

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

May 2012

Moving Forward



Features



Moving Forward / 3

RD addresses safety and the coming field and recreation season.

By Tom Melius



Safety First / 4

Midwest undergoes safety review.

By Valerie Rose Redmond



International Migratory Bird Day / 5

Spotlight on bird migration and IMDB.

By Ashley Spratt



Minnesota Youth Wins / 7

Sky Waters from Eagan, Minn., took top honors in the national Endangered Species Day art contest with his painting of a woodland caribou. Copy from Endangered Species Coalition.

By Georgia Parham

On the Cover:

Bald Eagle about to take flight.
Service photo.

Moving Forward

Did you celebrate and recognize Earth day this past April 22? I hope so. It's an important day for us to pause and reflect on what it all comes back to—making a difference and moving conservation forward. The conservation efforts that we are making are not only for us, but for generations to come. Individual involvement in events and personal activities not only raises awareness, but contributes to the cause. The Endangered Species Act, in fact, grew out of the Earth Day movement. To celebrate this momentous day, I was in Fergus Falls where we cleaned and planted a one-quarter mile ditch, and made sure that it wasn't eroding.

And speaking of making a difference, we will soon have a flood of fresh faces as seasonal hires and students join the cause. In eagerness to get mission work done, whether burning, taking heavy equipment out, or using mowers or chain saws, it is important to remember that safety is paramount wherever you are. I understand that time can be a factor, but it is still vital to go through safety briefings, document safety plans, and follow proper procedures.

The Service's National Safety and Health Review Team recently visited Midwest Region field stations and facilities to review our safety practices. I invite you to read more about it on page four. Please follow up with the Midwest Region Safety Health and Compliance Manager Rob McGinn should you have any questions.

It is also the beginning of the recreation season and in 2012, the Summer of Paddling! On May 23 we will kick off the inaugural Summer of Paddling event in Minneapolis/St. Paul. We've invited and anticipate that our Director Dan Ashe will be there. We are also expecting that the U.S. National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis will join us, as well. The Summer of Paddling initiative is a joint effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. National Park Service and many other partners. You can read up on the details on page 12.

After this initial celebration, there are well over a 100 events scheduled throughout the summer at different parts of the river. I hope that you will find opportunities to either to join in on, or assist with, these events, as well.



Above: Regional Director Tom Melius visiting Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Service photo by Tina Shaw.

Finally, in case you haven't noticed, I wanted to let you know that I am now on Facebook. As social media continues to be a high priority within the Service and the Department, we continue to look for new ways to communicate through these popular tools. Over the past 18 months, we have seen great success through Facebook pages for fisheries, refuges and the region as a whole. I am posting updates throughout the week of briefings and meetings so as to be as current with communications as I can. To subscribe to my Facebook updates, visit <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSmidwestRD>, login to your own Facebook account, and click the "Like" button. I hope to see you there!

PS. When you "like" my page, you are not giving me access to your personal Facebook pages.

Midwest Regional Director,

Tom Melius

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James O. Melius". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Midwest Region Moves Forward with Safety

 <p>JOB HAZARD ASSESSMENT (JHA) ACTIVITY: Power Washer CERTIFICATION OF HAZARD ASSESSMENT - 29 CFR 1910.132</p>		<p>STATION: Region 3 Safety Office DATE PREPARED: 5/18/07 PREPARED BY: John Hoffman CERTIFIED BY: Region 3 Safety Office</p>
<p>PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Head/Face Safety glasses. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hearing Ear plugs or muffs. <input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hands Gloves. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Feet Steel-toed boots. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Body/Other Fire extinguisher. Long sleeve shirt and pants. Sunscreen. 	<p>QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE, OR TRAINING REQUIRED:</p> <p>Review: Read Owners Operating Manual. Review: Inspection & proper use of equipment. Experience: Crew leaders shall observe YCC members when using power washer*** ***Child labor laws prohibit 14 and 15 year old workers from using the power washer***</p>	
<p>BASIC JOB STEPS</p> <p>Break work down to basic elements (such as remove, lift, carry, stop, start, apply, return, squeeze, weld, saw, walk, hold, grind, place, etc.). Describe what is done, not how it is done.</p>	<p>HAZARDS</p> <p>For each job step, state what accident could occur and/or what hazard is present. To determine this, ask yourself, "Can the person fall, overexert, be exposed to burns, fumes, rays, gas, etc.; hit against; be struck by; in contact with; be caught in, on, or between?"</p>	<p>SAFE JOB PROCEDURE</p> <p>State how each element of work should be performed to prevent the accident or avoid the hazard. What should the person do or not do? Be specific. What precautions should be taken? Ask yourself, "What can I do to eliminate, modify, guard, identify, or protect against the potential hazard or accident, including such things as how the worker stands, holds, uses, carries, dresses, etc.?"</p>
<p>I. Fueling, check oil & starting power washer.</p> <p>II. Starting power washer. * Be certain hose is properly connected & water is on before starting machine. (avoid equipment damage)</p> <p>III. Power washer Operations.</p>	<p>I. Burns from improper fueling of equipment. I. Fuel splash in eyes during fueling. I. Overcome by gasoline vapors.</p> <p>II. Slips, trips and falls.</p> <p>III. Cuts and sores in eyes. III. Debris in eyes. III. Burns from hot muffler when starting.</p>	<p>I. Fuel and oil caps are securely in place. I. Disconnect spark plug wire before performing any equipment maintenance. I. Allow power washer to cool down before refueling. I. Gasoline shall be stored and dispensed from an OSHA approved safety can. I. No Smoking I. Fire extinguisher available for use. I. Wear eye protection. I. Always fuel power washer outdoors in a well ventilated area. II. Start power washer on flat area in order to maintain footing.</p> <p>III. Do not point spray nozzle at co-workers. III. Select proper tip for work to be performed. III. Do not place tip too close to area being washed. III. Do not change tip while power washer is running. III. Do not examine tip or point nozzle at self during operation. III. Wear eye protection. III. Wear long pants and long sleeve shirt. III. Do not wear jewelry.</p>

