

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

June 2012



Features



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The RD chooses paddling event to kick off summer 2012.

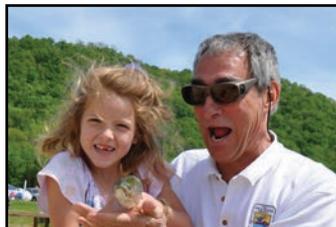
By Tom Melius



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Regional Director Paddling

Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius preps for a day of paddling on the Mississippi River, at a kick off event of the Summer of Paddling 2012. Service photo by Tina Shaw.

Summer 2012

Summer is upon us again, bringing with it a host of opportunities for outdoor recreation. Like the summer sun, activities at field stations will intensify throughout the season. Last month, we helped kick off what promises to be an eventful summer with the Summer of Paddling cooperative event in Minneapolis/St. Paul. I was out on the Mississippi with Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior Will Shafroth and a host of other partners. We paddled past adult and juvenile bald eagles, and watched blue herons fly overhead. I couldn't have been more pleased. It was a wonderful event. Thank you for all who participated. The Summer of Paddling initiative is a joint effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. National Park Service and many other partners. You can read up on the details on page four.

Prior to that event, I participated in the Kids Fishing Day at Genoa National Fish Hatchery. The children were limited to six fish per child, a direct result of a small pond having been stocked with 2500 rainbow trout. In its ninth year, the only downside to the event was that parents were afraid that their children would now have unrealistic expectations for fishing. Page six has the details.

Last month I joined the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in their hosting of its Career Development Internship Program orientation training. The Career Development Internship consists of interns from all around the country with diverse backgrounds that will be working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service this summer at various field stations. The interns are entering their first or second year of college in a variety of majors.

And don't forget, the Wildlife Sport and Fish Recreation 75th anniversary is in full swing this summer. I encourage you to get out and fish, hike, and enjoy fun summer outdoor activities with your children and families, including birding.

Speaking of birding, it is with great pleasure that I welcome Dave Scott to the Midwest Region as the Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs. Dave will be reporting for duty later this summer and I am confident that he will be successful in helping Migratory Birds and State Programs continue to deliver efficient programs that conserve and protect



Above: Marking the kick off, Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius (l), Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior Will Shafroth (c) and Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Refuge Manager Kevin Foerster (r) mark the Minnesota Summer of Paddling pick off event. Service photo by Tina Shaw.

migratory birds and deliver critical funding to state natural resources agencies for on-the-ground conservation.

We will take a closer look at some of these conservation efforts in coming issues of Inside Region 3. Page 10 starts off this series with "Advancing Science to Address Landscape Level Challenges." Increasing our science capacity is a key component to our mission.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention a special honor that we celebrated last month. Two regional employees, Linda Kucera and Ken Kuznia, both located at the Regional Office, accepted Civil Servant of the Year Awards from the Federal Executive Board. See page 12 for details and pictures from the riverfront event.

Have a happy and enjoyable summer.

*Midwest Regional Director,
Tom Melius*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Melius".

Summer of Paddling!

Below: Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Refuge Manager Kevin Foerster, Owner / Founder of Wenonah Canoe and Current Design Mike Cichanowski and Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Refuge Interpretive Specialist Cindy Samples were the pioneering spirits that developed the Summer of Paddling 2012 collaborative. Service photo by Tina Shaw.



May 23 was the Minnesota kick-off for the summer-long paddling campaign. Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior Will Shafroth joined Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius and conservation partners from local state, federal and nonprofits to mark the occasion with a paddle on the Mississippi River. The Summer of Paddling 2012 is a series of events designed to get Americans outside to enjoy the Mississippi River via

canoe, kayak, rowboat or standup paddleboard. Paddlers of any skill level can join a refuge ranger or other trained paddle guides to explore the river and all its wonder on full to half-day trips.

Learn more about the Summer of Paddling 2012 and the events happening near you by visiting: www.SOP2012.org. More than 200 events are catalogued there!

Paddlers will leave land to splash through the backwaters, bayous and braided streams on America's Rivers. But be warned, you might create a lifelong craving for outdoor adventure.

Paddle on!

