



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

December 2013

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Tom Melius • Regional Director
Midwest Region
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Happy Holidays and Happy Anniversary!

Although many of our favorite shopping locations proclaimed it nearly a month ago, it now truly is the beginning of the holiday season, with gatherings of families and friends to celebrate and reflect on the year. I hope your holiday season is happy and safe and that you are also enjoying the successes of our Region as we complete yet another marathon year of accomplishments and prepare to begin anew.

In a year of outstanding achievements that could fill a cable network highlight reel, I was pleased to recently join with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe and Michigan Congressman John Dingell for a groundbreaking at the site of the new Detroit River IWR Gateway Visitor Center. It was great to come together with our partners to celebrate and to bring our newest visitor center one step closer to reality. Read the story on page 4.

December 28 marks a significant day that our staff have been highlighting the importance of throughout 2013 – the 40th as I hope you have, sharing in the species facts, state endangered species feature stories and individual species project updates our staff have worked so hard to provide. This was a fantastic effort by all involved. Signed by President Richard Nixon in 1973, the Endangered Species Act has helped guide our work and that of our many partners in preventing species extinctions and restoring dwindling populations of species, in some instances, to full recovery. This date will come and go, but the tireless efforts of our professionals along with conservationists from around the world, will continue to ensure the lasting legacy of the Act.

In this issue of Inside Region 3, we will also begin a three-part series on the Sea Lamprey Control Program’s field season and its three units, which work together to successfully implement the program. Read the story on page 7.

Happy holidays and enjoy this month’s issue of Inside Region 3!



Regional Director Tom Melius signs the NiSource incidental take permit, while Lynn Lewis, Lisa Mandell, Tom Magnuson and Jessica Hogrefe look on. NiSource Inc., a natural gas pipeline and transmission company, developed a multi-state, multi-species habitat conservation plan to conserve dozens of endangered species while operating and maintaining its network of pipelines in 14 northeastern, midwest and southeastern states. Tina Shaw. USFWS

Tom Melius
Regional Director, Midwest Region



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On the Cover

Service Director Dan Ashe, Regional Director Tom Melius and Congressman John Dingell, joined local students and conservation partners in breaking ground for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Gateway Visitor Center.

Tina Shaw, USFWS

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Celebrates Groundbreaking for Refuge Gateway Visitor Center

By Tina Shaw
External Affairs

The National Wildlife Refuge System Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative took a huge step forward on November 8, with groundbreaking for the 11,800 square-foot Gateway Visitor Center at Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, Congressman John Dingell, and other partners from the U.S. and Canada marked the culmination of more than 10 years of restoration work in the Trenton, Michigan event.

The visitor center is located on property known as the Refuge Gateway, adjacent to the Humbug Marsh Unit of Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge – Michigan’s only “Wetland of International Importance” identified through the international Ramsar Convention. This 44-acre industrial brownfield was once home to the Chrysler automotive brake and paint plant.

For more than a decade, Wayne County, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and an array of partners have been cleaning up, restoring, and enhancing the site to prepare for this new visitor center. This project has transformed Metropolitan Detroit from industrial

brownfield to ecological buffer.

“Now, key species like the lake sturgeon, bald eagle, osprey, and mayflies have come back to the area in abundance. Because of the hard work and cooperation of our partners, this area has truly become a gateway for wildlife and people,” said Director Ashe.



Further, this transformation is helping change the perception of the Detroit River from that of a polluted “rust belt” river to an international recreation destination that connects people to nature, improves quality of life, showcases sustainable redevelopment, and enhances community pride.

“As a young boy growing up in Southeast Michigan, I have many fond memories of hunting and fishing along the shores of the Detroit River and Lake Erie with my dear old dad. The banks of the River looked a lot different than they do now. There was less concrete and more trees, less brick and mortar and more wetlands. This groundbreaking is yet

another step in preserving and protecting land so important to our region and so dear to my heart. The visitor’s center will open the doors to all kinds of people to learn and appreciate the great outdoors as I have all my life here on the banks of the Detroit River and Lake Erie,” said Congressman John Dingell.

More than 80 percent of Americans live in urban or suburban communities and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service values the role that urban refuges play in providing innovative education programming and volunteer opportunities.

In the last 200 years, the Detroit River and surrounding area has undergone extreme

changes from shipping, industrialization, and pollution, yet has been restored as a conservation centerpiece. Nearly 6 million people live in the metropolitan areas surrounding the river and it is a key source of relaxation, recreation, and renewal.

