



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

August 2009

Open to the Public



Plus:

Managing the Waters

2009 Federal Land Manager of the Year

The 14th Annual Goby Roundup/Carp Corral

what's inside

Editor's Note:

Connecting with nature does not look the same for everyone. Connecting with nature means different things to different people. For some, it's hunting and fishing. For others, it's walking in the woods or on the beach. What does your nature encounter look like? We want to know. To that end, we have added a regular section called Let's Go Outside!

We invite you to submit personal nature encounters as experienced by you and your children, as well as innovative ideas on how to connect with nature. We will run your accounts in this feature segment.

Please submit your youngsters' stories and photos to our regular section: Kid's Corner. Kid's Corner features the nature writing and photographic pieces by the children of regional employees.

E-mail: valerie_redmond@fws.gov with your Let's Go Outside! and Kids Corner articles, photos, journal entries and poems.

On the Cover: Ted Eggebraaten (left) removes a fish while Dale Hanson (right) brings the gillnet on-board through the lifter. USFWS Photo by Rob Elliott.

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Open to the Public

The vast natural resources that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) manages, offers wonderful wildlife related recreational opportunities to the public. As stewards of the land, the conservation efforts of Service employees have a huge impact on fishing, hunting, hiking, boating and birding populations. In summer, more than any other season, residents experience our natural resources in an up close and personal way. Whether conversant in Service conservation efforts or not, people expect clean waters and trails to enhance their time in the wild.

Indelibly linked to these warm summer days is the enjoyment of fishing on regional lakes,

streams, and ponds. As recreational fishing takes center stage, our national fisheries move into the spotlight, as well. The National Fish Hatchery System distributes about 19 million fish and 29 million eggs as part of restoration and recovery plans for native fish, including lake trout, brook trout, sturgeon and walleye.

Aquatic education through regional and national campaigns designed to reduce and eliminate invasive species, continue to be an important component of our overall preservation efforts. In mid-June Service employees organized and participated in the annual Goby Roundup/Carp Corral. The goal was to stave off the Asian carp invasion in the Illinois River. The crew's survey efforts were filmed for an upcoming episode of "Northland Adventures," an America Online show. I invite you to read more about the event on page 9.

I applaud events like the Goby Roundup/Carp Corral because not only do they facilitate our efforts to recruit people who enjoy

fishing to our resources, but they give us greater opportunities to collaborate with our many partners in our conservation efforts.

The National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices last year worked with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Coastal programs to restore 44 miles of stream and shoreline habitat. And our Sea Lamprey Control program worked with partners to control populations of invasive sea lampreys.

As we extend an open invitation to the public, these impressive efforts will continue to be appreciated. I am confident that the Service will continue to play a significant role in helping communities to make a personal nature connection by utilizing our bountiful resources around the region.

*--Tom Melius
Regional Director,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Midwest Region*



Above: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius helps a student with the catch of the day. USFWS Photo by Kristin Raveling.

"What a Catch!" Fishing for fun gets kids outdoors. USFWS Photo.





The Buzz

Winona District pops blue goose out of cake for 85th

The Winona District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge celebrated the refuge's 85th birthday with a giant birthday cake. The 12 foot high cake took center stage as Puddles waved to the crowd from the top. Refuge staff, volunteers and friends handed out over 1,500 wristbands commemorating the refuge's birthday to children on the sidewalks.

--Mary Stefanski,
R3-UMRNW&FR-Winona District



Above: Steamboat Days Parade: Winona, Minn. staff, volunteers and friends with sandwich boards hand out wristbands to the crowd while Puddles waves from the top of the cake. -- Photo by Mary Stefanski.

Fitness Craze Hits Necedah NWR

Park Ranger Dan Peterson of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) took the online challenge for the Biggest Loser TV show last January. Since then he has lost almost 80 pounds! No gimmicks for Dan, just a simple plan that cuts calories and increases exercise. He just hopes his uniform allowance will hold out as he has had to buy smaller uniform pants three times this year. Way to go Dan!

Just a few years ago Tate Fischer of Necedah NWR was a self-declared couch potato. Now he can be seen running refuge roads on an almost daily basis. In May, he ran his first marathon. Since then he competed in one triathlon, finishing sixth in his age group, and plans another one in August. Rock On!

