



## U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# Inside Region 3

March 2011



## what's inside

### **Features**



### Midwest's Secret / 3

The RD talks about change and extends congratulations to all five of the recent state appointments.

By Tom Melius



#### Federal Trust Responsibilities / 4

Working with tribes in the Midwest By Tim Patronski



### Waterfowl Symposium / 5

Honoring an influential conservationist.

By Ashley Spratt



#### **Sherburne Winterfest/11**

Friends of Sherburne and staff of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge celebrate winter together.

By Tina Shaw

On the Cover:

Getting outside is fun! RD Tom Melius enjoys winterfest at Sherburne NWR. Service photo by Tina Shaw.

## **RD's Corner**

#### A Wave of Change

The 2010 state-level elections ushered in a new wave of state leadership across the nation. Here in the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I would like to extend congratulations to the five new state natural resource agency leaders appointed. As well, I wish their predecessors much continued success.

I am looking forward to working with all the new appointees and I am making a concerted effort to engage each of them as quickly as possible so that we can discuss key issues in their respective states. I also want to ensure we continue the cooperation and good relationships that we have had with the states in the past.

I've already had the opportunity to meet with a couple of the new leaders. The Service enjoys a strong and effective partnership with the state of Iowa where Director Roger Lande has taken the helm at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and I visited with him at the Iowa DNR headquarters in January. In the state of Minnesota where Commissioner Tom Landwehr now heads up the DNR, we have many shared conservation issues and many opportunities to work together. The two of us had the opportunity to welcome members of the waterfowl conservation



Above: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius (r) visited with newly appointed Iowa DNR Director Roger Lande (l) at the IDNR's central office in Des Moines.

community to the 2011 Minnesota Waterfowl Symposium dedicated to Service employee Harvey K. Nelson (see page 5).

Cathy Stepp's recent appointment as the Secretary of the Wisconsin DNR was well received here at the Service. Her work as the chair of the Wisconsin State Senate's Job Creation Committee and co-chair of the Wisconsin Environment and Natural Resources Committee has been closely followed by us.

The Service will benefit immensely from the professional and innovative manner in which Ohio's DNR employees will carry out their mission under the guidance of Director David Mustine. His support will help ensure the protection of valuable fish and wildlife resources and we look forward to future opportunities where we can cooperate to ensure these resources continue to thrive.

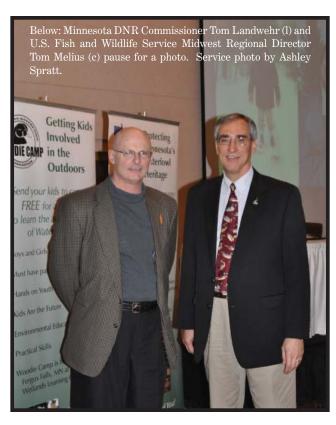
We also hold a very high regard for the Michigan DNR and the fine work it undertakes to manage fish and wildlife resources in that state. Rodney Stokes takes the lead as director there. I will have the opportunity to meet with him at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference later in March.

I am looking forward to working with all of them in the coming months.

And more change is coming. Eventually, a new Service director will come on-board. When that happens, we will make an effort to get the director out to field stations and showcase all of the good work that you and your programs are doing.

March, as always, signals more change: spring! If it comes quickly, it also brings the challenges of flooding. We are already going forward with training and having our equipment prepared. We are making sure not only that our own people are safe, but that if there is a need from our communities we are prepared to assist them, as well.

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



# Working with Tribes in the Midwest to Fulfill Our Federal Trust Responsibilities



The Midwest Region recently developed a video as a tool to help us all better understand our trust responsibilities as a federal agency for working with Indian tribes. A unique relationship exists between Native American tribes and the United States government; and, this relationship has important implications for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the work that we do.

"This video is the newest tool developed to help us all better understand what our responsibilities are, how this applies to the work we do, and how we can work together to meet our shared goals," said Midwest Regional Director, Tom Melius. "Effectively working with tribes is a priority for our

region and presents a tremendous conservation partnership opportunity."

