Tracks & Trails

Glendalough State Park • Battle Lake, MN • Summer 2026 • Issue #121

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Glendalough State Park

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Park Manager Glendalough

Tracks & Trails is the newsletter of Glendalough State Park published quarterly by the Glendalough Park Partners

Tracy Kortlever
Membership

Walk for Glendalough a Big Success, Thank You!

Saturday, April 25th marked the 30th anniversary of The Walk for Glendalough. It was a fine day for a walk! Young and old enjoyed the richness of Glendalough on Earth Day weekend with its pristine setting, wildlife, interpretive qualities, and diverse recreation. Guests began arriving at 9am, and the park staff had prepared a beautiful park setting for the event! Over $14,000 was raised, adding to what's been amassed in Walk donations since 1996.

At noon, Glendalough Citizens Advisory Board president, Dave McRoberts, opened the brief program by welcoming the public.

Walk for Glendalough
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Top fundraiser Linda Poll receives her Greg Gerhart Glendalough print from board member Tracy Kortlever.

A Partnership for the Next Generation

By Sean Belmont,
Glendalough Advisory Board Member,
Battle Lake School Board Member

On a very cold May afternoon with windchills hovering in the upper 30s, a group of Battle Lake 4th graders laced up their boots and headed out onto our trails. It wasn't exactly ideal outdoor weather, but the kids didn't seem to mind. "It was so cool," one student said afterward. "We saw really pretty flowers and some rare bird nest (it was an Osprey, which is indeed rare for us) that people hardly ever get to see." Hard to argue with that.

Natural Fit

For the students of Battle Lake School, Glendalough has always been just down the road. What's changing is how we'll be using it together.

Glendalough and Battle Lake School have partnered before, and there's a shared history of students coming out to the park to learn. What's happening now is more of a revival and building something more intentional and lasting.

Much of the credit goes to Dora, our park Naturalist, who has taken the lead in reestablishing this partnership. Dora has been working directly with Battle Lake administrators, teachers, and board members to develop programming that connects to what students are already learning in the classroom. She's the one who brought those 4th graders out on that cold May afternoon, pointed out the wildflowers pushing up

Partnership
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President's Remarks

By Dave McRoberts
President of the Glendalough Advisory Board

First, THANK YOU Park Partners for all your support in making our 30th anniversary Walk for Glendalough a success! We look forward to seeing you at the park this summer.

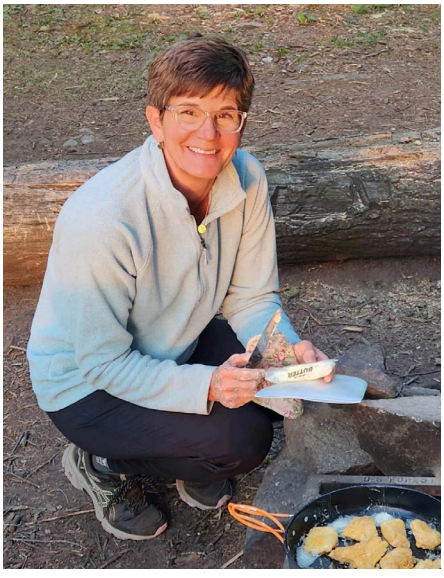
A group of us had our annual friend's camping trip at Glendalough recently, and it was a wonderful weekend! So many young families enjoyed hiking, biking, boating, fishing, and camping. The wildlife was busy too. While we sat around the campfire, we saw Sandhill Cranes, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Canada Geese, ducks, Yellow Rumped Warblers, Chickadee, Nuthatch, a few species of woodpeckers, sparrows, swallows, turkey and deer. Best of all, there were no mosquitoes this time of year. Where else can this happen in such a beautiful setting of lakes, sloughs, prairies, and forests? It's all right here at Glendalough State Park. All you need is a $35 vehicle permit which gives you access to all 73 (that's right!) state parks and recreation areas for 12 months. This year's permit even features Glendalough State Park!

Part of Glendalough State Park's charm is how undeveloped and peaceful it remains. Much of the land surrounding the park has been protected through conservation easements established by neighboring property owners, helping preserve the area's natural character. To the north lies Blanche Lake, to the east is Lake Emma, and to the south are archaeological sites of historical significance.

Property west of the park entrance was recently purchased by the City of Battle Lake, though its future use has not yet been determined. If that land is eventually developed, it could permanently alter the quiet, secluded character that makes Glendalough so special.

