



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

August 2007

About the Cover:

Historic flash floods in southeast Minnesota turned a shallow trout stream that flows into the Winona District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge into a raging river that left these houses dangling precariously over the edge of a newly created river bank.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staff used their training and equipment to help save and protect lives in the flood ravaged areas. Watch for some of their stories in a future issue of Inside Region 3.

- USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler

Upper Miss Refuge Employees Receive Department of Interior Honors

Three staff members of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge were presented with high-level Department of the Interior honor awards at a ceremony held in Winona, Minn., on Aug. 28.

Don Hultman, manager of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and Jim Nissen, manager of the refuge's La Crosse District, both received the Department's Meritorious Service Award and Eric Nelson, biologist for the refuge, received the Department's Superior Service Award.

Hultman has been with the Service for more than 30 years and spent the last five years as manager of the 240,000-acre Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Hultman was recognized for numerous accomplishments throughout his career that includes positions at seven national wildlife refuges, as well as regional and national offices. Hultman was the lead author of both the National Wildlife Refuge System's Vision document and the Upper Mississippi River Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

Nissen has been the manager of the 46,000-acre La Crosse District for 18 years and was honored for his consistently high-level of dedication and accomplishment during his tenure. He has worked for the Service 28 years.

Nissen was recognized for his role in numerous habitat projects including the Pool 8 drawdown in 2000 and 2001 and several Environmental Management Projects benefiting 11,000 acres; his leadership in waterfowl ecology, research, and management; his creative and tena-



- USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler

(left to right) Jim Nissen, Don Hultman and Eric Nelson from the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

cious land acquisition efforts resulting to more than 1,200 acres being added to the refuge; his leadership and contributions for the refuge CCP completed in 2006; and his exemplary and sustained outreach and education efforts with conservation groups, elected officials and the media.

Established in 1948, the Meritorious Service award is the Department's second-highest honor awarded to a career employee. The award recognizes highly superior performance and devotion to duty over a considerable time period. Hultman's and Nissen's awards were signed by Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne.

Nelson has been the senior biologist for the 240,000-acre refuge for 17 years and has worked for the Service for 27 years. He was honored for his lead role in developing the CCP.

Nelson was recognized for his leadership role and high-quality efforts in public involvement, research, and writing for the refuge's CCP, and for his ability to foster positive working relationships during planning with four states and two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers districts. Nelson's work on the CCP was accomplished in addition to many of his duties as refuge biologist.

Established in 1971, the Superior Service Award is granted for significant acts or achievements that help accomplish the Service's or Department's mission. It recognizes particularly difficult or important assignments that reflect well on the individual and the Service. Nelson's award was signed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall. *Don Hultman, Upper Mississippi River NWR*

Outreach at Air Show Reaches Thousands

Hundreds of thousands of aviation enthusiasts from around the world descend on Oshkosh, Wis., each summer to see tens of thousands of aircraft ranging from World War II warbirds to sleek and modern corporate jets, from homebuilt planes to Stealth bombers. The Experimental Aircraft Association's "Airventure," held in Oshkosh every July, is known worldwide as one of recreational aviation's premier gatherings.

For the past several years, Airventure visitors have also glimpsed a distinctive orange and white Cessna emblazoned with the Fish and Wildlife Service logo and sporting the words "Waterfowl Population Surveys" on its nose. This amphibious aircraft (meaning it has floats and wheels for use on water or land) is flown by Service pilot-biologist Fred Roetker, who lands in Oshkosh each year in between traveling his share of the 80,000 miles of waterfowl survey transects the Service covers in Canada and Mexico.

Joined by Midwest Regional Office employees Rachel Levin of External Affairs and Dave Pederson of Federal Assistance, Roetker spends the seven days of the Airventure talking with thousands of visitors of all ages about Service programs ranging from migratory bird management to national wildlife refuges to private lands.

The Migratory Bird Management Office in Washington initially began participating in the Airventure to promote the 50th anniversary of the Waterfowl Population Survey program. Established in 1955, this program combines aviation and science to count ducks and geese and assess the habitat on their breeding grounds. Annual survey results



- USFWS photo by Dave Pederson

Airventure attendees take a look at one of the Service's waterfowl population survey aircraft.

determine the status of North American waterfowl populations, help the Service to set hunting season regulations and guide decisions of waterfowl managers.

