

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



# Inside Region 3

## *October 2013*

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

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**Tom Melius • Regional Director  
Midwest Region  
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# *Welcome back!*

Our new budget year has only just begun yet we've already managed to weather our first storm, the 16-day partial government shutdown. Now that we're on the other side of it, I can't say enough how much gratitude I have for each of you and all the tremendous things that you continually do to benefit the Midwest Region.

My thanks extends, not only to those who were furloughed and facing the challenges and uncertainty of meeting personal commitments, but also to those who were still working without pay during that period. Those who were working during the shutdown were the face of our agency and in some cases had to deal directly with the public's frustration. Knowing you, as the dedicated and hard working government stewards that you are, I couldn't be more proud of all of you. Whether you were furloughed or on the job during this difficult time, I admire and appreciate your professionalism, patience and hard work.

Now that we're back and fully reopened for business, we can move forward to accomplish even more, but we should also reflect once again on the importance of the work we are doing. Where practical, we can reschedule activities and events that were cancelled or postponed for the shutdown. But most of all, we can get back into our stride of what we are known for and what we do best: implementing fish and wildlife conservation here in the Midwest Region. We know that this important work is truly appreciated by the American people and our partners.

*Welcome back, and please enjoy this month's  
(albeit a little late) issue of Inside Region 3.*



*Thomas O. Melius*

Tom Melius  
Regional Director, Midwest Region



# Inside Region 3

## October 2013

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#### On the Cover

*A Collins Elementary School student captured this photo of an open jack pine cone as part of a local species photo scavenger hunt. Courtesy Photo*

# Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture Collaborates on Shorebird Habitat Research Project

By Gregory Soulliere  
East Lansing Field Office

The Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (JV) is a large bird conservation partnership consisting of Midwest government agencies and non-government organizations that share expertise and resources to achieve bird habitat conservation on a large scale.

During the process of developing a JV Implementation Plan, many information gaps and uncertainties in Midwest bird conservation were uncovered. One of the evaluation needs identified by the JV's Shorebird Committee was to determine the habitat requirements of various shorebird species stopping in the region during migration.

The shores of Lake Erie, in Ohio, serve as a primary shorebird staging area in the Midwest region. This area also accounts



A Semipalmated Plover captured and banded during the Joint Venture-funded research project on wetlands of western Lake Erie. Greg Soulliere, USFWS

for a number of great conservation partners with the interest and resources to manage wetlands for shorebirds. Moreover, as long-term JV partners, Ohio conservation professionals have demonstrated a great business sense, supporting research to help assure their management is more effective and efficient over time. Thus, the Lake Erie wetlands of northwestern Ohio made for an ideal

location to determine the types of habitats used by migrating shorebirds, the timing of use, and the length of time shorebirds stop in the Midwest during their seasonal movements: north in spring and south in autumn.

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*Researchers are capturing, marking (leg banding / coloring feathers), and tracking individual shorebirds with observational surveys. They are examining body mass and condition, determining rates of change in body mass per day of migration stopover, and estimating stopover*

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A primary assumption used in the JV Shorebird Habitat Conservation Strategy is that food energy is a potentially limiting resource to migrating shorebirds, particularly during spring. JV partners aim to obtain empirical evidence to test this assumption along Lake Erie. Researchers are capturing, marking (leg banding / coloring

feathers), and tracking individual shorebirds with observational surveys. They are examining body mass and condition, determining rates of change in body mass per day of migration stopover, and estimating stopover

duration at key staging areas. The primary foods of migrating shorebirds are aquatic invertebrates found in wet soils near the water's edge. Through collection of soil samples and delicate sorting, scientists are determining invertebrate abundance and distribution at wetland sites used (and unused) by shorebirds during both spring and autumn migration.

JV scientists universally seek to determine "what, where, when, how, and how much" habitat is needed for priority bird species when developing regional conservation plans. Results from the Lake Erie shorebird project will be an important addition to the JV's shorebird conservation effort. The JV planning process uses an adaptive approach -- plan, implement management, evaluate, and adjust management based on evaluation results -- with JV bird conservation strategies being periodically revised as new research findings can be incorporated. 🐦

For more information regarding JV-supported projects and the JV Implementation Plan and associated Birdgroup Conservation Strategies, visit <http://www.UpperMissGreatLakesJV.org/>

# Rural Well-Being in Prairie Pothole Region: Linking Land Use and Economics

By Ashley Spratt  
*External Affairs*

Land-use in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) of the northern Great Plains has been shifting at an extraordinary rate, including changes in agriculture practices, the recent boom in petroleum production, and rising tourism, according to a new U.S. Geological Survey report.



The report examines how economic variables and rural development are linked to land use in the region and suggests that while agriculture remains an important economic, social and cultural driver, the long-term economic health of the PPR is dependent on a strong off-farm economy as well.

