



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

July 2009

Midwest Sweeps Jr. Duck Stamp Contest!



“The Midwest has produced some of the most talented wildlife artists in the history of both the Federal and Junior Duck Stamp programs.”

*-- Tom Melius,
Midwest Regional
Director of the
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



Three young Midwest artists placed first, second and third in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Federal Duck Stamp Design contest held at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. on April 22.



This year’s Junior Duck Stamp Contest judges included accomplished wildlife artist Joshua Spies, winner of the 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest.



Lily Spang, age 16, of Toledo, Ohio won first place with her acrylic painting of a wood duck.



what's inside

Editor's Note:

Connecting with nature does not look the same for everyone. Connecting with nature means different things to different people. For some, it's hunting and fishing. For others, it's walking in the woods or on the beach. What does your nature encounter look like? We want to know. To that end, we have added a regular section called Let's Go Outside!

We invite you to submit personal nature encounters as experienced by you and your children, as well as innovative ideas on how to connect with nature. We will run your accounts in this feature segment.

Please submit your youngsters' stories and photos to our regular section: Kid's Corner. Kid's Corner features the nature writing and photographic pieces by the children of regional employees.

E-mail: valerie_redmond@fws.gov with your Let's Go Outside! and Kids Corner articles, photos, journal entries and poems.

On the Cover: **Jr. Duck Stamp Contest Winners:** Lily Spang, age 16, of Toledo, Ohio won first place with her acrylic painting of two wood ducks. Abraham Hunter, age 15 from Vienna, Illinois placed second with his acrylic painting of two golden-eyes, and Rebekah Nastav, age 18, from Amoret, Missouri placed third with her acrylic painting of a common golden-eye.

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By Steve Kahl





Celebrating Our Birds

This spring, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is zoning in on bird conservation and management. Birds are considered indicators of the health of our environment, keep us attuned to changes in habitat and natural resources, and are undeniably linked to our quality of life in the Midwest.

In the United States, there are more than 50 million Americans who call themselves birders - whether expert, amateur or somewhere in between. Birders from across the nation and world flock to National Wildlife Refuges during spring and fall migrations to catch a glimpse at not only the birds, but also the wildlife that call these natural communities home - refuges like Seney, Swan Lake, Minnesota Valley, Upper Mississippi River, and Squaw Creek. All are home to more than 450 bird species that nest, migrate and/or winter in parts of the Midwest. Hunting of game bird species has also always been a strong part of our Midwest heritage and conservation ethic.

In early May, the Service along with multiple bird conservation community partners will celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. This year's theme- "Celebrate

Birds in Culture" - captures the impact and influences birds have on our culture in the Midwest. Minnesota Valley NWR and MN River Valley Audubon will host the first ever Kids' Birdwatching Fair, an opportunity for youth twelve and under to learn the basics of birding from experts in the birding watching community. Other field stations across the region have planned events in their own communities to celebrate the return of migratory birds to their summering grounds.

On Thursday, March 19th, the Secretary of the Interior announced the release of the first ever State of the Birds report at the National Press Club during the North American Fish and Wildlife Conference in Washington, D.C. This report was developed in partnership with multiple public, private and nongovernmental agencies and organizations, all in the business of conserving and managing birds.

The report highlights species population trends in habitats in the Midwest and across the country, from grasslands and wetlands to forests and urban environments. The report highlights the successes, opportunities and challenges associated with conservation and/or management of species in the Midwest region such as Henslow's Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, King Rail,



Trumpeter Swan, Lesser Scaup, Cerulean Warbler, and many others.

In the Midwest, bird population indicators for grassland habitats show the strongest decline over the past 40 years. Some birds that depend on forests are also declining. In contrast, indicators for wetland species and hunted waterfowl show increasing populations during the past 40 years, reflecting a strong focus on wetlands conservation and management. Birds that coexist with humans in urban and suburban areas have also increased since 1968.

I am confident that birds have influenced your lives and your careers in the conservation business in some way. As our environmental challenges morph with changing demands on our natural resources, I encourage you to celebrate the birds in our culture and be motivated to tackle the threats they face through partnerships and shared knowledge.