Many individuals, including many of our tribal partners, Service employees, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and our regional Office of the Solicitor contributed to producing the video. We hope it will be a valuable resource not only for our employees but also for our tribal partners and others who are interested in learning more about the federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes. More information on our work with tribes is available on our Partnerships with Native Americans website at: http://www. fws.gov/midwest/tribal.

--Tim Patronski External Affairs Above: Participants in a Service sponsored motorboat and airboat safety instructor training hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa gather for a photo. Service photo.

# **Story Tips**

For more great regional stories visit: http://www.fws.gov/midwest/news/tipsheet/

# Honoring an Influential Conservationist: 2011 Minnesota Waterfowl Symposium

Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius joined Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Tom Landwehr and Deputy Commissioner Dave Schad in welcoming members of

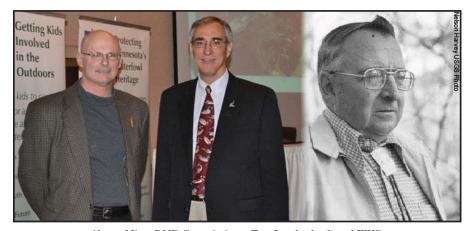
the waterfowl conservation community to the 2011 Minnesota Waterfowl Symposium. The Symposium, in its 14th year, was dedicated to former Fish and Wildlife Service employee and influential conservationist

Harvey K.

Nelson. Nelson was regarded as a highly respected advocate for the prairie pothole region, a leader in wetlands and waterfowl conservation, and a friend to the entire Midwest natural resources community.

"In my mind, the men and women who dedicate their careers to conservation possess a passion that extends into the communities they live in, the conservation societies they lead, and the families they are part of," Melius said. "Not only do leaders in wildlife conservation work to protect and conserve fish and wildlife resources in their professional careers, but in their personal lives as well."

Harvey K. Nelson, an active member of the conservation community, worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 42 years before retiring in 1992 to pursue various leadership roles in non-governmental conservation organizations. As a consultant with the Minnesota



Above: Minn. DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr (l) and FWS Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius (c) pause for a photo. Service photo by Ashley Spratt. Harvey Nelson (r), served a 42 year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before pursuing volunteer and consultant work for non-governmental conservation organizations. Photo courtesy of USGS.

Waterfowl Association, Nelson was instrumental in the development of the Minnesota Waterfowl Symposium. Nelson's vision for the symposium was to create a forum where dedicated waterfowlers could interact with waterfowl biologists and managers.

The native of Evansville, Minn., received numerous awards for his efforts in the upper Midwest conservation community including Man of the Year for 2000 by Minnesota Outdoor News and the Silver Eagle Award from the Service's Midwest Region.

Service Regional Director Tom Melius also welcomed Tom Landwehr to his recently appointed position as Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. "Tom's vision has always been a reflection of what is best for the resource," Melius said. "Tom is

> not only a planner, but a man who implements, as well. I had the pleasure of working alongside Tom on the restoration of grasslands and wetlands at Glacial Ridge, and the transfer of those lands to the Fish and Wildlife Service to become part of the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife

Refuge. I know that as DNR Commissioner, Tom will embrace landscape conservation and a common vision for Minnesota citizens and Minnesota resources."

Following a dedication to Harvey by retired Fish and Wildlife Service employee Dave Sharp, the program moved forward to address the current status of waterfowl populations, hunting regulations, species management problems, decoys and dog training, volunteer opportunities, and the future of waterfowl hunting recruitment and retention.

The Symposium was sponsored by the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Delta Waterfowl.

--Ashley Spratt External Affairs

# How Many Trees Would Need to be Planted to Offset the Carbon from One of Your Special Events?

Below: Visitor Services Specialist Cortney White conducted the first-ever Upper Mississippi River NWFR Winona refuge-wide (virtual) conference call. Service photo.

