



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

July 2007



About the Cover:

LaCrosse FRO Biologist Heidi Keuler pilots a boat up the Illinois River as silver carp follow in the boat's wake.

- USFWS photo

Bank Swallows Find Corporate Partner on Detroit River

Amidst industrial operations along the banks of the Detroit River, a colony of over 300 bank swallows has found a temporary home. Responding to improving habitat and a plentiful supply of insects on the river, the birds have built their nests in a 4,000-ton pile of dolomite owned by Detroit Bulk Storage. The colony was discovered this spring when Detroit Riverkeeper Bob Burns, Bruce Szczechowski and students from Southgate Anderson High School, and Greg Norwood of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were performing a colonial waterbird survey on the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

The dolomite pile where the bank swallows chose to raise over 1,000 young was approximately 50 feet

high, with a diameter of approximately 100 feet. The success of the nests was in jeopardy – any disturbance of the dolomite and the young could be lost. Fortunately, the birds had chosen a friendly landlord. Noel Frye, vice president of Detroit Bulk Storage said, “When we were made aware of the bank swallow nests, we were most pleased to limit our operations in the area and even place newly arrived material in another location to protect them during their critical nesting period.”

U.S. Steel owns the property and leases it to Detroit Bulk Storage. U.S. Steel spokesman Gary Kadu said, “U. S. Steel takes pride in its commitment to environmental protection as evidenced by recent improvements in air emissions and

shoreline habitat along the Detroit River, and we wanted to do whatever we could to help.”

This dolomite pile was clearly more than the birds could pass up. Boaters and fisherman cruising on the river were easily able to see this avian hotel, consisting of about 300 holes dug by the swallows using feet, head, and wings.

Considerable improvements in environmental quality have occurred in the Detroit River over the last 35 years, and the Detroit Metropolitan Area is gaining an international reputation for its public-private partnerships for conservation. The rewards of this environmental protection and conservation work can easily be seen in the rich diversity of wildlife that frequents this industrial heartland and

International Wildlife Refuge. Those fortunate enough to live or recreate on or near the banks of the Detroit River may see bald eagles and peregrine falcons soaring over the river, canvas-back ducks thriving amidst flurries of Bonaparte’s gulls, world record walleye being caught by fishermen, lake sturgeon returning to their spawning grounds, and now nesting bank swallows.

Barn swallow chicks hatch in late June to early July. The entire colony will be dispersed 30 days after most young hatch. All swallows will be completely gone from the area by early September. They depart for winter habitats in Suriname, Brazil, and southern Sinaloa to northeast Guerrero in Mexico. *Greg Norwood, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge*



- USFWS photo

Hundreds of bank swallows (and a couple Canada geese) have made this dolomite pile on U.S. Steel property their temporary nursery. Staff from the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge notified the company and U.S. Steel has made arrangements so the swallows can stay through the summer.

Bats and Boats Share Access to the Ohio River

Hoosiers came together in June to celebrate the opening of Charlestown Landing Boat Ramp and Overlook at Charlestown State Park in southern Indiana.

The boat ramp, which was funded by a combination of state and federal dollars, will greatly expand current access to the Ohio River. Two overlooks providing scenic views of the river were also constructed at the site.

The new facility is the latest in a series of cooperative activities at the site between the Service, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Defense.

It all began back in 1996, when the Bloomington, Indiana Field Office signed an agreement with the Department of Defense to conduct bat surveys at the Indiana Army Ammunition Plant at Charlestown in Clark County, Indiana.

In 1997, biologists from Bloomington discovered gray bats on the facility; this was a rare find as the state supports only one known maternity colony of this federally endangered species.

Staff conducted additional surveys in 1998 and in 2004, when biologists found the federally endangered Indiana bat at the site. The Army, which is in the process of closing the base, has worked closely with the Service to conserve the bats and meet Endangered Species Act requirements during the closure process.

As part of that process, a large portion of the base was given to the State of Indiana to expand Charlestown State Park. The Service worked with the Defense Department and the state to ensure that habitat for listed bats was protected and enhanced through the

park development process.

Staff from Bloomington's Environmental Contaminants have also been involved in this site, working closely both with Defense and the state to ensure that areas contaminated during ammunition production at the site were remediated to alleviate potential for contaminants to adversely affect the endangered bats at the site, and to provide areas where the public could safely enjoy the newly expanded state park.

