

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Inside Region 3

September 2013

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Tom Melius • Regional Director
Midwest Region
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The Success We Achieve Throughout The Year Leaves Lasting Impressions

Hard to believe, but we've already come full circle to the completion of another fiscal year with so much accomplished and much more on the brink of being added to that growing list.

I had the pleasure of seeing first-hand even more of that success, and how our staff continually make their mark, during a recent visit to Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. It was a thrill to see the rocket net training students in action as they worked as a team to learn the safe use of this longstanding technique. Learn more by reading the Story on Page 14.

I'm also looking forward to another great event coming back to our Region at the end of this month, when we host the Federal Duck Stamp contest. This year's event will be held at Maumee Bay State Park, Ohio, as our staff have worked closely with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife to host a top notch event. And, who knows, maybe we will even be able to celebrate yet another winning artist from our region when the judges complete their time honored duties of sorting through a sea of brilliant entries to select the new design. It's truly an honor to host this event and I salute our staff at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, in our Regional Office, at Ducks Unlimited and the many other partners who are making it all come together. Learn more by reading the Story on Page 10.

Another successful partnership was recently celebrated when staff here in the Regional Office welcomed our partners from Pheasants Forever, who I had the privilege of presenting several awards to. Longtime friend and valued partner Joe Duggan received our Silver Eagle Award and additional Pheasants Forever staff were honored for their collective work with our realty staff throughout the region. Learn more by reading the Story on Page 6.

Yet another important partnership within the region involves our tribal partners, which is why I am looking forward to the upcoming Tribal Workshop we are hosting later this month at the Prairie Island Indian Community in Minnesota. This will be the first ever workshop of its kind in our region and we know it will go a long way toward improving the work we do together for our shared interests in conserving, protecting and enhancing wildlife and their habitat.

There is always so much to be proud of as we look upon the accomplishments of the fiscal year, and with the challenges we've faced along the way with tighter budgets, this is no small feat. This new fiscal year will offer many of those same challenges as we see the likelihood of operating under another continuing resolution. I can assure you that we are planning for all contingencies so we can continue forward with the same success we've come to know and expect of ourselves each year.

I'd also like to share with you this link to the Special Edition of Administrative Matters that was recently produced by our national Budget Planning and Human Capital office titled, "The Budget And You."

I appreciate all of your hard work and your positive attitude even in the face of adversity. Keep up the great work and enjoy this month's issue of Inside Region 3!



Thomas O. Melius
Tom Melius
Regional Director, Midwest Region



Inside Region 3

September 2013



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Female Kirtland's warbler.

Joel Trick, USFWS

Urban Academy: Conserving the Future Takes Shape

By Anna Harris
Conserving the Future
coordinator



urban academy

Workshop logo. USFWS

Two summers ago, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ratified its vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System at the “Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation” conference, in Madison, Wisconsin.

Several themes emerged from the July 2011 gathering: recognition of the nation’s changing demographics; the impact of a changing climate; the need for landscape-scale conservation; the necessity of unprecedented collaboration; and the fundamental importance of scientific excellence.

The bold ideas from Madison inspired the entire Service and challenged the Refuge System to look at our work differently. Today, nine teams of Service employees are taking tangible steps to make “Conserving the Future” a reality.

The Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative team has identified

new opportunities in underserved markets. The team received more than 60 nominations for Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships and has selected eight as pilots.

The pilots will be formally recognized in September at the Urban Academy training, at which about 150 Service staff and partners will share tools, discuss overcoming barriers to engagement and develop strategies to implement standards of excellence for urban refuges.

The pilots are designed to foster a land ethic in cities. Here are two examples: The Rhode Island Refuge Complex and the Southern New England – New York Bight Coastal Program will collaborate with the city of Providence, watershed associations, the zoo, Audubon and others to use the city parks system as a

portal to reach urbanites. The San Diego Refuge Complex will create a River Rover whose goal is to bring “people to the river” and “the river to the people” in Los Angeles. The project will involve a mobile exhibit space to include an interactive model of the Los Angeles River watershed.

