U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

May 2013

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Tom Melius • Regional Director
Midwest Region
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The Beginning of Another Memorable Spring

One look outside our windows and it's plain to see that the busy spring season is upon us… or will be after this snowstorm…or maybe the next one. Yes, despite the lingering winter mixes of precipitation, it is spring and our work has in fact shifted to this busy and active time in the field season.

Our refuge staffs are busy conducting prescribed burns and handling the assorted and plentiful other outdoor preparations for the expected increase in visitors coming out of winter hibernation. I too have been eager to move on from the seemingly endless snow and get out to see and do things on the Service lands.

In the weeks ahead, I will do just that and I'm looking forward to travelling to Agassiz NWR, Tamarac NWR and Fergus Falls WMD, and possibly even seeing an American Woodcock or two, as seen in the northern reaches of our region, like the one featured in this video.

I also look forward to the opportunity to hear more about the University of South Dakota partnership with Genoa National Fish Hatchery (see page 11) to work with the Hine's Emerald Dragonfly when I travel to Genoa and whet a line with the kids at their youth fishing event. It's always great to see the smiles on kids' faces as they hook a fish and learn more about the lands and resources we work so hard to care for.

As many of you recall, we recently took the opportunity to celebrate the greatest resource in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, our people. I was pleased that so many of you were able to join us, either in person or by videoconference, as we highlighted employee excellence and took time to honor the great work each of you is doing throughout our region.

It humbles me to see what peers think of each other here in the Midwest region. I'm truly grateful for all the things you do to meet and exceed our mission. Especially so in these lean years where we are challenged in finding ways to get the job done with our usual flair of both innovation and success.

For any of you who missed the awards ceremony during Employee Appreciation Day or who would like to relive some of the fun of that day, you can view some photos of our winners on page 8 and the video of the ceremony here.

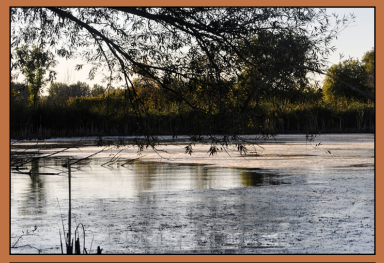
Enjoy this month's issue of Inside Region 3!

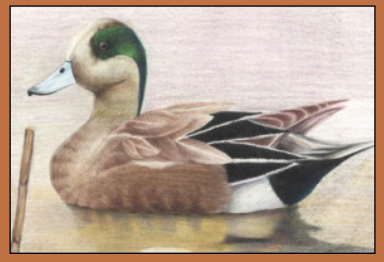
Tom Melius
Regional Director, Midwest Region

Inside Region 3

May 2013

In this Issue





On the Cover
Timberdoodle! The American woodcock is a shorebird that lives in forests. They have stocky bodies, brown and blackish plumage and long slender bills. They are most commonly seen at dusk when the male's chirping, peenting aerial displays attract attention. © Scott Sharley

2013 Whooping Crane Spring Migration is Underway

By Georgia Parham
External Affairs

The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, an international coalition of public and private groups that is reintroducing whooping cranes to eastern North America, reports the 2013 spring migration is underway.

As of April 3, there were 84 whooping cranes confirmed in central Wisconsin. Most notably, both wild-hatched chicks from the 2012 season have returned with their parents to the locations where they hatched last spring. W1-12 is a young male whooping crane that hatched on April 30, 2012, and W8-12 is a female that hatched on May 21, 2012.

Late last fall, both of these young cranes followed their respective parents to suitable winter habitat in southern Indiana. This spring, their arrival back at their northern breeding grounds marks the first full complete migration cycle for these whooping crane chicks produced in the wild.

Thanks to the efforts of WCEP, there are now 108 whooping cranes in the wild in eastern North America, which was part of their historic range.