In October 2010 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees from the Midwest Region and Washington D.C., representatives of local conservation organizations, and members of congress gathered at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge to celebrate the 27th U.S. Ramsar site designation to commemorate this milestone in local conservation history.

In planning the celebration, refuge employees made the decision early on to track the carbon produced by this event and then follow up with purchasing a carbon off-set.

Visitor Services Manager Cindy Samples stated, "Early In the planning stages it became apparent we all wanted to see if we could create a carbon-neutral event. We crafted a goal for the event: We will strive for a carbonneutral event that heightens public awareness of the vulnerability of wetlands."

The Conservation Fund measures carbon dioxide emissions from any of life's activities, then offsets the impact by planting trees, which absorb carbon throughout their life (http://www.conservationfund.org/). According to the Conservation Fund, one tree will offset approximately one ton of carbon over its lifetime. The young trees planted for the Ramsar event will only begin to sequester or absorb carbon if they are living, so the organization makes every effort to ensure the trees are healthy. In doing so, the Conservation Fund has met the standards of the Intergovernmental Panel on



Climate Change Good Practice Guidance and satisfies their highest level of accuracy criteria.

The planning committee also strived for carbon neutrality by considering the amount of carbon that would be produced by each segment of the event and if there was a more environmentally safe option. "After we looked over all of our options to reduce our carbon footprint we then tracked carbon emissions to determine the number of trees needed to offset the impact of the celebration" said Samples. The committee recorded each mile driven by employees, guests and service providers, as well as hotel stays and the amount of propane used for heat. Local companies were chosen to reduce possible emissions, such as a local tent company and caterer. Locally grown organic foods were served and natural, native decorations from the wetland and local gardeners spattered the tent inside and out. "We were surprised at how easy it was to track our carbon footprint and how inexpensive it is to offset the impact of the event" said Kevin Foerster, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge manager. "We strongly encourage other refuges do the same when planning their next event."

In continuing their efforts to reduce carbon the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge has been striving for carbon neutrality in their everyday activities. Recently, Visitor Services Specialist Cortney White and Wildlife Biologist Lisa Reid brought refuge employees upto-date on the Conservation Fund partnership through the first-ever refuge-wide (virtual) conference call. During the meeting employees were encouraged to sign a pledge to personally reduce their carbon-footprint in the next year. Using this style meeting allows employees from the 261 rivermile refuge to share ideas without creating extra carbon emissions.

In addition, employees of the Upper Mississippi River NWFR Winona District and Headquarters were inspired by the efforts of the planning committee and will participate in a challenge to reduce the amount of carbon they emit. Each employee is encouraged to calculate their carbon footprint and reduce their impact within the next six months. At the end of the challenge trees will be planted by the refuge on the Winona District to offset the carbon produced by participants. As a reward the employee to reduce their carbon footprint the most will receive a prize. The refuge hopes to continue to use refuge-wide conference call meetings to reduce travel and expenses. They also hope to again partner with the Conservation Fund one day by creating a habitation restoration project on the refuge.

--Cortney White, Upper Mississippi River NWFR Winona

## Sky Dancers Perform at Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

The skyline marquee at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is showing one of the great wonders of nature, the winter migration of thousands of bald eagles along the Mississippi River. This national troupe of sky dancers is performing daily with aerial displays including cart wheeling acrobatics and talon clinching maneuvers.

Sky Dancing is the ritual of social interaction of eagles in flight. This interaction bonds a family and is used in courtship by a pair that mates for life. Eagles relentlessly pursue each other and suddenly, one eagle will flip upside down and grasp the talons of the other. The two will cartwheel downward and with the grace of skilled acrobats, release talons and resume their game of pursuit. Aggressive aerial combat maneuvers are also made when two eagles are fighting over food or territory.

The bald eagle is one of the great wildlife management success stories in U.S. history. The combined efforts of individuals, conservation organizations, state and federal agencies made this success story. There were reintroduction programs combined with strict laws and a national education outreach effort. The bald eagle was removed from the federal endangered species list in 2007 but is still protected under several migratory bird laws.