*--By Kevin Foerster,
External Affairs*

Summer of Paddling!

Below: Staff from across the Department of Interior, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and many nongovernmental nonprofits came out in support of the event. Service photo by Tina Shaw.



Below: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius out on the water for a day of paddling on the Mississippi River, as kick off event of the Summer of Paddling 2012. Service photo by Tina Shaw.



Below: Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Refuge Interpretive Specialist Cindy Samples and others look on at Summer of Paddling 2012 commemoration. Service photo by Tina Shaw.



Below: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius and Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior Will Shafroth sign the Summer of Paddling 2012 paddle. Service photo by Tina Shaw.



Below: Safety first! Service photo by Tina Shaw.



Kids Fishing Day at Genoa National Fish Hatchery Another Great Success

Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin celebrated the ninth year of its annual Kids Fishing Day on May 12. Set to the backdrop of blue skies and sunshine, 190 children and their families came out to enjoy a day of learning, fishing and fun. In the first part of the morning, families rotated between four learning stations that focused on fishing ethics and conservation, fish anatomy, fish behavior and habitats, and jig tying. Kids were then handed fishing poles and set loose on a hatchery pond stocked with 2,500 rainbow trout.

Within minutes of baited hooks hitting the water, the first fish of the day (and for the youngest participants the first fish of their lives), were being reeled in. Most kids easily caught their six fish limit. Volunteers from the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Fisheries Services were on-hand to gut and rinse fish. The Friends Group also provided lunch for the families.

An archery station was a new addition to this year's festivities. After learning basic safety and how to shoot, kids could practice shooting arrows at nearby targets with either recurve or compound bows.

The event was sponsored by the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Fisheries Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery Program offices that they support. These local Fishery offices are the La Crosse Fish Health Center, the La Crosse National Fish and Conservation Office and the Genoa National Fish Hatchery.

--Katie Steiger-Meister,
External Affairs



Above: Midwest Regional Director, Tom Melius, pictured with one of the many young fishers who enjoyed a sunny morning at Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin. Service photo.

Proposed Scouting Merit Badge Brings Reinforcements to the Invasive Species Battle

Boy Scouts from across the Midwest tested a pilot invasive species merit badge on Saturday, May 12, testing themselves in the process. This potential merit badge challenged Boy Scouts to think regionally and globally about the natural world and in the

case of this Litchfield Wetland Management District based event, it also gave land managers help on the ground, removing eastern red cedar. Testing their biological knowledge, on a local, as well as global scale, this merit badge aims to immerse

scouts in understanding why non-native plants and animals are so damaging to native animals and the habitats that they call home.

Scouts came prepared, with a working knowledge of invasives and a fair amount of research already under their belts before their boots even hit the ground. A young scout by the name of Parker said that he loved the actual work of “lopping and dropping” the eastern red cedar. “I like the hands-on part, getting out and learning outdoors is so much better than in a classroom.”

Less than 1 percent of the original tallgrass prairie in Minnesota remains and the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is keenly focused on bringing prairie back. Much of the remaining prairie and its plants and animals are threatened due to loss of habitat, with one of the primary threats being the invasion of aggressive, non-native trees. Boy Scouts involved in this pilot removed thousands of small red cedar trees on two privately owned native prairie sites where the Service has been working with the landowners through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Landowners and Service staff have been working together strategically to restore prairie by removing invading trees, returning fire to the existing grassland and implementing managed grazing where appropriate. The service learning aspect of this pilot merit badge was part of the Districts larger restoration plan, with the Scouts cutting cedar in preparation for planned prescribed burns later this year.

Getting youth outside and learning about restoration work first hand is a personal passion for Litchfield Wetland



More than 100 scouts spent the morning removing invasive eastern red cedar. Service photo by Tina Shaw.

Caves and Bats and... Moving Trucks?

Onondaga Cave State Park was the site of the first annual Missouri Bat Festival, held in April. The festival was prompted by the recent release of the new bat-themed U-Haul moving truck featuring Missouri, Onondaga Cave State Park, and a red bat. Onondaga Cave State Park offered free cave tours, live bat demonstrations by Rob Mies with the Organization for Bat Conservation, kids' activities, vendors, and informational booths on bat ecology, white-nose syndrome, caving and cave mapping. Shauna Marquardt and Paul McKenzie represented the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and helped visitors learn about Missouri bats, habitat and white-nose syndrome.