Whooping cranes that take part in the ultralight and DAR reintroductions are hatched at the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md., and at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wis. Chicks are raised under a strict protocol that avoids conditioning the young birds to people and seeks to ensure the birds remain wild.

Aside from the 108 WCEP birds, the only other migrating population of whooping cranes nests at Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta, Canada and winters at Aransas NWR on the Texas Gulf Coast. A non-migrating flock of approximately 20 birds lives year-round in the central Florida Kissimmee region, and an additional 14 non-migratory cranes live in southern Louisiana.

Whooping cranes, including two wild-hatched chicks from 2012, are returning to Wisconsin. Joel Trick, USFWS

WCEP asks anyone who encounters a whooping crane in the wild to please give them the respect and distance they need. Do not approach birds on foot within 200 yards; remain in your vehicle; do not approach in a vehicle any closer than 100 yards. Also, please remain concealed and do not speak loudly enough that the birds can hear you. Finally, do not trespass on private property in an attempt to view or photograph whooping cranes.

Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership founding members are the International Crane Foundation, Operation Migration, Inc., Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and National Wildlife Health Center, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and the International Whooping Crane Recovery Team.

To report whooping crane sightings, visit the WCEP whooping crane observation webpage at: http://www.fws.gov/midwest/whoopingcrane/sightings/sightingform.cfm.

Minnesota Man Sentenced to Restore Federally Protected Wetland Basin

By Tina Shaw
External Affairs

Minnesota's wetlands and prairies saw a victory in late March as James Bosek was sentenced for illegal development activities on a federally protected wetland basin in central Minnesota.

Bosek, a 49-year-old from the central Minnesota community of Garfield, was sentenced March 27, for constructing a road through land that he knew was a federally protected wetland basin. United States Magistrate Judge Leo I. Brisbois sentenced Bosek to two years of probation on one misdemeanor count of filling a wetland that was subject to a federal easement under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act.

"Wetlands are essential buffers during annual high water events as we head into the spring melt and every acre we can keep as undeveloped wetland and prairie habitat helps buffer everyone's land," explained Fergus Falls Wetland Management District project leader Larry Martin.

Martin manages the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District, whose mission is to identify, protect, and restore the tallgrass prairie/wetland ecosystem and associated habitats. The district manages Waterfowl Production Areas and perpetual wetland easements like the one on Bosek's land. Together, these federally protected lands provide vital nesting and breeding habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

Judge Brisbois told Bosek in court that the restoration of the wetland is the only way to "undo the injury to the public interest." He fined Bosek $2,500, but said that if the restoration is completed by March 31, 2014, the fine will be waived.

Bosek engaged in prohibited activity when he built a road across the eastern edge of his property, located in rural Douglas County. The property is subject to a perpetual easement that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased in 1963. Bosek purchased the property subject to the easement in 2001.

"The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchases wetland easements to protect wetlands from this type of alteration, along with any type of drainage activity, and we are pleased to see the court upholding our easement and restoration efforts in Minnesota," Martin said.

It was further proven that Bosek knew of the easement before building the road, but did not obtain permission or authorization from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before altering the wetland. Fergus Falls Wetland Management District staff discovered the road while making an unrelated visit to Bosek's property in April of 2008.

Judge Brisbois credited the trial testimony of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist who surveyed the property and concluded that Bosek's filling of the wetland damaged the landscape as a protected native habitat for waterfowl. Bosek was charged on August 19, 2011, for violating the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act after he refused to follow directions to remove the road and restore the wetland.

Wetlands are very dynamic. By placing fill, in this case building a road, in a wetland, the natural processes of that landscape are disrupted. The fill required for the road eliminated the vegetation that was growing in that area of the wetland and changed it to non-native upland vegetation. The added fill also altered the amount of water that would naturally occur in the wetland basin, which affects the wildlife living in and using the wetland.