Via Conserving the Future, the Refuge System also has committed to landscape-scale conservation planning to integrate the best available science to adapt to demographic and climate change. “The Inventory and Monitoring Seven-Year Plan: 2013–2020” includes tools that help refuge managers document/justify monitoring priorities, streamline refuge management plan development and catalog individual refuge monitoring history.



This Milliken State Park storm water treatment system was designed by JJR along the Detroit River Walk. Courtesy photo by JJR.

Looking forward to the next two years, the Service will increase quality hunting and fishing opportunities on refuges; improve working relationships with state partners; and, where appropriate, invest in accessible facilities. New technology will be used to increase virtual and in-person visitation. An ambassador program will train employees, volunteers, refuge Friends and close partners to communicate and interpret key messages to the public.

“Like any other voyage, you have to get out the

compass and get your bearings straight,” Refuge System Chief Jim Kurth said recently. “We are making progress. You are going to have headwind, like this budget climate right now, but this country will be strong again, and, in the end, people in this country like what we do and care about wildlife and wild places and want us to conserve these national resources. It’s an incredibly powerful recipe.”

To follow the implementation teams’ work, go to <http://www.AmericasWildlife.org>.



Service Partners Gather for the Groundbreaking of the Great River Road Interpretive Center at Genoa National Fish Hatchery

By Katie Steiger-Meister
External Affairs

Congressman Ron Kind, representatives from the Sac and Fox Tribe of Oklahoma, and members of the local media helped Genoa National Fish Hatchery celebrate the commemorative groundbreaking for the future Great River Road Interpretive Center on August 21, 2013.

The new interpretive center will be located at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Genoa, Wisconsin. The project is being partially funded from a grant secured by the National Scenic Byways Program, part of the federal transportation budget. The grant is the first of its type for the Fisheries Program nationally, and the first use of Department of Transportation, Federal Highways -- National Scenic Byways funding of any type awarded to a national fish hatchery.

The center will focus on the intrinsic value of the Upper Mississippi River,



An artist's rendering of the Great River Road Interpretive Center.
Image courtesy of Kubala Washatko, Inc.

including its history and natural resources. The center will also feature an exhibit on the last battle of

the Black Hawk War, which was fought just south of the hatchery.



Invitees dig into the future site of the Great River Road Interpretive Center, which will be located at Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Genoa, Wisconsin. USFWS

The value of the new interpretive facility lies within its accessibility to both local residents and travelers on the National Scenic Byway. The new facility will offer visitors opportunities to learn about the aquatic resources of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Exhibits will spotlight the hatchery and its current programs. Visitors to the center will also be able to access the outdoor experiences at

the hatchery through its public-friendly fishing piers and wetlands boardwalk.

An estimated 14,000 people per year visit Genoa National Fish Hatchery to view fish and aquatic species, and participate in educational and recreational programs. Visitation is expected to significantly increase after the facility is completed in 2014. 🐦

Service Recognizes Successful Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Partnership

Presents Prestigious Silver Eagle Award to Pheasants Forever's Joe Duggan

*By Larry Dean
External Affairs*

On August 22, Regional Director Tom Melius presented the Silver Eagle Award to Joe Duggan, Pheasants Forever, and recognized staff involved in that partnership that have brought the success of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant and its resulting Waterfowl Production Area acquisitions.

“Partnerships are the bread and butter of successful organizations, and ours with Pheasants Forever is an outstanding example of that,” said Melius. “Pheasants Forever is a long-standing partner with the Service in our Midwest Region. Their willingness to act as our ‘realty agent’ using Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage dollars to acquire lands that will become Waterfowl Production Areas, has landed over \$24 million in Minnesota, since 2009.”



*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region presented the Silver Eagle Award to Pheasants Forever Vice President-Corporate Relations and Marketing Joe Duggan for his and the organization's efforts in making the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant partnership for Waterfowl Production Area acquisition a monumental success. Pictured (left to right) President and CEO of Pheasants Forever; Howard Vincent; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region Refuge Supervisor; Jim Leach; Joe Duggan, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director; Tom Melius.
Katie Steiger-Meister, USFWS*

Pheasants Forever President/CEO Howard Vincent noted, “We have really come a long way in establishing what truly puts the Big P in the word partnerships, with the Service. We’ve grown from an operation in a basement in White Bear Lake,

Minn., to a national, even international, organization together with common goals of conserving habitat and wildlife for the benefit and enjoyment of people.”