Job Hazard Assessment (JHA). Service scan.

that after several regional reviews, the Midwest Region's numbers across the board were the best thus far.

While the region must be congratulated on its success stories, it cannot risk being lulled into complacency. A forward trajectory towards progressive change requires review of targeted improvements. Lyons and Murphy identified region-wide elements of improvement including, among other things, proof of safety and health training, established station safety committees, and consistent, complete, and up-to-date job hazard assessments and safety plans. It was clear from the assessment that documentation, communication and practical implementation are paramount to moving forward.

The field season ushers in a host of fresh faces. Safety always is a concern, but is heightened with seasonal hires and students joining the Service. "I continue to stress that safety is everyone's responsibility," remarked Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius. "We need to not only provide appropriate training to our staff, we need to make sure that we are documenting that fact. Processes and procedure are only as good as everyone carrying them out in practice....please be safe in your work."

--Valerie Rose Redmond,
External Affairs



"We're Wild about Safety," was the tag line that went with the regional safety staff's promotional distribution of this safety egg to regional office employees.

With field season nearing, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Safety and Health Review Team visited Midwest Region field stations and facilities to review its safety practices.

Evaluation Team Leader Kerry Lyons and Team Member Chip Murphy presented their findings to regional leadership in April. The region was commended on many areas of practical implementation, including regular and consistent communication and support from executive leadership; however, all were in agreement that there was room for improvement.

Coordinated by Midwest Region Safety Health and Compliance Manager Rob McGinn, regional assessments and findings by Lyons and Murphy were based on visits to Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, Carterville Fisheries Resource Office, East Lansing Ecological Services Field Office, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Alpena Fisheries Resource Office, M/V Spencer F. Baird, Jordan River National Fish Hatchery, Ludington Biological Station, St. Croix

Wetland Management District and the Regional Office.

Ludington Biological Station stood out in the region for its exemplary and well defined training program which is tracked meticulously. "I've already been in communication with Ludington Project Leaders about the training program that they have out there," said McGinn. "It's one to emulate."

The M/V Spencer F. Baird training program also shined for its thorough training program. "I want to acknowledge our employees who have logged thousands of hours out there, manning boats and vehicles with no accidents," said Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley. "Their efforts are nothing less than commendable. I couldn't be more proud." The region's high marks for leadership communication were also a stand out. "We wish some of the other regions had the support system that this region has," remarked Murphy. Lyons shared

International Migratory Bird Day

20 Ways to Conserve Birds

International Migratory Bird Day brings attention to one of the most important and spectacular events in the Americas - bird migration. Bird Day is celebrated in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. In celebration of International Migratory Bird Day's 20th anniversary (with the help of biologists, educators, conservationists, birdwatchers, and bird enthusiasts) 20 issues and simple solutions are presented in the hope of creating more actions to help birds.

1. Prevent Bird Collisions with Your Windows

Collisions are one of the most frequent causes of bird deaths. Birds see nature reflected in the window or mistake houseplants inside the building for outdoor plants and fly into the glass. Putting up curtains or window decals helps make the window visible to birds.

2. Protect Birds From Pets

Unleashed dogs and outdoor cats can harm birds by disturbing, chasing, and

even killing them. Keeping your cat indoors and your dog from straying saves millions of birds each year.

3. Clean Your Bird Feeders

Dirty feeders can spread disease. Disinfect and clean out old seed from feeders frequently and put fresh water in your bird bath every day.

4. Don't Buy Illegally-Caged Birds

Selling wild-caught birds as pets is illegal. Buy only captive-bred birds. Make certain that the breeder or pet store is reputable.

5. Use Cloth Grocery Bags and Reusable Bottles

Birds that mistakenly eat plastic trash can become ill or even die. Avoiding plastic bags and bottles reduces plastic pollution and conserves resources.