--Mary Blasing, Wisconsin/Upper Miss Zone Office



Left: Dave Peterson shows off his dramatic weight loss. Below: Tate Fisher having the time of his life in his first marathon run. USFWS Photos.

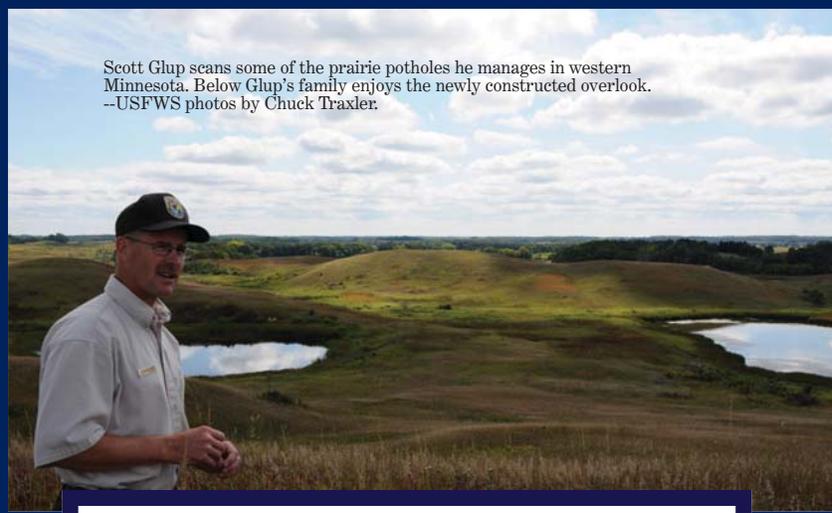


Federal Land Manager Honors

At a ceremony held in Washington, D.C., on July 17, Litchfield Wetland Management District Project Leader Scott Glup was honored as the 2009 Federal Land Manager of the Year.

Glup earned the award from Take Pride in America®, a nationwide partnership program authorized by Congress to promote the appreciation and stewardship of our nation's public lands. The Take Pride in America program is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior for the benefit of all public lands at all levels of government nationwide.

By working with the Scouts, Glup fostered a spirit of stewardship on public lands in young people at an impressionable age. Glup was honored to be recognized with the award, but wished all the scouts, parents and other partners in the project could have been there with him. "It is really the scouts who deserve



Scott Glup scans some of the prairie potholes he manages in western Minnesota. Below Glup's family enjoys the newly constructed overlook. --USFWS photos by Chuck Traxler.



this award," said Glup. "The motivation, dedication and spirit of these kids leaves me feeling good about the future of land management."

Scott Glup is a firm believer in partnerships. He worked extensively with a local Boy Scout Troop that was working to earn its "50-Miler Award," which requires canoeing or boating, hiking, trip planning and an outdoor service project. In all, 49 Scouts, parents and scout leaders donated more than 800 hours removing invasive buckthorn and other undesirable

trees on 130 acres of grassland on the Litchfield Wetland Management District, see: http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=32588_.

In addition, they also planted 65 species of native wildflowers and grasses, planted native ecotype burr oak as part of the savanna restoration project, picked up litter and trash along several miles of road side, restored a vintage cedar waterfowl production area sign, put in a sidewalk and bench as well as developed and put in three new interpretive signs on a newly constructed parking lot overlooking a restored wetland.

At the ceremony, which also honored other award recipients, Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Hayes said, "These individuals and groups are outstanding representatives for the hundreds of thousands of Americans who volunteer with the land management agencies at the state, local and national level and who participate in the Take Pride in America program. --Chuck Traxler
External Affairs

Service's John Rogner Appointed as DNR Assistant Director

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chicago Field Supervisor John Rogner Appointed as Assistant Director of Illinois Department of Natural Resources

John Rogner, long-time field supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service's) Chicago Ecological Services Field Office has accepted an appointment as the assistant director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced his appointment of Rogner earlier today.

As supervisor of the Chicago Ecological Services Field Office, Rogner was responsible for coordinating conservation activities throughout northeastern Illinois. Endangered species, wetland protection and restoration, mitigation of environmental contaminants and public education were a few of the issues Rogner worked on as field supervisor.