Ice conditions along the Upper Mississippi River typically determine the major eagle concentration areas because fish, especially shad, are a primary food source. Fish are easy pickings at the locks and dams where river current keeps the water open. Eagles also dine on ducks, rabbits and road killed deer. In a severe winter, they will sift through cow manure that has been spread in fields to find those golden kernels of corn.

Bald eagle nesting on Upper Mississippi NWFR is at an all time high. In 1971, there was only one bald eagle nest located within the 261 miles of the refuge. In 2010, there were 246 bald eagle nests.

Bald eagles generally use the same nest year after year and add more branches each season. Older nests

can weigh as much as one ton and may cause a tree to topple during a wind storm. An eagle pair may build more than one nest and use the alternate nest as a feeding station. One or two eaglets per nest is common, but as many as five have been documented. Increased production is a sign of abundant food and good habitat conditions.

Eagle nesting is often plagued with disasters, such as the one located at Lock & Dam 13 in Fulton, Ill. This nest has been active since 2004. In 2004 and 2005, the nest and eggs were destroyed by high winds. In 2006, one mate was killed after flying into a power line. In 2009, the eaglet flew into a power line and died. In September 2010, high winds destroyed most of the nest. A new nest is now being built 100 yards east of the old nest.

Stewards of Upper Mississippi Refuge in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are installing a web camera to observe eagles at Lock & Dam 13. It should be operational soon and can be viewed at the Stewards of Upper Mississippi Refuge website: sumriver.org. An adult eagle is a picture of grace and beauty with a wing span of seven feet. They may weigh up to 15 pounds and can spot a rabbit a mile away while diving 100 miles per hour to catch its prey.

We are fortunate to have the Mississippi River at our front door. Its wealth of natural resources is often taken for granted. The fury of its flood waters reminds us of its power and our inability to control this magnificent force of nature. Take time out of your busy schedule to walk or drive along the riverfront and reinvigorate yourself with the view of our grand Upper Mississippi NWFR and the aerial minuets of the sky dancers.

--Ed Britton is a Wildlife Refuge Manager at the Savanna District of Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge



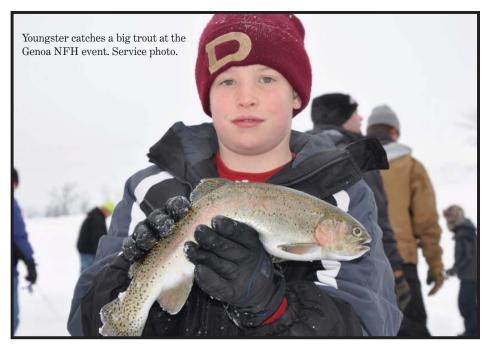
# Breaking the Ice: A Wintertime Tradition at Genoa National Fish Hatchery

More than 500 area children and parents enjoyed a day on the ice at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin this February. Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Fisheries Services, made up of volunteers who support area U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries field stations and hatcheries, has sponsored an ice fishing opportunity for resident youth since 2003.

Staff from LaCrosse Fish Health Center, LaCrosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and the Genoa NFH joined participants to provide tips and tricks to landing a fish on a hatchery pond stocked with rainbow trout.

"The event gets kids outside at a time when it is most convenient and comfortable to be cocooned up in front of a computer or video game," said hatchery manager





Doug Aloisi. "But it is also one of the most beautiful times to get outside and see what nature is doing in the middle of winter. It

> is also a good chance for kids and their families to enjoy an outdoor activity together."

The Viroqua Area Boy Scouts and Cashton Area Cub Scouts were just two of the many scout groups to participate this year.

What advice would Aloisi give to a first timer on the ice? He says the most important thing is to dress warmly, "No one can have any fun if they are not prepared for the weather." Secondly, Doug recommends going with someone that has been before and can show you

the ropes. "The rest is trying to figure out when the fish are biting," he says.