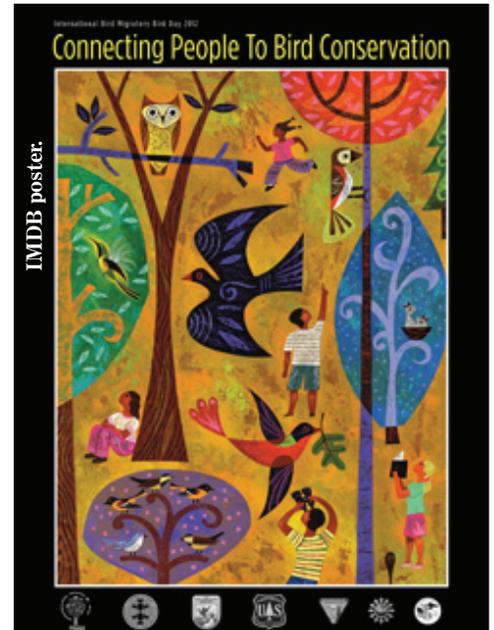
6. Recycle

Anything you recycle reduces litter and saves resources. Get creative! You can make a bag from used juice containers and bird feeders from old dishes and plastic bottles.

7. Restore Natural Habitat in Your Community

Birds need a place to live and many bird habitats are disappearing. City parks and open spaces are natural places for birds. Work with your community to recreate the habitat that once existed in your area.

8. Keep Your Distance Birds need space for feeding, nesting, and other daily activities. Approaching too closely may cause them to become nervous and deplete much-needed energy reserves. During the nesting season, it may



even result in loss of eggs or young to predators.

9. Leave Fledglings Where You Find Them

Fledglings may spend several days on the ground after they leave the nest before they are able to fly. You can help by keeping people and pets away, so their parents can continue to care for them. If you think a bird is truly an orphan, call a wildlife rehabilitator for instructions.

10. Slow Down When Driving

Cars kill millions of birds each year. Driving slowly gives you more time to respond if there is an animal in the road and gives the animal plenty of time to get out of the way.

11. Buy Bird Friendly Products

You can help preserve bird habitat in Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean by buying shade-grown coffee and chocolate. Shade coffee farms, which imitate native forests, have many more bird species than sun coffee farms.



Birding with binoculars takes practice! A happy family celebrating International Migratory Bird Day 2011. Service photo.

International Migratory Bird Day

20 Ways to Conserve Birds

12. Plant Native

Native plants provide food, nest sites, and cover for birds.

13. Teach Others About Birds

Talk to your friends about birds and start a club in your community to teach people about the challenges birds face. The more people know, the more they can do to help.

14. Get Outdoors and Enjoy Nature

You can appreciate the bird habitat near your home. Find a local park and go for a walk or just stroll around your neighborhood.

15. Take a Friend Bird Watching

Invite a buddy and see if you can spot more birds together.

16. Support Conservation

Join a bird club or other conservation organization to learn more and contribute to protecting birds. Volunteer with organizations that preserve habitat and help birds.

17. Be a Citizen Scientist

Many projects need helpers to gather data on birds and their habitat. Contact your local National Wildlife Refuge, Nature Center, library or conservation organization to volunteer.

18. Reduce Energy Use

Riding your bike or walking reduces your carbon footprint and prevents pollution of bird habitats. Switching off the lights in your house not only shrinks your energy bill, but can also help prevent birds from colliding with your windows.

19. Avoid Chemicals

Birds may accidentally eat pesticide and herbicide pellets or prey that have been poisoned. This can kill a bird

or have toxic effects on their own health and that of their growing embryos, including deformation or suppressed immune systems.

20. Learn the Hunting Laws

Federal and local laws protect sensitive areas and manage the harvest of birds to ensure healthy populations. Purchase a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps. It contributes to habitat which benefits all birds.

International Migratory Bird Day events are coming soon to a refuge near you:

April 28 - Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge - Field activities and birding trips around the refuge.

May 1 - Seney National Wildlife Refuge - The refuge will participate in the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory's spring fling event highlighting migratory birds on the refuge.

May 5 - Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge - The Youth Jamboree is a cooperative effort by several wildlife and conservation organizations in Louisa County, Iowa. It is a full day of safe, family-oriented outdoor activities including canoeing, bird watching, archery and fishing.

May 5 - Windom Wetland Management District - Wings on the Prairie Celebration will educate the public on migratory birds and participate in a Trumpeter swan release.

May 5 - Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge - The Kids Bird Watching Fair, co-sponsored by Audubon Minnesota, will give children and families the opportunity to participate in bird banding simulations, learn wild bird identification on nature hikes, and see live birds of prey.

May 8 -10 - Fergus Falls Prairie Wetlands Learning Center - Advanced Birding Series Sessions with topics including bird structure, identification, phenology, migration and habitat. Registration required.

May 11 - 13 - Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge - Wings Over Muscatatuck Bird Festival will offer guided birding van tours, guided bird walks, bird programs with live raptors, awards contest for Jr. Duck contest, bird banding, kids birding activities, bird photography program, landscaping for wildlife workshops, and nature walks.

May 11 - 14 Horicon National Wildlife Refuge - Horicon Marsh Bird Festival will offer guided birding hikes, bus and boat tours, kids' activities, bird banding demos, live birds of prey, and special exhibits. Sponsored by Horicon Marsh Bird Club.