"Working cooperatively with federal, state, and local government agencies, along with businesses, non-profit groups

and individual citizens has always been a high priority for John," said Service Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius. "He will be a great asset to the State of Illinois. So, while we are sad to be losing him as an employee, we are very glad to be gaining him as a partner."



Above: John Rogner at a press conference with Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn to announce a school rain garden program that USFWS is doing with his office. USFWS Photo.

The Illinois DNR approached the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and requested Rogner based upon their dealings with him over the past decade. Governor Pat Quinn and newly-appointed Illinois DNR Director Marc Miller recognized Rogner's strong professional credentials in natural resources and fish and wildlife biology, organizational management

experience and credibility within the Illinois conservation community.

As Illinois DNR assistant director, Rogner will serve as a liaison to federal partners and work to rebuild its fish and wildlife programs, as well as help manage new initiatives on youth retention and recruitment. Rogner is joining the Illinois DNR as part of an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that is intended to strengthen fish and wildlife programs and projects managed cooperatively by both agencies.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is functionally tied with state fish and wildlife agencies through similarity of missions and numerous federal assistance programs. The Service accomplishes its mission in some important ways through the work of the states, examples of this include implementation of state wildlife action plans,

endangered species recovery and migratory bird conservation. Therefore, the Service will also benefit from this appointment by helping to create opportunities to more closely align state and federal programs and projects and re-establish close working relationships with the State, thereby creating a stronger partner in conservation in support of the agencies' shared missions.

Birding Nature Festival is a "Hoot"

The third annual Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival was once again a great success. The festival was a three day weekend in mid-May full of birding and nature activities on Wisconsin's south shore of Lake Superior at the peak of spring migration during International Migratory Bird Day. The Chequamegon Bay Area is arguably one of the best birding destinations in the entire Midwest, with diverse habitats supporting nearly 300 different species of birds.

Although inclement weather, swooped in like a barn swallow on Saturday of the event. The freezing cold winds that came off the freshly thawed Lake Superior were full of snow flurries. Visitors, however, bravely faced the blustery conditions Mother Nature offered and happily ventured into the northern great outdoors. The sunny, warmer days on Friday and Sunday more than made up for the quintessential early spring-like conditions on Saturday, which was welcomed by all who attended.

With nearly 120 activities to choose from, including a photography contest, birders and nature lovers of all skills and ages found a wealth of choices at this year's festival. Activities on birds, butterflies, dragonflies, frogs, wolves, bears, fish, wildflowers, landscaping, wildlife art, and more were offered via field trips and workshops, with guest speakers for adults and youth alike.

Exceptional destinations such as the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Copper Falls State Park, Chequamegon National

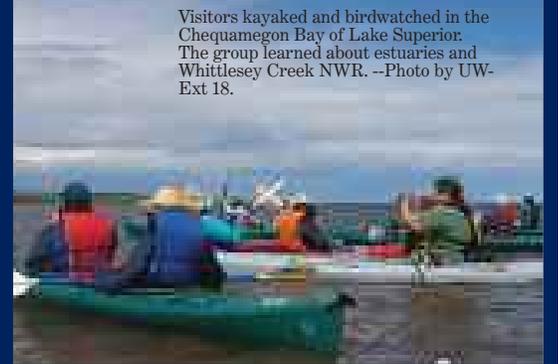
Forest, and more were offered. A grand total of 173 species of birds were observed by trip leaders and bird enthusiasts. The most notable discovery was a Louisiana waterthrush, a terrestrial, thrush-like warbler that was observed by sight and sound with its song



being three clear notes followed by a descending jumble. "This was only our second Chequamegon Bay area record of a Louisiana waterthrush and my first!", said Ryan Brady, research scientist with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Kevin Lowry, visitor services manager of Whittlesey Creek NWR, said "The amount of local community support, along with outstanding land stewards visiting from Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, and Minnesota of all ages, is absolutely incredible."

Keynote speaker, Al Batt of rural Hartland, Minnesota did a thoughtful, clean and humorous talk that allowed those in the audience to laugh and learn.