Under the statute of conviction, the maximum penalty is 180 days in prison, a $5,000 fine, and costs of restoring the wetland. This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Fergus Falls Wetland Management District Law Enforcement staff and Zone Law Enforcement Officer Brent Taylor and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lola Velazquez-Aguilu, Thomas Calhoun-Lopez, and William J. Otteson.

The Fergus Falls Wetland Management District was established in 1962 with the initiation of the Accelerated Small Wetlands Acquisition Program. It is located in west central Minnesota and includes the counties of Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Wadena and Wilkin.

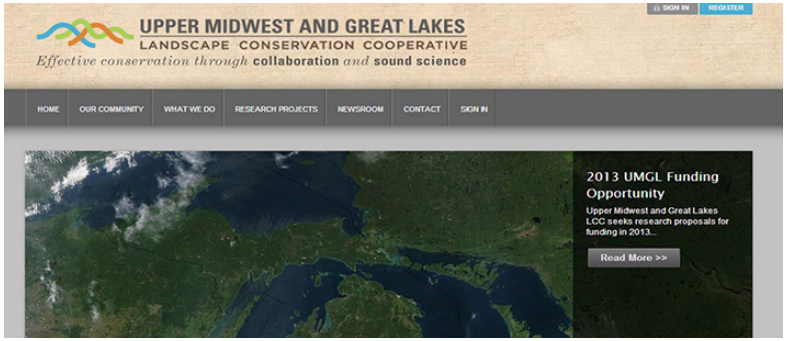
Learn more about the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District at: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Fergus_Falls_WMD/.

The Prairie Pothole Region is dotted with small wetlands that are interspersed with prairie. Habitat like this is important to wildlife and people alike. USFWS

Conservation Partners With the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes LCC Unveil New Web Site

By Ashley Spratt
External Affairs

The Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) recently released its newly designed public Web site http://GreatLakesLCC.org to promote effective conservation through collaboration and sound science.



A look at the new Upper Mississippi and Great Lakes LCC web site. USFWS

The LCC facilitates dialogue among federal, state, non-governmental, academic and private interests to build a collaborative network of knowledge surrounding natural resource issues impacting the upper Midwest and Great Lakes landscape.

LCC partners are working together to bridge the gap between science and natural resource management while tackling broad reaching natural resources challenges like climate change, aquatic and terrestrial connectivity, energy development, and socio-economic implications of conservation practices.

GreatLakesLCC.org provides natural resource professionals and the public with access to shared conservation priorities, ongoing scientific research, funding opportunities, and educational resources, while offering continued transparency on behalf of the LCC community.

This network of knowledge equips the upper Midwest and Great Lakes community with the tools necessary to prepare for and address current and future stressors impacting the natural resources of this ecologically diverse and economically important landscape.

Join the GreatLakesLCC.org RSS Feed by clicking "Subscribe Now!" to have the most current LCC information delivered to your email inbox.

2013 Midwest Regional Director's Employee Excellence Awards

By Joanna Gilkeson
External Affairs

On April 25, the Midwest Regional Director's Employee Excellence Awards honored eight individuals or teams who have shown exemplary dedication to the Midwest Region's commitment to conservation.

An employee's commitment to conservation can be shown in many ways including, communication and outreach, customer service, teamwork, or science excellence. More than 100 were nominated for excellence awards this year, including several from outside the Midwest Region and the Service.

As the ceremony came to a conclusion, Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius reiterated the key role our employees play in making the Service's mission of conservation a success, "The reality is that we and our partners in conservation face a number of daunting challenges, that's why we are celebrating the theme 'One Service: Our Commitment to Conservation Excellence'."

He added, "We have every confidence that our region's exceptional workforce will continue to be equal to the challenges we face."

Regional Director Melius and Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley hosted the ceremony. Click here to view a video of the ceremony. Photos of award recipients are shown on the next page.

"We have every confidence that our region's exceptional workforce will continue to be equal to the challenges we face."

Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius

2013 Midwest Regional Director's Employee Excellence Awards

Tiffany Breske, RO Contracting, *Internal Customer Service Award*

Michael Fodale, Marquette Biological Station, *External Customer Service Award*

Lori Nordstrom, RO Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, *Fostering Partnerships Award*

Rod Hansen, Desoto NWR, *Refuge Law Enforcement Officer of the Year*

Dave Wedan, La Crosse Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office, *Safety Improvement Award*

Josh Eash, RO/Refuges, *Teamwork Award* (on behalf of the Missouri River Hydrogeomorphic Team)

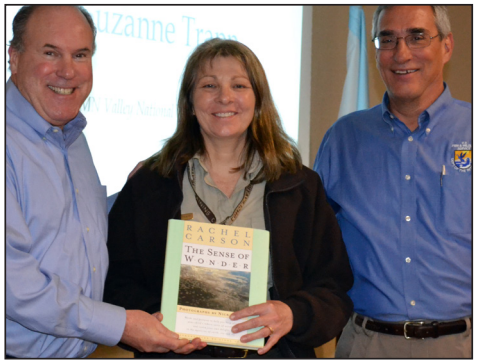
Mat Weber, RO Information Resources Technology Management, *Workplace Improvement Award*

Lisa Meicher, Wisconsin Private Lands Office, *Refuge Administrative Officer of the Year*

The 2012 Summer of Paddling team, Upper Mississippi National Wildlife & Fish Refuge, *Outreach Excellence Award* (Kevin Foerster, Cindy Samples and Cortney Solum represented the 10-state, multiagency effort)

Becky Lasee, La Crosse Fish Health Center, *Science Excellence Award*.

Dan Wood, Muscatatuck NWR, *Refuge Biologist of the Year.*



Suzanne Trapp, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Midwest Region *Sense of Wonder Award*.

Lake Trout Fins Indicate Restoration Success

Natural Reproduction of Lake Trout in Lake Michigan

By Dale Hanson
Green Bay FWCO

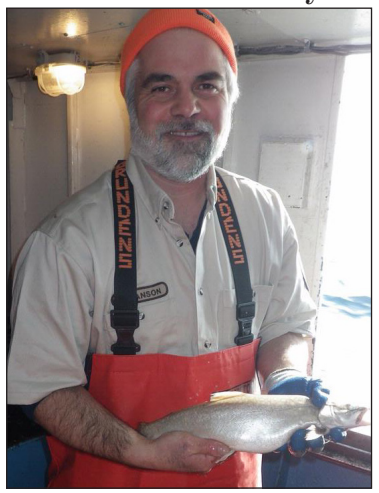
Something really cool is happening on Lake Michigan. Anglers and biologists are capturing lake trout that have a complete set of fins. This first evidence suggesting successful natural reproduction of lake trout was obtained from large numbers of small lake trout recovered during Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office's bloater egg collection surveys.

Lake trout disappeared from Lake Michigan in the 1950s due to overfishing and sea lamprey predation. In the 1960s a reintroduction program began in Lake Michigan with widespread stocking programs to restore self-sustaining populations. Over the last 50 years, between 2 and 3 million lake trout yearlings were stocked annually into Lake Michigan waters. These fish were marked, by clipping one or more fins, so they could later be identified as having originated from hatchery stocking. In the last two years a notable percentage of lake trout caught in the lake have a full complement of fins. This is a clear sign that these fish originated from natural reproduction in the lake.

Between 2010 and 2013, the Green Bay FWCO worked with commercial gillnetters and bottom-trawlers, in offshore waters of western Lake Michigan, to capture and spawn bloater, a deep-water species of cisco. The primary objective of these surveys was to obtain fertilized eggs to support a bloater reintroduction effort in Lake Ontario. However, lake trout were commonly caught as by-catch. Unclipped, wild lake trout accounted for 20 percent of all lake trout caught from surveys in the Southern Refuge. In waters off the northern Door Peninsula, between 10 and 27 percent of the 2007 – 2009 year-classes were wild. Preliminary data from 2013 indicates 22 percent of the lake trout by-catch from the northern Door Peninsula was wild, and 21 percent of lake trout by-catch was wild from bottom trawling near Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

These findings of wild recruitment were just published in the latest issue of North American Journal of Fisheries Management. More evidence is mounting that recent natural reproduction may be widespread in Lake Michigan: multiagency fall lake trout spawn surveys reported 9 to 50 percent of the fish recovered were unclipped and these included surveys in Grand Traverse Bay and Illinois waters.