May 12 - Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge - Guided bird walks for beginners, live bird presentations, crafts, games and bird feeder making.

To register your event as part of the IMBD celebration, e-mail hchapman@birdday.org. Or you can view/register more events across the region here: <http://birdday.org/birdday/explorers-map>

--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs

Minnesota Youth Wins National Endangered Species Day Youth Art Contest

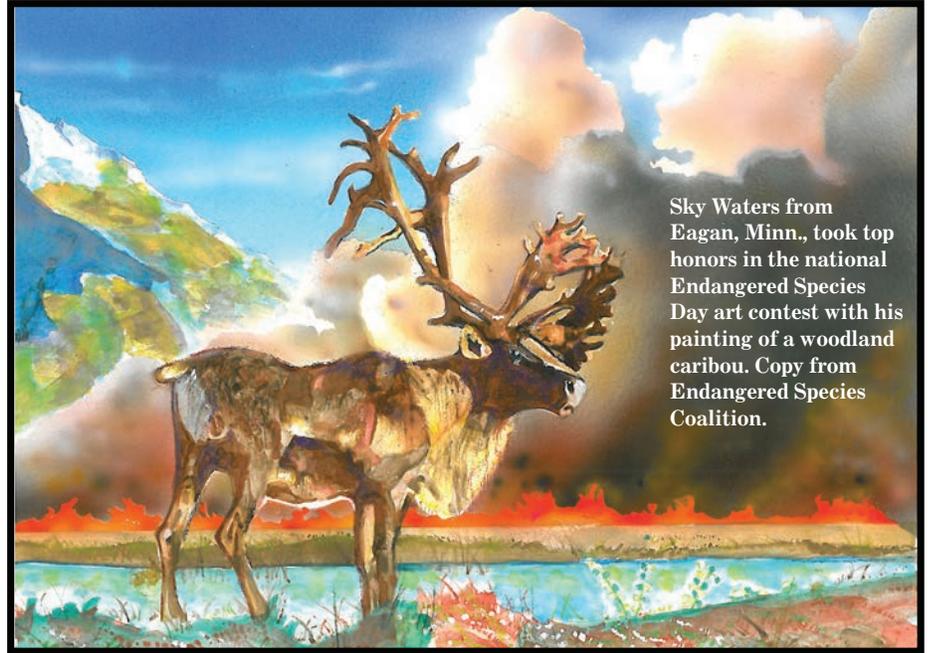
Sky Waters, a fifth-grader from Eagan, Minn., carried off the grand prize in the 2012 Endangered Species Day Youth Art Contest. The 11-year-old artist took top honors with his painting of a woodland caribou.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Coalition, Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Ogden Museum of Southern Art/University of New Orleans sponsored the annual art contest, which is an integral part of the 7th annual national Endangered Species Day, celebrated this year on May 18.

More than 2,100 young artists from around the country entered the annual contest, which provides an opportunity to learn about and promote the conservation of endangered species through art.

The winners were chosen by a panel of artists, photographers, scientists and conservationists, including Wyland, the marine artist; Jack Hanna, host of Jack Hanna's Into the Wild; David Littschwager, a freelance photographer and regular contributor to National Geographic Magazine; Susan Middletown, a photographer who has collaborated with Littschwager and whose own work has been published in four books; and Tom Sachs, whose work can be found in major museums worldwide.

Sky will be honored at the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Congressional Reception in Washington, D.C. on May 9, and have his name engraved on a special trophy. In addition, he will receive an art lesson from Wyland, a plaque, and art supplies. First place category winners will receive a plaque and art supplies.



Sky Waters from Eagan, Minn., took top honors in the national Endangered Species Day art contest with his painting of a woodland caribou. Copy from Endangered Species Coalition.

Forty semifinalists were chosen by the Ogden Museum of Southern Art/University of New Orleans, which will display the artwork in a special exhibit opening June 14. Semifinalists will receive a Certificate of Achievement.

Started in 2006 by the United States Senate, Endangered Species Day is a celebration of our nation's imperiled plants and wildlife and wild places, with an emphasis on success stories of species recovery.

The 2012 winners are:

Grand Prize:
Sky Waters (fifth grade)
Eagan, Minn.

First place winners in grade categories:

Grades K-2:
Jasmine Lee
Freemont, Calif.

Grades 3-5:
Timothy Erwin
Davis, Calif.

Grades 6-8:
Meilynn Shi
San Diego, Calif.

Grades 9-12:
Ella Chen
Pauline Chen
Quitman, LA
Temple City, Calif.

To see all the winning artwork, visit <http://stopextinction.org/media/ESDArt.html>

--Georgia Parham
External Affairs

Refuge Maintenance Receives Honors

Two Midwest Regional maintenance mechanics were honored with retirement plaques after lengthy tenures with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Refuge Supervisor Jim Leach presented Dean A. Huhta from of Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Rodney Ahrndt of the Morris Wetland Management District with the plaques on April 12 at the Heavy Equipment Training session at Sherburne NWR.