The portion of the base that became part of Charlestown State Park includes Ohio River frontage, where the state wanted to construct a boat ramp and overlooks to provide public access to the waterfront. Both endangered bat species were known to use the forested areas adjacent to the river for foraging and travel corridors, and there was concern with maintaining forest cover to the river for the bats. The state and the Service worked closely to incorporate bat habitat considerations into the boat ramp design, which included provisions for minimizing the tree clearing for the boat ramp and associated developments. Trees were planted in some areas to create additional travel corridors and enhance existing forested corridors for the bats.



- USFWS photo by Lori Pruitt

Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels (left), Bloomington Field Office Supervisor Scott Pruitt (center), and Indiana DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife Director Glen Salmon (right) at the Charlestown Landing Boat Ramp dedication.

Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels delivered the keynote address at the dedication ceremony, which was attended by representatives of Federal, State, and Local government agencies, conservation organizations, and private citizens. Abbey Kucera, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3 Federal Assistance Branch Chief, provided comments at the dedication. A Federal Assistance grant provided partial funding for the facility. Scott Pruitt, Bloomington Supervisor, and Lori Pruitt, a Bloomington biologist, also attended the event.

Thanks to this successful partnership, both boats and bats now have access to the Ohio River at this site. The Service and the State plan to continue our partnership, including plans for developing educational displays at Charlestown State Park to educate the public about the endangered bats that live there. *Lori Pruitt, Bloomington Ecological Services Field Station*

Shiawassee Refuge Begins Ninth Year of Monitoring Avian Productivity

Volunteers and staff at Shiawassee NWR began their ninth year of participating in the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program at the refuge.

The MAPS program is coordinated by the Institute for Bird Populations and is endorsed by several federal agencies and conservation groups, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, National Audubon Society, and Partners in Flight.

One of the primary goals of MAPS is to track the population trends and productivity of more than 100 targeted bird species from data on the numbers and proportions of young and adult birds captured. The refuge's MAPS station is among over 500 across the continent and is one of only a few that monitors birds in grassland habitat.

Operating a MAPS station involves mist netting birds for six morning-hours per day, for one day during each of six 10-day periods. All birds captured are identified by species, age and sex and are ringed with a uniquely numbered aluminum band provided by USGS.

MAPS protocol requires participants to record all bird species seen or heard in the vicinity of the station on every day of operation.

Kids Fishing Day Activities A Big Success Thanks To Genoa Hatchery

In past years, staff from the Ashland Fishery Resource Office had used an electrofishing boat to collect largemouth bass for use during the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's Annual Kids Fishing Day. However, due to concerns about transferring fish pathogens, this year's relocation was cancelled. The Ashland FRO then



- USFWS photo by Steven Kahl

Shiawassee Refuge's David Peters works to remove a female red-winged blackbird from a mist net.

In addition, standardized quantitative habitat descriptions are prepared for each major habitat type contained in the station.

While contributing to a larger continental project, the refuge's MAPS station also yields important local information. The most common species captured at the refuge's MAPS site include common yellowthroat, red-winged blackbird, bobolink, and savannah sparrow.

Unusual species captured include American bittern, belted kingfisher, ruby-throated hummingbird, and mourning warbler.

One of the most successful years occurred the year following a prescribed fire at the MAPS station. Banders captured almost twice the annual average of individual birds after the burn. Interestingly, sedge wrens decreased dramatically that year. *Steve Kahl, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge*

called on the kind folks from the Genoa National Fish Hatchery who were able to save the day. Two hundred catchable size, certified disease free, rainbow trout were soon transported to Keweenaw Bay for three different fishing activities that took place over a three-week period. *Frank Stone, Ashland FRO*



- USFWS photo

Genoa Hatchery saves the day.

Refuge Interns from Across the Region Attend Workshop in Minnesota

Staff from the Regional National Wildlife Refuge System program hosted a workshop for 18 summer interns on July 12 and 13 in the Regional Office. The workshop brought all the interns together and offered them the opportunity to gain a better understanding of regional operations, both within the Refuge program, as well as in other programs such as ecological services, fisheries, migratory birds and external affairs. Program representatives from these areas, as well as the diversity and civil rights and federal assistance programs made presentations to the students on July 12. The students, currently stationed at refuge stations across the region also made their own presentations to the Regional Office staff on July 13.

This is the second year the Midwest Regional Office has hosted a summer workshop for interns, which is open to undergraduate and graduate degree candidates. Last year, the workshop was restricted to Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) interns; this year it was attended by student interns recruited by local refuge offices, as well as those recruited through ECO. Three students from the 2006 Workshop were offered SCEP appointments and are currently pursuing graduate degrees.