“This report shows that policymakers and land managers may want to think holistically about land-use change and understand the linkages between their decisions and aspects of community well-being,” said William Gascoigne, the USGS

scientist who led the study. “We set out to produce the most comprehensive report regarding land conditions, economic influence, and rural community well-being in the PPR to help inform their decisions.”

The report showed that although a vast amount of land in the PPR remains in farming -- still a major employer in select counties -- technological advances in agriculture and a depressed off-farm economy are threatening the economic contribution of this industry.

“We found that a strong farm economy and the persistence of family farms are just as, if not more so, dependent on a strong off-farm economy and labor market,” Gascoigne said. “Although each community is unique, modern rural-development must go beyond agriculture and take sight of other aspects of rural communities, including what attracts people to the area.”

The newly released **USGS report** and **fact sheet** also demonstrated that native prairie grassland remains in decline, a large portion

of lands enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are once again being cultivated, and expanding petroleum production has just moved North Dakota past Alaska as the number two oil producer in the nation.

While agriculture and oil production are major economic players, the report also noted that tourism — largely wildlife-based in this region — is a top-three industry in both of the Dakotas and is growing above the national average in these states.

“The farming community has long understood that diversity in agricultural operations is critical to economic productivity,” said Rick Nelson, coordinator for the Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC), which funded the study. “Local policy makers also know that tourism activities and outdoor recreation are key

components of a healthy local economy. It is less understood how this economic activity is threatened by land-use change and loss of habitat. This study helps to quantify how an investment of time and resources in strengthening the nonfarm rural economy may greatly assist local governing officials as they work to support agriculture in the community.”

The study conservatively estimates that expenditures on hunting and wildlife viewing are estimated to be contributing close to 10,000 jobs, \$760 million in labor income, and \$450 million in output to the regional economy. In addition, operational spending by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Refuge System and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, including perennial habitat restoration, are supporting close to another 900 jobs, \$40 million in labor income, and \$50 million in output in the region.

The PPR extends into areas of both the United States and Canada where midgrass and tallgrass prairies contain thousands of shallow wetlands known as potholes, which are essential habitat for millions of migrating ducks and other birds each year.

The LCC is a federal, state, and nongovernmental partnership working to understand the interaction among the economic, social and biological values of conservation to PPR communities.

The Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC is responsible for identifying, prioritizing, and supporting research that addresses scientific uncertainties related to broad-scale natural resources challenges impacting the northern Great Plains and prairie pothole region of the United States and Canada. 🐦

For additional information on the mission, vision and activities of the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC visit <http://www.plainsandprairiepotholeslcc.org/>.



**PLAINS & PRAIRIE POTHOLE**  
LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE

# Hide & Go Seek: *the Lake Sturgeon Edition*

By Margaret Hutton  
Alpena Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Office

For nearly 20 years, organizations have studied lake sturgeon in the Huron-Erie Corridor. Within the corridor, there are thought to be three main spawning populations: one in the Detroit River, one in lower St. Clair River, and the last in southern Lake Huron near Port Huron, Michigan. While we understand that lake sturgeon are utilizing these locations within the corridor, little is known about where lake sturgeon travel before and after they spawn.

Lake sturgeon are a potamodromous species meaning, for a majority of their life, they live in the larger lakes but travel up streams and rivers to locations with rocky habitat to spawn.

Lake sturgeon do not spawn on an annual basis. Male lake sturgeon will only spawn every two to four years, while female lake sturgeon will wait four to seven years between spawning events.

Within this time frame, little is also known about the lake sturgeon's life history. Previous tagging efforts, using external tags and Passive Integration Tags (PIT), have shown that lake sturgeon can travel great distances. Lake sturgeon caught and tagged in the corridor were recorded in areas as far as eastern Lake Erie and Green Bay, Wisconsin.

A new project funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust titled, "Lake Sturgeon Meta-Population Structure: Migration Pathways,

Spawning Fidelity, and Survival in a Complex River-Lake Ecosystem," is about to answer some of the questions regarding fish movement in the Huron-Erie Corridor.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish biologists from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office's Waterford Substation, have partnered with the U.S. Geological Survey, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in order to tag

sexually mature, adult lake sturgeon in the corridor with acoustic transmitters.

The new transmitters will allow biologists to collect more continuous data compared to the external and PIT tags. With these transmitters, a fish does not have to be recaptured for the scientists to receive information.

To date, 160 adult lake sturgeon were implanted with transmitters by project partners. Lake sturgeon movements are currently being monitored using an acoustic telemetry array, with 77 receivers deployed within or in close proximity to the corridor. The lake sturgeon captured will still be tagged with external tags to report information including length and location by calling the telephone number on the tag and providing the corresponding lake sturgeon fish number.