Tom Kerr, refuge manager, for



Visitors kayaked and birdwatched in the Chequamegon Bay of Lake Superior. The group learned about estuaries and Whittlesey Creek NWR. --Photo by UW-Ext 18.

Whittlesey Creek NWR said "The festival is a wonderful outreach opportunity for the refuge and our partners to inform and inspire not only adults but also our youth which will be the decision makers in the future." Festival participant, Carol Mc Manus who was smiling from ear to ear stated "I've come all the way from Chicago for the weekend and just love the variety of things to do here at the Visitor Center. In fact, I visit this area on and off each summer, so how can I volunteer for the refuge?"

The popular annual festival would not be possible without the collaborative partnership between Ashland County Tourism, Chequamegon Audubon, NPS, USFWS, USFS, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Refuge staff and partners look forward to next year's Fourth Annual Birding and Nature Festival which will be once again held in May and based out of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland, Wis.

--Kevin J. Lowry, Visitor Services Manager, USFWS

Accolades from the Public

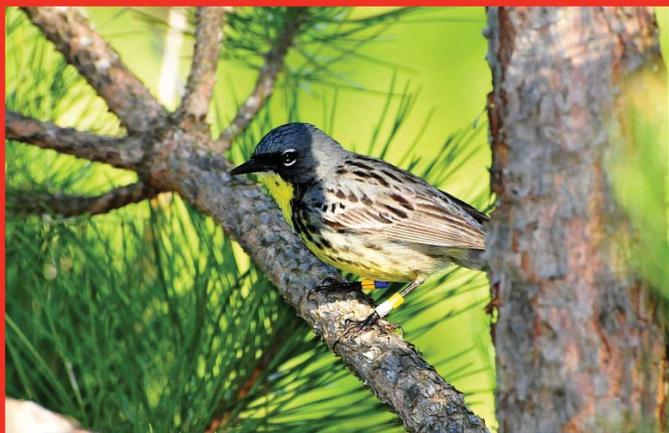
Roderick,

Thought I would e-mail you and thank you again for the time you took to talk with me while I was visiting my family in Neosho. Even though you were just starting your vacation and were trying to get out of the office you were professional enough to sit and talk with me about your facility and the area around Neosho. As a citizen, I (was) truly impressed by your dedication to your job and the enthusiasm you had for the programs that the site was working on. As a classroom teacher, I was even more impressed with the information you offered to me which I could use in my classroom. I found all this to be exceptional because I am from the state of Washington in Spokane Valley. I did take your advice and fished the Hickory Creek and was able to catch and release several nice rainbow trout, I also made it over to Capp Creek and found some small rainbows there as well. Your advice to go see the Missouri Conservation Admin. office worked well as they had a great deal of information on fishing and other materials I can use in my classroom too. I hope to be able to return to Neosho again and see my family in the next year or so and stop by again and say hello. Until then good luck with the sturgeon project and hope you finally made that vacation trip you started.

Sincerely,

Thomas Shaw
5th grade teacher
Spokane Valley, Washington

Craig Czarnecki, PL at East Lansing, received this note about another stellar Service employee:



Above: This male Wisconsin Kirtland's warbler that was originally banded in the Bahamas has returned to the Wis. breeding site for the second straight year. Photo by Joel Trick.

Dear Mr. Czarnecki,
Four of our family were privileged to meet and accompany Dawn Lemon on June 9, 2009 on one of your Kirtland's Warbler Guided Tours. Ms. Lemon has a wonderful knowledge of the Kirtland's Warbler and its habitat. She was very kind to show us around the breeding grounds and because of her knowledge, we were not disappointed.

Your guided tours are very much appreciated and we hope you and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to provide Guided Tours and Habitat Protection.

Sincerely,

Lee and Carol Smith

The Big, The Bad and The Ugly...Fish The Carp Corral Experience

Imagine being surrounded by flying aliens—flying non-native fish that is! These hurling 30+ pound missiles erupt explosively straight out of the water up to 10 feet in the air and can hit you head-on. It's like being clobbered with a flying bowling ball. That's what is in store for you aboard a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) fisheries boat sampling for invasive carp on the Illinois River.