Why, after more than 50 years of stocking, are we only now seeing widespread reports of lake trout natural reproduction? There is no simple answer. Several impediments to lake trout natural reproduction have been suggested, including contaminants, stocking of lake trout in poor habitats, insufficient numbers of spawning lake trout, predation of newly hatched lake trout by alewife, and a deficiency of thiamine in lake trout eggs caused by a diet rich in alewives. Any one of these factors may have played a role in preventing natural reproduction of lake trout over the years.



Dale Hanson holds a "wild" lake trout captured during the bloater egg-take surveys, from a gill-tug of the northern Door Peninsula, Michigan. Todd Kinn, USFWS

Most contaminants have dropped precipitously in Lake Michigan since the 1960s. Lake trout stocking practices have changed and most are now stocked in offshore areas with suitable spawning habitat. Lake trout harvest is more effectively managed these days and reducing the abundance of sea lamprey remains a priority of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. Finally, alewife populations in Lake Michigan are near their lowest levels since the 1950s, reducing the potential for fry predation and increasing the likelihood that lake trout now consume a more diverse diet that has led to increased thiamine concentrations in lake trout eggs.

Restoration of self-sustaining lake trout populations is not complete. Lake trout densities are still far below target levels and natural reproduction is only just starting to reach detectable levels. Still, after 50 years of stocking it is great to see a lake trout with all of its fins.

More To Coffee Than Meets the Eye

By Andrew Forbes,
Assistant Coordinator
Upper Mississippi River/Great Lakes Region Joint Venture

The theme of this year's International Migratory Bird Day celebration is "Life Cycles of Migratory Birds: Conservation Across the Americas". This highlights the need to conserve migratory birds throughout their entire lifecycle: on their summer breeding grounds, wintering grounds, and during migration when many species undertake incredible journeys spanning sometimes thousands of miles. Many people are surprised to hear that approximately half of "our" more common Midwestern breeding songbird species, such as Wood Thrush, American Redstart, and Baltimore Oriole actually spend up to eight months of the year either on their wintering grounds in Central and South America, or in transit between here and there, during migration.

Tom Will delivered a brown bag session on the Regional Office's trial transition to bird friendly coffee, the bird coffee connection and why it's a hot topic for the Migratory Bird program. USFWS

Birds face a multitude of threats to their existence throughout their annual lifecycle. However, one common, universally recognized threat at every stop along a bird's yearly journey is habitat destruction. Many are surprised to hear that one of the major drivers of habitat loss on the wintering grounds for many of our favorite birds lies within the cup of coffee that many of us drink every day.

Over the last few decades, coffee production in central and South America has shifted from traditional "shade" varieties of coffee, which are grown underneath a canopy of tropical forest, to "sun" varieties of coffee, which require the conversion of tropical forest to a more row-crop setting, where coffee plants are grown in full sun, using a broad spectrum of pesticides and fertilizers. The effects of this large-scale coffee conversion on birds (and other resident wildlife and plants) is obvious – without suitable winter habitat, birds must move into increasingly small forest fragments. At a minimum, those do not provide them with an ideal place to spend the winter and return to the breeding grounds in the Midwest in top condition for raising the next generation of young.

In support of the IMBD 2013 festivities, the "Coffee Club" at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Office served bird-friendly-certified, shade-grown coffee for the latter half of April, and is exploring the feasibility of making a permanent change to a shade-grown variety. Tom Will, from the Migratory Bird Program, delivered a "Brown Bag" presentation on shade-grown coffee and its ecological benefits.

