

NWRS 2009 Volunteer of the Year Award

This award was established to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of volunteers. Each year volunteers make up a critical work force that contributes over 1.5 million hours to the operation and management of the Refuge System.

Marie Springer, Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, NJ

In 2008 alone, Marie logged more than 2,000 hours of volunteer time for Wallkill River NWR and the Refuge System, the time and workload equivalent to that of a full time employee. A talented artist, she handmade 31 costumes of local nocturnal wildlife for the refuge's annual Nocturnal Creature Night, held each Halloween, and hand painted a 275-foot maze accurately depicting Wallkill River and its wildlife. Also a skilled researcher and wildlife enthusiast, Marie collected and documented over 5,000 native bees and educated the public about the importance of Wallkill's recently discovered endangered Indiana bat population. She has helped with bird counts, invasive species, and assisted with land acquisitions. Since its inception in 2006, Marie has served as the president of Friends of Wallkill River and helped to grow its membership to nearly 100.



Volunteer of the Year, Marie Springer

Marie's volunteerism extends beyond Wallkill River to surrounding refuges like Shawangunk Grasslands and Supawna Meadows NWRs as well as to the System as a whole. She coined the phrase, "Every Refuge Matters" and has played an integral role in forming and growing multiple Friends Groups and willingly shares her expertise in non-profit management with volunteers nationwide. Whether she is attending town meetings on proposed development adjacent to refuges or testifying before Congress in support of increased funding for the System, Marie is a bold advocate for refuges everywhere!