*Shauna Marquardt
Columbia Ecological Services Field
Office*

Below: Rob Mies, Organization for Bat Conservation, holds "Camilla" the flying fox as part of Missouri Batfest. Right: U-Haul's new moving truck features a red bat. Service photo by Shauna Marquardt.



Scouting Badge Continued.

Management District manager Scott Glup. "This is special for me because my family and I are actively involved in scouting." Glup goes on to explain that, "I'm very youth driven and introducing young conservationists to our newest waterfowl production area is a major goal of mine." The restoration work took place on and around the Randall Waterfowl Production Area, one of the newest waterfowl production areas in the region.

Safety is paramount for all scouting merit badges, but especially true for this merit badge, as the requirements have scouts using restoration tools. Scouts are required to map out the potential hazards they may encounter while they work on these projects, as well as the proper protective

equipment and safe precautions needed to lessen the chances of injury for themselves and their fellow scouts working on the project.

Scoutmaster Brian Reiners, of the North Star Council of the Boy Scouts of North America, worked hand in hand with Glup and other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff to make this weekend-long event a reality. Reiners said that scouts are the perfect partner because, "Scouting is a conservation organization and we believe in putting the outing in scouting." This proposed merit badge is important because, "while we have other biology merit badges, we don't have anything that highlights the problem of invasive species as a centralized issue."

More than half of Minnesota's remaining tallgrass prairie, grasslands and wetlands are on private lands. To meet the challenge of protecting and preserving these remaining habitats and the trust species that call these places home, it is essential that the Service works with private landowners to protect and manage their lands to benefit native species.

Learn more about invasive species: <http://www.fws.gov/invasives/faq.html>
Learn more about the proposed merit badge: <http://www.scoutmasterbucky.com/>

*--Tina Shaw,
External Affairs*

Helping to Prevent the Unintended Effects of Euthanasia Drugs on Wildlife

Prevention is key. Working together with the United States Attorney and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement continues their education effort in support of wildlife as they fight the devastating effects of euthanasia drugs.

United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin John W. Vaudreuil, announced May 2 that an agreement has been reached between the United States and Jennifer M. Primich, 37, of Phelps, Wis., in connection with the accidental poisoning of bald eagles on April 9, 2011, at a landfill near Eagle River, Wis.

Seven bald eagles were found comatose and near death near the landfill on April 9, 2011. An investigation conducted by the Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources established that the eagles were poisoned accidentally after feeding on the remains of euthanized animals. Primich had sent the remains to the landfill on behalf of the Vilas County Humane Society.

On June 1, 2011, after weeks of intensive care, the eagles - three adults and four juveniles - all recovered from the euthanasia toxin and were successfully released back to the wild at Antigo, Wis., by Marge Gibson and her staff at the Raptor Education Group. Thus, the largest and most successful rescue of poisoned eagles came to a dramatic and happy completion.

You Can Help Stop Poisoning in the Future

Euthanasia by sodium pentobarbital injection is a humane way to end

killed after ingestion of pentobarbital residues in the tissue of exposed euthanized carcasses. Exposure of these carcasses is almost always the result of improper disposal.



Above: Last spring, the Raptor Education Group, Inc. completed the largest and most successful rescue of poisoned eagles ever recorded, by successfully rescuing, rehabilitating and eventually releasing back to the wild seven of eight bald eagles that were poisoned at a landfill site in Wisconsin. The Permits Division of Migratory Bird Management (l to r: Jason Mercado, Rachada Weiland, Richard Rottman, Larry Harrison) presented Gibson (c) with an award for her exceptional rehabilitation efforts on behalf of the Service.

the life of a suffering animal and is recommended for many species by the American Veterinary Medical Association Panel on Euthanasia. Ironically, this compassionate act can sometimes have the unintended consequence of causing the premature death of other animals.