Huhta, who has been with the Service for close to 30 years, did not know he was receiving the plaque. "I was pleasantly surprised," he says. An outdoors man with a knack for mechanical equipment like motor graders and dozers, Huhta worked construction in a carpenter's union. He says he liked using these tools for moving dirt and blading roads for public use. He was working as a private contractor when opportunity presented itself at Rice Lake NWR. He volunteered to help out at the refuge and has been there ever since.

Born in Virginia, Minn., Huhta has roots in the iron range of Minnesota. Huhta says it was a great fit. "I've always outdoors type of person," he says, "fishing, hunting and camping has always appealed to me." His daily activities include the maintenance of vehicles, equipment, buildings and the



Dean A. Huhta photographed in front of his much equipment. Service photo.

land surrounding them.

A valuable asset to the region, Huhta has helped restore approximately 400 wetlands in the Midwest, in the states of Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Nebraska. He was also on the ground floor of the public use expansion at Rice Lake NWR.

Huhta is a member of the Maintenance Action Team and the Heavy Equipment Training Safety Program where he trains students to run equipment.

Huhta says what he will miss the most are the people that he's worked with. Reflecting, he gives sound advice to all of us. "Occasionally, a person should look back in the past," he says, "it makes you feel good about your career, the accomplishments and the people that you've helped."

Huhta's official retirement date is July 13.

Also receiving a plaque was Huhta's Morris WMD counterpart and U.S. Army veteran, Rodney Ahrndt. Ahrndt started with Benson WMD (now Morris WMD after a redistricting), as a tractor operator. Ahrndt's career began with four years of seasonal work, requiring him to re-apply every year. He is now an engineering equipment operator, who has logged more than 32 years with the Service. Ahrndt grew up on a farm and like Huhta, liked to hunt and fish and so, found the Service to be a great fit. In addition to the maintenance activities required for his every day duties, he also works the ground



Jim Leach (c) presents Rodney Ahrndt (l), Dean A. Huhta (r) with honorary retirement plaques. Service photo.

with seed bed preparation and broadcast and restoring wetlands. "I grew up on a farm," he says, "so it was like farming eight hours a day and getting paid for it." He says that besides enjoying what he does, he feels like he is really making a difference by among other things, providing more habitat.

Ahrndt has been a heavy equipment safety trainer since 1989 and is safety certified with equipment such as specialty tractors, AG tractors and Skid Steer. He says one of his most interesting jobs and perhaps one of the most challenging was one he had to wait 14 years for. It took that long for the conditions to be right at Barry Lake. "There have been times when we took equipment over the ice to get to some island type areas," Ahrndt says. "We couldn't get to them because they were too wet in the summertime. We had to wait until it was frozen. We took down an old building site and cleaned it all up."

Ahrndt is married (Diana) and is the father of four children (Allison, Trevor, Zachary and Amanda). He has five grandchildren and plans to retire on June 2. He says that it is so very nice to be recognized. "I'm lucky enough to get paid for what I like to do."

--Valerie Rose Redmond,
External Affairs

Iron River NFH Lends a Helping Hand to Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians operates a fish hatchery in Cherokee, N.C. Two years ago the facility experienced a major flooding event and lost several thousand fish due to a clogged water intake, which effectively shut the water off to their hatchery. Program Manager, Robert Blankenship, contacted Iron River National Fish Hatchery with the hopes of obtaining any surplus coaster brook trout eggs to supplement his losses.

IRNFH was able to supply the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians with 35,491 coaster brook trout eggs. Since then, the tribe has requested all of the brook trout eggs that would normally be surplus. This year's excess coaster brook trout egg production was over 398,000 eggs. Normally these eggs would be destroyed after all existing requests are met, but with the request coming from the Cherokee tribe all of the hatchery's brook trout eggs will be utilized.



Above: Biologist Nick Grueneis packages eggs for shipment to North Carolina. Service photo.

Special styrofoam coolers were used to ship eggs overnight from Iron River, Wis. to Cherokee, N.C. The eggs arrived in great condition and the Tribe was very appreciative of the support that IRNFH could provide.

The Iron River National Fish Hatchery maintains approximately 6,000 adult lake trout and coaster brook trout. These fish are spawned each fall and eggs are collected for restoration purposes in the Upper Great Lakes. Eggs are shipped to other entities, including federal, state and tribal agencies, throughout the region.

--Carey Edwards
Iron River NFH

Once the eggs were sufficiently developed, they were disinfected and packaged for shipping. Eggs were counted by volumetric displacement, disinfected in an iodine bath and wrapped in moist cloth diapers.



Regional Director Tom Melius (r) and visiting Chinese delegation learn about how Necedah National Wildlife Refuge staff use radio telemetry for locating whooping cranes. Service photo by Tina Shaw.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Grants Awarded to Tribes in the Midwest Region

The Midwest Region funded three tribal fish and wildlife conservation projects totaling \$599,978 through the Service's Fiscal Year 2012 Tribal Wildlife Grant Program.