Silver carp are the acrobats but under the water also lurk bighead carp, a cousin of the silver carp that are both native to Asia. Silvers can reach weights of 80 pounds and bigheads can weigh in at over 100 pounds. Together, they are new and threatening menaces of riverine ecosystems. These jumping carp might look like an excerpt from the World's Funniest Video, but it is a sad commentary on the state of our rivers.

After their first summer, they can reach a size of 10 inches and there are few predators that are big enough to eat them. These developing giants feed on abundant



Sam Stafslie (left, USFWS) and Mari Nord (right, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) display a goldfish caught while electrofishing during surveillance for Asian carps in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. USFWS Photo.

microscopic plants and animals or plankton, and consume 40% of their body weight each day. They just keep growing!

Bighead and silver carp have faces only a mother could love! Their eyes are set very low on their head so it looks like their head has been put on upside down.

Asian carp were first collected in 1991 on the Illinois River and quickly expanded their

numbers. The middle part of the Illinois River currently has the world's largest concentration of bighead and silver carp. It's ground zero. The Illinois Natural History Survey conservatively estimates 4100 silver carp per river mile. They also discovered that 9 out of every 10 fish they collect are invasive bighead and silver carp. Most native

fish spawn once a year, but bighead and silver can spawn at least three times a year and each female can produce 1 million eggs.

Nowhere is the Asian carp invasion more critical than on the Upper Illinois River due to its connection to the Great Lakes. There is grave concern about bighead and silver carp invading the Great Lakes. A four billion dollar fishing industry could be at stake due to potential ecological and human threats from Asian carp.



Biologists work as a team to untangle bighead carps caught in nets during annual surveillance for Asian carps in the Illinois River. USFWS Photo.

An electrical barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal is the only thing standing between the front line of Asian carp and Lake Michigan. Bighead and silver carp are now about 15 miles from the electrical barrier and about 45 miles from Lake Michigan.

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Volunteer Mike Leis displays one of the many bighead carp brought aboard his boat near Starved Rock State Park during surveillance for Asian carps in the Illinois River. USFWS Photo.



Managing the Waters

Green Bay NFWCO Completes Fishery Independent Lake Whitefish Surveys

Rob Elliott, Ted Eggebraaten, and Dale Hanson spent the first week of June in Grand Traverse Bay and waters near Frankfort, Mich. while they finished the fishery independent lake whitefish surveys. These annual surveys are needed to track the relative abundances of lake whitefish and lake trout within these fishery management units. The crew set several gill-nets in each location to determine catch per effort (cpe), or simply the number of fish captured per 1800' of net. Each gillnet is 1800' in length and begins with a small 2" mesh with subsequent increments of 0.5" mesh until the last large 6" mesh is reached. This repeated "graded mesh" pattern enables the survey to target a wide size-range of whitefish and lake trout from which information can be gathered on fish age, sex, size, maturity, and presence of lamprey wounding.

Fishery independent surveys are a cooperative venture performed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), the State of Michigan and the Tribes within the 1836 Treaty waters of the upper Great Lakes. Fishery independent survey data compliments other fishery data collected through commercial and recreational catch monitoring. All available fishery data is input within an integrated analysis which combines the multiple data sources into a single stock assessment model for each management unit. This approach was a critical component of the 2000 Consent Decree as it fosters the adoption of scientifically defensible management policies to regulate lake trout mortality rates, to levels consistent with Service rehabilitation



Ted Eggebraaten (left) removes a fish while Dale Hanson (right) brings the gillnet on-board through the lifter. Photo: Rob Elliott. USFWS Photo.

objectives, by effectively managing commercial and recreational fisheries in 1836 Treaty waters.

--Dale Hanson, R3-Green Bay FRO

Pendills Creek NFH Stocks 866,000 Yearling Lake Trout in 2009

Pendills Creek NFH, located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, is part of the USFWS Great Lakes Lake Trout Restoration Program. Pendills Creek works along with Sullivan Creek NFH, Jordan River NFH, and Iron River NFH to produce and stock lake trout yearlings into the Great Lakes every spring.