For more information on IMBD, or on shade-grown coffee, visit http://birdday.org or http://www.fws.gov/birds/documents/HR-ShadeCoffee.pdf

Genoa NFH Staff Meet With University of South Dakota To Discuss Hine's Emerald Dragonfly Partnership Opportunity

By Angela Baran
Genoa National Fish Hatchery

Hine's Emerald Dragonfly. USFWS

Staff from Genoa National Fish Hatchery recently travelled to Vermillion, South Dakota to meet with students and faculty studying the federally endangered Hine's Emerald Dragonfly at the University of South Dakota.

Prior to the meeting, Genoa staff was contacted by the Green Bay and Chicago Ecological Services Field Offices to see if it would be possible to raise the dragonfly larvae on a larger scale than in the university setting they currently are using.

Genoa NFH seems to offer an almost ideal setting for possible dragonfly culture, with access to the hatchery's natural wetland and the multiple food sources utilized by the many species raised at the hatchery.

Sitting down with the students and staff at the university allowed for an open discussion about possible ways to take what has been learned about the species and develop large scale efforts to culture this species.

It also helped to frame up what new questions and methods need to be tested to take the next step for this species. For example, how many larvae can occupy a specific space without cannibalism or causing illness? How fast can they be grown without compromising life history or behaviors?

The next step will be to see if there are funding sources available to begin working with this species. The staff and students at the university will also visit Genoa NFH to see if the site will work for dragonfly culture.

The Hine's Emerald Dragonfly was placed on the Federal Endangered Species list in 1995. The primary reason for the species decline is loss of habitat due to urban development. The historic range for the dragonfly is Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Michigan and Wisconsin. The dragonfly has been extirpated from Alabama, Ohio and Indiana.

Habitat restoration efforts are underway in several locations and with the culture methods being developed, there is great hope for this species to stabilize and re-establish in historic ranges.

Life Cycles of Migratory Birds

Conservation Across the Americas

By Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day 2013 with a focus on bird life cycles. This year's theme details all aspects of a migratory bird's life, from migration to breeding, nesting and raising young.

Habitat conditions in one season may affect the survival and nesting success of birds in another. Winter habitats are just as important as nesting sites, and their quality influences nesting success. Stopover sites, the places where birds rest and refuel during migration, are also critical. Sandy beaches, forests, grasslands, and other habitats must be present for birds flying long distances.

While International Migratory Bird day is typically held on the second Saturday in May, any day can be one of celebration. Celebrate whenever migratory bird arrival happens in your own community or whenever you feel like celebrating birds.

IMBD is an invitation to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation. Click here to learn more. Use the following interactive maps and websites to find festivals, bird observatories, raptor centers, birding trails or bird camps:

- IMBD event
- IMBD events map
- Birding Help on the Web

Links to Bird Conservation Plans

- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- Partners in Flight
- North American Bird Conservation Initiative

More Bird Festival Programs!

- World Migratory Bird Day
- Birdlife's World Bird Festival
- Carribean Endemic Bird Festival

Midwest Region

2013 Best of Show

The Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program is a dynamic educational program designed to spark youth interest in habitat conservation through science, art, math, and technology. Students in kindergarten through high school are encouraged to interpret the natural world through artistic expression. By providing a basis for participation in the Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest, the activities encourage students to move beyond simply "learning about" wildlife and wildlife art to testing their abilities as wildlife artists.

Best of Show artwork featured below advanced to the National Junior Duck Stamp Contest, held in April at the National Conservation Training Center, Shepardstown, WV. Two artists from the Midwest region came away with honors from that national contest.