--Tom Melius
Regional Director



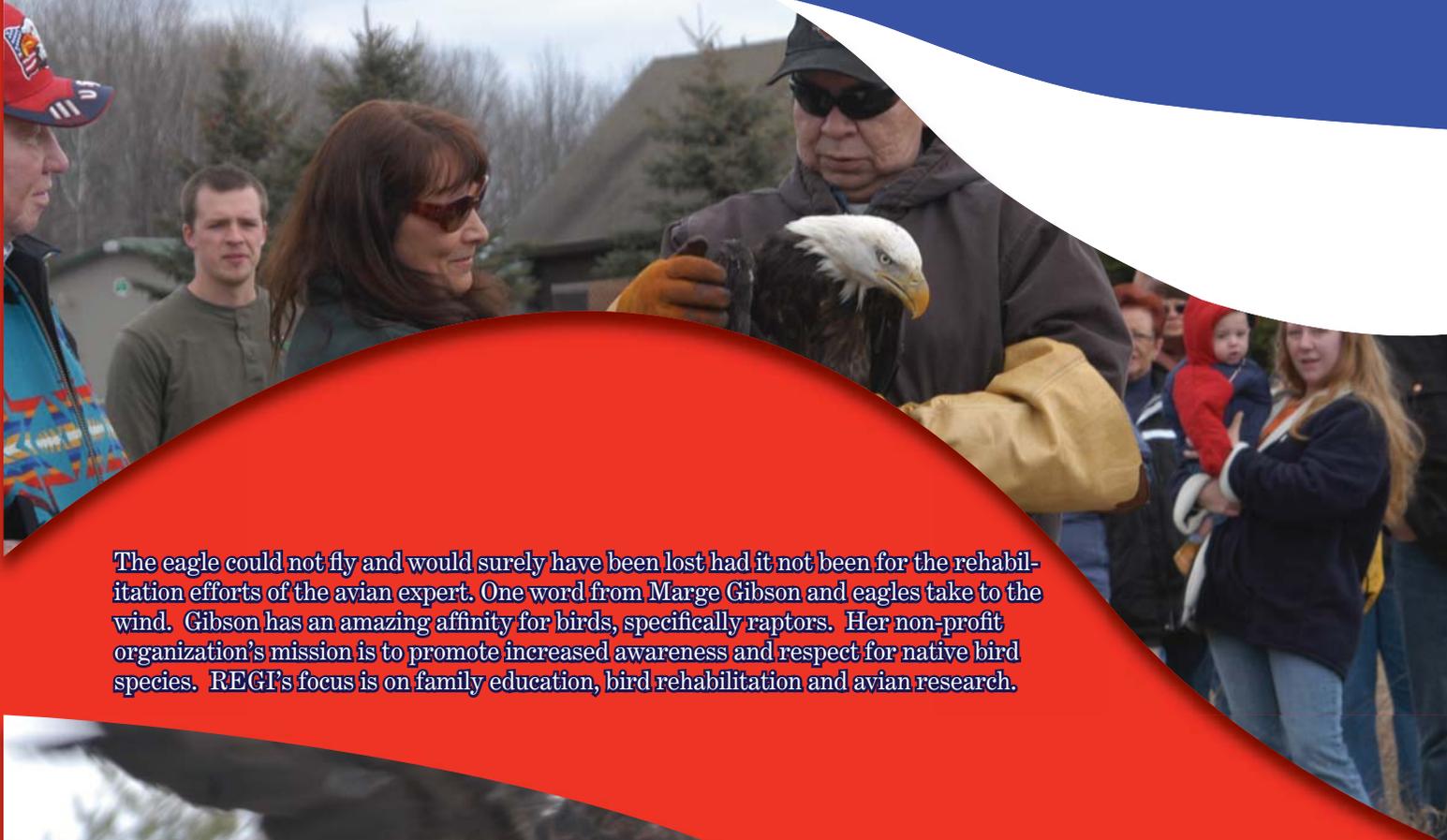
Fly Like an Eagle



Summoned to the side of an critically injured bald eagle, Marge Gibson, founder and director of Raptor Education Group, Inc. (REGI) located in Antigo, Wis. immediately flew into action. The raptor, found on the side of a Highway 55 by Forst County Potawatomi member, Clarence Daniels was suffering from lead poisoning from two pellets lodged in its chest,

Gibson cradled the raptor all night and over many weeks, nursed it back to health. The eagle was released in a ceremony on April 9 at the raptor center, after a tribal tribute.

Fly Like an Eagle



The eagle could not fly and would surely have been lost had it not been for the rehabilitation efforts of the avian expert. One word from Marge Gibson and eagles take to the wind. Gibson has an amazing affinity for birds, specifically raptors. Her non-profit organization's mission is to promote increased awareness and respect for native bird species. REGI's focus is on family education, bird rehabilitation and avian research.



