

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

April 2012

USFWS Midwest Region Excellence Awards



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Midwest Region Excellence Awards

Live from Bloomington, Minn. and broadcasted across the Midwest Region to all of Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin, the 2012 Midwest Region Excellence Awards Ceremony, themed with the 2012 Summer Olympics, was a huge success! Winners received plaques and the pictured medals. Service photo.



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Among the honorees is Dr. Carol Bocetti of the California University of Pennsylvania, who leads the recovery team for the endangered Kirtland's warbler.

By Georgia Parham

Passing the Torch

Here in the Midwest Region, spring is a time for recognition, acknowledgement, and gratitude. In the spirit of honoring the contributions of our staff, this year's Annual Midwest Region Awards is themed with the 2012 Summer Olympics, in the host city of Bloomington, Minn. As with any Olympic competition, it is a sizeable undertaking that acknowledges everyone's excellence, but rewards with medals, the very best of the best.

That said, I want to say that I appreciate all of the outstanding efforts that all of you make to keep the flame lit under our conservation mission. That which ignited your dedication to the care and preservation of our world must also ignite the torch that we must pass on to the next generation of conservation stewards. One way to do that is to pause and reflect on the exemplary work that we are doing today. This and every award ceremony that we have is our legacy to the Service's posterity.

I hope that most project leaders were able to set aside some time last month to show their appreciation to the great employees we have here in the Midwest Region. If you weren't able to do something last week, there is still time! It is always the right time to thank staff for their hard work and dedication. To that end, we have posted all the winners on pages 4-7, along with a video of the ceremony on our InsideFWS site: <https://inside.fws.gov/index.cfm/go/post/2011-Excellence-Awards>

And, we've created a Flickr set of still images as well: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest/sets/72157629280105750/with/6860467220/>

But the accolades don't end there. Last month, I was at the 77th Annual North American Wildlife and National Resource Conference in Atlanta, Ga. Our region was well represented at the conference and received several well-deserved honors for regional staff. Senior Special Agent Dan Burluson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region Office of Law Enforcement received the 2012 Guy Bradley Award for achievement in wildlife law enforcement and two Midwest refuges were recognized as part of the national 4-H youth initiative with the Connecting Youth with Nature through Natural Resources Conservation Education Award. You can read more about these special honors on page 8.



Above: Regional Director Tom Melius passes the torch to Gary Young signifying the beginning of the ceremony. Service photo.

Finally, I'd like to remind you that safety should always be on our minds. Warmer weather has arrived early this year. This, as you know, means early wildfire season. Above normal temperatures are having an impact on wildlife and migration patterns, as well. Various species are arriving earlier this year, including whooping cranes which have already arrived at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Weather predictions have increased the severity and frequencies of storms too. Increased tornado activity and flooding on the refuges and in the region have the capacity to impact and threaten both people and wildlife. I encourage you to take every safety measure as we endeavor to respond with the mission to protect our natural resources and the people and wildlife that live in and around them.

I want to congratulate all the winners once again for their amazing work and accomplishments. Thanks to all of them, and to all of you, for your continued great work.

Let's have a great spring!

Midwest
Regional
Director,

Tom Melius

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom O. Melius".

2011 Employee Appreciation Awards

Below: The regional office celebrates with a pizza party before the award ceremony in Bloomington, Minn. Service photo.



Below: Gary Young holds the torch close to his heart. Let the games begin. Service photo.



Below: Leadership receives training techniques from ARD Rick Schultz before the award ceremony. Service photo.



Below: Law Enforcement's ARD Greg Jackson runs in the torch at the Midwest Region Excellence Awards in Bloomington, Minn. Service photo.



Below: Awards and medals for the 2012 Midwest Region Excellence Awards. Service photo.



Below: Confident and poised, Lynn Lewis (l) and Barb Pardo (r) pose for a shot before the awards. Service photo.



2011 Employee Appreciation Awards

Below: Rick Schultz takes a spin before the ceremony. Service photo.