Each year a number of bald and golden eagles, other wildlife, and domestic dogs are intoxicated or

If you are a practicing veterinarian or a pet owner faced with the tough choice of euthanizing your family pet, please take preventive measures. Learn more about the secondary poisoning effects associated with euthanasia chemicals: <http://go.usa.gov/Vgh>

Given the serious, but accidental, poisoning of the eagles, the United States agreed that an appropriate resolution of this case was for Primich to complete one hour of community outreach per month over the next 12 months. The outreach will be performed at county humane societies and will address the secondary mortality effects of using euthanasia drugs.

This resolution was the result of a joint investigation between the Wisconsin DNR and the Service.

Learn more about bald eagle recovery and the Service's role in meeting this mission, www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle/recovery/index.html.

The Wisconsin DNR is an important conservation partner of the Service. Learn more about WDNR by visiting, dnr.wi.gov/.

Check out photos of the eagle release and learn more information about REGI by contacting executive director Marge Gibson at 715-623-4015 or by visiting www.raptoreducationgroup.org/

--Tina Shaw,
External Affairs

Advancing Science to Address Landscape Level Challenges

Why Landscape Conservation?

In future editions of Inside Region 3, we will be taking a closer look at landscape conservation cooperatives and how these collaborative partnerships are increasing our science capacity, building and enhancing our mission and the mission of our partner agencies. With increasingly complex stressors impacting our natural resources from climate change, to renewable energy and invasive species, landscape conservation cooperatives are challenging us and our partners to think and work more strategically to conserve and protect our natural resources.

The Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation, in partnership with U.S. Geological Survey, is working to understand one of the many human dimensions of conservation – the economy.

The Economics of Conservation

William Gascoigne with the U.S. Geological Survey is investigating the economic contribution of conserved habitat lands to the economy in the prairie pothole region of the United States. His research shines a light on the linkages between landscape conditions and conditions within surrounding rural communities; linkages that are not always that apparent. This research context has been relatively under studied in the natural resources field, but has emerged due to the current economic climate and competing land uses in the prairie pothole region. The question his research aims to address— how does investing in landscape conservation impact rural economies now and in the future? This information may shed

light on how healthy and diverse landscapes may also contribute to healthy local economies.

The study, which received funding from the Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative in 2011, is breaking ground by illustrating the “socioeconomics” of wildlife conservation, particularly in rural communities heavily dominated by agriculture. It will analyze the dollar value of specific conservation actions by drawing parallels to the value of outdoor recreation, a storied pastime in the dwindling hunting and fishing communities of the prairie pothole region, while considering the value of agricultural interests. Hunters and anglers traditionally have been poised to support habitat restoration and species management efforts because of their direct connection to the landscape. With fewer hunters and anglers relative to the growing

human population, natural resource managers increasingly look to the agricultural community for collaboration and support to maximize habitat quality and achieve other landscape natural resources objectives, while keeping agricultural values intact. The results of Gascoigne’s research can ultimately be used at the local level by natural resource managers and local agricultural interests to inform on the ground conservation and land use activities to maximize landscape conservation objectives.

For more information about this and other projects supported by the Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperative, visit plainsandprairiepotholeslcc.org

--Ashley Spratt,
External Affairs

The value of energy and conservation
Natural resource managers face wind development as a growing change on the landscape. USGS photo.



Study Evaluates Impacts of Bat Banding



Above: Volunteers place a band on the forearm of a little brown bat. Service photo by Kristen Lundh.

White-nose syndrome is a major threat to North American bat populations, and many efforts are underway to study the impacts of the disease on cave-hibernating bats. But a Service-funded study aims to look at the impacts of studying bats by evaluating the effects of marking bats for research. Biologists from the Rock Island Ecological Services Field Office recently took part in the capture and banding of 700 little brown bats at Blackball Mines Nature Preserve in Illinois.

Blackball Mine is one of five sites included in a bat banding study to assess band-related mortality and band retention, and provide information on the movements of Midwestern bats among different hibernacula. Marking and tracking bats has become increasingly important with the appearance of White-nose syndrome. Tracking individual bats to and from their winter and summer habitat could shed light on the movement of the disease through bat populations and also help researchers learn more about management of the disease. This study was designed to help determine whether the marking of the bats may increase mortality.