Gateway Visitor Center Timeline

- Building contract awarded Fall 2013
- Groundbreaking Fall 2013
- Grand opening expected in Fall 2015

The construction of this visitor center is also one of the 2013 priorities of President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative to develop a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda. America’s Great Outdoors builds on our nation’s long history of actions taken to conserve our natural heritage. This Initiative takes as its premise that lasting conservation solutions should rise from the American people.

In 2001, the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was established as a result of bi-national efforts from politicians, conservation leaders, and local communities to build a sustainable future for the Detroit River and western Lake Erie ecosystems. The refuge consists of nearly 6,000 acres of islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands.

For more information about Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and the Gateway Visitor Center project, visit http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River/refuge_units/refuge_gateway.html

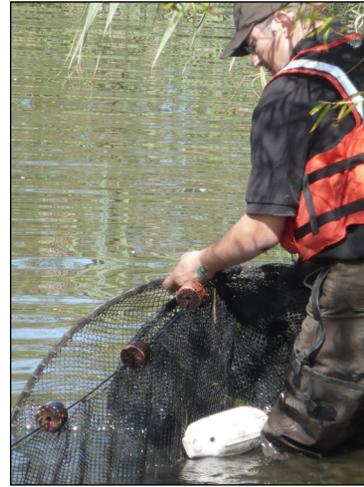
From Pollution to Partnerships: *Cleaning Up Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes*

By Annette Trowbridge.
Midwest Region Ecological Services

Great Lakes Areas of Concern are locations along the Great Lakes suffering from degraded environmental conditions caused by historic and ongoing pollution. These areas were designated under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the U.S. and Canada based on the presence of one or more beneficial use impairments. A beneficial use impairment is when a body of water is so polluted it is no longer suitable for specific uses, such as loss of fish and wildlife habitat or restrictions on fish consumption. Of the 43 AOCs identified in the U.S. and Canada, to date, only two Canadian and one U.S. AOC have been delisted.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is making funds available to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to clean up and restore these highly degraded areas. The Service is contributing its expertise to the Great Lakes-wide effort through its project, Accelerating Remediation and Restoration of Contaminated Sediment at AOCs.

The goal of the project is to remove beneficial use impairments and ultimately delist AOCs. Service projects are planned and conducted in close coordination with federal, state and local conservation partners. Work will help eliminate several impairments, including fish consumption advisories, degradation of fish and wildlife populations, and loss of fish and wildlife habitat,



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists set nets in Conneaut Creek, a tributary of Lake Erie. USFWS

bird or animal deformities or reproduction problems.

Service contaminants specialists first evaluate impairments to help identify the best opportunities for delisting. Specialists provide guidance in the removal of contaminants and design sediment removal projects to achieve the best, most efficient cleanups while preserving and restoring high quality habitat in Great Lakes AOCs. Currently, the Service has funded 25 projects that contribute to delisting impairments in a variety of ways.

Several projects in the St. Louis River in Minnesota, as well as the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, guide implementation of future

remediation and restoration actions to address identified fish and wildlife population and habitat related beneficial use impairments. The results of planning projects are informed design alternatives and ultimately the implementation of targeted on-the-ground and in-the-water projects.



This nesting common tern is an example of a species potentially impacted by high pollution levels. A wide variety of fish and wildlife can be impacted in Areas of Concern. USFWS

Other projects gather data necessary to evaluate the status of “Fish Tumors and Deformities” and “Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproduction Problems” impairments. The incidence rate of tumors and deformities across AOCs is often unknown; however such information is critical to determine whether or not these impairments can be removed. Such evaluations are being conducted in AOCs throughout the Midwest, including the St. Louis River in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Niagara River in New York, Grand Calumet River in Indiana,

and Saginaw Bay, River Raisin, Detroit River, and St. Mary’s River in Michigan.

The Service is also implementing several remediation and restoration projects, such as the one on the Maumee River AOC in Ohio. This on-the-ground project is restoring, enhancing, and creating 1,900 feet of contiguous habitat along the Ottawa River located on the main campus of the University of Toledo. Another restoration project within the Maumee AOC on the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge restores and enhances 512 acres of wetland and upland habitats, and reconnects 127 of those acres to Lake Erie. The project includes pre- and post-monitoring, reconnection of additional wetlands, and restoration of riparian habitats.