All of the lands acquired through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage

partnership are donated as Waterfowl Production Areas. The lands are open to public recreation, hunting, fishing, trapping, photography, bird watching, environmental education and interpretation and more. The gathering also offered Service and Pheasants

Forever representatives the chance to celebrate the “front-line staff” who make things happen, insuring the dollars get to the right spot on the ground where they are needed most. Pheasants Forever’s Eran Sandquist, Joe Pavelko and Chad Bloom were recognized for their part in that, as were the entire Midwest Region’s realty staff.

“Be they ring-necked pheasants, or native species like bobolink or blue-winged teal, Joe and all of our great partners at Pheasants Forever place the same high priorities we do on ‘saving dirt’. That shared vision has solidified this relationship over 30 years and will sustain it into the future,” Melius said.

“Thanks to Joe, Pheasants Forever’s and our own staff for that continued dedication and great focus on conservation for the American people,” he added. 🦉

Fungus Responsible for White-Nose Syndrome Found at Two Minnesota State Parks

By Georgia Parham
External Affairs

The fungus that causes white-nose syndrome in bats was confirmed at Soudan Underground Mine State Park and Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park in Minnesota, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. White-nose syndrome has caused widespread mortality among cave-hibernating bats in the eastern United States.



A healthy little brown bat.
Jeremy N. Moore, USFWS

Sampling for the fungus at the two parks occurred in 2012 and 2013. Recent testing to track the spread of the disease found that four bats of 47 sampled were positive for the fungus. Species testing positive included the northern long-eared bat and the little brown bat. Testing was part of a national study funded by the National Science Foundation and led by researchers at University of California Santa Cruz and Northern Arizona University.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources says it will step up its efforts to slow

the spread of the fungus. Public tours of Soudan Underground Mine and Mystery Cave will continue, but visitors will begin each tour with a brief lesson on how they can prevent the spread of the fungus.

After tours, visitors will be required to walk across special mats designed to remove spores from footwear. They will be advised not to visit other caves or mines with any clothing, footwear or gear they have used in areas where white-nose syndrome or the associated fungus is present. 🐉

Rep. Betty McCollum visits Whitney Genetics Lab and Learns about the Science of eDNA

By Garrett Peterson
External Affairs

Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., visited the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Whitney Genetics Lab, in Onalaska, Wis., on August 29, 2013, to learn about the Service's work to detect Asian carp in waterways throughout the Midwest.

The Whitney Genetics Lab was opened in April of this year, and it is now processing water samples from the Great Lakes and major rivers in the Midwest states to test for the presence of Asian carp environmental DNA (eDNA). This is one of the technologies that the Service is using to detect and track Asian carp.

The Service is a committed partner with states and other federal agencies to fight against the spread of Asian carp. 🐉



Biological sciences technician Jenna Merry explains the techniques used to collect water samples, which will later be tested for the presence of Asian carp eDNA. Congresswoman Betty McCollum visited a Service research vessel to see the process firsthand. Garrett Peterson, USFWS



Geneticist Emy Monroe gave Congresswoman Betty McCollum a tour of the Service's recently-opened Whitney Genetics Lab in Onalaska, Wisconsin. The lab processes water samples from the Great Lakes and Midwest states to test for Asian carp eDNA. Garrett Peterson, USFWS

Wild Elk Make Comeback in Missouri

Thanks To A Wildlife Restoration Project Supported by Service Funding

By Joanna Gilkeson
External Affairs

The state of Missouri is actively working on restoring its wild elk population. This year alone, the Missouri Department of Conservation added 40 elk to their newly established herd, including one newborn male calf. A research and management plan for elk is headed up by the Department and University of Missouri to improve reintroduction processes and insure successful elk population management.