Highlights of the workshop included a tour of the Regional Office, several group discussions with Regional Director Robyn Thorson and a career path discussion led by Regional Refuge System Chief Nita Fuller. *Dan Sobieck, Regional Refuge Office.*

Detroit's Black Lagoon Becomes Ellias Cove

The City of Trenton, Mich., the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and many partners celebrated the restoration and revitalization of the Black Lagoon in a ceremony renaming it Ellias Cove. The ceremony took place on June 18, at Trenton's Meyer Ellias Park.

The Black Lagoon is a backwater embayment located in the Trenton Channel of the Detroit River. The Black Lagoon received its name in the mid-1980s when scientists investigating the Detroit River discovered that oil and grease released from the 1940s through the 1970s had accumulated in the sediment of Black Lagoon.

Those celebrating the restoration noted milestones of the effort, including:

- The U.S.-Canada research that identified the Black Lagoon as a contaminated sediment hotspot that allowed for development of remediation plans;
- The identification of the Black Lagoon as a management priority through the Detroit River Remedial Action Plan and Metropolitan Affairs Coalition's Greater Detroit

American Heritage River Initiative;

- The \$9.3 million remediation of Black Lagoon's contaminated sediment in 2004-2005 through the U.S. Great Lakes Legacy Act and the Clean Michigan Initiative;

- The \$151,000 shoreline habitat restoration completed in 2006; The 2007 awarding of \$582,000 from a Boating Infrastructure Grant from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to build a marina and further economic revitalization of downtown Trenton (\$200,000 will also be provided as local match from Trenton); and now

- The renaming of Black Lagoon as "Ellias Cove" in honor of the family who donated the adjacent land to Trenton that became Meyer-Ellias Park.

The project is an excellent example of how the Detroit River is rapidly gaining an international reputation for public-private partnerships for outdoor recreation, conservation, and quality of life. *John Hartig, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge*



- USFWS photo

The 2007 Midwest Region Refuge System Interns pose with Nita Fuller and Dan Sobieck (back row, left) during their recent meeting at the Midwest Regional Office.

Results are Mixed in Survey of Invasive Fish on Illinois Waterway

Illinois's sunny skies and warm temperatures greeted biologists from the Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners during the weeklong 2007 Goby Round-Up and Asian Carp Corral in June. Analysis of the results from four days of surveying fish along more than 180 miles of the Illinois Waterway yielded both good news and bad in the fight against invasive species.

During the 12th Goby Round-Up and 6th annual Carp Corral, 14 crews totaling 50 people monitored the Illinois Waterway from Blue Island to Havana. Participants represented federal agencies, state agencies and aquariums, as well as the Cook County Forest Preserve, the City of Chicago, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Field Museum of Natural History and The Nature Conservancy.

Objectives of this annual survey are to locate the downstream leading edge and relative abundance of round goby, and determine the relative abundance and upstream distribution of the invasive silver and bighead carp. In addition, crews collect round goby, bighead, silver, grass and common carp as part of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Wild Fish Health Survey.

Results just in from this year's surveys show that bighead carp have advanced to less than 50 miles from Lake Michigan, while round gobies have not advanced further downstream toward the Mississippi River.

Since 2002, an electrical fish barrier in the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal near Romeoville, Ill., has been in operation to slow or prevent the spread of nonnative aquatic species like gobies and Asian carp. The barrier was intended to prevent the round goby from advancing from Lake Michi-

gan to the Mississippi River; biologists and fishermen hope it will prevent Asian carp from reaching Lake Michigan.

The pilot barrier's electrodes are corroding; a new barrier built just downstream can repel small fish more effectively than the pilot barrier and will have a longer lifespan. The new barrier is being tested for commercial barge and recreational boater safety before it becomes fully operational.

During this year's surveys, biologists did not find round goby any farther downstream than where they were collected in July 2004 — just below the Peoria Lock and Dam, nearly 170 miles from Lake Michigan and half the distance to the Mississippi River. Abundance of the round goby seemed to decrease from last year in one stretch of the river in Joliet downstream from the barrier.

This year, survey crews collected a bighead carp at River Mile 281.5. Previously, the most upstream record of a bighead was from a 2002 collection at River Mile 275. This now places bighead carp about 15 miles below the electrical barrier and 45 miles from Lake Michigan. Based on the survey collections and on observations by anglers, biologists say that the number of bighead and silver carp are increasing in several pools of the river.