Preliminary movement results are consistent with previous theories



*Fisheries biologist, James Boase, inserts a transmitter into an adult lake sturgeon. This transmitter will send signals to acoustic receivers throughout Lakes Huron and Erie for the next 10 years. USFWS*



*Supervisory fish biologist, Darryl Hondorp, U.S. Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center, implants an acoustic transmitter on an adult lake sturgeon captured in the Detroit River. USFWS*

that three spawning populations exist, however more data is needed to fully assess movement patterns of adults within this system. The results of this study will provide insight regarding potential spawning locations, seasonal movement patterns, and survival of this threatened fish species. 🐟

# Endangered Carrion Beetles Carrying On In Ohio

By Sarah Bowman  
Pathways student  
Ohio Ecological Services  
Field Office

American burying beetles got a boost in Ohio this summer when members of the Ohio Field Office took part in a release at The Wilds, near Zanesville, Ohio. Forty-eight pairs of beetles that were reared by Wilds biologists were released on the property.

Biologists dug shallow holes and placed a pair of beetles (along with carrion) into the holes. The holes were then covered with soil, and protective mesh (to keep out competitors and predators). The hope is that the beetle pairs will produce offspring that will survive the winter into the next year.

The federally endangered American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*), was once found in 35 states and three Canadian provinces. The American burying beetle has now been extirpated from around 90 percent of its original range. In the past several years, the Ohio Field Office has been part of a multi-agency effort to reintroduce the beetles to several locations within Ohio.



Service Pathways student Sarah Bowman takes part in a reintroduction of endangered American burying beetles in Ohio. Angela Boyer, USFWS

American burying beetles are members of the family Silphidae, which includes many species of carrion beetles. The species have an interesting life cycle that starts in the summer when a male and female pair find a carcass. The pair will dig out the soil from underneath the carcass to bury the animal. The carcass will serve as a food source for the pair and the female will lay eggs on or near the carcass. Larval

beetles are fed by the adult beetles until they are mature enough to take care of themselves. As adults, the beetles only survive one year. After overwintering, the process will begin again.

Biologists hope that by providing pairs with a new home and carrion, the beetles will be able to carry on and begin to produce a new thriving population in Ohio. 🐞

# Preventing the Spread of Avian Botulism in Piping Plover



By Jack Dingledine  
Ecological Services

Trained plover monitors look for piping plovers at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. USFWS

Over the past 10 years several piping plover individuals from the endangered population of the Great Lakes have died as a result of exposure to Type E Botulism.

Equivalent to food poisoning, Type E Botulism is caused by a toxin that, when ingested by birds, results in paralysis and ultimately death.

Although the exact cause of death was not determined in each case, evidence suggests at least six piping plovers have died over the last decade. With a population of approximately 60 breeding pairs, the loss of even a small number of birds is significant.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has allowed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's East Lansing Field Office in

Michigan, the lead for Great Lakes piping plover recovery, to coordinate monitoring efforts with our partners at the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding has provided for education of plover monitors, preparation of outbreak response protocols and on-the-ground efforts at early outbreak detection, including the removal of carcasses, which can provide a potential pathway for the toxin.

For more information about U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service activities funded through GLRI, visit <http://www.fws.gov/ghri>. 🐦

# Topeka Shiners Surveyed After 2012 Drought

By Aleshia Kinney, Columbia Ecological Services Field Office

After one of the worst droughts in the state's history struck Iowa, in 2011 and 2012, biologists from the Rock Island Field Office conducted surveys, in July 2013, to help determine the effect of the drought on the endangered Topeka shiner.

During the 2012 summer's drought, miles of streams designated as critical habitat for the Topeka shiner went completely dry. Entire watersheds became so devoid of water that not even intermittent puddles existed. Most tributary streams were completely dry, leaving only the main rivers, nearby gravel pits and seemingly random pools (e.g., under bridges and plunge pools below structures) as possible sources of available water.

Since 2002 the Rock Island Field Office has restored more than 50 oxbows within the North Raccoon River watershed to provide habitat for Topeka shiners, and we know that most support fish. During the drought, almost all of the restored oxbows went dry.

The weather cycle returned to more normal conditions in 2013 with a few precipitation events causing floods. As a result of this flooding, the restored oxbows reconnected with their streams. This prompted

biologists to sample some of these oxbows that were known to contain Topeka shiners to find out three things: what fish species are the first to recolonize these systems and associated off-channel habitats, whether Topeka shiners are among the early recolonizing species, and if Topeka shiners show up, at what density are they represented.



*A female Topeka shiner and a male orange-spotted sunfish were found in a restored oxbow, after the 2012 drought. Topeka shiners have been documented spawning on top of orange-spotted sunfish nests.* Aleshia Kinney, USFWS

The oxbows that were sampled were those that were sampled in 2009 during an intense sampling effort that provided baseline fish population data for six restored oxbows. Along with resampling those six oxbows, any restored oxbows nearby were also sampled.