The Ho Chunk Nation in Wisconsin, the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, and the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians in Michigan all received funding this year.

Tribal wildlife grants provide assistance to tribes in the development and implementation of programs that benefit fish and wildlife resources and their habitat. Activities funded through the program may include: planning for wildlife and habitat conservation, fish and wildlife conservation and management actions, fish and wildlife related research, habitat mapping, field surveys and population monitoring, habitat protection, and public education that is relevant to the project.

Since 2003, 73 projects totaling more than \$11 million have been funded in the Service's Midwest Region through the Tribal Wildlife Grant Program and the Tribal Landowner Incentive Program. These projects have made a big difference on the ground and have helped build capacity for tribal management of culturally important fish and wildlife species.

The following projects were funded this year:

- **The Development of Ho-Chunk Nation Wildlife Management Plan and Native Species Restoration Plan— Ho-Chunk Nation (\$200,000).**

This project will establish a comprehensive wildlife management



Above: Biologists from the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Natural Resources Department survey lakes to calculate population estimates of adult walleye in the 1836 Treaty Area of Michigan. Photo courtesy of Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.

plan and native species restoration plan for Ho Chunk Nation lands. As part of its native species restoration efforts, the tribe will work with partners to pursue elk restoration in the Black River area of Wisconsin. Overall, the project will enhance the tribe's capacity to effectively manage its resources and contribute to resource conservation at a landscape scale.

- **Common Carp Research/Mitigation and Wild Rice Restoration on the Clam River System and Clam Lake— St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin (\$200,000).**

This project will research the impacts of common carp, a non-native species, on wild rice and the ecological functioning of the Clam Lake System in Wisconsin. The project will also restore nearly 300 acres of wild rice. Working closely with other partners, the tribe's efforts will benefit waterfowl populations, the lake's fishery, and culturally important wild rice beds, as well as both tribal and non-tribal members who use these resources.

- **Development of the Michigan Walleye Population Model for the 1836 Ceded Territory— Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians of Michigan (\$199,978).**

This ongoing project will gather information to calculate population estimates of adult walleye and classify walleye lakes based on recruitment to further develop the walleye population model currently used in Michigan's inland lakes. The refined model will be used to predict adult walleye abundance in order to effectively manage walleye resources in the 1836 Treaty Area of Michigan.

The Service received 119 proposals nationally requesting over \$19.1 million in project funding this year. The proposals were reviewed by regional and national scoring panels and 23 projects totaling \$4,344,049 were funded.

*--Tim Patronski
External Affairs*

Bank Swallows Returning Soon to Midwest Help Protect Nesting Sites



Above: Bank swallows originally nested in the steep, sandy banks of rivers, but have adapted to using many different man-made excavations. Photo by B. Van Valen/ Courtesy of bvanvalenphotography.com.

Spring is coming to the Midwest and so are hundreds of thousands of birds looking for a summer home. Bank swallows - the smallest swallows in North America - are among them and they are actively looking for places to nest and raise their young. You can help protect these gregarious birds by keeping an eye out for their nesting colonies across the region.

Bank swallows live in low areas along rivers, streams or reservoirs. Their territories usually include vertical cliffs or banks. Though in the past, bank swallows were most commonly found around natural bluffs or eroding streamside banks, more and more often these swallows populate human-made sites, such as road banks, construction

sites and landscaping borrow sites.

Social and always active, these small brown and white birds nest in colonies sometimes numbering in the thousands and quickly colonize these sites before landowners may realize. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, bank swallows and their nesting sites are protected as long as the sites remain active.

What Can You Do to Protect Bank Swallows?

The best solution is to avoid making the human-made sites attractive to nesting birds. This can be done by eliminating the cliff like vertical surfaces

in suitable nesting soils by either rounding off the vertical face or in the case of smaller scale sites such as home foundations, by covering the exposed vertical surface with plastic tarps or other coverings. To avoid destruction of nests, eggs and newly hatched young, these remedial activities must be done before arrival of the birds and nest construction begins. The time to act is now.

Range and Habitat

- Breed from Alaska across northern Canada south to California, Texas and Virginia;
- Spends winters in the tropics and

the Old World. Preferred habitats include riverbanks, creeks, seashores and lakes;

Measurements

- Length
- 4.7–5.5 in
- 12–14 cm
- Wingspan
- 9.8–11.4 in
- 25–29 cm
- Weight
- 0.4–0.7 oz
- 10–19 g

Interesting facts:

- Most pairs in breeding colonies lay their eggs at the same time so that they will be feeding nestlings at the same time. This means there will be a large number of adults searching for swarms of insects, which makes it more likely they will find them.
- The scientific name of the Bank Swallow, *Riparia*, means “riverbank”
- This species originally nested in the steep, sandy banks of rivers but have adapted to using many different man-made excavations.
- A group of bank swallows are known collectively as a “foreclosure” of swallows.

For more information about bank swallow remediation efforts or to report an active colony, please contact Special Agent Gary Jagodzinski at 608-783-8420.