Biologists working in the Peoria Pool—the stretch of the river from Starved Rock State Park to Illinois River Mile 223—for the past four years have observed a significant increase in the number of Asian carp netted. They collected 236 bighead and silver carp this year, more than double last year's total.



- USFWS photo

Eric Leis, of the LaCrosse Fish Health Center, holds a bighead carp captured during the carp corral survey. Bighead carp have moved to within 45 miles of Lake Michigan.

Some 60 silver “flying” carp jumped in the survey boat.

Although it seems populations of Asian carp are increasing, the encouraging news is that they have not been collected above the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, about 35 miles from Lake Michigan.

During the sampling, crews also checked carp for bacterial and viral pathogens including Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia and Spring Viremia of Carp Virus (SVCV). In 2003, SVCV was found in common carp collected in the Calumet Sag Channel. Although it poses no threat to humans, it is highly contagious to carp, goldfish, koi, and minnows and could cause locally significant mortalities in these fish populations. The results from this year's sampling are not yet available. *Heidi Keuler, La Crosse Fishery Resources Office*

New Aquarium Offers Up-Close View of Big Fish at Genoa National Fish Hatchery

There are two questions that visitors to a national fish hatchery always ask: “Can I bring my fishing pole?” and “Do you have any big fish here?” While anglers may still be disappointed, visitors looking to catch a glimpse of big fish now have an excellent chance of seeing them at Genoa National Fish Hatchery.

Many of the broodstock at Genoa are held either in large ponds or are released back into the wild. A large aquarium was needed to provide a year-round look at the species cultured on the facility. This spring, visitors got their wish.

Development for a display tank began in November. The staff of Genoa decided to construct a 1,000-gallon welded aluminum tank with tempered glass inlaid into a wall inside the station’s sturgeon culture building. The location allows visitors a view of both the early and later life stages of lake sturgeon.

The aquarium project used the unique talents of the entire Genoa crew. Everyone helped with the

construction in some way, but much of the credit goes to the maintenance staff of Jeff Lockington and Dan Kumlin for their welding, electrical, and wood-working skills.

The tank has been up for only about three months, and already hundreds of local and out-of-state visitors have enjoyed the live fish display. Children and the young-at-heart are captivated by the aquatic life found in our lakes and rivers, and the aquarium provides an up-close view of many of the species of fish and mussels found in the Upper Mississippi River basin.

Right now, the tank displays 10 species of fish including bluegill, black crappie, yellow perch, wall-



- USFWS photo

Genoa Hatchery’s new aquarium gives visitors an up-close look at 10 species of fish and a variety of freshwater mussels.

eye, channel catfish, rainbow trout, brook trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and lake sturgeon. A variety of freshwater mussels are on display as well. All of the fish were reared on station over the past several years in order to avoid disease concerns which could be incurred if wild fish were brought on station. *Nick Starzl, Genoa National Fish Hatchery*

Volunteer Spreads the Sea Lamprey Story Far and Wide

Since retiring as a computer assistant in May 2006, former Service employee Barry Matthews has volunteered his time to become sea lamprey control’s personal outreach envoy.

Beginning in June 2006, and continuing through year’s end, Matthews contributed more than 200 hours reaching 1,150 people with information about sea lamprey control and other aquatic invasive species.

Continuing with his volunteer work in 2007, Matthews has logged about 140 hours of volunteer time at 10 outreach events where he interacts with grade school children and conducts interpretive programs in

state parks, maritime museums, and aboard the Inland Seas Education Association schooner, “Inland Seas.” So far in 2007 Barry has spread the invasive species story to nearly 1,600 persons around the Great Lakes region.

Volunteer Barry Matthews explains the sea lamprey invasion into the Great Lakes aboard the educational schooner, “Inland Seas” prior to his retirement in May 2006. Barry continues his passion for sea lamprey control by volunteering his time to conduct outreach events around the Great Lakes region. *Denny Lavis, Ludington Bio. Station*



- USFWS photo

Volunteer Barry Matthews explains the sea lamprey program aboard the educational schooner *Inland Seas*.

Regional Workshop Helps Connect People and Nature

There's a movement underway to evoke the consequential connections people have with nature and the Midwest Region is stepping forward to lead the way. During the week of June 18, Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge hosted the Regional Visitor Services Workshop. The theme of the workshop was *Connecting People and Nature*. More than 40 visitor services professionals gathered to learn, discuss and share techniques for managing visitor services programs that better connect our visitors to nature.