Over the course of three days, a total

of 15 restored oxbows were sampled and Topeka shiners were found in 10 of them. The 10 oxbows where Topeka shiners were found were either very near the mouth of the North Raccoon River or near a gravel pit, and that is not believed to be a coincidence. The gravel pits, because of their depth and ability to hold water during extended dry periods, may provide

refuges during drought. It is likely that spring flooding dispersed fish from these pits into the river main channel and adjacent floodplain, including into our restored oxbow ponds.

Biologists were impressed and heartened that, following the first flood after a drought, they were able

to find Topeka shiners in 70 percent of the off-channel areas that were checked. However, numbers appear to be substantially down. In 2009, 10 oxbows were sampled (including the same ones sampled in 2013) and 754 Topeka shiners were found, whereas, in 2013 15 oxbows were sampled and 80 Topeka shiners were found (17 males and 63 females).

The diversity and numbers of other fish using these oxbows is impressive, especially considering they and adjacent tributaries were dry last summer. In three days of sampling, over 15,000 fish of 24 different species were collected, and that is not counting all of the young of the year spawn! The oxbows were also full of turtles, amphibians, insects and crayfish.

Information collected from this study will help guide future management decisions regarding population status and recovery actions. Climate models predict that extreme weather events will become more frequent. Obtaining population density data after the drought of 2012 and comparing it to baseline population estimates from the same place during normal climate years will help researchers and managers evaluate the impact of the 2012 drought on an already imperiled species. Results from this study will be used to guide and focus restoration efforts in years to come.



# Collaborative Vision Moves Forward at Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge



*Visionaries gathered to mark the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding: Jon Allan, Office of the Great Lakes; Dr. John Hartig, Project Leader, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge; Congressman John D. Dingell, U.S. House of Representatives; Joe Robison, Wildlife Supervisor, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (hidden in photo); Keith Creagh, Director, Michigan Department of Natural Resources; Richard Wyma, General Manager of the Essex Region Conservation Authority; Bob Ranka, Ducks Unlimited Senior Volunteer; Dustin Krasny, Office of Congressman Walberg; Rebecca Humphries, Ducks Unlimited Director - Great Lakes/Atlantic Region; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley; Gildo Tori, Director of Public Policy, Ducks Unlimited. Jamie Lanier, USFWS*

*By Tina Shaw  
External Affairs*

History was made August 17, as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources signed a Memorandum of Understanding stating that 13,684 acres of state

and federal lands will be managed cooperatively in spirit and intent of the 2001 Conservation Vision and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

These groups have a long history of monitoring and managing

this corridor cooperatively and this special agreement is their pledge to work to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiencies relative to research, monitoring, conservation planning, restoration, and public use opportunities.

Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley noted, “Collaborating on conservation work like this is not only smart, it is a model for other major urban areas and an opportunity to meet our missions together. We look forward to seeing this partnership grow.”

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Keith Creagh added, "Fish and wildlife know no boundaries. This historic agreement will help the DNR and Service better manage this corridor as an ecosystem, in cooperation with our Canadian partners. I think this agreement is a model of cooperative conservation that can be used as a template for other communities."

Also recently signed was an agreement between the Service and the Essex Region Conservation Authority, the lead organization of the Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural Area in southwest Ontario. Under this agreement, Essex Region Conservation Authority and its partners have created a Canadian registry of lands and actions, and have initially added to it almost 4,000 acres of Canadian lands owned and managed by Essex Region Conservation Authority.

Essex Region Conservation Authority General Manager Richard Wyma said, "It is an honor to work

with our U.S. partners to protect our natural heritage and enhance our world-class, outdoor, recreational opportunities. I believe it is possible that, on the Canadian side, we could see 12,000 acres of existing protected areas in southwest Ontario included in our international effort over the next 10 years."

U.S. Congressman John D. Dingell, an avid

an international wildlife refuge that will, one day soon, protect over 25,000 acres of land in southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario, for not only this generation, but generations to come." Since this signing and establishment of the refuge in 2001, Canadian and U.S. partners have worked on State of the Strait Conferences; a sturgeon spawning reef off Fighting

Initiative and more.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, more than 100 species of fish and over 300 species of birds. It is the first international refuge in North America. The Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. The Essex Region Conservation Authority conserves natural resources in the Essex Region in partnership with member municipalities and the Province of Ontario for the benefit of present and future generations. ♪

*"This historic agreement will help the DNR and Service better manage this corridor as an ecosystem, in cooperation with our Canadian partners. I think this agreement is a model of cooperative conservation that can be used as a template for other communities."*

Keith Creagh, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director

outdoorsman and strong supporter of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, noted, "I am proud to see how the U.S. and Canadian governments, businesses, n o n g o v e r n m e n t a l organizations, and concerned citizens have joined forces to achieve conservation and outdoor recreation results that they could not have achieved on their own. We are building

Island that represented the first fish habitat restoration project in the Great Lakes funded with both U.S. and Canadian resources; 51 soft shoreline engineering projects; a By Ways to Fly Ways bird driving tour map; an ecosystem indicator project; restoration of more than 1,000 acres of land with funding from North American Wetlands Conservation Act and Great Lakes Restoration

Area is the institutional mechanism for Canadian federal, provincial and local partners to cooperatively work with U.S. partners on the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.



