to the Friends of Maplewood State Park, a 501(c)3 organization, is a powerful way to ensure the sustainability of Maplewood State Park for generations. An estate or other planned gift can be made through wills, trusts, retirement funds, life insurance, stock or real estate. Contact us at friendsofmaplewoodstatepark@gmail.com for more information.

Photo Contest Winners!

Friends of Maplewood hosted a photo contest for Juniors aged 12-17 and Seniors 18+, for photos taken in Maplewood State Park of scenery, wildlife, plant life, or activities. Thanks to all entries! Here are the judges' selections.



1st Place, Sr. Div., Amy Potts, \$40



2nd Place, Sr. Div., Amy Potts, \$30



3rd Place, Sr. Div., Mara Davis, \$25



1st Place, Jr. Div., Daleyza Ramirez, \$25

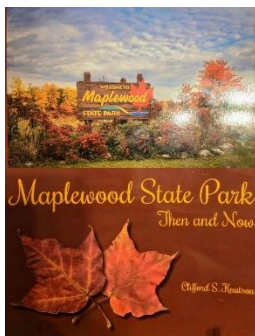


2nd Place, Jr. Div., Hadassah Martinez, \$15



3rd Place, Jr. Div., Dulce Garcia, \$10

For Sale!



“Maplewood State Park: Then and Now” is written by long-time volunteer and friend of Maplewood State Park Clifford Knutson. Filled with history, photos, and stories that showcase the park’s natural beauty, this book makes a wonderful gift or keepsake for anyone who loves Maplewood. Pick up your copy today at Victor Lundeen Company, Mercantile on Main, or the Otter Tail County Historical Society.

Friends of Maplewood State Park are selling our pure maple syrup! A 16-ounce bottle costs \$20. Call Lynn at 218-731-2989 to place your order!

Friends of Maplewood Misson

The MISSION of the Friends of Maplewood State Park is to support and encourage the Park’s recreational, interpretive, educational and environmental activities through leadership, volunteerism, program development and fund raising.

Founded in 1994.



Memorials, Donations, & Planned Giving

Lifetime

#85 Bank Pelican Rapids

#86 Mike and Linda Haarstad

In Memory Given by

Orlean Rudie	Pat Rudie
Jerri Baker	Ron & Cheryl Baker
Chet Nettestad	Jeff & Beth Pladson
Miriam Lundin	Kelly Beaudin
Joshua Hanson	Galen & Sharon Vaa
Duane Bohne	Ruth & Van Holmgren
Tyson Wells	Robert & Mary Bowers
Miriam Lundin	Larry & Jane Hansen
Miriam Lundin	Joyce Shea
Miriam Lundin	Gerald & Jeanne Larren
Miriam Lundin	Jeffrey & Lisa Hoplin
Miriam Lundin	Judy Johnson
Duane Bohne	Dave & Teresa Lisko
Connie Michealson	Paul & Connie Miller
Dick Muehlhausen	Garnet Muehlhausen
Alma Ronningen	John & Bonnie Nordstrom
Chet Nettestad	Carol Boole
Orlean Rudie	Carol Boole
Walter & Lavone Albright	Thomas Albright
Merilyn Fischer	Rod Mittelsteadt
Ervin Ohman	Iris Ohman
James Lindenfesler	Terry Lindenfesler

In Honor of

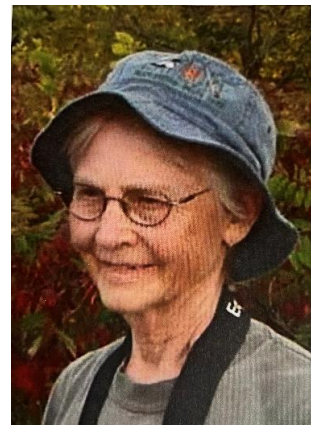
"all the volunteers"	Elton & Gabriele Lezon
Don DelGreco	Karen Homan
Maple Syrup program	Brian & Kim Nelson
Park Enthusiasts	Jeana Schiffler

2025 Financial Donations

Charlie & Elaine Blixt	Nancy Palubicki
Faith Waldoch	Landon Ohe
Scott & Laurie Behr	Tom McDougall
Jeff & Diane Gerst	Robert Backman

Donations (cont'd)

Tom Colman	Dave & Sharon Kline
Jerry & Kim Pederson	Laurie Behr
Tom & Sherri Schultz	Mary Brinkman
Dennis & Lisa Ouren	Don & Sue Kunelius
Susan Kohler	Everett & Deb Ballard
Steve & Diane Millard	Joan & Dave Jarvis
Steven & Diana Spitzer	Teri Thorsen



This past August, we lost a cherished friend and dedicated supporter of Friends of Maplewood, Alma Ronningen. She served as the secretary for many years, and you could always count on her to send out the minutes of our meetings within an hour after they concluded. It was enjoyable working with her at our events. Our conversations often revolved around the birds she observed, the flowers, or whether the ospreys had returned to her yard. We are grateful for all she contributed to the Friends of Maplewood. Alma grew up in Maplewood and has returned to her hometown. Rest in Peace, Alma.

We Take Pride in Our Park

Our organization consists of members who enjoy and appreciate this great natural resource. Our goal is to work with park management on various projects and events so that you and your family can enjoy the park year-round.

Maplewood State Park

39721 Park Entrance Road, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572

https://stateparks.com/maplewood_state_park_in_minnesota.html

3 Ways to Join or Donate to Friends of Maplewood

1. Scan the QR code and choose the membership and payment option that works for you.
2. Click on this link to access our membership form and payment options.
<https://form.jotform.com/241023977604153>
3. Complete and return this application with a check **payable to Friends of Maplewood** and mail it to PO Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572.



Choose one: ☐ I am a new member. ☐ I am renewing my 2025 membership.
AND/OR ☐ I want to donate.

Choose one: ☐ Single \$10 ☐ Couple \$15 ☐ Family \$30 ☐ Lifetime \$500
☐ Corporate \$250 ☐ I am interested in information about a planned gift.

☐ I am interested in hearing more about volunteer opportunities! (**check if interested**)

☐ I prefer to receive my newsletter ☐ electronically OR ☐ in the mail (**choose one**)

Name

Address

City State Zip

Phone email

☐ Additional Donation in MEMORY OF

☐ Additional Donation in HONOR OF

Friends of Maplewood is a 501(c)3 organization.

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Cut here and return to Friends of Maplewood at PO Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572



Friends of Maplewood

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