The Airventure proved to be such an excellent opportunity to communicate with a large number of people that the Service has returned each year since.

Airventure 2007 ran from July 23 to 30. The weather was typical of southern Wisconsin in July—hot, sticky and occasionally stormy. But that didn't stop some 560,000 people from visiting the Airventure grounds. Some 75,000 of them came through the International Federal Pavilion – the home base for representatives from the governments of the United States, Canada and the Bahamas who discuss their agencies' aviation-related programs.

Just outside the entrance to the Federal Pavilion stood the Service's survey plane, an early 1980s Cessna 206, tail number N728,

loaded down with the tools of the trade for pilot-biologists, including the customized laptop computer that allows them to record their observations using voice-activated software that plugs bird numbers into a database.

Levin, Pederson and Roetker—joined by Region 4 Law Enforcement employees Bill Mellor, John Rayfield and Stephen Clark pilot-biologists John Solberg and John Bidwell stood at the ready to answer questions and discuss the Service's wildlife conservation mission. A number of people asked questions related to aviation and the survey aircraft, but many others wanted to know about what the Service does and how they could contribute to conservation.

Many visitors to the Airventure were from the Midwest Region and they were very interested in the activities of the Service in their own backyards.

Planning is already underway for Airventure 2008. *Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs*

An Unlikely Partnership to Keep Birds and People Safe

The recovery and delisting of the bald eagle is cause for celebration, but one of the lesser-known consequences of the rise in bald eagle numbers is a corresponding rise in the number of eagles encountering plane and helicopter traffic in metropolitan areas.

The number of eagles present at the St. Paul, Minn., downtown airport has been steadily increasing. The most likely reason for the increased eagle presence at the St. Paul airport is proximity to foraging habitat near the Mississippi River.

The Region 3 Migratory Bird Permits Office is collaborating with the Metropolitan Airport Commission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services program, the Minnesota DNR, the National Park Service, the City of St. Paul and the University of Minnesota Raptor Center to reduce the risk of eagle-aircraft encounters at the St. Paul downtown airport.

This collaboration is the first of its kind since the official delisting of the bald eagle in July.

Most eagles that present a threat to public safety at the airport are juveniles. The Region 3 Migratory Bird Permit Office has authorized USDA Wildlife Services to trap and relocate up to five of these juvenile bald eagles per year. The University of Minnesota Raptor Center will work with Wildlife Services to ensure that the eagles are humanely trapped and banded.

These birds will be equipped with bands that use satellite telemetry. Satellite telemetry allows a wildlife researcher to pinpoint the location of an animal tagged with a transmitter, no matter how far away it may be. The transmitter sends sig-



- USFWS photo

A unique collaboration aims to relocate immature bald eagles from the St. Paul airport, where they pose a threat to air traffic.

nals to a receiver aboard one of a number of satellites orbiting the Earth. The bands will give the partners involved in this collaboration the ability to gather valuable data about the dispersal and behavior patterns of the species as a whole.

The Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge will be the release site for eagles relocated

from the airport between July 1 and Jan. 31. This region of Minnesota contains several roosting sites and many local bald eagle populations. In addition, it is an important winter foraging area and there will be many opportunities for the eagles relocated there to interact with eagles from throughout the upper Midwest.

The National Park Service has begun a banding project at the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The Park Service will share banding information with Wildlife Services and the Fish and Wildlife Service. All of the involved parties are eager to witness the results of this collaboration as the science community has much to learn about the behavioral patterns of bald eagles and how these patterns will impact survival ratios.

Region 3 hopes that the data and information collected as a result of this pioneering collaboration will help all of the Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners in developing approaches to curbing bald eagle-public interactions. *Andrea Kirk, Migratory Bird Permits*

National Wildlife Refuge Supervisors Meeting



- USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler

Refuge System Chief Geoff Haskett and Refuge Supervisors from across the nation held a 3-day meeting at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Aug. 21-23.

Something Fishy at the Mall of America

Forty-one children and their families representing 25 states descended on Minnesota's Mall of America on Saturday, July 21, for the 2007 State-Fish Art Expo. Sponsored by Brooklyn Center, Minn.-based Wildlife Forever, the State-Fish Art Expo shone the spotlight on talented young artists who submitted paintings of a designated state fish. The winning painting will be made into the 2007 "Art of Conservation" stamp, which will raise money for environmental education.