AOCs, though only dots on a map of the Great Lakes Basin, represent important areas that serve as models for how highly contaminated and degraded areas can be restored. Only by working with others who share a common goal of restoring these areas can AOCs be delisted. The Service is proud to contribute its expertise and experience to help remove beneficial use impairments and ultimately return areas known as AOCs to a more natural, healthy and productive state. 🦿



Margaret Hutton and Andrew Briggs prepare to net fish. Fish sampling helps to identify the incidence rate of fish tumors and deformities found in some Areas of Concern. USFWS

Indiana's Wyandotte Cave Shares History with the Endangered Indiana Bat

By Lori Pruitt
Bloomington Indiana
Field Office

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is issuing articles that highlight endangered species conservation in each state. This article focuses on Indiana. More about the Endangered Species Act 40th anniversary and other endangered species conservation articles can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/ESA40/index.html>.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, but some species have been recognized as endangered for almost 50 years. The Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) was among the first 78 species to gain federal protection under the Endangered Species Protection Act of 1966, a precursor to today's Endangered Species Act.

There were approximately 1 million Indiana bats surviving in the wild at the time the species was listed. This figure sounds plentiful, but as with many endangered species, it is important to look at populations in an historic context. Biologists estimate that at one time, the Indiana bat was possibly one of the most abundant mammals on earth, numbering in the



Nearly 57,000 endangered Indiana bats hibernate in Wyandotte Cave in southern Indiana. Andrew King, USFWS

tens of millions.

Individual caves, including Wyandotte Cave in Indiana, likely supported millions. Wyandotte is a large and complex cave, typical of other caves known to support tremendous numbers of Indiana bats. These large caves often attract humans. Wyandotte provides a long, colorful example of the shared history of Indiana bats and people.

Native Americans used Wyandotte Cave over 3,000 years ago for shelter and mining chert and other minerals. Early settlers also

mined the cave for Epsom salts and saltpeter, which was used to make gunpowder, during the War of 1812. Later, entrepreneurs stored barrels of onions in the cave to corner the onion market... the venture failed, but the smell of onions lingered for

Wyandotte became a commercial tourist attraction in the 1850s—its large size and spectacular formations made it one of the grandest show caves in the country.

over 30 years. If folklore can be believed, Wyandotte may even be inhabited by the ghost of a counterfeiter who met his end in the cave. Through

these various human uses, the Indiana bat has endured. However, one chapter in the cave's history has come close to eradicating the bats—opening the cave to tourism.

Wyandotte became a commercial tourist attraction in the 1850s—its large size and spectacular formations made it one of the grandest show caves in the country. As visitation increased, the owners modified the cave, enlarging passages to open new areas and installing gates to control access. The combined effect of these alterations, which changed the cave's air temperature and hindered the bats' access, along with disturbance from visitors, devastated the bat population. By the early 1950s, bat numbers at Wyandotte declined to about 15,000. By the mid-1950s, after construction of a stone wall in the cave entrance, the population plummeted to as few as 500 bats.

In 1966, the Endangered Species Protection Act was passed. Listing the Indiana

bat as an endangered species focused attention and research on causes of its decline. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources purchased

the cave and began managing to reverse declines, including removal of the stone wall. By 1991, the Indiana bat population increased to 13,000

Today, staff at O'Bannon Woods State Park, home to Wyandotte Cave, continue to manage the cave for the bat's continued recovery. Wyandotte now supports almost 57,000 Indiana bats—one of the three largest populations of the species. Efforts of the state of Indiana, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and conservation partners have paid off. Unfortunately, white-nose syndrome, a disease devastating Indiana bats and other cave-hibernating bats, was confirmed in Wyandotte in 2011. Wyandotte has become a major hub of white-nose syndrome research, providing information that may help manage the disease.

Despite these conservation challenges, many people are dedicated to ensuring the long legacy of Indiana bats in Wyandotte Cave continues. These bats have survived dramatic changes to its habitat through the years—mining, onions, torch-bearing tourists, and possibly even a ghost. Biologists are dedicated to ensuring the species overcomes white-nose syndrome and continues on the path toward recovery.

Recapping the 2013 Sea Lamprey Control Field Season: *Larval Assessment Unit*

Editor's note: This article is the first in a series of three articles to highlight each of office Units: Larval Assessment, Lampricide Control, and Adult Assessment and Barriers

By Joanna Gilkeson
External Affairs

The 2013 Sea Lamprey Control Program field season has come to a close, and with that, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to highlight and share some of the remarkable work accomplished over the past 7-8 months.