The 2027 Minnesota State Park vehicle permit features Glendalough State Park. Make sure you get yours!

New Board Member



Lisa Malmstrom, Glendalough Board's newest member

Saying yes to serving on the Glendalough Board was an easy decision for me. Like many of you, I consider Glendalough to be "my backyard park", where I've spent hundreds of hours over the years in all seasons. Somewhere along the way, Glendalough stopped being just a destination and became part of who I am.

From paddling to biking to miles of hiking, our family has enjoyed everything that Glendalough has to offer. It truly is a place of solitude and simplicity – the kind of place that provides the mental reset we all need in our busy lives.

In 2025, I committed to get outside every day and take a nature photo. Many of those 365 images were captured within Glendalough's borders. My camera roll is filled with beautiful landscapes, tiny intricate flowers, towering trees, and charming little mushrooms discovered along the trails as part of my own nature treasure hunt. Even after countless visits, the park continues to surprise me with something new to notice and appreciate.

I look forward to serving the park, supporting its future, and encouraging others to discover the beauty, peace, and connection that make Glendalough such a special place.

Why We Teach Outdoors

By Mona Davis, 4th grade teacher, Prairie Science Class, Fergus Falls Public Schools

Molly Stoddard, retired educator, Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

What if a practical solution exists that addresses mental and physical health struggles, stress, the disconnect between people and nature, and natural resource depletion?

What if this same solution also connects families and communities, boosts school attendance, increases enrollment, increases per pupil funding, teaches critical thinking, strengthens social development, delivers improved test scores, reduces behavior interventions, and creates a positive school culture?

That solution exists in your school yard and at Glendalough. Outdoor nature education fosters resilience, creativity, and connection by using nearby nature as a living classroom. It is an important tool in natural resource management which provides local residents the opportunity to support conservation and contribute to growing the healthy and sustainable communities we all rely on for life.

Getting kids outside often is a large part of the Minnesota Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. Nature provides a multi-sensory experience with invaluable teachable moments. There is no app for that!

Nearby nature makes learning easier because students observe real life, first-hand, making lessons authentic and concrete, bringing books to life. Teachers can expand the four walls of their indoor classrooms to include the sky overhead, grass beneath their feet, fresh air to breathe, and the joy and wonder of discovery together. By doing so, they positively enhance the culture of education, learning, and nature stewardship.

Students who frequently learn outside get a double education, one that supports state academic standards while becoming experts of their home biome, becoming aware, knowledgeable, and skilled naturalists. Nature sparks an endless sense of wonder, an effective motivation for learning about the beauty, mystery, and surprises of the world we live in. Movement, fresh air, and a change of scenery are beneficial for all students to refresh their minds and awaken their bodies. Outdoor learning increases mindfulness and supports positive mental health. It levels the playing field for students who struggle to sit still and listen because there is so much color, movement and sound to notice.

We invite you to place yourself and children you love under the beneficial influences of nature where learning is never boring because there is always something new to discover and explore.

Partnership

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through the chill, and made sure they left with a memory they won't soon forget. Teachers have shared areas of interest for their students and together we've identified themes and will directly tie them into Minnesota state teaching standards. Themes include the lifecycle and biodiversity of prairies, animal adaptations and fisheries, environmental stewardship and human impacts, glacial geology and local waterways, bird migration and the interconnectedness of ecosystems, and the history of this land, including the rich Native American history of the park.

Why This Matters

Battle Lake School aims to give students meaningful experiences beyond the classroom, and Glendalough offers exactly that. Few schools have such easy access to outdoor learning opportunities that students can return to again and again. Those hands-on experiences leave lasting impressions. Seeing an Osprey nest or learning about glacial history while standing on the landscape itself creates connections a textbook simply can't match. From where I sit, serving on both the Glendalough Advisory Board and the Battle Lake School Board, it's been awesome to watch this partnership develop with genuine enthusiasm. Both Dora and the school staff are doing great work to reestablish the partnership

An Invitation

Community interest in supporting park programming has been encouraging. Volunteers have already offered to help lead activities, assist Dora in the field, and support programs in other ways. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact the park. The programming will also be open to homeschool families. Those interested in nature-based learning opportunities at Glendalough should watch for upcoming details or contact the school.