# Hook, Line and Sinker

## *A Landscape Approach to Sport Fish Conservation in the Face of Climate Change Impacts*



*Angler fishing Black Earth Creek, a popular trout stream in Dane County, Wisconsin. Agricultural practices and invasive species (like reed canary grass) are just a few of the management challenges impacting stream health in portions of Wisconsin.* Dennis Franke

*By Ashley Spratt  
External Affairs*

The Great Lakes basin includes numerous rivers and freshwater streams attracting fishermen from across the globe. Popular sport fish including brook trout and small-mouth bass spend portions of their life cycle migrating to and from the Great Lakes to these freshwater streams to spawn, feed and grow.

Through the coordinated efforts of the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC), federal, state and academic partners are working side-by-side to determine how projected warmer air temperatures and changes in precipitation in the coming century may impact fish habitat.

Researchers with U.S.

Geological Survey are working alongside Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Michigan Institute of Fisheries Research and Michigan State University to model the potential impacts of increasing air temperatures and changes in precipitation on water temperature and flow in freshwater streams that are part of the Great Lakes system. The models

project future distributions for 14 fish species based on known fish locations, their habitat preferences, their adaptability to different water temperatures, existing and future stream conditions, and projected climatic changes.

The models show that the distribution of brook trout, which requires cold water for survival, is projected

to shrink by 60 percent in some Wisconsin streams by mid-century, an impact attributed to warmer waters as a result of a changing climate. Loss of suitable freshwater habitat for this and other popular sport fish species due to climate change has economic implications as well, as recreational fishing opportunities across the Great Lakes system contribute to a multi-billion

dollar tourism and recreation industry. Aquatic resource managers are using model results to help prioritize on-the-ground conservation and restoration efforts while considering the potential impacts for the broader Great Lakes landscape. For example, the Wisconsin DNR is using the results to help make informed management decisions on easement properties that

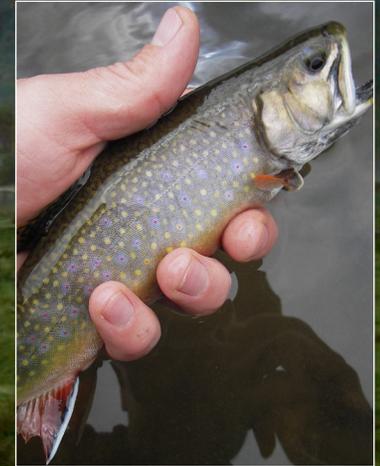
boast more than 35,000 acres of trout and small mouth bass streams. “We can identify streams where fish populations may have a higher or lower likelihood of changing as a result of projected climate change impacts. This means we can make better investments in groundwater and storm water protection measures or implementation of agricultural best management practices in

higher priority areas,” said Paul Cunningham, Wisconsin DNR fisheries biologist. By examining current and future fish distributions, existing opportunities for public access and weighing demands for recreational fishing, natural resources managers across the upper Midwest and Great Lakes will be equipped with the tools needed to make strategic conservation

decisions, such as how habitat is managed and when and where additional land should be acquired.

Scientists are working with natural resources managers across the region to ensure they have access to this valuable scientific data that will help guide future management decisions in the face of a changing climate.

This project is a collaborative effort by the U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin DNR, Michigan Institute of Fisheries Research and Michigan State University. Funding support was provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative. 🐟



*Angler releases a brook trout, a popular sport fish throughout the upper Midwest and Great Lakes. New models predict brook trout distribution to decrease by as much as 60 percent in parts of Wisconsin. Matt Mitro, Wisconsin DNR.*

*Timber Coulee Creek, part of the Coon Creek Watershed in Wisconsin's Driftless Area. Photo courtesy of Dan Braun*

# Snowbird Honors Midwest Bird Expert

By Valerie Rose Redmond  
*External Affairs*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist Tom Will received conservation honors at the Partners In Flight International Conference, August 28, in Snowbird, Utah. Partners In Flight, an organization that took wing in 1990 amid copious conservation concerns about avian populations and declines, annually recognizes the exceptional dedication and contributions of bird advocates that focus on species in North, South and Central America.