The workshop kicked off with an inspirational message from Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Don Hultman, refuge manager of the Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. The loss of connectedness to the natural world around us makes it difficult to see ourselves as part of the landscape. The challenge of the visitor services program is to find innovative ways to help create that link. Hultman reminded the participants, "You are the story tellers of refuges, a role vitally important to the health of our individual refuges and the broader Refuge System."

A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to learning more about environmental education. Participants developed a better understanding of how to determine if a program is interpretation or environmental education and benefits of each strategy. They were also introduced to 'Rhythms of the Refuge' a guide for developing effective environmental education programs. New methods were studied to determine which environmental education programs



Visitor services professionals share ideas at Neal Smith Refuge.

- USFWS photo

have outcomes that support the conservation mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, in order to make summative evaluation decisions about education programs at each field site. Hands-on examples of new approaches were practiced.

Group discussions focused on incorporating technologies and looking for different ways to reach out to children. With this in mind, Tom Worthington laid out a challenge for the development of a "Discovery Area" that emphasizes new and innovative ways kids can have unstructured play. A second challenge was to develop an innovative use of technology for visitors, both to be funded this year.

Other sessions included honing technical skills in analyzing visitors and what they do. They discussed

methods of counting visitors and gathering information on how visitors are spending their time on refuge lands. Participants learned optimum practices for developing quality signs to aid visitors and found new ways to work together in area teams. Jerome Ford, Assistant to the Director and Juancarlos Geise led a thought provoking discussion on how we reach out to minority and ethnic audiences.

In the end, participants went back to their stations with the tools to enhance the connections of people to nature. *Donna Stanek, Refuges Visitor Services and Outreach*

Chicago Field Office Assists Fishin' Buddies with Kid's Fest 2007

Kid's Fest is an annual event hosted by the Chicago Park District and Fishin' Buddies to teach children about fish and related aquatic topics, and to provide fishing and boating opportunities on the Chicago River.

Approximately 150 kids and adults attended the 2-day event. The kids rotated around to 10 educational stations. At the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service station, the children learned about water quality by using an Enviroscape watershed model, and learned about the importance of water quality for healthy fish and wildlife.

The Chicago Ecological Services Field Office has been involved with the Fishin' Buddies program for 11 years. *Cyndi Duda, Chicago Field Office*

- USFWS photo below
Fishin' Buddies teaches Chicago kids about fishing and aquatic topics.



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Attention Data Base Users

Marsh Birds: The Marsh Bird Monitoring Team has announced a public release of the web-based Marsh Bird Monitoring Database, a collaboration among several agencies. The database enables efficient storage and sharing of marsh bird survey data. Users can enter, export, obtain summaries and simple reports on a specific station's marsh bird survey data. The database was produced based on guidelines in the North American Standardized Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol.

The Biological Monitoring Team of the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System provided funding for the database development as well as formation of a group to inform the database development process and to work on survey protocols. Among the partners are Service biologists and project leaders, Dr. Courtney Conway and his associates (Arizona Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit/Univ. of AZ), and Bruce Peterjohn, Mark Wimer, and other database programmers (USGS Patuxent

Wildlife Research Center).

The website is available at: <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/point/mb/>

To obtain a username and password, contact Mark Wimer at mwimer@usgs.gov

Interested in Starting a Marsh Bird Monitoring Program? Contact Soch Lor at: socheata_lor@fws.gov

Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Research Inventory: The International Joint Commission (IJC) invites Great Lakes researchers to submit or update information on their projects for the online Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Research Inventory.

The Inventory depends for the most part on voluntary participation from scientists and agencies willing to share some time and information in a spirit of collaboration serving the best interests of the Great Lakes ecosystem. With information on approximately 1,200 projects, 980 principal investigators and 300 funding organizations, the database represents a valuable information resource for Great Lakes researchers, managers and policy makers.

Originally developed to help the IJC assess how research activities support the goals of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Research Inventory recently created direct links and data sharing agreements with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, the U.S./Canada Great Lakes Monitoring Exchange and the Great Lakes Regional Research Information Network. This move towards a more widely distributed network will continue and make this important tool available to a growing number of users.

The Research Inventory is available online at <http://ri.ijc.org>.

Contact: Mark Burrows, International Joint Commission - Great Lakes Regional Office, burrows.m@windsor.ijc.org

Around the Region



- USFWS photo

Staff from stations across Minnesota and Iowa attend a required chainsaw safety course held at Detroit Lakes WMD.



- USFWS photo by Ken Stromborg

Wildlife Biologist Sadie O'Dell approaches Green Bay NWR (Hog Island) during a colonial waterbird census.



