

Successful Refuge Retailing

A wide landscape of a wetland or marsh area. The foreground is dominated by a large, calm body of water that reflects the sky and clouds. The middle ground is a vast expanse of green, marshy land with scattered clumps of taller vegetation. The background shows a distant, flat horizon line under a bright blue sky filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall scene is serene and natural.

Merritt Island Wildlife Association,
Sandee Larsen



Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

The Refuge:

- Was established for migratory birds in 1963;
- Overlaps NASA's Kennedy Space Center; &
- Hosts ~1.1 million annual visitors.

Spanning over 140,000 acres, the MINWR hosts >500 species of wildlife and >1,000 species of plants.

Is a key over wintering and stopover site for shorebirds, waterfowl, and neotropical migratory birds.

The Refuge is home to 94 federally and state listed species (10 federally listed threatened or endangered).





The Refuge also consists of key bird rookeries, manatee habitat, sea turtle nesting beaches, bald eagle nest sites, fish spawning sites, and juvenile fish nurseries.

West Indian manatees are frequent visitors to the Refuge. During peak season over 400 manatees may reside in refuge waters.





MIWA's Beginnings

- USFWS employee, Barbara Bolt fostered the development of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) in 1994.
- MIWA acquired the bookstore in 1994 from Eastern National Parks and Monument Association.
- MIWA's bookstore sales were >\$54,000 in the first year (an increase of 30% over ENPMA 1993 sales).
- Over the years sales have steadily increased to approximately \$170,000 annually (FY 2007).

MIWA's Purpose & Vision

- **Purpose:** The Merritt Island Wildlife Association promotes conservation, awareness, appreciation and use of the MINWR and supports Refuge programs.
- **Vision:** MIWA is recognized as an effective and efficient Friend's group, enhancing the MINWR visitor experience while preserving it's natural resources.

MIWA @ Visitor Information Center

- Staffed by US Fish & Wildlife Service staff, MIWA staff, and committed volunteers.
- VIC visitation is over 64,000 annually.



MIWA by the Numbers

MIWA currently has 1,116 Members

MIWA's Annual Income has Reached \$246,000



Today's Economy



Good News!

As long as fuel prices remain affordable, your visitation will likely remain stable.



Ask Yourself:

- Will a retail outlet be a benefit or a headache?
- Do you have adequate visitors to support a store?
- What is the economic demographic of your potential customers?
- Do you have volunteers and staff to stock and care for the store?

Benefits to the Refuge & Friends Group

- Additional Staff to Support the VIC
- Additional Funding for Refuge Projects
- Enhances the Visitor's Experience
- Promote Membership via Sales

Getting Started



- Incorporate
- Sign a Cooperative Agreement with your Refuge
- Register with Your State Department of Revenue
- Purchase a POS System
- Be Credit Card Ready
- Form a Committee
- If Sales are Expected to be Steady, Hire Staff

Show Me the Money!



Startup Funds can be acquired via

- Grants (Challenge Cost Share Project via Regional Office, NFWF, Large Corporations, etc.)
- Donations (Members, Large Corporations, Local Community)
- Friends' Groups (Mentors)
- Fundraisers (Annual Meeting Dinners, Silent Auctions, Art Exhibitions, Bake Sales, etc.)
- Donation Box in VIC
- Sell Offsite (Attend Festivals)

Acquiring a Space

- Retail Space :Consider layout for traffic flow, lighting, and handicapped shoppers
- Point of Sale Area: Space needs include retail bag storage, cash register, counter space for the visitor
- Back Stock Area: closet, an outside storage shed, or an abandoned office

Train Volunteers On Your System



- **Volunteers are your best asset as they are the visitors first contact .**
- **Encourage volunteers to watch for new items, and voice problems or cash register needs.**

Product Selection

- Select Items for your Geographical Area
- Listen to the Needs of Your Visitors
- Items Should have Educational Value
- Chose Good Quality Items (Always Request a Sample)
- Go Local: Contact Local Artist Groups for Items

Purchasing

- Build a Relationship with Your Sales Representative
- If No Rep. is Available: call the 800 # and ask if a promotion is available
- Take Baby Steps: start with the lowest first order requirement by the company
- Consignments: a Headache

Free Stuff!