So why is Missouri restoring elk to the state? Prior to European settlement, native elk were abundant in Missouri, but by 1865 it was

determined that the population was extinct. Restoring and managing for native species is one of the Department's major responsibilities. In addition, citizens and local conservation groups in Missouri had also been requesting that the state work to restore the wild elk. Not only does the restoration have biological benefits, but this resurgence in interest was also because states, including Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Arkansas, have seen their reintroduced elk populations serve as a tourist attraction for hunters and wildlife enthusiasts. The benefits of restoration can work to the state's advantage as surges of tourism generate increased revenue for local communities.



A collared elk at Peck Ranch Conservation Area. Photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation

Elk Restoration Zone

The 346-square-mile restoration zone covers parts of Carter, Shannon and Reynolds counties and was chosen because of suitable habitat, high public land ownership, low road densities and limited agriculture activity.



A map of Missouri's Elk Restoration Zone.
Photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation

In response to the public interest for elk restoration, the Department conducted an elk reintroduction feasibility study in 2000. The Department determined that elk restoration was feasible in an area around the Peck Ranch Conservation Area, which is made up of three southeast Missouri counties and about 350 square miles of land. Despite interest to restore elk, the project was put on hold due to concerns about lack of suitable habitat and that elk could carry chronic wasting disease which could be passed on to livestock or wildlife.

The desire for elk restoration in Missouri was reignited by interest from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, citizens, and Conservation Commissioners. Given the successful examples of elk restorations in other states and a better understanding of chronic wasting disease, Missouri began reconsidering the effort to restore wild elk.

On Oct. 15, 2010, the Commission approved a plan to bring 150 elk into Missouri within a year's time. The plan directed the Department to restore elk in an originally

designated elk restoration zone in southeast Missouri. The effort began by capturing wild elk from states with established populations and bringing them into the restoration zone, specifically from Kentucky's wild elk population. Also, Kentucky has no reported cases of chronic wasting disease. In 2011, Missouri captured and released 39 elk, and in 2012, an additional 35 elk were captured and released.

This year, Missouri brought 39 elk from Kentucky. By the time they reached Missouri, the Department had 40 elk. One of the pregnant cows gave birth on the road to Missouri. He was nicknamed "Plus-1".

The Department is learning about the trials and tribulations of elk reintroduction. From the 2011 trapping season to 2012, the Department changed trapping practices like enlarging holding pens and extending the pens into brushier areas to provide more realistic



Sporting fresh tags, these are some of the 2013 delivery of cow elk in the Missouri Department of Conservation holding pen at Peck Ranch Conservation Area. Photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation

habitat conditions for the elk. The Department believes that, as they learn more about elk reintroduction through experience, the changes to the process will bring about positive responses from the elk and reduce the stress they may experience while being transferred from Kentucky to Missouri.

The Department and the University have developed a research and management plan for the reintroduced elk. The results of this research will be critical in guiding successful management of the population in the future. Each elk that has been released has been fitted with a Global Positioning System-Platform Transmitter Terminal (GPS-PTT) tag attached to it. These tags are programmed to collect elk locations at 5-hour

intervals, year round. The GPS-PTT tags will monitor elk movements and these locations will be transmitted from satellite receivers to a website, where it is then downloaded.

The data will result in better informed management decisions for wild elk in Missouri. The data will evaluate elk movement patterns, habitat use, and food habitats, as well as the diet quality of the elk. In addition, the survival and reproductive rates will be tracked in order to follow population demographics of the elk over time. This information will be critical in developing sustainable management techniques and an appropriate elk harvest model. Finally, hormones will be taken from fecal samples to evaluate stress after release and how human disturbances effect the elk.

So far, the collar data have provided some insight into elk behavior in Missouri. The elk are exploring their new home, but stay in close proximity to green browse fields and open woodland habitat. Deer hunters in the area were also asked to carry GPS units in order for researchers to evaluate how elk reacted to human disturbance. They found that most elk movements were short term and that the elk returned to their original locations upon hunters exiting the area. The research has provided some much needed answers, but grant funding for the project will remain intact until June of 2015. This will allow the Department and University to continue collecting elk population information and to develop effective management strategies for the new herd.