During the field season, sea lamprey control staff based in the Marquette and Ludington Biological Stations work around the clock and, at times, 10-day shifts in order to reduce the impacts of the invasive sea lamprey on the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Service employees work in one of three units of sea lamprey control: larval assessment, lampricide control, and adult assessment and barriers. Each unit plays a different role in facilitating the decline of sea lampreys in the Great Lakes, but collectively, they work together to keep this voracious parasite at bay.

The larval assessment unit is responsible for finding streams and tributaries containing sea lamprey larvae around the Great Lakes. They use electrofishing to stimulate larvae from their burrows and estimate the sea lamprey larval population in each infested stream.

The team surveys all tributaries to the Great Lakes that have a potential to harbor sea lampreys, including those where larval sea lampreys have been found in the past, and those where they have never been detected.

Larval assessment data are then used to decide which streams will be treated with lampricides the following year, the exact locations where lampricides will be applied in each stream, and how the larval population is distributed within a stream. Access to many locations requires travel to remote areas of a stream by hiking and ATVs.

By the numbers, here is just a brief glance at what the larval assessment team was up to during 2013:

- Number of sites sampled for larval sea lampreys: 3,139
- Number of streams surveyed for larval sea lampreys: 335
- Number of slow-moving waterways surveyed for larval sea lampreys: 30
- Number of employees in the larval assessment program:
 - 14 from Marquette Biological Station and 12 from Ludington Biological Station
- Number of states worked in: 8

The Fish and Wildlife Service's Matt Symbal electrofishes at Wislon Creek, a tributary to the Big Garlic River, in Marquette County, Michigan. Lynn Kanieski, USFWS

As shown by the numbers, the larval assessment team assesses thousands of sites from northern Minnesota to the southern tip of Wisconsin, east to Buffalo, New York. All of this hard work happens during the short field season that lasts from April to October. When larval survey sites border the United States and Canada, the Service often partners with the Department of Oceans and Fisheries Canada staff to complete these surveys.

The larval assessment unit is crucial to sea lamprey control because it determines not only when and where to treat streams, but also if treatments have worked in the past and where they are most needed in the future.

Stay tuned for our next issue of Inside Region 3, which will include an article highlighting the Lampricide Control Unit. 🐾



Also assessed was the North Branch of the Ford River, in Dickinson County, Michigan. Lynn Kanieski, USFWS

2013 Minnesota Governor's Deer Hunting Opener Takes Place at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

By Valerie R. Redmond,
External Affairs and
Matt Conner, Fergus Falls
Wetland Management
District

The Minnesota Governor's 2013 Deer Opener took place at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC) on Nov. 8th and a "Welcome to Camp" kickoff for the event was hosted the day before, at the local Best Western.

The Nov. 7 welcome reception for this event included speeches from a number of dignitaries, including Fergus Falls Mayor Hal Leland, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Tom Landwehr and representatives from the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association. The Minnesota Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau extended a warm welcome to the community for this popular event. Explore Minnesota Director John Edman was also on hand and spoke about the economic impact of deer hunting. Safety was also a key.

Guests were invited to attend a tour at the Viking Valley Hunt Club and the Preserve the Tradition Museum, on Nov. 7th. Refuge Manager Larry Martin represented the Service at the event.



Youngsters enjoy Youth Field Day at the Fairgrounds and the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photo by Jean Bowman)

Transportation for the public was provided to shooting activities at the Hunt Club.

A 4:30 a.m. early morning continental breakfast provided the jump start for many at Friday's events, followed by a 6 a.m. live radio broadcast at the PWLC. Governor Mark Dayton headlined the speakers.

There was a strong community outreach for the event, one component of which was youth engagement.

Friday was Youth Field Day at the Fairgrounds and the PWLC. The day was full of youth activities, including, "Taking aim at Invasive Species" activity with archery, "Snap-Shot Hunting" (nature photography), "How to Keep a Hunting and Nature Journal" and "Predator and Prey Relationships." There were 175 Students from the PWLC's Prairie Science Class at the event. Public activities ran concurrently with youth events and included a number of field

day activities and sponsor booths.

Outreach for the event paid off, with attendance topping 250 people. Matt Conner, Director of the PWLC, was very happy with the turnout. "The main thing I want all youth to 'get' is, occasionally you see hunters who will just be a hunter, but never stop and look around," Conner said. "In other words. There are people that go hunting, but they never actually see nature. So we're trying to

get them prepared for that. If you're going to be out there hunting, why not learn about nature photography, wildlife observation, and how to best record these experiences than in a nature journal?"