Looking Ahead

Those 4th graders who braved the cold went home with muddy boots, rosy cheeks, and stories to tell. Many of them saw a rare Osprey nest - something plenty of adults around here have never had the chance to witness. We're grateful to Dora for her leadership in making this partnership real, to the teachers and administrators at Battle Lake for leaning in, and to everyone in this community who cares about connecting young people to this place. There's more to come, and we're glad to be building it together.

Summer Programs & Events 2026

JUNE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

Jr. Rangers: Birds **10–10:45am**
Come and learn about the wonderful world of birds with Naturalist Dora. This program is for children ages 3 and up and their adults. Meet at the Dining Hall.

Wildflower Walk **2pm**
Join Naturalist Dora on a half mile loop to see what is blooming in the prairie. Meet at the Prairie Hill Parking Lot.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11

Nature Table: Bald Eagles 9:30–11am
Swing by the table for 10 minutes and learn about our national bird. Dining Hall and Lodge Area.

Summer Series **3pm**
Join Naturalist Dora and a guest presenter and learn about a wide range of topics focused on the natural world that surrounds us. Meet at the Picnic Shelter.

FRIDAY, JUNE 19

First Timer Fishing **9:30–11am**
Learn to fish with Naturalist Dora. Practice casting, learn about lures, hopefully catch a fish, and learn how to release it! Limited number of spaces. Meet at the Picnic Shelter.

Birding Beaver Pond Trail **2:30pm**
Bring your binoculars and come hit the trail with Naturalist Dora. We will wander down the 1.4-mile loop scanning the tree tops and skies in search of songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors. Meet at the Dining Hall.

THURSDAY, JUNE 25

Summer Series **3:00pm**
Join Naturalist Dora and a guest presenter all summer long and learn about a wide range of topics focused on the natural world that surrounds us! From June 11th through August 20th join us every other Thursday at 3pm in the park. Meet at the Dining Hall.

JULY

FRIDAY, JULY 3

Prairie Fireworks **9am**
Let's go check out what is bursting into bloom in the prairie! This will be a half mile loop on a grassy trail uphill. Meet at the Prairie Hill Parking Lot

SATURDAY, JULY 4

Float on the 4th **10am**
Bring or rent your own kayak or canoe, life jacket, and paddles and float through the creek between Molly Stark and Annie Battle Lakes for some fun on the Fourth of July! Meet at the Molly Stark Picnic Area Fishing Pier.

Good Old-Fashioned Fun **2pm**
Join Naturalist Dora and make some tasty ice cream to celebrate the country's 250th birthday today! Meet near the Lodge.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

Jr. Rangers: Lake Study 10–10:45am
Join Naturalist Dora in the lake to see what little creatures are living underwater at Glendalough State Park. Geared towards kids, but open to all people who are kids at heart. Meet at the Molly Stark Picnic Area.

Woodland Walk **10–10:45am**
Let's talk about the history of the park as we walk between the trees along Beaver Trail. This is a 1.4-mile loop on mostly flat terrain. Meet at the Dining Hall

THURSDAY, JULY 9

Summer Series **3pm**
Join Naturalist Dora and a guest presenter and learn about a wide range of topics focused on the natural world that surrounds us. Meet at the Dining Hall.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Art in the Park: Watercolor **3pm**
Learn the basics of painting outdoors with watercolors. Materials will be provided. Meet in the Dining Hall.

FRIDAY, JULY 17

First Timer Fishing **9:30–11am**
Learn to fish with Naturalist Dora! Practice casting, learn about lures, hopefully catch a fish, and learn how to release it. Limited number of spaces. Meet at the Picnic Shelter.

Nature Table: Prairie Grass **3–4pm**
Swing by for 10 minutes and learn about the wild world of prairie grass. Meet at the Picnic Shelter.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Prairie Hill Hike **8:30am**
Join Naturalist Dora on a stroll through the prairie and learn about this important ecosystem. Meet at the Prairie Hill Parking Lot.

THURSDAY, JULY 23

Summer Series **3pm**
Join Naturalist Dora and a guest presenter and learn about a wide range of topics focused on the natural world that surrounds us. Meet at the Dining Hall.

FRIDAY, JULY 31

Nature Table: Animal Furs 10–11am
Stop by for a few minutes and learn about animals that live in the park and feel their fur. Meet at Sunset Lake Trailhead.

AUGUST

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

Woodpecker Walk **9am**
Join Naturalist Dora to walk a mile through the woods listening and looking for signs of woodpeckers. Meet at the Dining Hall.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

Jr. Rangers: Bugs **10–10:45am**
We are going on a bug hunt to see what we can see! And to learn about what important roles bugs play in the world. Meet at the Molly Stark Picnic Area.