The overall goal of this research is to develop effective management strategies for the reintroduced wild elk population in Missouri, and also provide information for other reintroduction efforts, including best practices for elk restoration. This research project was, in part, made possible by a Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program grant. The Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program efficiently and effectively administers grant programs and works with fish and wildlife agencies in a mutually responsible, cooperative and creative grant partnership to protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and habitat resources for present and future public benefit. 🦌



Nicknamed Plus-1, this elk calf was born during the delivery of 39 elk from Kentucky to Missouri. Photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation

The Duck Stamp Legacy Returns to the Midwest this September

By Ashley Spratt
External Affairs

Every fall, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hosts the most prestigious federal art contest in the nation. It's called the Federal Duck Stamp Contest and this year the conservation legacy returns to the Midwest.

In proud partnership with Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, the FWS Midwest Region is honored to host the 2013 Federal Duck Stamp Contest, September 27-28, at Maumee Bay State Park in Oregon, Ohio.

Wildlife artists, hunters, birders and conservationists in the Midwest hold a long-standing place in the history of the Federal Duck Stamp Program. In fact, more than 20 Federal Duck Stamp artists have been from states in the Midwest, and three have been Ohio natives.

As part of this year's contest activities, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge will honor the conservation legacy of one of those individuals - wildlife artist and Ohio native

Bob Hines - through the dedication of the Bob Hines Refuge Ranger Station. The designer for the 1947 Duck Stamp, Hines also dedicated his career to natural resources conservation, working for both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife.

Thanks to continued public support for the Federal Duck Stamp Program, more than 6.5 million acres of wetlands

and wildlife habitat have been acquired or protected as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. In fact, 86 percent of land managed by Ohio's Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge was purchased through Duck Stamp dollars. Buying a Duck Stamp is a simple way to put your stamp on conservation, so don't forget to buy yours today from your local post office, sporting goods store, national wildlife refuge, or online.



Wildlife artist and conservationist Bob Hines designed the 1946-1947 Federal Duck Stamp. USFWS



SAVE THE DATE
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE FEDERAL DUCK STAMP ART CONTEST

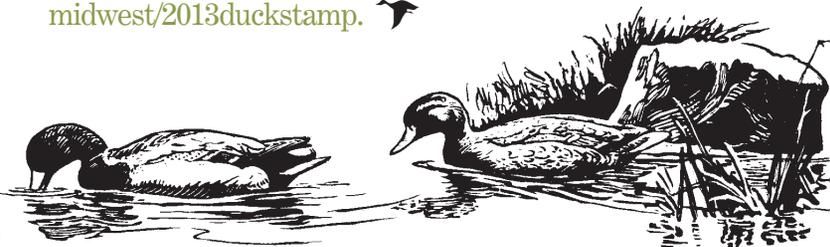
See the Selection of the Next Federal Duck Stamp and Participate in Related Events That will be fun for all ages.

SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2013
MAUMEE BAY STATE PARK
OREGON, OHIO

Viewing of the duck stamp art entries and judging is open to the public. Admission is free.

For more information on the Duck Stamp Program visit:
fws.gov/midwest/2013duckstamp

To learn more about the conservation legacy of Bob Hines and this year's contest, visit <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/2013duckstamp>.



Protecting Ohio's Rare Cliff and Rock Habitat

*By Jennifer Finfera,
Ohio Ecological Services
Field Office*

The state of Ohio has a variety of habitats, including dense forests in the southeast, marshes along the Lake Erie shoreline, and oak openings of the northwest. Another habitat that is rare and yet very important is the cliffs and ledges of northeast Ohio. The moist rock outcroppings with their caves and crevices provide vital habitat for two federally listed species: northern monkshood (*Aconitum noveboracense*) and the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*).

Metro Parks, serving Summit County, protects important ledge habitat in northeast Ohio. One Metro Parks site contains a population of northern monkshood, found in only a few locations in Ohio. This federally listed threatened plant species is found on cool, moist, talus slopes or shaded cliff faces in wooded ravines. It has beautiful purple flowers and grows along the cool, moist base of

a cliff at Gorge Metro Park. Staff of the Metro Parks have been monitoring the plant since the 1990s and have been doing management to improve the population since the 1980s.