*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Tom Will. USFWS*

One of six awardees, Will was honored for his visionary leadership in the migratory bird conservation community. He is highly respected among his peers across the United States

and, indeed, in many venues around the world. A sought after speaker, his extensive knowledge of migratory birds has allowed him to build both an illustrious career and an admirable reputation.

Last month's ceremony honored Will for a number of significant accomplishments. In his personal capacity, he is working on research exploring a wide range of bird mortality causes including: depredation by collisions with wind towers, collisions with buildings and windows, collisions and electrocution at power lines, collisions with communication towers, moving vehicle collisions, and poisoning from pesticides and other environmental contaminants.

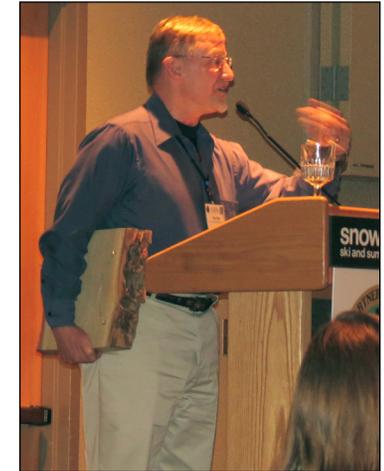
Will has developed partnerships with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute to better understand the magnitude and impacts to direct human-caused sources of bird mortality. He has co-authored a number of publications and conference presentations on migratory birds and has played a major role in the emerging

concept of full life-cycle bird conservation. He has lead efforts to identify and address limiting factors on the breeding, migration, and wintering grounds of several neotropical migrant birds, including the Golden-winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, and several grassland bird species.

Additionally, Will has guided the Midwest Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership and Midwest Avian Data Center toward tremendous success and, in turn, is helping the Avian Knowledge Network emerge as the hub for avian data management and decision support in North America. Through his many bird conservation activities, the Service and its partners have been able to identify the highest monitoring, research, and habitat management priorities, which makes the bird conservation community more efficient and effective in conserving and managing species of concern.

"I congratulate and thank Tom and all of the award winners for their scientific acumen and leadership," said Midwest Regional

Director Tom Melius. "The mission of the Service depends heavily on their accomplishments and insights in helping us all to make conservation strides."



*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Tom Will. USFWS*

Partners In Flight is a cooperative effort involving partnerships among federal, state and local government agencies, philanthropic foundations, professional organizations, conservation groups, industry, the academic community and private individuals. For more information about Partners In Flight visit: <http://www.partnersinflight.org/> 



# Minnesota – Land of 10,000 Lakes and Several New Boat Access Sites



By Joanna Gilkeson  
External Affairs

*The future site of Moccasin Point's new boat access location on Lake Vermillion, Minnesota.* Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Minnesota is home to over 12,000 freshwater lakes of over 10 acres in size and holds more lakes than any other state. Waterways include the well-known Boundary Waters, the Mississippi River, Lake Superior and Lake Vermilion, which is also known as the “Lake of the Sunset Glow” to the Ojibwe people.

With such outstanding natural resources, it is only fitting that Minnesota also has the highest boat registration per capita in the U.S. and ranks second in registered boats, with 817,996 boats as of 2012.

To meet the demand of recreational boaters, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is working to develop and

reconstruct several boat access sites located throughout the state. One of these renovations will take place at Lake Vermilion's Moccasin Point public access site in northeastern Minnesota.

Lake Vermilion is a 40,557 acre lake in St. Louis County, Minnesota. The Lake allows for non-motorized and motorized recreation, and has 1,200 miles of shoreline and 365 islands, making this an ideal lake for improved boating access.

The access point will receive a complete reconstruction and expansion, with construction beginning in fall of 2013 and continuing into the summer of 2014. A majority of improvements to the site will be funded

by a grant through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program. Minnesota state funds will also contribute to a wide barge ramp that will allow large barges to dock at Moccasin Point and will allow barges with construction materials to access the area and surrounding islands.

Before Moccasin Point was acquired by the state in 2008, it was home to a resort. The location is conveniently located at the end of a County Road 77 (Moccasin Point Road) ensuring that it is accessible to all recreationists. Moccasin Point was acquired by the Department of Natural Resources, with funds from the Service's Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration grant program to improve and

reconstruct the boat access site. This year, the Service approved another grant that will allow the Minnesota DNR to redevelop and improve the 6.1 acre access site.

Currently, the site is made up of a gravel and grass parking lot. Visitors will be able to use the informal access site until July 4, 2014 when full-scale development is scheduled to begin. It is expected that reconstruction will last for the rest of the summer.

Once demolition of the existing building is finished, the new and improved boating site will be completed and feature designated parking areas, ADA compliant facilities, improved shoreline and stormwater management,

and renovations to boat launch and docking facilities.