"Despite the inclement weather, it was really wonderful to see the community come out and support the event," said Mark Johnson, Executive Director of the Minnesota Deer Hunting Association. "It was a good testament to the community, the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, and definitely to how deer hunting is an integral part of Minnesota culture."

Sponsors of the event included: Trinity Outdoors, Outdoor Promotions, Border Broadcasting, Townsquare Media, KNSI, Outdoors Weekly, Wild Dakota, Business Voice, and others.

"I'd like to thank the FWS for their outstanding support of the Governor's Deer Hunting Opener through all the hard work of their staff and the lifelong skills they are ingraining in the next generation of stewards of the outdoors," said Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Mentoring Program Coordinator Michael Kurre.



The Muscatatuck Scrapers

*Reprinted with permission from
Alan Garbers
Indiana Outdoor News*



Alan Garbers
(Photo courtesy of Indiana Outdoor News)

One of the big problems that Indiana Conservation Officers and Federal Wildlife Officers have to deal with on our state's wildlife refuges is the proration of marijuana. Since the plants are found on state property the officers often have no way of linking it to a local grower. Often they back off without disturbing anything and start watching the area. Countless hours of surveillance can end with no arrests if the grower catches the slightest hint that the marijuana plants have been discovered. In such a case the area is cleaned of all illegal plants and gear.

With millions of dollars on the line growers try many tricks to hide their

plants but they are limited in places that have the right conditions for marijuana growth. Marijuana needs a great deal of sunlight, just like corn. In fact cornfields that border the wildlife refuges are often used to grow a crop of "weed". The grower will sneak through the refuge and enter the backside of cornfields unseen. The tall corn is perfect for hiding the tall, hybrid marijuana plants. Some growers even go to the extent to plant their seedlings in a preset pattern, replacing the corn seedlings with their own. The pattern makes it easier to later harvest the marijuana in total darkness.

Other marijuana locations exist naturally. Growers will follow the rich, moist bottom ground along creeks until they find a hidden oasis with strong sunlight. Other times they utilize areas where a natural opening exists in the forest canopy due to wind or insect damage to trees. Luckily, many of these same locations are known by the law enforcement officers and are watched in the spring and summer. If a batch is found, high-tech surveillance gear is deployed in hopes to capture photographic evidence of the plot growers.

One of the best tools an ICO or FWO has in his or her toolbox is local citizens. They are often the eyes and ears of the officers. Such is the case for Federal Wildlife Officer Frank Polyak.

Citizens alerted Polyak to suspicious activity on Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge one summer a few years ago.

The information he received centered on several young men that were seen sneaking in from a road that ran along the perimeter of the refuge. The reports stated that the men were often carrying backpacks and armed with machetes. "We thought they were harvesting marijuana."

Officer Polyak investigated and repeatedly tried to catch the young men during their clandestine activities, even going so far as enlisting the aid of the local ICOs and Indiana State Police Officers to provide surveillance. After repeated attempts to catch the young men failed, the officers suspected someone was tipping them off using cell phones. Drug money or free marijuana can buy many friends.

Officer Polyak was frustrated but persistent. He searched the expansive area every day, often hiking into the woods looking for their setups. "Eventually I was able to find where someone had hacked a hidden trail." The trespassers had hacked up and cut down valuable trees as they made a road through the thick forest undergrowth.

Officer Polyak followed the trail suspecting the worst and wary of booby traps. He was surprised by what he found. The men were not marijuana growers as first suspected. They were common thieves that had found a gold mine. "They were using the refuge as access route to steal car parts from neighboring auto salvage."

With the pieces falling in place the puzzle became clear. "I now had a good hunch where the men were coming from," Polyak said. There was a residence not far from the trail termination and it was there that Officer Polyak headed. When he arrived at the home a middle-aged man was working outside. The officer started interviewing the man to see if he knew of any suspicious activity or if anyone in his family was going into the refuge.

The homeowner acknowledged that his son and a friend had been going into the forest at night. While the father didn't know the reason for the nightly excursions, he was curious. He himself had tried to search for evidence in the thick undergrowth of the refuge but had not succeeded. Officer Polyak expressed his concern that the man's son might be involved in illegal activities and possibly to drug crimes.