Below: ARD Chris Jensen contemplates strategy before the games. Service photo.



Below: ARD Todd Turner is eager for the start of the awards. Service photo.



Below: Katie Eull receives the Customer Service Internal Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: Don Kleven receives the Customer Service External Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: Jim Nissen and Sharonne Baylor (c) receive the Fostering Partnerships Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



2011 Employee Appreciation Awards

Below: Dave Peters receives the Safety Improvement Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: LE's Katie Stone-Westin beams happily after accepting her award. Service photo.



Below: Cathy Vanatta receives the Workplace Improvement Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: In Tameka Dandridge's absence, Lisa Mandell accepts the Outreach Excellence Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: Chuck Bronte receives the Science Excellence. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: Gregg Knutsen receives the Biologist of the Year Award. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



2011 Employee Appreciation Awards

Below: Audience members applaud awardee recipients at the Midwest Region Excellence Awards. Service photo.

Below: Pam Worrells receives her award at the Midwest Region Excellence Awards. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Below: FBMS team receives the Team Work Midwest Region Excellence Awards. Presented by Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (l) and Regional Director Tom Melius (r). Service photo.



Midwest Takes Home National Honors at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest region is home to many programs and employees that bring great innovation in meeting today's conservation challenges. Evidence of this was seen during the annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Atlanta, Ga., on March 15, when two programs were honored with national awards.

Senior Special Agent Dan Burluson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region Office of Law Enforcement received the 2012 Guy Bradley Award for achievement in wildlife law enforcement and two Midwest refuges were recognized as part of the national 4-H youth initiative with the Connecting Youth with Nature through Natural Resources Conservation Education Award.

2012 Guy Bradley Award

Named after the first wildlife officer killed in the line of duty in 1905, the Guy Bradley Award is presented each year by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to recognize individuals for outstanding lifetime contributions to wildlife law enforcement.

"We join the Foundation in applauding the accomplishments of these officers," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "Their work, as well as that of their state and federal law enforcement counterparts nationwide, truly makes a difference for wildlife." Burluson, who has worked in conservation

law enforcement for more than 30 years, was honored for his success in completing high-profile investigations that helped safeguard wildlife resources in the United States and Canada. These efforts included multiple cases exposing the illegal harvest and trafficking of



Above: The Midwest region meets conservation challenges in a variety of ways. Whether it be through special agents battling illegal wildlife trafficking or through student scientists mapping refuge assets. Service and University of Minnesota photos.

sturgeon and other fishery resources, as well as investigations that documented unlawful guiding and hunting of migratory birds and big game species.

Connecting Youth with Nature through Natural Resources Conservation Education Award

Also receiving honors at the Conference is the youth mapping initiative powered by 4-H, in partnership with national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries across the country. The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping Replication and Expansion Project is a youth-focused initiative that provides leadership in conservation, fosters stewardship through interactive, hands-on learning opportunities for young people in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota and New York with a special focus on reaching underrepresented audiences.

In the Midwest, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge are actively participating in the program.

The Minnesota 4-H GIS team is working with staff at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, located in northwest Minnesota near the community of Detroit Lakes and White Earth Nation and is comprised of student interns, a White Earth 4-H Promise Fellow and University of Minnesota extension services staff. The team's initial project work includes locating and marking the major directional and interpretive signs on the refuge. The information collected through this project will help refuge management gauge the cost and prioritize various capitol improvements at the station.

According to Tamarac NWR Manager Neil Powers, "Accurate documentation of assets on the refuge is important to the refuge system, especially when it comes to federal allocation of funding. As we move forward on new projects at Tamarac, GIS tools like this will give us a better understanding about future costs down the road."

Projects like this benefit the students as well as the refuge, explains 4-H project coordinator and University of Minnesota extension educator Joe Courneya, "Youth from the White Earth Nation are able to see potential employment and volunteer opportunities that may lead to careers with the Service."