When the hatchery staff isn't educating area youth on a Wisconsin wintertime tradition, Aloisi and his team spend the winter months caring for lake trout, rainbow trout, and coaster brook trout eggs and fry, mending nets for the upcoming broodstock collection season on the river, and constructing new culture systems for the upcoming production season.

--Ashley Spratt External Affairs

### **Duckstamps**

Region Total: 365 Duck Stamps Sold!

## Wildlife Inspection Program Gains Efficiency

**Great Lakes Restoration** Initiative funds are supporting the wildlife conservation mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement at ports throughout the Great Lakes Basin. Charged with the responsibility of protecting and conserving native and foreign wildlife through the enforcement of federal laws, the Service's Wildlife Inspection Program, inspects cargo at some of the largest ports in the United States, including Chicago and Detroit. GLRI funds covered the cost of a mobile inspection system that will strengthen existing resource protection efforts by increasing the capacity and efficiency of wildlife inspection screening efforts.

This system is built for on-site, mobile inspections of high volumes of freight—from cargo plane pallets and rail cars, to intermodal containers that travel via cargo ship. It will be a tremendous asset for wildlife inspectors in their efforts to detect wildlife smuggling and interdict invasive species. Through this technology, wildlife inspectors will get accurate images of contents without the need of opening a parcel or box. This efficiency will allow inspectors to target and inspect large amounts of cargo using less manpower.

The mobile inspection system has computerized X-ray inspection capability with a programmable zoom that magnifies the image from 2 to 32 times. It also features sharp video display on dual 17 inch liquid crystal display flat panel monitors for crisp, realtime inspection. The screening software incorporates unique



Above: Chicago-based Service employee Jennifer Roth is one of the Wildlife Inspection Program staff that will be trained in using the mobile inspection system. Service photo.

features designed to optimize threat prevention and product identification. One feature of note is image annotation, a functionality that allows the operator to draw a frame around a suspect area of the scanned image and enter a reference code. The operator can either save the image for later review or transmit the image to a supervisor workstation for secondary review. Another key feature is Picture Perfect, a scanning process that analyzes and normalizes scanned images in both color and black and white modes, making all areas visible to the operator. Picture Perfect allows for clear identification of multi-layer content.

OLE wildlife inspection officers and special agents will be trained in the use and maintenance of this system in the spring of 2011.

--Tina Shaw, External Affairs

# Your Opinion Matters

As a reader of Inside Region 3, External Affairs would like to get your views on the newsletter. As such, you will soon receive a survey inquiring about Inside Region 3. This survey is to provide you with an opportunity to tell us what you think of it, your expectations and your suggestions for improvement.

Our aim is to obtain a true and unbiased picture of Inside Region 3's readership habits so that we can produce the most relevant and compelling content on Service issues for your consumption. Your responses to this survey will be an invaluable guide in helping us to achieve this goal and your contributions will help us to improve Inside Region 3 and where possible, will ultimately impact the future shape of the newsletter. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes.

## White-nose Bat Syndrome Confirmed in Indiana

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service have received confirmation that a bat found in a southern Indiana cave has tested positive for white-nose syndrome. The case is the state's first for the syndrome, believed to be responsible for the deaths of more than one million bats in the eastern United States.

Researchers doing biennial bat counts at Endless Cave in Washington County discovered two little brown bats on Jan. 23 that exhibited the white fungus characteristic of WNS. One of the bats was euthanized and sent to the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wis., which later confirmed the presence of the WNS-associated fungus.

Additional bats with signs of WNS were discovered during routine bat count surveys at other caves.

The fungus has been discovered in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, Canada.

Researchers associate WNS with a newly identified fungus, *Geomyces destructans*, which thrives in the cold and humid conditions characteristic of caves and mines used by hibernating bats.

Experts believe WNS is transmitted primarily from bat to bat, but they also caution it may be transmitted by humans inadvertently carrying fungal spores from cave to cave on their clothing and caving gear. The DNR closed public access to all caves on state-managed properties two years ago.