Because of our mutual goals of educating young people to be future environmental stewards, the Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Region joined with Wildlife Forever as a sponsor of this year's State-Fish Art Expo. The Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Forever and another event sponsor, the U.S. Forest Service, used ample space in the mall's central rotunda for exhibits aimed at bringing mall-goers closer to their natural world.



- Photo courtesy of Wildlife Forever

Puddles the Blue Goose was on-hand to help congratulate and help hand out rod and reel sets to State-fish art participants.

The expo began with an awards ceremony recognizing all State-Fish Art contest finalists and announcing the 2007 Art of Conservation Stamp winner, Clayton Bowen of Eagle Lake, Texas. Two national winners—Benjamin Berkompas of Washington State and Brie Jenkins, a Junior Duck Stamp contest top finisher from Missouri—also received scholarships from the Art Institutes International Minnesota.

Midwest Assistant Regional Director for External Affairs Jason Holm gave remarks during the awards ceremony and then had the very important job of helping to hand out prizes—including a fishing rod and reel—to each of the students as they walked across the stage.

Following the ceremony, about 75 of the young artists and their parents and siblings headed to Minnesota Valley NWR for an afternoon of fishing. Hosted by refuge staff and with help from several volunteers from the Regional Office, the kids learned fishing basics and ethics and then put their skills into practice at the refuge's bass ponds, stocked for the occasion by Genoa National Fish Hatchery. Refuge ranger Mara Koenig coordinated the successful afternoon of fishing.

Meanwhile, back at the mall, shoppers were drawn to the



- Photo courtesy of Wildlife Forever

State-fish art participants relax and enjoy a day of fishing at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Service's exhibit by large tanks filled with live sea lamprey, native fish and mussels. Adults and children alike gazed with wonder at the lamprey and asked Sea Lamprey Control staffers Robert Kahl and Ryan Schwarb many questions about these destructive creatures.

A cadre of field and Regional Office employees handed out coloring books and brochures and talked with mallgoers about the Service's activities and outdoor recreation opportunities in the Midwest. Staffing the exhibit throughout the day were: Rob Grant (DCR), Dave Radloff (Fisheries), Valerie Redmond (ABA), Dave Hendrix (Neosho NFH), Gwen Kolb (Illinois Private Lands Office) and Rachel Levin (EA). Brandon Jutz (Refuges) turned in a spectacular performance as Puddles the Blue Goose.

More information about the State-Fish Art contest and all of the winning art is on the Web at <http://www.statefishart.com>. Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs

Another Battle in the War against Invasive Mussels

Native freshwater mussels in the Midwest have been under attack for the last 20 years by invasive zebra mussels. Since they were first reported in the Great Lakes in 1985, zebra mussels have marched across all the Great Lakes, down the Illinois River and into the Mississippi River, where unsuspecting barges first transported them into the Upper Mississippi River system.

The relentless bombardment of zebra mussels decimated populations of native mussel such as the federally endangered Higgins eye pearlymussel, causing a rallying of the troops by bringing together the Mussel Coordination Team, comprising multiple federal and state agencies dedicated to countering the attacks of zebra mussels.

It was the formation of the Mussel Coordination Team that brought Genoa National Fish Hatchery into the war against zebra mussels.

Genoa NFH is the first federal fish hatchery in modern times to successfully culture native mus-



- USFWS photo.

Like all freshwater mussels, black sandshells filter drinking water, provide habitat for other fish and provide a host of other benefits to wildlife, aquatic habitat and people.

sels. Techniques used by the Genoa NFH and the Mussel Coordination Team to culture Higgins eye mussels have since been used to culture five additional mussel species.

One of these species is the black sandshell, which Genoa NFH has

been producing for the past four years. Black sandshells have been held and grown in cages in the Ice Harbor in Dubuque, Iowa, for the past two years. Nearly 150 of these mussels were recently transferred to the U.S. Geological Survey's Upper Mid-West Environmental Science Center, where they will be used to test the effects of a chemical that is reportedly toxic to zebra mussel, but harmless to native mussels.

Finding a chemical that will only be toxic to zebra mussels will allow managing agencies to start all-out chemical warfare on zebra mussels and hopefully eradicate these destructive invasives.