--Tina Shaw
External Affairs

There's a new buzz around the Mississippi River. They're calling it the "Summer of Paddling 2012." This summer, we've partnered with the National Park Service, Army Corps of Engineers and several local and state organizations to create the Summer of Paddling 2012. So, what is it? The Summer of Paddling 2012 is a series of events designed to get Americans outside to enjoy the Mississippi River via canoe, kayak, rowboat or standup paddleboard. Paddlers of any skill level can join a refuge ranger or other trained paddle guide to explore the river and all its wonder on full to half-day trips.

I hope you get the chance to be active and get outside this summer on a paddling adventure. If you're interested in learning more about the Summer of Paddling 2012, please visit www.SOP2012.org. All events will be listed on this website and you can register for events by contacting the host listed on each event's description.

Paddlers will leave land to splash through the backwaters, bayous and braided streams on America's River. But be warned, you might create a lifelong craving for outdoor adventure. I know because paddling is one of the outdoor sports that I've enjoyed my entire life.

I began paddling at a young age with my friends and family on Lake Tahoe in California. We would spend long



days out on the water getting in splashing fights but also taking the time to admire the natural beauty of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. I now appreciate the opportunity to paddle when I was young because I know the activity contributed to the conservation ethic I carry with me today.

Having a strong connection to the silent sport, I knew it was a natural fit for the America's Great Outdoor initiative. But the Summer of Paddling 2012 didn't just come from my experiences as a young boy on Lake Tahoe. It all started one day during a conversation

with Cindy Samples (Visitor Services Manager at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge). We reminisced about the importance of paddling to our lives and wanted to make paddling accessible to others. We decided one way would be to highlight the America's Great Outdoors initiative in our part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. That initial, informal hallway meeting led us to an initiative that now involves 10 states, multiple Fish and Wildlife Service regions, local agencies, NGO's, and one of our partnering organizations – the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative.

Each organization involved in the Summer of Paddling 2012 helped make up the theme: "1 river, 10 states, 100 events." The Summer of Paddling comes from a lifelong connection to water sports

and the ingenuity of creative minds like my colleagues Cindy Samples and Cortney White, who don't limit their thinking opportunities to conventional wisdom. They continue to remind me of the good things that can happen when you think big. Paddle on!

--Kevin Foerster,
Upper Mississippi NW&FR

Hope on the Horizon for the Endangered Scaleshell Mussel

Preventing extinction of threatened and endangered species is always challenging, but consider the obstacles when the species is extremely difficult to find in its native habitat and has a particularly complex life history.

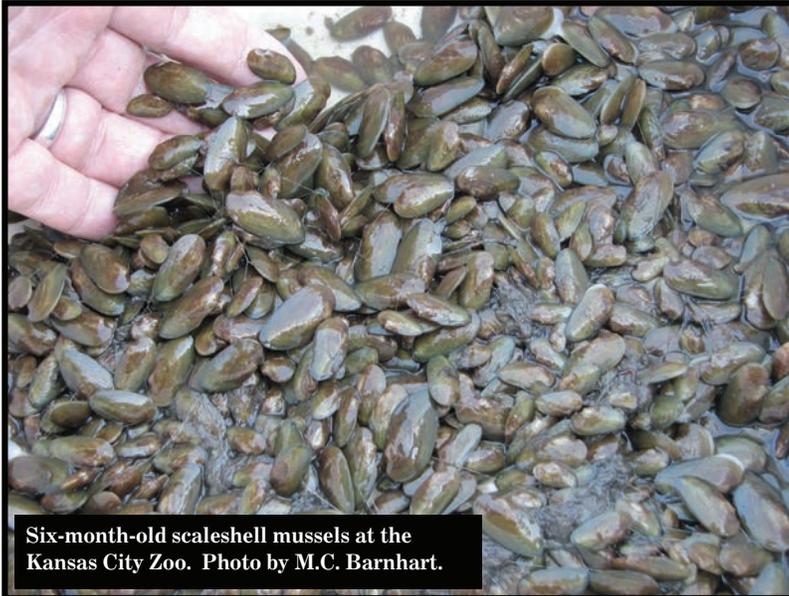
These are the challenges facing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and partners who are working to recover the endangered scaleshell mussel. Fortunately, persistence and ingenuity are paying off.

The scaleshell (*Leptodea leptodon*) historically

occurred in over 50 rivers across 13 states, but now can only be found from just three rivers in Missouri. Even in Missouri, the species is extremely rare. Listed as endangered in 2001, the scaleshell faces threats from habitat destruction and pollution. The plan to recover the scaleshell calls for artificial propagation as a critical tool to boost existing populations and reintroduce the species into portions of its former range.

To complicate matters, many freshwater mussels, the scaleshell included, require a specific host fish as part of their life cycle. Mussel eggs develop into microscopic larvae called glochidia within the gills of the female mussel. The female discharges its glochidia into the river where they

must attach to gills or fins of a fish to continue developing. Each mussel species has specific fish species needed by the glochidia to develop. Glochidia continue growing on the fish and transform into juveniles.