Pendills Creek tries to raise and stock at least 900,000 healthy, good quality yearlings every year, but this year the total was 866,000, or 34,000 less lake trout yearlings than required. Pendills Creek NFH is undergoing complete replacement of our 1950's built fish raceways, and fish rearing was a bit challenging at times! The 2009 stockings all took place from Charlevoix in Michigan's Lower Peninsula, and

all fish were stocked by the M. V. Spencer F. Baird into Lake Michigan. The 866,000 yearlings weighed a total of 38,208 pounds and took three large fish trucks five days worth of trips to the Baird to haul out of the hatchery.

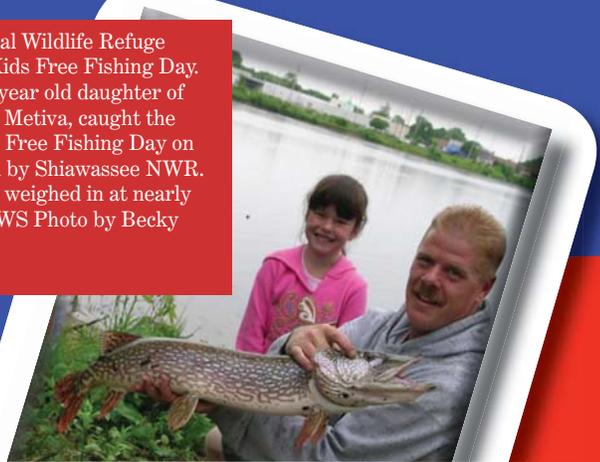
This year's yearlings ranged in size from 4.79 to 5.43 inches, or 30 fish per pound to 20 fish per pound. The lake trout stains included in this spring's stockings included the Superior Apostle Island, Seneca Lake Wild, and Lewis Lake Wild. All yearlings released had been fin clipped prior to stocking so they can be identified as hatchery released fish once in the wild.

Pendills Creek NFH would like to thank Sullivan Creek NFH, Iron River NFH, and Jordan River NFH for all of their help throughout the distribution season, and also for all the help during the raising of the young lake trout.

--Crystal LeGault-Anderson,
R3-Pendills Creek NFH

Let's Go Outside

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge hosted its annual Kids Free Fishing Day. Hailey Metiva, six year old daughter of Steve and Amanda Metiva, caught the largest fish at Kids Free Fishing Day on June 13, sponsored by Shiawassee NWR. The Northern pike weighed in at nearly 9 1/2 pounds. USFWS Photo by Becky Goche.



Desoto Refuge Fest is a Success in 2009

On June 7, Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office's Brian Elkington and Mark Corio took part in Refuge Fest at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Refuge Fest, initially started in 2001 to encourage fishing at DeSoto Lake, is a great opportunity for outreach and education. Working together with DeSoto NWR staff, the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, the Army Corps of Engineers, American Family Insurance and many more organizations made this event a huge success. Bass Pro Shops and Tracker Boats provided educational excursions and clinics ranging from archery to boating and fishing. They also donated prizes for the carp fishing contest.



Duck Stamp Winners: Lily Spang, age 16, of Toledo, Ohio won first place with her acrylic painting of a wood duck. Abraham Hunter, age 15 from Vienna, Illinois placed second with his acrylic painting of two golden-eyes, and Rebekah Nastav, age 18, from Amoret, Missouri placed third with her acrylic painting of a common golden-eye.



July 16 concluded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service's) First Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) for the M/V Spencer F. Baird, in Cheboygan, Mich. The MOCC was designed as a safety course for all biologist and boat riders that work on the Baird during stocking season, gill netting/site assessments and through out the year. Lead by the Service's own Adam Kowalski and Aaron Woldt, the three day course covered general information about the Baird, Left: Jaime Masterson in an immersion suit. USFWS Photo.



DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges are supporting the Junior League of Omaha's, H.I.P. Kids project, "Go! Play Adventure" in a joint effort to promote a healthy and proactive lifestyle among children through physical fitness, play and healthy eating habits. Recently two rubbing posts were installed; one at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge's Oriole Trail and another at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge's Lewis & Clark historical campsite. USFWS photo.



Instructional System Specialist David Ellis shares a decomposing red-bellied snake with wide-eyed youth in the Summer Explorers Biology Camp at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center on June 8. Photo by Molly Stoddard.