Iowa

Kathryn Weets (18)

Illinois

Justas Varpukanskis (17)

Indiana

Taylor Bone (15)

Michigan

Hannah Hu (10)

Minnesota

Cassidy Haggard (18)

A painting of snow geese by Peter Coulter, of Washington, Missouri, was named the runner-up of the 2013 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest. Third place was awarded to Drake Schlosser, from Rubicon, Wis., for his acrylic painting of a single common goldeneye.

Missouri

Peter Coulter (17)

Ohio

Alexa Counts (18)

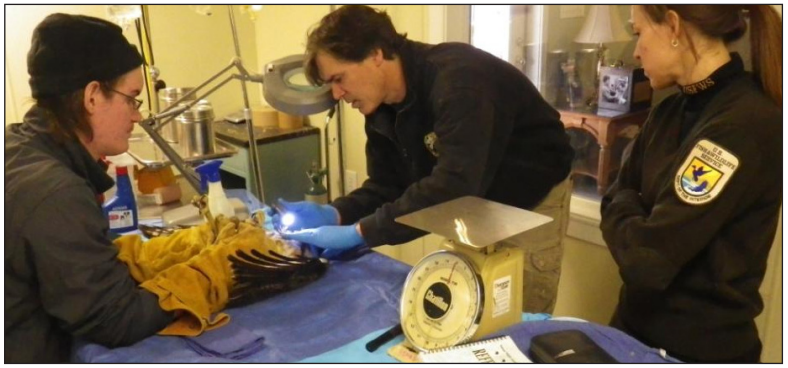
Wisconsin

Drake Schlosser (17)

For more information on the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program visit: http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck.

Columbia Field Office Steps in to Help Injured Hawk

By Trisha Crabill
Columbia Ecological Service Field Office



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Trisha Crabill assists as veterinarians from the World Bird Sanctuary attempt to treat an injured red-tailed hawk. USFWS

The Columbia Missouri Field Office recently received a call about a red-tailed hawk that appeared to be unable to fly and was potentially injured. While a raptor rehabilitation facility in Columbia was willing to receive and treat the hawk, none of their staff was able to drive to Saint Louis to retrieve the animal. The hawk had been in this condition for at least three days, and the caller was concerned about any further delay in medical attention.

Because the hawk had already been without food or water for several days, the Columbia office offered to assist by driving to St. Louis to retrieve the bird. Working with a Service Law Enforcement special agent, biologist Trisha Crabill was able to capture the hawk and transport it to the World Bird Sanctuary, a nearby rehabilitation facility in St. Louis.

Upon examining the hawk, veterinarians quickly discovered the source of injury -- a wound through the chest and into the esophagus. According to veterinarians, the injury could have been the result of a number of things, including colliding with a stick or other object while hunting prey. Unfortunately, wounds penetrating the esophagus often are unable to heal and despite the veterinarians' best attempts, the hawk didn't survive. Although the outcome was disappointing, we appreciate the concern of the people who reported the hawk and the veterinarians who worked to rehabilitate it.

Many Service field stations probably receive similar calls for injured birds or other wildlife. So what should you do?

If your office doesn't already have a list of qualified wildlife rehabilitators, you can call a local veterinarian, humane society, or county or municipal wildlife agency to find the nearest qualified wildlife rehabilitator that can take and treat the bird. You may also access the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association site at: http://www.nwrawildlife.org/content/finding-rehabilitator to help put you in touch with a qualified rehabilitator. While you are locating a suitable rehabilitator, experts recommend keeping the bird in a dark box in a warm, quiet spot and refrain from offering it food or water.

Draft Habitat Conservation Plan for Indiana Wind Farm Available

By Georgia Parham
External Affairs

In April, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made available a draft habitat conservation plan for Fowler Ridge Wind Farm in northwestern Indiana. The Service also released a draft environmental impact statement addressing impacts to the endangered Indiana bat and the environment.