In the past Metro Parks have coordinated with the Cincinnati Zoo and their Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife program to produce clones from plant material at their site to be used to augment the population. They have also selectively removed trees in an effort to allow more light to reach the population, installed a fence to reduce herbivory on the plant, and most recently hand-pulled invasive plants to reduce competition. Every year at the beginning of August biologists from the Ohio Ecological Services Field Office join Metro Park staff to monitor the population, recording the numbers of buds, flowers and fruits, as well as each plant's height, and other information about the condition of the plants. This year the plants



The moist rock outcroppings in northeastern Ohio provide habitat for the federally threatened northern monkshood. Julie Reeves, USFWS

looked healthy, although the population numbers had decreased slightly from last year.

In addition to the work that they have done to enhance the population of northern monkshood, Metro Parks have also focused on research and education. They have worked with the Akron Garden Club to sponsor research conducted by the Holden Arboretum and have created a **YouTube video** that discusses the plant and its natural history.

Metro Parks are also actively working to safeguard habitat for the federally endangered Indiana bat. The cliffs and ledges in northeast Ohio provide the cool, moist caves and crevices that many bat species use to hibernate in during the winter when no insects are available to feed on. Indiana bats and other bat species hibernate in groups and predators or humans can create disturbance when they enter a hibernaculum during the winter. This disruption causes the bats to wake from hibernation, requiring them to use vital



Northern monkshood., USFWS

fat reserves they need to continue hibernation for the rest of the winter.

To reduce disturbance, Metro Parks has been constructing gates at the entrances of hibernacula. These gates permit bats to enter and exit freely while blocking predators and human visitors. Last year, Metro Parks identified several potential hibernacula for protection. The Columbus Ohio Field Office helped to fund the

purchase of steel needed to construct one of the new bat gates, while Metro Parks provided the resources to construct the gate. It was completed this summer and will be in place to protect bats returning to the hibernaculum this Fall.

In addition to their work to protect hibernacula, Metro Parks also conduct bat surveys on their properties to document the diversity and abundance of bats. This vital data will provide

the Columbus, Ohio Field Office with an indication of the impacts of white-nose syndrome on bat populations. Metro Parks has collected data prior to the 2011 discovery of white-nose syndrome in the state of Ohio. Comparison of the data before and after 2011 will provide a rare opportunity to document the effects of the disease on bat populations in Ohio.

Biologists with the Columbus Ohio Field Office appreciate all the habitat protection and monitoring that Metro Parks, has conducted and we look forward to continuing efforts to recover rare species. 🦇



Conservation Partners with the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC Unveil New Web Site



By Ashley Spratt
External Affairs

The Plains and Prairie Potholes (LCC) recently released its newly designed public web site: <http://PlainsandPrairiePotholesLCC.org> to promote effective conservation through collaboration and sound science.

The LCC facilitates dialogue among federal, state, non-governmental, academic and private interests to build a collaborative network of knowledge surrounding natural resources challenges impacting the prairie pothole region and

northern Great Plains. LCC partners are working together to bridge the gap between science and natural resources management while tackling broad reaching natural resources challenges like climate change, agricultural practices, water demands, urbanization, and socio-economic implications of conservation practices.

PlainsandPrairiePotholesLCC.org provides natural resources 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 conservation community with the tools necessary to prepare for and address current and future stressors impacting the natural resources of this ecologically diverse working landscape.

Join the Web site's RSS feed by clicking "Subscribe Now!" to have the most current LCC information delivered to your email inbox. 🐦



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists taking plant samples in the Rochester Embayment AOC. USFWS

Another Great Year for the Great Lakes

By Katie Steiger-Meister
External Affairs



Now in its fourth year, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative continues to be an important driver of environmental stewardship in the Great Lakes Basin. Numerous U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service projects and partnerships are supported by the \$40.5 million in GLRI funding the Service received in FY 2013. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

support for the Service now totals over \$190 million.