This project began as a science support proposal, a process whereby resources from the two sister agencies of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey are pooled to research and solve specific resource-related questions. *Tony Brady, Genoa NFH*

Survey Says: We Love the Outdoors

Midwestern outdoors enthusiasts led the nation in pursuing their favorite activities in 2006, according to preliminary state data from the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*.

A nation-leading 25 percent of residents 16 years of age or older in western North Central states—a section of the country that includes Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri—went fishing or hunting or watched wildlife in 2006.

In the eastern North Central United States—which includes

Great Lakes states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin—17 percent of residents 16 or older hunted, fished or watched wildlife last year.

Sportsmen and women and wildlife watchers in these two areas of the country spent more than \$25 billion on these pursuits.

Want to know more? Find the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation State Overview* report online at: <http://federalaid.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html>

Partners Collect Pre-Drawdown Data for Mississippi River Pool 6

Visitors to Pool 6 of the Upper Mississippi River may have seen and heard some strange activity out on the water in late July. A team of some 60 people in 20 boats could be seen scattered across the area. It might have sounded like the beginning of the old preschooler show “Romper Room,” but with very strange sounding names. A person in the boat would rake up some vegetation and then gaze out over water say “I see Elodea, Sagittaria, Nelumbo... oh, there’s a little bit of Ceratophyllum.” Another person in the boat would busily write all this down.

What visitors were seeing was a group of staff and volunteers from six agencies and one university converged on Pool 6 of the Upper Mississippi River to sample submersed vegetation as part of an Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee effort. After receiving an orientation to data recording, the sampling procedure, and vegetation identification, the 20 boats were loaded with vegetation rakes, transparency tubes, and field guides and sent to sample 15 points per crew along a 14-mile stretch of river.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, Army Corps



- USFWS photos by Cindy Samples

Service and other agency staff and volunteers converge on Mississippi River Pool 6 to conduct a vegetation survey.

of Engineers, Minnesota DNR, Wisconsin DNR, Iowa DNR, and University of Wisconsin – La Crosse all participated in the day’s effort. More than half the personnel were Service staff and volunteers from seven different offices in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. The Service also provided nine of the 20 boats. Jon Sobiech, forester with the La Crescent, Minn., Corps of Engineers Office commented, “Not only are we getting valuable information, but it’s great working with our partners in a setting other than a meeting room.”

Similar efforts were completed in pools 9 and 19 in 2005 and 2006. The study is being conducted to determine the submersed aquatic vegetation condition in various pools of the Mississippi River. The

study looks at not already monitored by the USGS’ Long Term Resource Monitoring Program (LTRMP).

An added incentive to conduct the test on pool 6 is that the Water Level Management Task Force of the River Resources Forum is planning a drawdown in Pool 6, but had very little information on the natural resources in that pool. Previous river drawdowns in other pools included monitoring submersed and emergent vegetation using LTRMP protocols, the same protocols used by this study. The data collected from this study will be used as pre-drawdown submersed vegetation information and will be compared to post-drawdown vegetation.

Four agencies have also committed resources to reviewing and entering the data and efforts are being made to get funding for analysis. Through the participation of the various partners, a relatively large effort for one agency to fit into a tight schedule has turned into a manageable effort when divided among several agencies. *Lisa Reid, Upper Miss NWR - Winona Dist.*



Around the Region



- USFWS photo

Friends of Rydell Refuge Naturalist Dani Olson (right) demonstrates how to use a GPS unit as part of the refuge's geocaching treasure hunt.



- USFWS photo

Minnesota Valley NWR's Vicki Sherry (left) and Denise Gilsrud pose with the Minnesota Twins' mascot "TC Bear" to highlight the State-Fish Art contest during a Twins game.



- USFWS photo

Current and former staff from Genoa National Fish Hatchery (above) joined more than 600 friends, partners, volunteers and dignitaries to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the hatchery on Aug. 8.



- USFWS photo by Steven Kahl

Shiawassee Refuge Biologist James Dastyck sprays a phragmites stand on the refuge. The refuge has an aggressive detection and control program that has kept this invasive plant from degrading the Refuge's wetlands.



- USFWS photo by Paul McKenzie

Columbia FRO Biologist Zachary Beussink identifies fish during an event at the Missouri ES Field Office's Nature Camp.