- USFWS photo Steve Redman

(left to right) Ashland FRO Biologist Frank Stone and Wisconsin YCC Students Scott Stipetich and Sarah Fletcher use backpack shockers to capture and relocate fish from Schacte Creek, the primary water source for Iron River Hatchery, to reduce the chance of fish pathogens entering the hatchery.



- USFWS photo by Steven Kahl

Shiawassee Refuge Volunteer Stan Lilley identifies a Delaware skipper during the Refuge's first butterfly count.



- USFWS photo

Two Rivers Refuge Manager John Mabery (front row, right) joined conservation partners at the St. Charles, Mo., Bass Pro Shop to celebrate the Federal Duck Stamp First Day of Sale. Similar events were held at Bass Pro Shops across the Nation.



- USFWS photo by Robert Cail

Midwest Region Refuge Chief Nita Fuller (right) and Refuge System Chief Geoff Haskett get a close look at a sturgeon during a tour of Middle Mississippi River Refuge.

Coffee Table Confessional

Staff from the Regional External Affairs Office are occasionally allowed to leave their desks and actually go out and see the people, places and things we help to promote. While traveling around the Midwest Region, you can't help but notice the quality professionals we have working for the Service. In each destination, there is a unique story. We'll try to share as many of these stories with you as we can. This is one of them.

Lori Pruitt is the endangered species coordinator in the Service's Bloomington, Ind., Ecological Services Field Office. She started with the Service in 1994 after a stint as a deer biologist with the Indiana DNR. Lori spends much of her time as Indiana bat recovery coordinator while dividing remaining time among Indiana's 20 other federally listed species. EA's Georgia Parham caught up with Lori in between Indiana bat conference calls in the Bloomington Field Office.

EA: Why the passion for bats – and Indiana bats in particular?

Lori: I didn't start out working with bats – it was kind of thrust upon me. But my first job with the Service, as a term, involved work at Jefferson Proving Ground (now Big Oaks NWR). The base was closing, and when we surveyed the area we found Indiana bats. This became a major issue in the closure process, and I wound up working on the wildlife management plan. The more I worked with bats – mist netting, surveys – the more interested I became. I think bats are cool.

EA: It's not just you – your whole family loves bats – even the kids. How did that happen?

Lori: Well, during mist netting, we were always short-handed. Scott (Current BFO field Supervisor Scott Pruitt) and I took the kids with us so we could both go out in the field and for the extra help. I think the idea of staying up all night intrigued them, plus we always took a good supply of snacks, which were especially attractive to my son. The kids (Ross, now 18 and Morgan, 15),

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helped out a lot, raising and lowering the nets and keeping data. We didn't let them handle the bats, but they got up close to them, and I think that's why they're so interested in them.

EA: You and I work together on a lot of Indiana bat outreach. Why is outreach so important to you?

Lori: Bats are victims of myths. We need to educate people to gain support for bat conservation. I especially like working with kids. They think bats are interesting – kids like hearing about the bat's life history, how they hibernate. And then I show them a bat skeleton, and they're like, "Wow, bats look just like us." That recognition makes bats all the more interesting. And after all, we work for the American people – they should know what ecological value bats have, and why we're spending tax dollars on bats.

EA: You have an interesting assortment of outreach items in your office. Can you tell us about them?

Lori: Any piece of bat stuff that comes along, I buy it. I have bat rings that kids love. They're about 3 cents apiece – there aren't many great outreach tools you can get for that price. I have a bat tiara and scepter, bat wings and ears, which I'll use at the upcoming Great Lakes Bat Festival next month. But my favorite piece is that bat skeleton. Even young kids recognize the similarity to the human skeleton – it gets their attention.

EA: I've seen you hand out stickers that say "Ask me about bats."

Lori: I do, and I give each kid an interesting fact about bats and tell



- USFWS photo

Lori Pruitt in front of the entrance to a bat colony in Indiana.

them their homework is to let other people know how cool bats are.

EA: There are lots of interesting bat facts –

Lori: - Yes! Did you know that when Indiana bats are born, they weigh one-quarter of their mother's weight?

EA: Wow –

Lori: - That would be like a 120-pound woman giving birth to a 30-pound baby! You're a mother – can you relate to that?

EA: Yes, OK–

Lori: - And then the mother flies around with that baby – can you imagine?

EA: Well, that's certainly –

Lori: - And did you know that an Indiana bat weighs only about 6 to 7 grams? That's about the same as 3 pennies!

EA: I think your phone is ringing.

Inside Region 3



<http://midwest.fws.gov>

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