In celebration of our accomplishments and the hard work of Service staff and project partners, External Affairs is unveiling updated and new outreach tools.

To learn more check out the completely redesigned website at www.fws.gov/GLRI. 🐦

Rocket Netting: Keeping Staff and Wildlife Safe

By Tina Shaw
External Affairs

Staff from around the Midwest Region met recently at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge to sharpen their skills in rocket-netting. Regional Director Tom Melius was on hand to kick off the training in northern Minnesota.

Rocket-netting, and the similar technique known as cannon-netting, is an important method used by biologists and researchers to capture large numbers of wildlife quickly for population studies and

other resource management needs.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists use rocket nets to capture live wildlife to better understand bird migration and habitat use, as well as to measure the overall health of populations in the face of disease. This technique is also utilized to rehabilitate and release wildlife impacted by oil and other contaminants. The most common species captured include waterfowl, shorebirds, cranes, gulls, turkeys and deer.

Regional Director Melius

shared some of his fieldwork experiences with the gathering, noting that the “strength of this technique is built on a team of people who can act safely and quickly together.”

In the Midwest Region, the netting technique is most often used for banding or other monitoring purposes, but is also a quick and safe method for relocation programs. Most often, bait is used to lure the desired species into the netting area while the rocket netter waits in a concealed blind a short distance away, ready to fire weighted nets over the birds.

“Rocket-netting came into existence in the mid-1950s and many of our staff have used this technique to capture various wildlife for research and marking purposes,” explained instructor and acting deputy project leader Wayne Brininger.

Although rocket-netting has been a relatively safe practice with our biologists throughout the years, this training brings the Midwest Region into compliance with the current rocket netting policy that was developed in 2010. 🐦



Regional Director Tom Melius assisted instructor Wayne Brininger in firing the rocket-net, during a demonstration at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. Kelly Blackledge, USFWS

Participants included:

Lowell Deede - Wildlife Biologist, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge

Gina Kemper - Biological Technician, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge

Cody Okeson - Pathways Intern, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge

Tom Cooper - Webless Migratory Game Bird Coordinator, Headquarters

Jessica Dowler - Zone Biologist, Rydell National Wildlife Refuge

Keith Jensen - Maintenance Worker, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Robert McGinn - Midwest Region Safety Manager

Wayne Brininger - Instructor/Acting Deputy Project Leader/Wildlife Biologist, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge

Darrin Franco - Instructor/ Fire Management Specialists, Glacial Ridge and Rydell National Wildlife Refuges

Check out this resource management technique in action: http://youtu.be/_t1DhkYUp7I

The Remarkable Recovery of the Kirtland's Warbler

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

By Chris Mensing
East Lansing ES Field
Office

Forty years ago, the Kirtland's warbler was on the brink of extinction. Today, this lively songbird of northern Michigan's jack pine forests is the subject of a great recovery story -- rebounding from a low of 167 males in 1987 to a record-breaking 2,090 in 2012.

The Kirtland's warbler was among the first animals to gain federal protection in 1967 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act, a precursor to the Endangered Species Act. After the species was listed as endangered, biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, and other conservation organizations met to discuss the threats



Meeting long-term conservation needs for the Kirtland's warbler, like the female pictured here, is the key to delisting the species.
Joel Trick, USFWS

and determine what actions were necessary to recover the species to the point where Endangered Species Act protection was no longer necessary for its survival. In 1974, this group

completed the first-ever recovery plan under the act, which identified habitat loss and brown-headed cowbird nest parasitism as the primary threats to the species.

To address habitat loss, the U.S. Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources initiated a program of jack pine management across the glacial outwash plains

of Michigan's northern lower peninsula. Kirtland's warblers nest in young jack pine trees, but years of fire suppression had allowed the jack pine forests to become too old for the birds to use. To recreate this nesting habitat, foresters began planting and managing large stands of dense jack pine to mimic the effects of wildfire. Over 210,000 acres are designated as Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas and managed on a 50-year rotation, allowing jack pine to grow to commercial size before being cut and replanted.