Fowler Ridge Wind Farm LLC, Fowler Ridge II Wind Farm LLC, Fowler Ridge III Wind Farm LLC, and Fowler Ridge IV Wind Farm LLC are seeking an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act. The draft Habitat Conservation Plan developed by Fowler Ridge includes measures for long-term conservation of Indiana bats at the Fowler Ridge facility. The Fowler Ridge Wind Farm currently includes 355 wind turbines in Benton County, with plans for up to 94 additional turbines. Two occurrences of Indiana bat mortality have been discovered and reported by Fowler Ridge during routine surveys of the facility.

The draft EIS identifies alternatives for reducing Indiana bat mortality at the Fowler Ridge Wind Farm. The no-action alternative would shut down all 449 turbines from sunset to sunrise from Aug. 1 through Oct. 15 to avoid take of Indiana bats; an HCP would not be needed. The other three alternatives involve feathering the turbine blades below a specified cut-in speed (the wind speed at which the turbines begin to generate electricity), either at 3.5 meters per second, 5 meters per second (the alternative proposed by the applicant and described in the HCP) or 6.5 meters per second. Feathering causes the turbine blades to be motionless, or nearly so, below these wind speeds thus reducing impacts to bats flying through the facility. The measures would be implemented on a nightly basis from sunset to sunrise, adjusted for sunset/sunrise time weekly, from Aug. 1 to Oct. 15 annually.

In addition to efforts to avoid and minimize take, these alternatives describe proposed mitigation for any incidental take of Indiana bats. Mitigation would include coordinating, funding, and monitoring the protection and restoration of both summer and winter habitat.

The draft habitat conservation plan for the Fowler Ridge Wind Farm, in Indiana, outlines ways operators would avoid and minimize take of endangered Indiana bats like those pictured here.
Ann Froschauer, USFWS

Specifically, Fowler Ridge would preserve and restore summer maternity habitat in the vicinity of existing maternity colonies in Putnam County, Tippecanoe County, Vermillion County, or Warren County, Indiana. Fowler Ridge would also protect winter habitat by installing a new bat gate near the entrance of a Priority 1 hibernaculum in Indiana.

The draft documents are available on the Midwest Region's website at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/permits/hcp/r3hcps.html

The Service is accepting comments through June 4, 2013.

Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes Atlantic Office Wins Coveted Blue-winged Teal Award

By Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan Award Committee selected the Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office to receive the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Blue-winged Teal Award.

The award was presented on March 26 during the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Arlington, Va. Accepting the award was their Executive Director Rebecca Humphries.

The National Blue-winged Teal Award recognizes partners whose activities at the national, regional, or local level result in substantial benefits to waterfowl, other wetland-associated migratory bird populations or wetlands habitats.

Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office was nominated by both the Wisconsin and Michigan Departments of Natural Resources for outstanding contributions to wetland habitat and waterfowl in approximately 20 states, from the Great Lakes region to the Atlantic Coast.

Notable contributions in Michigan include the conservation of 30,000 acres of waterfowl habitat. In addition to delivering wetland conservation projects, Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office staff's expertise and leadership in research, policy, and outreach/communications resulted in numerous benefits for the region's waterfowl, wetlands, and waterfowl professional community. Important research like their Great Lakes mallard study has provided information to understand and improve habitat management for mallard production in the region.

In June 2011, Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office contributions to wetland conservation surpassed the 100,000-acre mark in Wisconsin, where a dedication ceremony was held at the Meadow Valley Flowage to mark this milestone.

Other recent notable accomplishments include more than 100 properties conserved around the Great Bay area in New Hampshire, the first Great Lakes Restoration Initiative restoration project completion at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan, and GIS assistance to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for updating the National Wetlands Inventory database.

The Blue-winged teal award was presented on March 26 during the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Arlington, Va. (From left) Bernie Maryzck, Gildo Tori, and Director Rebecca Humphries, from the Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office; Tom Hauge, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Russ Mason, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Russ Terry, Ducks Unlimited Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office. USFWS

Click here for more information on the National Blue-winged Teal Award.