Six-month-old scaleshell mussels at the Kansas City Zoo. Photo by M.C. Barnhart.

After a few weeks they drop off and land on the river bottom where they grow into adults.

The Service's Columbia Missouri Field Office has been working with the Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri State University for over 12 years to develop artificial propagation and rearing methods for the scaleshell. This has been a slow and arduous process because scaleshell, particularly females, are extremely rare and difficult to find. While extensive searches for gravid brood stock – females that might be used to produce mussels for reintroduction - have been ongoing every year since 1999, only a handful of females have been found.

Despite the small number of animals, the fish host has been identified – freshwater drum - and propagation techniques developed. In 2010, the scaleshell was successfully reared for the first time at a new mussel rearing facility at the

Kansas City Zoo in Missouri. Over 50 rapidly growing scaleshell, along with thousands of other juvenile mussels of other species of concern, are now being cared for and studied at the zoo by their staff, MSU and the Service. In addition, thousands of juvenile scaleshell are growing at MSU facilities and will soon be transferred to the zoo to grow large enough for release into the wild.

The goal of reintroducing the scaleshell mussel into its former range is now in sight. We have the ability to propagate larvae, rapidly grow large numbers of juveniles, and hold brood stock adults for long periods. Several

female scaleshell were collected in 2011 and are being held for broodstock. In 2012, we will have the genetic knowledge needed to help guide our propagation efforts. The Duck, Green and Osage rivers in Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri, respectively, are examples of rivers being considered for future reintroductions. These rivers have recently been restored and we hope they may once again support populations of the elusive scaleshell mussel.

--Andy Roberts
Columbia, ESFO

Making Connections: Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperative convenes Researchers and Technical Committee in Bismarck

The Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperative is poised to provide science needs from the perspective of land, resource and conservation decision making, and, provide support to partners to carry out impactful conservation actions.

Technical committee members of the landscape conservation cooperative, responsible for identifying and prioritizing the scientific uncertainties and needs within the ecosystems of the Plains and Prairie Potholes, joined forces with researchers from academic, federal, state and NGO entities in a two day work session at North Dakota Fish and Game Department headquarters in Bismarck this April.

Researchers presented research projects directed at maximizing habitat quality and meeting landscape level objectives within six key ecosystem features identified by the cooperative. Three of them include 1) palustrine wetlands, native grasslands and restored grasslands of the potholes region 2) sage prairie of the plains region and 3) woody draws, riparian habitat, and hydrologic systems of rivers.

--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs



Above: Project investigators Steve Krentz, Bob Gresswell, Kathy Chase and Mark Dixon respond to questions from technical committee members related to large rivers and streams research. Service photo.

Below: Mike Olson, science coordinator for the Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative, facilitates a discussion on the prioritization of science needs with project investigators and technical committee members. Service photo.



A Birder's Delight at Corey Lake, Courtesy of Wetlands Conservation Act

Cory Lake at Hamlin Wildlife Management Area in Lac Qui Parle County, Minn. is currently hosting a bird bonanza – and funding provided by a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant played a big role in helping make it all possible.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and several other conservation partners were awarded a NAWCA standard grant in 2009 for their proposal to protect 260 acres of wetlands and 865 acres of adjacent upland habitat, and enhance approximately 1,000 acres of wetlands and 1,454 acres of grasslands. Cory Lake was one of these enhancement projects, where 150 acres of wetlands were enhanced via the installation of a water control structure, pump, and fish barrier. A key acquisition by Ducks Unlimited also provided managers with the flexibility to properly manage water levels in the basin.

According to Andy Forbes, assistant coordinator for the Upper Mississippi and Great Lakes Joint Venture, the project's labors have come to fruition this spring. "Several thousand shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl of many species are currently feeding on prime mudflat habitat created by a recent drawdown, including Cinnamon



A young birder scopes the scene at Cory Lake.
Photo by Curt Vacek, Minnesota DNR.

Teal and White-faced Ibis, which are rarely seen in Minnesota," Forbes said.

Curt Vacek, Lac Qui Parle area wildlife supervisor with the Minnesota DNR made a recent site visit to Cory Lake. "We were able to begin dewatering Cory Lake due to the lack of spring runoff and minimal risk for flooding, thus exposing prime mudflats just in time for the shorebird migration," Vacek said.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the results. The 150 acre basin is already about 80 percent dewatered, and what water remains is

harboring carp that are an obvious draw for migratory birds, including several thousand shorebirds and ducks."

Temporary drawdowns like this one help control invasive fish populations, improve water quality, and promote the growth of beneficial aquatic vegetation. The area is located within the Prairie Pothole Region, which is noted for its importance to migrating and breeding waterfowl and wetland-dependent birds.

"I invite folks to get out there and enjoy this wonderful birding opportunity, but I also hope folks will respect our efforts to improve stop-over habitat for these critters and view them with minimal disturbance," Vacek said.

--Andrew Forbes/Ashley Spratt



White-faced Ibis, a rarity in Minnesota, are enjoying the food and habitat provided by a recent draw-down. Photo by Curt Vacek, Minnesota DNR.



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