Nature Table: Birds **2–3pm**
Stop by the table and get a chance to use binoculars to see who is calling in the trees around the picnic area! Meet at the Molly Stark Picnic Area.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

Creek Paddle **9am**
Bring or rent your own kayak or canoe, life jacket, and paddles and float through the creek between Molly Stark and Annie Battle Lakes for a relaxing paddle. Meet at the Molly Stark Picnic Area.

Summer Series: Wild Rice Management and Harvest **3pm**
Join the DNR's Area Wildlife Supervisor, Nicholas Snavely, for a talk about the management and harvest of wild rice in the state. Meet at the Molly Stark Picnic Area.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

Sunset Lake Stroll **4pm**
Meander the woods and prairies around sunset lake with Naturalist Dora and learn about the unique habitat created where the forest meets the prairie. Meet at the Sunset Lake Trailhead.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

Jr. Rangers: Monarch Butterflies **10–10:45am**
It's monarch butterfly season! Join Naturalist Dora as we dive into theamazing world of monarch butterflies. Meet outside the Ranger Office.

Nature Table: Monarch Butterflies **1:30–3pm**
Stop by the table and learn about the wild migration journey these little creatures make each year! Meet outside the Ranger Office.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

Summer Series **3pm**
Join Naturalist Dora and a guest presenter and learn about a wide range of topics focused on the natural world that surrounds us. Meet at the Dining Hall.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

First Timer Fishing **9:30–11am**
Learn to fish with Naturalist Dora! Practice casting, learn about lures, hopefully catch a fish, and learn how to release it. Llimited number of spaces. Meet at the Picnic Shelter.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

Prairie Palette **9:30–11am**
This time of year, the prairie starts to change its colors. Come walk through the prairie in search of a rainbow of color! Meet at the Sunset Lake Trailhead.

For more information about any of the listed programs, email Park Naturalist Dora at dora.obrien@state.mn.us or call 218-261-6904. ***Programs are subject to change.***

Walk for Glendalough *continued from page 1*

He then introduced Senator Jordan Rasmussen who shared thoughtful remarks about Glendalough State Park and echoed Franklin D. Roosevelt's belief that parks are a uniquely American idea. Attendees also heard from Christa Maxwell, Parks & Trails Assistant Regional Manager. Finally, Park Manager Jeff Wiersma provided updates on current and future Glendalough projects.

The program closed with recognition for the top 2026 Walk fundraisers – Linda Poll, Ken and Mary Jo Wentz, and Tom Colman – who each received a beautiful Greg Gerhart Glendalough print to display in their homes.

Special thanks to our local businesses and sponsors for their generous contributions: Larry's Foods, Amor Pork, Lake Country Gardens, Falls Baking Company, Otter Tail Lakes Property Owners Association, Girard Township, Everts Township, and Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota. Appreciation goes out to the DNR and park staff for their ongoing partnership and dedication. The Walk is only possible because of the strong sense of community we share.

Park Partners are proud to be part of such a supportive community, and we look forward to seeing you at Glendalough.

Ken Wentz receives his Greg Gerhart Glendalough print from board member Tracy Kortlever.

Board chair Dave McRoberts presents Tom Colman with his Glendalough print.

Manager's Report for Tracks and Trails

May 15, 2026

From St. Paul/Region

The National Outdoor Recreation Conference was held in Duluth in May with outdoor recreation professionals and vendors attending from all over the United States and even some from overseas.

A new Junior Ranger booklet will be coming out this summer. This popular Parks and Trails program teaches kids about nature and helps them to earn a special patch. The older booklets will continue to be available also.

Fire danger remains high over much of Minnesota, including Glendalough. Keep fires low, attend them at all times, and make sure they are out before you leave them.

Project Update

NEW TRAIL CENTER – Picnic tables and benches have been ordered and should arrive in early June. Two black cherry trees were planted this spring. A few of the trees planted last fall did not make it, primarily due to deer damage. Photos have been selected for the interior acoustic panels, and some issues with the vendor's sizes are being worked out. Water softener installation is funded and should occur soon. A new purple martin gourd rack was installed on the north island of the parking lot. The placement of tongue-in-groove lumber behind the exterior fascia is complete. (Looks great!)