With this study, researchers are testing the use of banding pliers; the risk to bats of wearing a band; and survival rates of bats handled during hibernation at White-nose syndrome free sites.

The current banding research indicates that there are many variables (species, band type, application procedure) that determine whether a band will stay on the wing of a bat or if the application of the band will cause injury. With the increased losses to bat populations due to White-nose syndrome, any additional bat losses due to banding mortality could be consequential.

Many proposed treatment options for White-nose syndrome would require the handling of bats during the hibernation period. There is some evidence that suggests that handling infected hibernating bats may cause unacceptably high levels of mortality. With the rapid expansion of the disease, the opportunity to collect data from uninfected populations of bats on band related risks and retention and winter handling is quickly running out.

The study is being conducted by Alan Hicks of Vesper Environmental LLC. Staff from the Service's Rock Island and Barrington Ecological Services Field Offices and the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy, the University of Illinois, and other volunteers joined Hicks for two nights of banding in Blackball Mines

Nature Preserve.

Each of the banding sites will be revisited in the winter of 2012 – 2013 and searched for banded individuals. All sites will be visited again in April 2013, when banded bats will be recaptured and data recorded on overwinter mortality due to handling, overwinter band retention, and the extent of movements between nearby sites during the winter.

For details on the banding study, see Kristen Lundh's Field Notes entry in March 2012.

--By *Kristen Lundh*
Rock Island ES FO

**One River,
10 States,
100 Events**

The Summer of Paddling 2012

Visit <http://sop2012.org/> the website for more background information.

A special guide "How to Plan a Summer of Paddling Event" along with promotional materials like brochures, stickers, and posters are available via the website.

A Facebook page "Summer of Paddling – 2012" has also been established.



Midwest Region Employees Receive Civil Servant of the Year Honors

Two Midwest Region U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees were among the 90 winners who received honors at the 35th Annual Civil Servant of the Year Awards Program that took place on May 4 at the Crown Plaza hotel on St. Paul's riverfront.

Linda Kucera, a management analyst in Refuges, and Ken Kuznia, a fiscal grants officer in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Division, both located at the Regional Office, accepted awards from Federal Executive Board Chairperson Dan Luna.

When their names were called, the two were cheered on by a host of Service supporters, including the recently retired, former Assistant Regional Director of Migratory Birds, John Christian. WSFR Chief, Jim Hodgson was on hand, as well.

Kucera serves as Regional executive assistant for the National Wildlife Refuge System leadership team and has served as the executive assistant for the Regional Director, as well. "I feel very honored to be selected, along with Ken Kuznia, as the 2012 Midwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Civil Servant of the Year." Kucera was also nominated as one of five Top Outstanding Winners and Special Honorees, as a finalist for the Administrative award category. "I had no idea. It was a total surprise to me," she said, referring to the latter.

Kuznia was honored for his leadership and knowledge in both conservation and financial programs. He oversees the financial administration of the Service's grants in the Midwest Region. Kuznia has a reputation as the go to expert when it comes to conservation and



Above: Ken Kuznia and Linda Kucera show off their awards. Service photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

federal financial requirements. "It was nice of the Federal Executive Board to hold a lunch and ceremony to recognize the many hard working federal agency employees furnishing public service in Minnesota," Kuznia said.

Former FEB chair, Ray Morris was also honored for his contributions over the years.

Eric Schwartz, Dean of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs gave the keynote address prior to the presentation of the awards. For a job well done, Kuznia and Kucera received plaques engraved with the inscription, "In recognition of your selection for extraordinary service to community

and government," which was presented by Luna.

"It was really cool," Kucera said, commenting on the entirety of the annual event.

For more photos of the event, visit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest/sets/72157629966214263/>

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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

Celebrating on the River



All Together Now

It's a team effort. This special paddling event was hosted and planned by Wilderness Inquiry and the National Park Service. WI is a non-profit organization that helps people from all walks of life to personally experience the natural world.

Learn More: www.wildernessinquiry.org/
Foreground Service photo by Tina Shaw.
Background Service photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

Thank you for entering your journal reports and photographs in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Field Notes (<http://www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/>).