--Tina Shaw,
External Affairs

Jr. Duck Stamp Contest Held in March Around the Region



Above: Refuge Biologist Wedge Watkins reviews scores from judges during the Missouri Junior Duck Stamp Contest while the next round of artwork is displayed. Service photo.

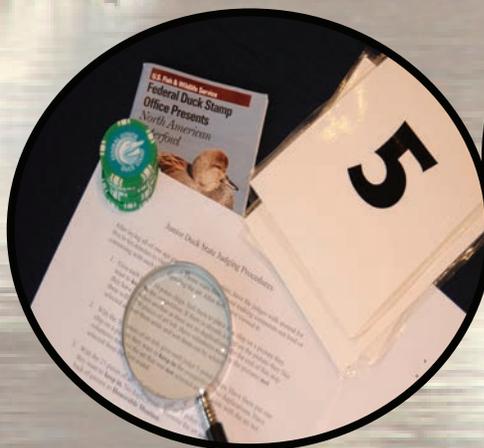
Right: Brock Jenkins, age 14 of Pittsburg, Mo. and Tim Haller, park ranger at Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge, display Brock's first place artwork of a black bellied whistling duck after the Missouri Junior Duck Stamp Contest. Brock won first place in his age group seventh through ninth grade and was runner up for Best of Show. Service photo.



Right: Junior Duck Stamp program state coordinator Mara Koenig displays Minnesota Best of Show artwork alongside contest judges. Judges included (1 to r) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Jim Leach, Minnesota Waterfowl Association's Dale Eggert, professional artist Judy Lieber, retired art teacher Laura Shimek, and Ducks Unlimited's Jason Evans. Photo by Lawrence C. Duke.



Above: The Poole family, Joseph (l), Svitlana (c), and Mara (r), eagerly await the judges' decision on Best of Show. Photo by Lawrence C. Duke.



Below: Judges are provided with a waterfowl identification handbook, magnifying glass, and other preparation items during a pre-contest briefing. Photo by Lawrence C. Duke.



Above: Indiana Junior Duck Stamp judges (1 to r) Doris Shaw, Stuart Hickerson, and Bob VanHoff, narrow down entries on March 24 at the Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge visitor center. Service photo.

Kirtland's Warbler Advocate Dr. Carol Bocetti Wins Recovery Champion Award

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced recipients of the 2011 Recovery Champion award, which honors Service employees and partners for outstanding efforts to conserve and protect endangered and threatened species. Among the honorees is Dr. Carol Bocetti of the California University of Pennsylvania, who leads the recovery team for the endangered Kirtland's warbler.

A total of 56 teams and nine individuals were honored as Recovery Champions for work to conserve species ranging from the polar bear in Alaska to the Appalachian elktoe mussel and spotfin chub in North Carolina. Restoring streams, releasing listed species into their historical ranges, and conducting field surveys and monitoring programs are among the diversity of initiatives by this year's Recovery Champions. What began in Fiscal Year 2002 as a one-time award for Service staff members for achievements in conserving listed species, was reactivated in 2007. It was expanded to honor Service partners as well, recognizing their essential role in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

Dr. Bocetti was recognized for her work with the Kirtland's warbler, an endangered songbird found only in Michigan, Wisconsin and Ontario. Dr. Bocetti's research and recovery initiatives have been a key factor in the growth of the warbler population from near record lows of about 200 pairs during the mid-1980s to the current estimate of more than 1,700 pairs, surpassing recovery goals. Her research also documented the link between the size of jack pine stands – the warbler's nesting habitat - and warbler productivity.



Above: Dr. Carol Bocetti of the California University of Pennsylvania leads the recovery team for the endangered Kirtland's warbler. California University of Pennsylvania photo.

A member of the Kirtland's warbler recovery team since 1998, Dr. Bocetti became the team leader in 2006. Working with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, the U. S. Forest Service, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others, she spearheaded efforts to develop a conservation strategy and commitment to managing habitat, a significant step toward recovery and long-term conservation of the species.