ANNIE BATTLE CARRY-IN ACCESS – Final design is done, but project is waiting on federal review. Timeline has been postponed to late August and fall construction. The paving of the road from the Trail Center to the bridge will be completed in coordination with the access project. There may be some impacts to watercraft rentals and access to the Old Camp (lodge, dining hall, Annie beach) during construction.

CAMPGROUND SHOWER BUILDING – New water softeners installed, and two sinks repaired.

HAZARD TREES – Three hazard trees were removed in the campground. Removal of some leaning and damaged trees on the bike trail continues.

POWER LINE BURIAL – Otter Tail Power is committed to burying the Glendalough power lines and removing the wooden poles this summer. (This does not include the metal high voltage lines.) Review for cultural and natural resource considerations is proceeding. The new line will follow the old township road on the west that goes past the park office and then follow the main park road.

Jeff's Jottings

Purple martins, the largest swallow in North America, are a species of special concern in Minnesota. They are entirely dependent on man-made nesting structures for reproduction. Glendalough hasn't seen many martins in several years, and none have nested here for decades, but there are martin colonies nearby that may spread to the park, now that the nesting gourds are available. We may not see any this summer, but if juveniles visit in the fall, we could see some next spring. Don't be fooled by the two decoys!

Park Manager Jeff Wiersma attended the National Outdoor Recreation Conference in Duluth and was surprised to meet Damian Clarke, the manager of Wicklow Mountains National Park in Ireland, home to the original Glendalough valley for which our park is named!

An osprey is building a nest on a wooden power pole west of the office. For safety reasons, it will probably have to be removed, but if you want to see an osprey while permits are pending.

Over 500 students have visited Glendalough this spring with more to come. Though camping has dropped a bit so far this year, day use attendance is about 4,000 visitors over last year at this time.

The proposed housing development adjacent to the park is back on the Battle Lake City Council agenda – stay tuned.

New Trail Center

New purple martin gourd rack

Honk, Honk. Let's Rent Some Fun.

For the past eleven years, Galloping Goose Rentals has helped visitors make the most of their time at Glendalough State Park. Whether you're exploring the park trails or enjoying time on the water, they offer convenient rentals both inside the park and at their downtown Battle Lake location. Here's some helpful information about what they offer and how to connect with them.

Q: Please tell us about the types of bikes you rent.

A: Adult and youth Trek bikes are the most commonly rented. But our specialty bikes are popular too. We have e-bikes, surrey (e-surrey and traditional), fun bikes and recumbents.

Q: What's the busiest day of the week for rentals?

A: As you might expect, Friday and Saturdays are the busiest. Visit us early in the week, if possible.

Q: Besides bikes, what kinds of things do you rent?

A: Row boats, motorboats, kayaks, canoes, and hydro bikes.

Q: What's the story of the Galloping Goose name?

A: The name Galloping Goose has local roots, inspired by the old Northern Pacific Railroad "Galloping Goose" rail car that once made a daily trip from Staples MN through Battle Lake to Oakes ND. The rail car carried mail, freight and passengers, and locals said its air horn sounded so much like a real goose that it was easy to mistake the two.

Q: Any charming stories about a rental experience at Galloping Goose?

A: A couple celebrating their 60th anniversary rented our three-passenger surrey for what was supposed to be a be a one-hour outing. Instead, they spent three leisurely hours making their way around the six-mile park loop, soaking in the scenery and enjoying every minute of it. By the end of the ride, they said they'd had an absolutely wonderful time at Glendalough.

For more information and prices, visit GallopingGooseRentals.net

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New and Renewing Park Partners

MARCH 2026 TO MAY 2026

We received 140+ donations from Park Partners. Thank you to everyone for your support of Glendalough State Park!

Memorials, Honors, and Appreciation

Memorial given in honor of LeLand and Carol Larson from KC Lawn

Donation given in honor of Grace Stoebe for her many years of support for Glendalough and the Walk from Beth and Bill Reid

Glendalough State Park Advisory Board

Dave McRoberts, President (2026)
Dan Christensen, Vice President (2028)
Peter Christianson, Treasurer (2027)
Tracy Kortlever (2027)
Chris Estes (2028)
Sean Belmont (2026)
Mary Phillipe (2027)
Petric Van Erp (2028)
Lisa Malmstrom (2026)

Glendalough TRAIL
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For information about Park Partners, upcoming events, and archived *"Tracks & Trails"* newsletters, visit **morethanatrail.com/getting-involved/**

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