Physical signs associated with WNS are a white fungus on the bat's nose, wings, ears or

tail membrane. Bats afflicted with WNS often exhibit unusual behavior in winter, including clustering near hibernacula entrances. Affected bats also may leave their hibernacula during the day and may be observed flying or clinging to rocks outside or on nearby buildings. Dead or dying bats are often found on the ground near affected areas.

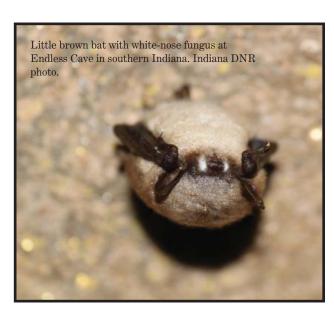
--Georgia Parham External Affairs



## Spread the Word: Endangered Species Day Art Contest

Endangered Species Day is May 20. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Endangered Species Coalition, Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Ogden Museum of Southern Art/ University are partnering to launch the 2011 national Endangered Species Day art contest. The competition offers young people an opportunity to learn about endangered species and express their knowledge and support through artwork. Endangered Species Day recognizes conservation programs nationwide aimed at protecting America's threatened and endangered species. Deadline for entering is March 15, 2011. For more information and entry requirements, visit http://www.stopextinction.org/esd/194esd-art.html

--Georgia Parham External Affairs



## **Around the Region**

#### **Sherburne Winterfest**

For more than 17 years the Friends of Sherburne and staff of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge have celebrated winter together with a day-long event filled with fun and educational activities for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages.

Winterfest 2011 continued this tradition with a huge outpouring of support from volunteers and refuge staff who provided everything a snow adventurer could need: snowshoes, instruction, interpretive sleigh rides through rare oak savanna and a toasty camp fire and warm treat of hot cocoa.

Audubon Center of the North Woods Wildlife Coordinator Jeff Tyson introduced some of his feathered friends to visitors with a live bird presentation, while others learned the secrets of photography from nature photographer Dave Zosel. Visitors also celebrated the birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System!



Above: Great day for snowshoeing! Service photo by Tina Shaw.



Above: Sherburne Refuge Manager Anne Sittauer and long-time Refuge volunteer. Service photo by Tina Shaw.



### **New State Appointments**

On behalf of the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I would like to extend congratulations these recently appointed state natural resource managers. Congratulations to you all and we look forward to working with all of you.

- --Tom Melius USFWS Regional Director
- Tom Landwehr Commissioner Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Roger Lande
   Director
   Iowa Department of Natural
   Resources
- Cathy Stepp Secretary Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Rodney Stokes
   Director
   Michigan Department of Natural
   Resources
- David Mustine
   Director
   Ohio Department of Natural Resources

## **Employee Highlight: Judy Geck**

External Affairs Valerie Redmond interviewed Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Services Park Ranger/Librarian Judy Geck on her path to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Geck joined the Service in April 2008. Prior to working for the Service, she worked for the National Park Service on the Mississippi River and at Fort Union National Monument in New Mexico.

**Redmond:** What's your job title? What do you do?

Geck: Visitor Services Park
Ranger/Librarian. I teach
environmental education to our
partner school students. My
primary visitor service duties are
operating the Bloomington Visitor
Center and conducting public
interpretive programs. As regional
resource librarian, I manage and
maintain resources including books
and videos, displays, photos, and
documents that are circulated to
the Midwest Region U.S. Fish
and Wildlife Service field stations,
educators, and the local public.

**Redmond:** What attracted you to the Service? How did you come to work for the Service?

At the Minnesota Valley Grand Re-Opening Judy Geck (c) pauses with National Park Service friends for a photo. Photo courtesy of Judy Geck.



**Geck:** After five years of working with the National Park Service at the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, I was looking for a permanent federal position following graduate school. As a Student Career Experience Program I could be considered by any federal agency and since I lived and worked near the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers I hoped to continue working with water resources. I contacted Minnesota Valley NWR and learned about the Park Ranger/Librarian position, an ideal job for me since I came from a previous career in the book industry. I worked in retail bookselling from 1980 to 2003. Most of my book career was at the Hungry Mind in St. Paul as a buyer and one of several managers. I'm doing a talk at the Northwoods Children's Book Conference in September focused on nature books.