Together and with a little coaxing they were able to talk the man's son into coming by the father's home to talk with Officer Polyak. Once there, the young man confessed to everything, including actually driving to the salvage yard and stealing car parts to later sell as scrap. He also implicated other friends whom Officer Polyak was able to successfully interview and build a case against. Along with federal charges for destruction of public property they were charged with a series of other unrelated crimes. 🦋

CAST of Partners and Volunteers Provide Fishing and Fun

*By Tim Smigielski,
Jordan River National
Fish Hatchery*

Catch a Special Thrill, the United Special Sportsman Alliance, the Marion Illinois Kiwanis and Chamber of Commerce, along with many additional partners and volunteers provided some special families with a day in the out of doors, September 27.

A family fishing event was held on Crab Orchard Lake in

More than 20 disabled and critically ill children showed up with their families to focus on fun and fishing for the day. The families registered for the event through United Special Sportsman Alliance, a charity that has provided more than 3,000 outdoor oriented wishes to families and their critically ill and disabled children.

Catch a Special Thrill, also referred to as CAST, provided all families with hats, t-shirts, fishing rods and tackle boxes



Catching A Special Thrill (CAST) aboard one of the many vessels donated and piloted for the day by partners. Photo courtesy of Jim Owen, CAST

cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Carterville Illinois Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge.

to use for the day and to take home for future fishing adventures. Local bass fishing clubs and recreational fishing enthusiasts provided their time, their boats and their expertise.



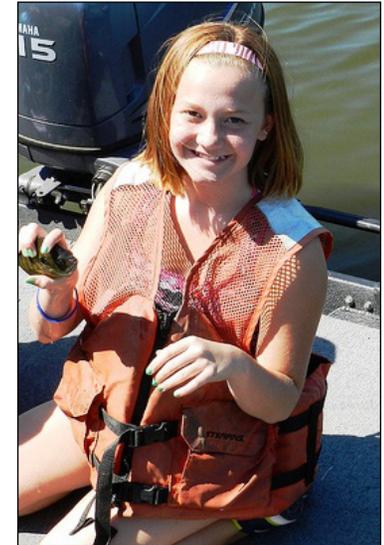
A CAST kid and their mentor are rigged and ready for a fun day of fishing on Crab Orchard Lake, Illinois. Photo courtesy of Jim Owen, CAST



Boat Captains and mentors helped the kids celebrate the day. Here are a few receiving a photo plaque to commemorate the event. Photo courtesy of Jim Owen, CAST

The families were assigned a boat captain who guided them on a boat tour; fishing for bass, bluegill, crappie and catfish and anything else that would bite. The families returned to the boat access with big smiles, many stories and even a few stringers of fish. All were treated to a picnic lunch served up by volunteers and organized by the local Kiwanis Club.

However, the real “take home” for the families and all who participated is the memories that were made, the time that was shared and the wishes that came true. 🐟



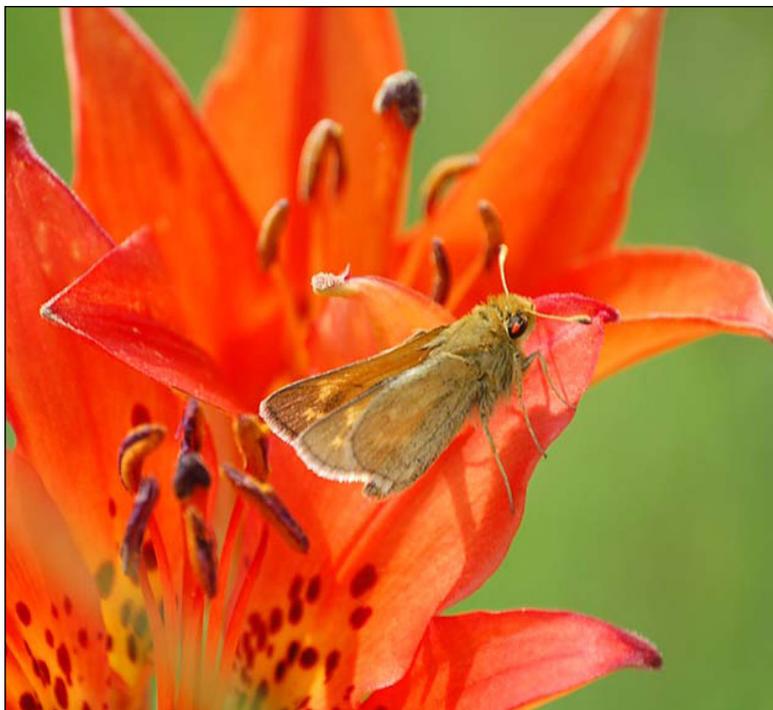
You could see by CAST kid smiles, everyone had a great time. Photo courtesy of Jim Owen, CAST

Butterflies, Bat Proposed for Endangered Species Act Protection

By Georgia Parham
External Affairs

Three species found in the Midwest Region and beyond were proposed for protection under the Endangered Species Act, in October 2013. The Service is considering listing the northern long-eared bat and two prairie butterflies – the Dakota skipper and the Poweshiek skipperling.