"The Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas provide nearly 40,000 acres of jack pine habitat suitable for Kirtland's warbler nesting each year," said Christie Deloria, biologist in the Service's East Lansing Field Office. "They also support many other species, including snowshoe hare,

wild turkey, spruce grouse, white-tailed deer, eastern bluebird, and upland sandpiper.”

Another critical recovery tool for the Kirtland’s warbler is a brown-headed cowbird trapping program. The brown-headed cowbird is a nest parasite that knocks Kirtland’s warbler eggs out of the nest and replaces them with their own. Kirtland’s warblers then unknowingly raise the cowbird’s young. Removing cowbirds during the warbler’s breeding season reduces the pressure of nest parasitism and increases the warbler’s nesting success.

Even with these efforts, the Kirtland’s warbler population declined to an all-time low in 1987, restricted to just 22 townships in northern Michigan. Through research and monitoring, the Service, USFS, and MDNR refined management techniques. Over the last 25 years, the population has increased to over 2,000 males in 2012, and has expanded to parts of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, Wisconsin, and Ontario.

Research and management continue across the warbler’s breeding range and in the Bahamas, where the bird spends the winter. The Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Team remains an integral part of these efforts by facilitating coordination among the

Service, USFS, MDNR, and many other individuals and organizations committed to recovering the species.

With the population nearing twice the recovery goal of 1,000 pairs, the challenge now is securing future jack pine management

to promote recovery—the species’ long-term conservation needs must be met before the species can be removed from ESA protection. The Service, with support from USFS, MDNR, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Huron Pines, is on an

initiative that will address this recovery requirement.



In Missouri: Valuable Lessons Learned for American Burying Beetle Recovery

By Scott Hamilton,
Columbia ES Field Office

“The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.”

Henry Ford

We failed. Well, more precisely, we don't know if we failed or not. As Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, we are encouraged to write about our experiences and share them in venues such

as this one. I was planning to write up my positive experience with our second reintroduction of the endangered American burying beetle into southwest Missouri. After

all, our first reintroduction went very well, and our beetles not only reproduced, but they survived a record drought year and their offspring were found this spring.

This year's event started off well: it was overcast and in the 70s, and the soil was still soft from rain a couple days previous. We had double the number of people from last year show up (surprisingly) to handle

rotten quail carcasses and dig holes in the ground. Roughly 60 people came out, most likely drawn in by the aforementioned great weather, but probably also because the St. Louis Zoo had organized such a smooth reintroduction event last year. And things went great this year as well. We dug 300 18-nch holes at three sites on a scenic prairie ablaze with wildflowers. Volunteers placed rotten quail in each hole, followed by a male and female beetle. The holes were re-filled, and scavenger-repelling fencing was staked over the holes. We all retired, in good spirits, to a nearby shelter, where we enjoyed refreshments provided by the zoo.

The next morning, the rains came -- about 1.3 inches in a couple of hours. The zoo staff and I drove out to the three sites to see our holes were filled with water, and witnessed seven beetles tunneling out before they were drowned in their underground chambers. There was nothing we could do, so we left. We had planned to monitor the beetles' reproduction by

digging up some of the holes and counting the larva after 10 days, so that's what we did. We were devastated. Roughly 80 percent of the brood chambers had been abandoned, and 13 beetles were found dead. Of the brood chambers we dug up, only three had broods in them, and those were small in size and number. Our only consolation was that the majority of beetles had apparently escaped, and that it was possible that the beetles could fly back to the abandoned chambers to re-use the quail carcasses.

Failure is something that happens regularly, and it is human nature not to broadcast it. But failure makes for a great teacher, and informs our future decisions. For next year's reintroduction, we will hold two events a couple weeks apart, and put half of the beetles into the ground at each event. This will, of course, double the coordination effort for the supplies, volunteers, beetle transport, etc. However, this extra effort should ensure that an unforeseen event, like this gully-washer, will not impact all of our reintroduced beetles.



Volunteers join staff from the Service and St. Louis Zoo to help reintroduce the American burying beetle into Wah-kon'tah Prairie in southwest Missouri. Rick Hansen, USFWS