- Always ask for a sample before purchasing a new item: Catalogs are deceiving, use samples as giveaways at events or donate to schools
- Request Displays: It is easy to acquire displays via your Sales Rep. Always state: *I would love to carry your line...if I only had a display :~(*

Product Placement

- American Adults Shop from Eye Level to Just Above Knee Level: Place Most Important, Expensive, & Seasonal Items at Eye Level
- Children Shop Lower: Use Lower Shelving in Kid's Area
- Draw the Eye Up
- Display Items Light to Dark
- Stock in Odd Numbers
- Rotate Your Stock

130 Square Feet Goes a Long Way!



- The original area was an 8½' by 11½' room, with additional shelves at the information desk.
- In order to get the most out of the area I utilized wall space to draw the eye up.

The Bookery

- In the summer of 2003 MIWA acquired the new sales area. The bookstore now consists of 317 square feet.



Lighting is Everything



Retail is Detail



Plan for Traffic Flow



Utilize Your Space



Your Displays Make a Difference



Keep It Neat



- Studies have shown folded t-shirts sell better than those on hangers.
- Make a habit of resetting three times during the day: am, afternoon and closing.

Children Need Space

- Have a separate area for children.
- Encourage parents to scan books and interact with kids.
- Utilize the bottom rows in this area as children are eager to sit on the floor to read books & play.



Retailing Offsite



Try to visualize the profit you will make as you're unpacking the endless supply of merchandise!



Keep Good Records

- Use a Daily/Weekly Spreadsheet
- Make Deposits Daily/Weekly
- Invest in Accounting Software
- Print Reports via Your POS

Learn to Say NO!

- Especially During Peak Sales Season: Staff events, volunteer programs, teacher workshops, all seem to be scheduled at once. Learn your limits and schedule yourself accordingly.
- **Retail Requires Organization:** if you're overextended you will make major mistakes.

What do you do with all that profit?

Support your refuge.
Meet with your
Refuge Manager
annually for a list of
needs/projects.

Remember, we are
here to support the
Refuge, not for our
own agenda.



Sendler Education Outpost

- Built in 2002, The Sendler Education Outpost (SEO) is a pavilion style structure used by area students for environmental education.
- In 2003 the final phase, installation of permanent restrooms, was completed with a final cost of \$100,000 for the project.



Sendler Education Outpost

- Requested by Brevard County School District, MIWA began acquiring funds and writing grants to build a pavilion for area school children for hands on educational outdoor classes.



- In 2008, >2,000 students participated in programs at the SEO.



Black Point Wildlife Drive Enhancement Project



This >\$175,000 Project Upgraded the Drive with Native Plant Beds, Permanent Spotting Scopes, Wildlife Viewing Blinds, Restrooms, and a Handicapped Accessible Observation Ramp



2009 Obligated Funds

| | |
|---|----------|
| ■ VIC General Funds | \$10,000 |
| ■ VIC Work Camper/Intern | \$5,000 |
| ■ Volunteer Fund | \$13,000 |
| ■ Haulover Canal Kiosk Project | \$10,000 |
| ■ NFWF Matching Grant Fund..... | \$1,000 |
| ■ Nature of Learning Grant | \$9,346 |
| ■ Bair's Cove Boat Ramp Extension | \$5,500 |
| ■ Bair's Cove Boat Ramp Lighting | \$3,000 |
| ■ MIWA Tour Bus | \$15,000 |

Continued.....

2009 Obligated Funds Cont...

| | |
|---|----------|
| ■ Elliot Plantation Archeology Dig..... | \$5,000 |
| ■ NCU Waterfowl Study | \$10,000 |
| ■ Tern Nesting Platforms | \$2,000 |
| ■ VIC Projector | \$2,500 |
| ■ Bunk House Supplies | \$8,000 |
| ■ IT Support | \$2,000 |
| ■ MIWA Memorial Fund | \$1,965 |
| ■ MIWA Operating Fund | \$15,000 |

Remember: Enjoy the Refuge you Love!

Questions?