MEET THE LOCALS: DON DEL GRECO

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By Heather Rule

Don Del Greco retired in October 2024 after 40 years of working with the state of Minnesota and the Department of Natural Resources. Locally, he was a park ranger at Maplewood State Park for the past 14 years.

A native of Buhl, Minn., Del Greco discovered his "appreciation and wonder and awe" of the abundance of the iron range on the edge of the boundary waters.

"I was captivated by butterflies, insects, birds, and especially butterflies captured my heart early on, and then I pursued that into a career as a biologist," Del Greco said.

Del Greco's career started in fisheries work in Voyageurs National Park in the northeastern corner of Minnesota. He also worked with fisheries and state parks in southeastern Minnesota before becoming a park ranger at Whitewater State Park.

He and his wife moved to Otter Tail County, and he served as the head park ranger, park supervisor and park manager at Maplewood State Park for the past 14 years. The landscape of Maplewood is what captivated him, Del Greco said.
"Just its sheer size, its sheer beauty and the beauty and wonder of the maple leaf hills and these western prairies, the deep beautiful lakes," Del Greco said. "Really provided me an opportunity to work with so many wonderful people in our park staff."

Some of his favorite things were working through the seasons and seeing people find rest, solitude, hope, peace and the beauty of nature through families visiting the park. He loves seeing the joy of people enjoy the beautiful resources.

"Connecting people to nature really has been a great joy and a pleasure for me, and an honor to help people come to find opportunities in these beautiful places," Del Greco said.

His day-to-day duties as a park ranger varied. He took pride in helping people connect and renew their spirit in nature while also answering questions about what visitors saw in the park or things they'd like to experience. He also enjoyed making places accessible for people to enjoy the park, which included the redesign of the most popular hike in the park, the Hallaway Hill Hiking Trail. That was redesigned about six years ago to provide a more accessible route to the top of the vista.

"I love to hike Hallaway Hill at sunrise and be on top of the mountain and look at the beautiful sunrise and experience nature from that perch quite often," Del Greco said.

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