- USFWS photo

Service Volunteer Morgan Pruitt poses with a bat princess and a bat during the Great Lakes Bat Festival at Indiana State University.

Desktop Confessional

As a young man at a college job fair, **David Hendrix** saw that no one was talking to the person at the Fish and Wildlife Service booth. So he went back to his dorm and put on his one and only tie and jacket then went back to the booth where he visited with the Service representative for nearly three hours. Finally, the Service representative asked if he was interested in going to Minnesota for the summer. Excited about the opportunity, David agreed.

The Service person cautioned David that there weren't many African Americans in this small Minnesota town. David just wanted to know if there were good people at this place and with confirmation of that, his first job was as a summer hire for the hatchery in New London, Minn. He loved it and has now been with the Service for just over 30 years.

David Hendrix is currently manager at the oldest federal hatchery in operation today, Neosho National Fish Hatchery in Missouri. As part of a detail to External Affairs, Tamarac NWR Park Ranger Kelly Blackledge had the pleasure to visit with Mr. Hendrix and ask a few questions.

EA: What did you do before you started with the Service?

Hendrix: I was a cook. I always wanted to be a chef. I worked for my sister who ran a restaurant. We served barbecue, burgers, shrimp and a variety of food. I love to cook.

EA: Where are you from originally?

Hendrix: I grew up on a big farm in Louisiana. We grew cotton, soybeans, fruit trees and pecan trees. We also had sheep, hogs, and a variety of other animals. We had a huge family of 13. We needed that many people to run the farm. I worked hard. We didn't have a lot of money, but with all the gardens we had plenty of food on the table. We were rich with love and family. There

was a lot of discipline and a lot of love.

EA: Why do you think people refer to you as 'Mr. Wonderful'?

Hendrix: Well, I have a smile on my face all the time because I feel blessed to be here. I love what I do. I love people. I wave all time. It's just my personality, it comes naturally. You never know when people are having a bad day. You can make a difference in someone's life every day and sometimes that just takes a wave or a smile.

EA: What makes that cowboy hat so appealing to wear?

Hendrix: You know, your parents are a greater influence than you may think. My father always wore a cowboy hat. I guess it's a tribute to him. I was glad to see the cowboy hat as part of the uniform. It really fits, like the job, it really fits me.

EA: How do you feel about being a minority in the field of fisheries?

Hendrix: I love it. I see this as an opportunity to help other African Americans to find the Fish and Wildlife Service. They don't have to want to pursue a career in it, but I think everyone should know the opportunity is there. I hope to make it easier for the kids that follow me. I like to set a good example and be a role model.

EA: What are your biggest challenges?

Hendrix: It's too easy to just say budget. I think it's personnel. Getting the right people in the right position. If your heart is not into it you may achieve, but not at a high level. You have to find people that want to work as a team. We have a big job to do and you can't achieve it alone, we have to work as a team and with partners. We have a great community here and a friends group that's second to none. You are only as good as the people you sur-



- Photo courtesy Kay Hively, Neosho Friends Group

David Hendrix and Director Dale Hall.

round yourself with. My parents always said, "You are your environment." So I look to have a productive environment.

EA: Your job sounds extremely fulfilling.

Hendrix: My favorite activity we offer is when we take kids fishing. Parents don't always have the time any more to take their kids fishing, so it's the first time for many of them. We have 45 or 50 volunteers that take the day off work and help with this event. The look on the kids faces when they catch a trout is unbelievable. I'm representing the Fish and Wildlife Service everywhere I go. People are always stopping to talk with me. I always make time and listen and folks really appreciate that. I feel you have to be consistent with that smile. It's important to be a part of the community and I'm very involved. I'm blessed to have the opportunity to do this work. I get paid 100%, but I give 200%.

EA: So really, where are all the big fish?

Hendrix: I tell folks you can't fish in the hatchery, but we stock 100,000 pounds of rainbow trout in Lake Taneycomo annually. And that's the connection for people to the work at the hatchery.

Inside Region 3



<http://midwest.fws.gov>

August 2007

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Inside Region 3 is produced by the Office of External Affairs, Region 3, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ft. Snelling, Minn. Items included are selected from reports submitted by Region 3 offices via the Accomplishment Reporting System.

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