Fly Like an Eagle

Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'
Into the future
Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'
Into the future
I want to fly like an eagle
To the sea

Fly like an eagle
Let my spirit carry me
I want to fly like an eagle
'Till I'm free
Oh, lord, through the revolution

-- Steve Miller Band

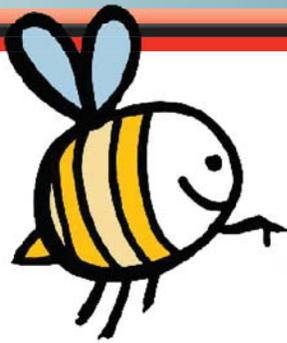
Celebrate Birds in Culture



The State of the Birds: A Midwest Perspective

The State of the Birds report was developed in partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), state wildlife agencies, and non-government organizations (NGOs) as a subcommittee of the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

Birds are considered indicators of the health of our environment. They keep us attuned to changes in habitat and natural resources and are undeniably linked to our quality of life in the Midwest. Approximately 450 of America's bird species occur in the wetlands, grasslands, forests and urban environments of the Midwest. The bird species that follow provide just a few examples of the ongoing successes and challenges of bird conservation and management in the Midwest Region. To see the complete report, visit <http://www.stateofthebirds.org>. --Sean Kelly, Tom Will, Bob Russell, Steve Lewis



The Buzz

Recovery Champions: Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership Communication and Outreach Team

Congratulations to the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership Outreach Team for winning the 2008 Recovery Champions Award! The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership Outreach Team has promoted awareness of the introduced flock of whooping cranes that were trained, when young, to “adopt” an ultralight aircraft and follow the plane from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin to St. Mark’s National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Co-chaired by Joan Garland from the International Crane Foundation and Daniel Peterson from the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, the outreach team works with the media, gives school presentations, staffs information booths at birding festivals, and provides educational materials on the project to the public. Providing insurance against extinction, this flock complements the one that naturally migrates between the Texas coast and Canada. The WCEP Communication and Outreach Team is critical to the success of the recovery efforts of the whooping crane in eastern North America. By advancing public understanding of the ultralight-led migration and Direct Autumn release projects, the COT also advances the protection and restoration of whooping cranes and their habitat.



WCEP COT members educate students in Citrus Springs, Florida, about the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership and reintroduction project along the migration route. (Photo courtesy of WCEP).

Coordinated Bird Monitoring Comes to the Midwest

Bird monitoring can range from status and trend measurement to setting population and conservation goals for species, determining the causes of population changes, and ultimately informing management to make conservation decisions. Midwest Region has now committed to bringing the Coordinated Bird Monitoring philosophy to Service and outside partners alike to monitor birds in a more effective manner and ultimately better inform strategic conservation. These emerging partnerships enable land managers to realize the value of their local contribution to regional bird conservation priorities and objectives, generate enthusiasm to bring conservation partners together in addressing emerging issues, provide a forum for establishing a consistent sampling framework, and enable accountability reporting for conservation activities.

I am very excited to announce an upcoming event that will 1) provide networking opportunities with other bird conservation partners, 2) explore how to use monitoring data for the conservation of birds and their habitats, and 3) help partners take steps to meet priority bird monitoring and conservation needs at multiple scales. These workshops are free (participants need to cover lodging, meals and travel costs) and enable you to help shape the direction of bird conservation in the Midwest. Details can be found below. For more information, please contact Katie Koch by e-mail (katie_koch@fws.gov) or phone (906-226-1249).

Workshop: July 28-29, 2009 in Onalaska, Wisconsin, Stoney Creek Inn and Conference Center (borders of MN and WI) --Katie Koch

Wetlands Conservation Act Aids Bird Habitats



The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, chaired by Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, recently approved nearly \$3 million in federal grants under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) for wetland restoration and enhancement in Missouri and Iowa. Non-federal project partners will contribute an additional \$6.8 million in matching contributions.

"The wetlands of the Missouri Confluence and the Prairie Pothole Region of Iowa contain some of the most valuable habitat in the nation for migrating and wintering waterfowl and other birds in the mid-continental U.S.," said Tom Melius, Midwest Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "By dedicating more resources to habitat restoration in this area, we can ensure continued protection of these species."

The project in Missouri will protect, restore and enhance wetlands and associated habitats in the Confluence Region of eastern Missouri, an area that has lost 90 percent of its historic wetlands. As part of the project, donated conservation easements will protect habitat for more than 250 species of waterfowl, waterbirds and neotropical songbirds that

migrate through or use Confluence wetlands. Habitat restoration and enhancement will benefit large numbers of migrating or breeding waterbirds and shorebirds include king rail, American and least bitterns and black rails, and restored lands will also provide suitable habitat for large numbers of tundra swans and other waterfowl.

The wetland areas in Iowa are also an important part of a major migration corridor for lesser scaup and other waterbirds moving north from the central Mississippi River to the Prairie Pothole Region and other breeding grounds to the north and west.