The redesigned area will also help to improve traffic flow and reduce vehicle speeds in the area. Upon completion, Moccasin Point will welcome canoes, kayaks, anglers, and other recreational boaters with easy access to Lake Vermilion and the surrounding islands.

Minnesota lake goers can also expect several additional boating access sites in the next few years, including West Newton Public Access site along the Mississippi River in Kellogg, and South Lindstrom Lake Boat Water Access near Lindstrom. These projects are also funded through grants from the Service Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration program. 🐾

# Regional Office Biologist Mary Mitchell Selected As Finalist in Nextgov Bold Awards

By Larry Dean  
External Affairs

Mary Mitchell, a biologist with the Regional Office's Conservation Planning Program, was recently selected as a finalist for the Nextgov Bold Award.

Mitchell was selected from more than 180 nominees nationwide for this honor that recognizes federal employees who have taken risks to implement innovative programs that make the government more effective.

Mitchell's nomination was the result of her developing a process of using high-resolution aerial photography to monitor conservation easements. She prepares the flight plans, retrieves the raw digital photography from the pilot, processes the photos within 24 hours and provides them to law enforcement staff to review for potential violations.

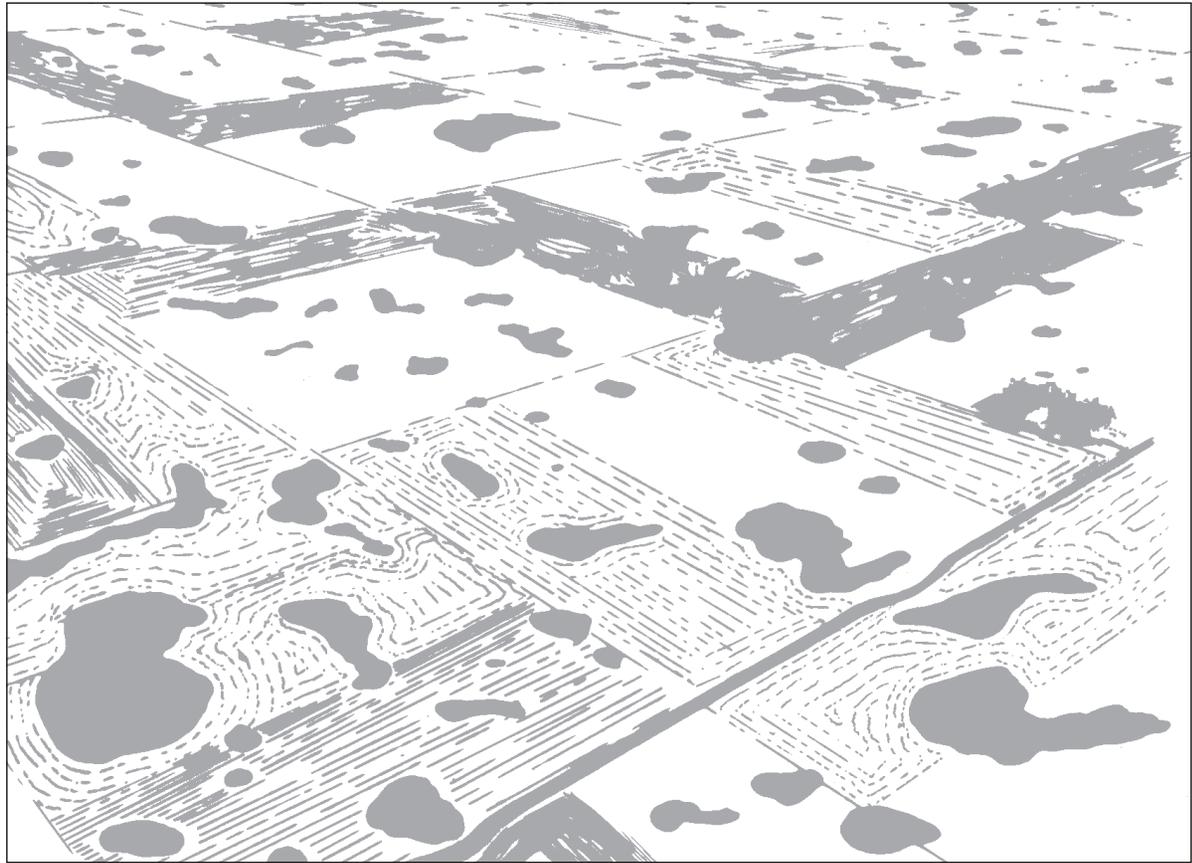
Her efforts allow Service law enforcement to monitor



Mary Mitchell, USFWS

thousands of acres of easements in Minnesota and Iowa to ensure the integrity of these areas for breeding and migrating waterfowl and other birds. This saves staff time and money, while improving compliance and reducing the burden on landowners.