"Thanks to Dr. Bocetti's leadership and dedication, Kirtland's warblers are making strides toward recovery," said Service Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius. "That is a remarkable achievement for a species that was once on the brink of extinction."

--Georgia Parham
External Affairs

Tours Offered to View Endangered Kirtland's Warbler

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Michigan Audubon Society are again providing opportunities to catch a glimpse of the endangered Kirtland's warbler.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Michigan Audubon Society will lead tours from the Grayling, Michigan, Ramada Inn from May 15 through July 4. Free of charge tours are offered weekdays at 7 a.m. and on weekends and holidays at 7 a.m. and 11 a.m.

"This is an incredible opportunity," said Dan Elbert, biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "[because] the warbler's nesting areas in northern Michigan are closed to the public during nesting season."

Although an actual sighting is not guaranteed, participants will learn about the conservation success story of the Kirtland's warbler, which is now making a comeback.

Most male Kirtland's warblers arrive on the breeding grounds between May 1 and May 18, with the first females arriving a week or so after the first males. The best period for seeing the warbler is late May and the month of June. After July 1, viewing opportunities diminish. Birders are encouraged to bring binoculars and spotting scopes. The U.S. Forest Service will conduct tours on the Huron-Manistee National Forest. More information is available at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/EastLansing/te/kiwa/tour.html>

--Georgia Parham, *External Affairs*

Rainbows for Veterans

The first weekend in March, 275 veterans and their families participated in Veteran's Fishing Day at Neosho National Fish Hatchery in Missouri. Fishing poles and bait were provided as participants attempted to hit their catch-and-keep limit. Most participants walked away with the limit of four rainbow trout. To take a break from fishing, veterans and their families enjoyed a picnic lunch while listening to music put on by the 399th Army Band from Fort Leonard, Mo.



Above: Bryan Arroyo, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation in Washington D.C. was in attendance. See picture below (looking at the picture from left to right - Roderick May, Assistant Manager of the Neosho NFH; Bryan Arroyo, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation in Washington D.C.; and David Hendrix, Hatchery Manager of the Neosho NFH.-Service photo.

The day's events were provided through the support of local partners including the National Turkey Federation's Sugar Creek Gobblers, Friends of the Neosho NFH, Missouri Department of Conservation, Davidson Zoo, Fort Leonard Wood Military Jazz Band, Columbia Fisheries Resource Conservation Office and many others. Applauded by the Neosho Daily news as "a great way to tell [veterans] 'thank you' for their service to our country,"

Rainbows for Veterans was a great success.

--Katie Steiger-Meister,
External Affairs

Thompson Creek Fish Passage Project

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ashland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office partnered with the Town of Washburn and the Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Department to restore fish passage at a road crossing on a tributary to Thompson Creek in northern Wisconsin. The partnership was facilitated through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the site is located on a township road and was a fish passage barrier to brook trout and other aquatic life. The existing structure was replaced with a new properly sized culvert which was installed to allow passage of fish. This action resulted in the enhancement of the Thompson Creek watershed fishery by restoring connectivity to one and a half miles of habitat above the former barrier.

Thompson Creek is a tributary to Lake Superior. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Brook Trout



Heavy equipment installs the new fish-friendly properly sized culvert on Thompson Creek. Service photo.

Rehabilitation Plan for Lake Superior lists Thompson Creek as one of 15 streams along the Wisconsin Lake Superior shoreline which are important to brook trout rehabilitation. The goal for brook trout rehabilitation in Lake Superior is to maintain widely distributed, self-sustaining populations throughout their original habitat.

Reaching this goal requires actions to restore habitat, regulate harvest and introduction of genetically appropriate strains of fish through stocking. The recent work on Thompson Creek is one more step in reaching the goal for brook trout, and in turn benefits a wide range of other aquatic species.

--Ted Koehler



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