The northern long-eared bat is found across much of the eastern and north central United States, and all Canadian provinces from the Atlantic Ocean west to the southern Yukon Territory and eastern British Columbia. The primary threat to the northern long-eared bat is white-nose syndrome, a disease that has killed an estimated 5.5 million cave-hibernating bats in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest and Canada. Populations of the northern long-eared bat in the Northeast have declined by 99 percent since symptoms of white-nose syndrome were first observed in 2006.



The Dakota skipper has been proposed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Phil Delphey, USFWS

White-nose syndrome is a fungal disease known to cause high mortality in bats that hibernate in caves. The fungus causing the disease thrives in low temperatures and high humidity – conditions commonly found in caves and mines where northern long-eared bats hibernate. White-nose syndrome has spread rapidly throughout the East and is currently establishing a foothold in the

Midwest. Although there is debate as to how fast white-nose syndrome may spread throughout the species' range, current model predictions suggest it will likely spread throughout the United States.

The Service also proposed to list two prairie butterflies, the Dakota skipper and the Poweshiek skipperling, due to steep population declines. The Dakota skipper is

proposed as a threatened species, with critical habitat. Found in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Canada, the Dakota skipper has experienced a dramatic decline in numbers and no longer occurs on half the sites where previously found. The Service is also proposing a special rule for the Dakota skipper that would provide flexibility for landowners and land managers who have Dakota skippers on their property.

The Poweshiek skipperling is proposed as endangered, with critical habitat. This butterfly, once found in

eight states and Canada, now occurs only in a few native prairie remnants in Wisconsin and Michigan, and in Manitoba, Canada. Surveys indicate that Poweshiek skipperlings are gone from nearly 90 percent of the sites where they were previously found.

The Twin Cities Field office has lead for the butterfly proposals, while the Green Bay Field Office is in charge of the proposal to list the northern long-eared bat. [For more information on these proposals, go to \[www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered\]\(http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered\)](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered) 



A northern long-eared bat shows symptoms of white-nose syndrome. Photo courtesy of Steve Taylor, University of Illinois

Reintroducing Topeka Shiners in Missouri: *An Interagency Partnership*

By Paul McKenzie
Columbia Missouri Field
Office

After a long effort to establish a non-essential experimental population, Topeka shiners were released, November 6, in pond and stream habitat at the Nature Conservancy's Dunn Ranch and the Missouri Department of Conservation's Pawnee Prairie, in northern Missouri.

The Service's Columbia, Missouri Ecological Services Field Office, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Nature Conservancy were partners in the effort. A total of 3,300 fish were released into three ponds

and one stream, on Dunn Ranch, and two ponds, at Pawnee Prairie. A small number of orange-spotted sunfish were also released because Topeka shiners are obligate spawners on sunfish nests.

Pond habitats mirror off-channel habitats that occur in the northern parts of the Topeka shiner's range. Personnel at Missouri Department of Conservation's Lost Valley Hatchery in Warsaw have been successful in propagating the species in pond habitat.

Topeka shiners were propagated at Lost Valley Hatchery and hauled to pond and stream habitats on Dunn Ranch and Pawnee Prairie. Fish were transferred from

a hatchery truck to a cooler before being released. The establishment of a non-essential experimental population is part of Missouri's recovery goal to maintain seven populations of the species in the state as outlined in the agency's 2010: "A Ten Year Strategic Plan for the Recovery of the Topeka Shiner in Missouri". It is hoped that Topeka shiners will successfully spawn in ponds at Dunn Ranch and Pawnee Prairie.

The release followed the publication of a final rule in the Federal Register on July 17, establishing a non-essential experimental population under Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act (available at <http://1.usa.gov/1e5Ka09>).