**Redmond:** Where were you born? Are you from this area? If not, how did you get here?

Geck: I was born in Minneapolis and grew up across the street from Minnehaha Park. I attended college the College of St. Catherine across the river in St. Paul and have lived in the Highland Park area of St. Paul since 1982.

**Redmond:** Are you married, children? What are their names and ages?

Geck: My husband is a biologist, retired from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and currently works part-time with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in their food lab.

Redmond: Can you talk about the children and nature program that you're involved in? Why do you have a passion for it?

Geck: The Minnesota Valley NWR is located in the heart of a major metro area and the refuge offers intensive environmental education programs for elementary students. Our partner school program is designed to bring entire elementary schools to the refuge for repeated visits during multiple seasons in order to develop an appreciation for habitat and wildlife needs and adaptations. The continuity helps students distinguish a refuge from other local public lands and provides opportunities for exploring this unique natural area.

We also offer a variety of public programs for families to explore the refuge. This is one of only a handful of urban refuges so there is easy access, even via the light rail! Some of the interpretive programs that I've developed like "Defined by Nature," take a closer look at the history, evolution, and significance of our local natural resources to the cultural history of the Twin Cities metro area. "Rail to Refuge" is a guided light rail ride and hike demonstrating our easy metro transit access.

**Redmond:** Do you have an educational background in working with children? Where did you go to school?

Geck: Yes. I have a bachelor's degree in physical education from the College of St. Catherine and a M.Ed. in outdoor recreation from the University of Minnesota. My course work included a variety of education courses, emphasizing non-formal education, curriculum, and experiential learning.

# Michael Olson Named as New LCC Science Coordinator

Michael Olson joins the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC as its new science coordinator. Olson has been the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Missouri River Coordinator since October 1999. Prior to that, Olson worked with the Service as an endangered

species biologist and an environmental contaminants biologist. Olson earned a Master of Science degree in entomology from North Dakota State University, and a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from St. Cloud State University. He also recently completed the Service's Advanced Leadership Development Program.

As part of the new position, Olson will remain based in

Bismarck, N.D., and will serve as a primary resource benefitting the work of the Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperatives Steering Committee. "Mike's nearly two decades of scientific research and project management

research and project management make him the perfect choice to help us identify information gaps and find solutions for the questions we have about landscape-level changes we are seeing across the prairies," said the Service's Midwest Regional Director, Tom Melius. "His experience and background make him a valuable shared asset to all the LCC partners across the plains and prairies.

Olson will work with partners within the LCC to initiate,



Above: Michael Olson. Service photo.

facilitate, integrate, coordinate, and communicate scientific work addressing climate change impacts on landscape and habitat conservation. Olson will focus on Strategic Habitat Conservation implementation and administration, including biological planning, conservation design and delivery, assumption-driven research, monitoring/evaluation, and organizational performance. According to the Service's Mountain-Prairie Regional Director, Steve Guertin, "Mike has brought together information from many different agencies, and

across administrative boundaries, to help diverse interests focus on the shared resources of the Missouri River. Because of that experience, and the skill set he brings, he is the ideal person to help the LCC partners meet their conservation missions."

The Plains and Prairie Potholes LLC is dedicated to the conservation of a landscape unparalleled in importance to a vast array of unique species, including many that are undergoing steep population declines. Geographically, the LCC includes all of North and South Dakota, portions of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Montana and Wyoming, and across the Canadian border, sections of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Melius also extended his appreciation to Dr. Pat Heglund, who worked as the interim science coordinator for the LCC. "Dr. Heglund was a critical component to the successful development of the LCC, and developed the solid scientific groundwork needed to help us move forward."

More information on LCCs can be found here: http://www.fws.gov/midwest/climate/LCC.cfm.

--Chuck Traxler External Affairs



### **U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

http://www.fws.gov/midwest/

March 2011