Around the Region

Neosho Breaks Ground for New Energy Efficient Visitor Center

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Neosho National Fish Hatchery (NFH) in southwest Missouri, the nation's oldest operational federal fish hatchery, hosted a ground breaking ceremony today to celebrate the construction of a new visitor center. The 9,200 sq. ft. visitor center is expected to accommodate more than 100,000 visitors per year, enhance environmental education and interpretation opportunities, and generate economic benefits for Newton County and surrounding areas.

Federal and state legislators and local public officials in attendance for the ceremony included Congressman Roy Blunt, and staff representatives from Senator Bond and Senator McCaskill's offices. Community members, businesses and organizations, including the Friends of the Neosho NFH, also took part in the groundbreaking ceremony.

Neosho NFH currently receives approximately 45,000 visitors annually. The construction will convert the visitor center into an energy-efficient, LEED-certified facility, which will include installation of photovoltaic solar panels. Seating capacity will be increased to facilitate student groups and other visitors to the hatchery. Construction and operation of the visitor center is expected to generate local economic benefits in the form of enhanced tourism revenues and associated employment opportunities in southwestern Missouri.

"This is not a hatchery of the past, this is a hatchery of the future," said Acting Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rowan Gould.

Above: A long line of ground breakers take part in the ceremony. USFWS photo.



Quote of the Month

“The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of that which is elusive but attainable, perpetual series of occasions for hope”

Connecting with Latino Audiences through Creative Visitor Services

Knowing and understanding the cultural nuances of diverse audiences can help front-liners, interpreters and managers in their efforts to create connections with a diversity of visitors. Research and field-based studies on National Forests in Texas and in surrounding Latino communities has revealed some interesting and helpful ways to help bridge gaps that often create divides and cause management and visitor-use conflicts. Cultural content and program activities will help individuals improve visitor communications and cultivate constituent development with Latino communities.

Tamberly Conway graduated with a B.S. in Wildlife Management from McNeese State University in Lake Charles, La. She graduated with her Master's degree in Forest Recreation Management and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Forestry with an emphasis in Human Dimensions in Natural Resources in the College of Forestry and Agriculture at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. Her doctoral research focuses on design, development and implementation of outreach and conservation education programming for Latino communities. Tamberly is the Conservation Education Coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service, National Forests and Grasslands in Texas. Her responsibilities include creating partnerships in which to better provide conservation education and outreach to urban, mi-

nority and rural communities, promoting a sense of stewardship in these communities and working to inspire youth in the pursuit of future careers in natural resource conservation and management.

--Kenneth A. Garrahan
Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

Asian Carp Continued

Working in a hot, steamy and sweltering environment, the crew sets gill nets on the first day, and will return to the net sites on the following and each succeeding day to remove bighead and silver carp and other fish. This effort is to determine the relative abundance of bighead and silver carp as compared to previous years. In addition, an electrofishing boat is used that puts electrical current into the water to “shock” the fish, and they surface so they can be collected with a large landing net. Another function of the electrofishing boat is to “drive” fish into the gill net.

We use large mesh gill nets and the fish become entangled in the web as they swim through the area. It is a challenge to remove the fish from the net after they have twisted and turned trying to escape. A picking tool is needed to assist in the removal of the slimy fish. All in all, a very messy job!

After the carp are removed, they are identified and measured; and then the

real fun starts as fish health samples are collected for bacterial and viral pathogens. An incision is made along the mid-line and often massive amounts of eggs and intestines fall out. The biologist then takes a sample from the kidney and spleen and places the tissue in a numbered vial. When a back log of unprocessed fish develops, flies and their maggots soon find the stinking and decaying fish. This sampling activity leaves our brown uniforms stained; a soup of blood, dirt, and slime on the floor; and dried eggs stuck to everything in the boat.

The options for taking a lunch break are limited along this stretch of river—there are no McDonalds or Pizza Huts. Staff, by necessity, pull over to the shore in their work boat for lunch. They are surrounded by the stench of fish and buzzing flies. You wash off the fish slime and blood with anti-bacterial soap, but the odor of fish remains on your hands and the buzzing flies try to share your sandwich. It is all in a day's work of doing what biologists love to do—collect samples and data to help protect our precious aquatic resources.

--Pam Thiel
La Crosse FRO