Without the establishment of non-essential experimental populations in Missouri, it is probable that this critically imperiled species will become extirpated in the state. 🐦

Topeka shiners are released in Missouri. USFWS



Happy 40th Endangered Species Act!



By Georgia Parham
External Affairs

On December 28, 1973, President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law. Since then, the protections afforded by the Act and the spotlight it places on the plight of imperiled species have staved off extinction for many species and paved the road to recovery for many others. We've seen the rebound of the bald eagle, gray wolf, peregrine falcon and whooping crane, to name a few.

Over the past 12 months, *Inside Region 3* has featured endangered species success stories and challenges from around the Midwest, from American burying beetles in Missouri to the Kirtland's warbler in Michigan. The series ends this month with a focus on the Indiana bat.

Celebrate the 40th anniversary of one of the world's most important conservation laws by visiting <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/ESA40/index.html>. While you're there, take a look at the video "Endangered Species 101." If you need a little inspiration for the new year, you'll find it here.



Midwest Birding Symposium 2013



Some of the Midwest Birding Symposium attendees take to the field as part of the event.
Photo courtesy of the Midwest Birding Symposium

*By Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs*

The 2013 Midwest Birding Symposium was held September 19-22, in Lakeside, Ohio. Known for its marshlands, it sits on the shores of the Lake Erie Western Basin.

Hosted by the Bird Watcher's Digest, the Lakeside Chautauqua and the Ohio Ornithological Society, the Symposium offered a host of events for eager bird enthusiasts including, but not limited to a Lake Erie Island Sunset Boat Cruise, Birders: The Central Park Effect Movie, Carbon Offset Bird Program Birders' Exchange Program, Conservation Raffle, Back To the Wild Exhibit, Kelleys Island Birding Excursion, Bird Photography

Workshops, Lake Erie Pelagic Trip, Roadrunner 3K Fun Run/Walk, Young Birders' Day & Young Birders' Clubhouse, Author Book Signings, Mothing Station, Phonescoping, and The Big Sit!

Speakers at the event included, John Acorn, the writer and host of the television series "Acorn, The Nature Nut"; George Armiste, the events coordinator for the American Birding Association; Al Batt, a writer, speaker, storyteller and humorist; Jessie Barry, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; and Mark Cocker, author of best-selling books, including "Birders: Tales of a Tribe", "Birds Britannica", and "Crow Country".

Sponsors included the

American Birding Association, the Ohio Division of Wildlife, Princeton University Press, Ducks Unlimited, Swarovski Optik and the MBS 2013 Cerulean Warbler Sponsor, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

More than 750 people attended the event. "Everybody had a good time," said Bill Thompson, Editor-in-Chief of the Bird Watcher's Digest. "We had a wide range of speakers. It really lived up to its billing of the World's Friendliest Birding Event of 2013!"

For more on this exciting event, visit:
<https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb2013/about.php>

After The Storm – A Beetle Story

*By Scott Hamilton
Columbia Ecological Services
Field Office*

When I last wrote, things were not looking good for the American burying beetle. Obviously, this is an endangered species, so most reports on this animal are at least tempered with a bleak history of decline, or a remark on its past abundance, now mysteriously reduced to the edges of its former range. But this story offers a little hope.

I last reported that the St. Louis Zoo, along with many volunteers, had paired up 600 beetles and introduced them to Missouri soil for the first time in their little beetle lives. Our otherwise successful day was spoiled by the next when an unexpected cloudburst filled the area with rain and washed the beetles from their burrows. The "brood check" 10 days after reintroduction, when we dug up one-third of our constructed burrows to measure breeding success, found only five grubs (last year we found 300).

Following our monitoring plan, zoo staff laid out baited pitfall



Service personnel place American burying beetles into constructed burrows the day before the big storm. USFWS

traps near our reintroduction sites a couple months after we put the beetles in the ground. Honestly, we weren't expecting much.

Much to our surprise, on the second day of trapping, seven American burying beetles flew into the pitfalls overnight. The next day, we found three more. At the end of the monitoring cycle, a total of 15 beetles were found, a considerably better showing than the two beetles found the previous year.

None of the beetles captured had the elytra notches we put on the zoo-bred adults, so we were actually finding the offspring of the beetles we put in the ground.

Could it be possible that the beetles escaping the deluge found mates, raised their young, and completed their lifecycle largely without our help?

I can't say for sure, because the grubs found during our brood count (after extrapolation) could be the exact same ones that matured and later fell into our pitfall traps. But I have a little hope. 🐞