"The news of Mary Mitchell's selection for this honor comes as no surprise to those of us who know of her hard work and dedication," said National Wildlife Refuges Chief Charlie Blair. "I congratulate her as she moves into the finals of the Nextgov program and couldn't be more proud of



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*"The news of Mary Mitchell's selection for this honor comes as no surprise to those of us who know of her hard work and dedication."*

Charlie Blair, Chief, Midwest Region National Wildlife Refuges

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her effort and leadership in technology innovation."

Finalists selected were from 12 federal agencies, including the Service.

Collectively, their efforts are described as having enhanced veterans health care, boosted national security and saved lives during emergencies,

advanced international relations, strengthened environmental protections and saved taxpayers dollars. 🦋

# Conserving The Lakeside Daisy With a Little Help From Our Friends

*By Jennifer Finfera, Ohio Ecological Services Field Office*

One of the responsibilities of the Ohio Ecological Services Field Office is annual collection of seed from the federally threatened lakeside daisy. The lakeside daisy, which occurs on the Marblehead Peninsula and Kelleys Island in Ohio, is found in dry, rocky prairie underlain by limestone, or in cliff and alvar crevices of exposed limestone rock outcrops. The Lakeside daisy requires an open habitat with full sun exposure.

The Ohio Field Office obtained permission this year to collect seed from an active quarry on the Marblehead peninsula owned by Lafarge North America Inc. The quarry provides the rocky habitat that this species requires.

The challenge: Seed collection always occurs in early summer, when the field office is also busy with bird surveys, other plant surveys, fish work, Earth

Day celebrations and other activities.

This year the Ohio Field office coordinated with volunteers from the Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association as well as people who have completed Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist training. Several interns from the Toledo Botanical Garden joined the effort. By having volunteers available and willing to assist, the field office was able to coordinate a significant group of people to collect seed.

After staff and volunteers attended safety training, provided by Lafarge, volunteers and staff spent three days walking over gravel hills collecting seeds that were ready for harvest. Seeds were collected over a two-week period so that plants with a variety of blooming times were collected. Seed collecting started in the mornings and on some days extended until midafternoon. Volunteers and staff collected over a dozen bags of flower heads



*Volunteers Bill Roshak, Randy Haar, Guy Denny, and Jan Kennedy hold some of their collected seeds of the threatened lakeside daisy. Jennifer Finfera, USFWS*

containing seed, which weighed in at over 5 pounds. This is quite impressive since the seed is so small. The volunteers had a great time as the weather was not too hot and there was a breeze from the lake to help keep everyone cool.

Seeds were gathered for storage by the Ohio Ecological Services

Field Office and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Seeds were allowed to dry and will be stored until fall when they will be used to augment existing populations on public land. The Ohio field office plans on collecting seed for the next few years in an effort to maintain genetic diversity and establish additional

self-sustaining populations of the Lakeside daisy on public land. 🐦

# Michigan Kids Get Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Lesson

*By Megan Cross, East Lansing Ecological Services Field Office*

Last spring, the East Lansing Field Office piloted a program aimed at teaching northern Michigan elementary students about endangered species and conservation of the endangered Kirtland's warbler. This year, that initiative has expanded to include six different schools, 20 teachers and over 550 students.

Throughout the course of the semester, visiting biologists met with students in the classroom and led them on field trips to the warblers' jack pine habitat, offering repeated exposure to key concepts such as habitat management, natural resource use, and helpful versus harmful effects of humans on the environment. Hands-on activities and collaborative learning were highlighted.

During the classroom visit, students engaged in an

interactive presentation on bird identification, the jack pine ecosystem and management, and brown-headed cowbirds. They also participated in a game that simulates the relationship between Kirtland's warbler chick survival and cowbird nest parasitism.

On the field trips, students visited jack pine habitat and spent the day as wildlife biologists, searching for the Kirtland's warbler and documenting with cameras and on data sheets the various species they encountered. Students were able to integrate the information they had learned earlier in the year during the classroom visit with the experience of being in warbler habitat and searching for birds.

During the field trips, students also visited a cowbird trap and learned about the life cycle of a Kirtland's warbler, specifically as it relates to their migration and

breeding, stopover and wintering habitat. New to the program this year were enough digital cameras and binoculars for each student to use, which helped them focus on the surrounding landscape throughout the day.

The second year of the East Lansing Field Office's Kirtland's warbler outreach was very well received by students and teachers, and all of the schools expressed an interest in being involved in the program again next year. The continuation of this outreach has helped to solidify the relationship between the Service and northern Michigan youth through a recurring presence in the school system, and is a positive step towards strengthening awareness of modern day environmental challenges.



*A Collins Elementary School student captured this photo of an open jack pine cone as part of a local species photo scavenger hunt. Courtesy Photo*