"Historically, it is one of the most productive portions of the Prairie Pothole Region, and still is an important production area for mallards, blue winged teal, wood ducks and Canada geese, as well as a host of other migratory bird species," said Paul Richert, migratory bird biologist with the Midwest Region. The projects funded by NAWCA grants will expand traditional prairie pothole and tallgrass prairie restoration projects to include several wetlands enhancement projects on shallow lakes and large marshes.

The commission also approved the purchase of wetland habitat that will be added to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge

System to secure breeding, resting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife. These acquisitions are funded with proceeds from sales of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, otherwise known as the Federal Duck Stamp.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the 1934 amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that created the Federal Duck Stamp. For every dollar spent on Federal Duck Stamps, ninety-eight cents goes directly to purchase vital habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission oversees the use of Federal Duck

Stamp funds for the purchase and lease of these wetland habitats for national wildlife refuges. To date, more than 5 million acres of wetlands have been purchased using more than \$650 million in Duck Stamp revenue.

More information about NAWCA grant programs and summaries of the approved projects are available on the Web at: <http://www.fws.gov/bird/habitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>.

For more information about the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture, visit www.uppermissisgreatlakesjv.org.

--Paul Richert, Ashley Spratt



Above: Wetlands of the Missouri Confluence are an important habitat for migrating waterfowl, waterbirds and neotropical songbirds. FWS Photo.

Greatest Diversity at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge



Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas Documents Greatest Diversity at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge was established primarily because of the value of the area's diverse riparian wetlands as a stopover site for birds during migration. However, the refuge provides important habitat for nesting birds as well. In fact, fieldwork for the second Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas (MBBA II), completed 2002-2008, documented that the greatest diversity of nesting birds in the state occurs at Shiawassee Refuge.

Nesting evidence was recorded for a total of 134 species at the refuge. This great diversity is due in large part to the refuge's diversity of habitats. Emergent marsh areas support declining marshbirds including American bittern, least bittern, black tern, common moorhen, marsh wren, and swamp sparrow. Large blocks of contiguous forested wetland provide habitat for hooded merganser, yellow-billed cuckoo, red-bellied woodpecker, yellow-throated vireo, wood thrush, and prothonotary warbler. Sedge wren and bobolink utilize grassland and prairie habitats. American woodcock, willow flycatcher, brown thrasher, and indigo

bunting find quality habitat in shrub dominated areas. All of these species are state-listed or Partners In Flight priority species.

Several other noteworthy aspects of the refuge's avifauna were documented via MBBA II. Three new breeding species for the refuge were confirmed, including sandhill crane, yellow-bellied sapsucker, and vesper sparrow. Wild turkey, pileated woodpecker, and cliff swallow were unrecorded on the refuge during the first atlas, but both are now common refuge breeders. Also, the greatest density of nesting wood ducks in the state was found on the refuge. Sadly, one species that seems to have faded from the refuge's breeding bird community is yellow-headed blackbird. This species was confirmed as a refuge breeder



Above: Sandhill cranes started nesting at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in 2004. Photo by Edward P. De Vries;

during the first atlas, but was not found at all on the refuge during MBBA II.

MBBA II replicated the efforts of birdwatchers in the 1980s who surveyed the entire state in a massive effort to map the distribution of birds which breed in Michigan. This information has proved invaluable to scientists and natural resource managers. The atlas was coordinated by the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Major funding was provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, supplemented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

--Steve Kahl



International Migratory Bird Day

Celebrate Birds in Midwest Culture

This spring, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service zoned in on bird conservation and management. Birds are considered indicators of the health of our environment, keep us attuned to changes in habitat and natural resources, and are undeniably linked to our quality of life in the Midwest.

In the United States, there are more than 50 million Americans who call themselves birders - whether expert, amateur or somewhere in between. Birders from across the nation and world flock to National Wildlife Refuges during spring and fall migrations to catch a glimpse at not only the birds, but also the wildlife that call these natural communities home - refuges like Seney, Swan Lake, Minnesota Valley, Upper Mississippi River, Squaw Creek and Glacial Ridge. All are home to more than 450 bird species that nest, migrate and/or breed in parts of the Midwest. Hunting is also a strong part of our Midwest heritage and

conservation ethic, as we manage populations to ensure they never become threatened.

In early May, the Service along with multiple bird conservation community partners celebrated International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD). This year's theme- "Celebrate Birds in Culture" - captures the impact and influence birds have on our culture in the Midwest.

Here are just a few of the events that took place in the Midwest Region in celebration of IMBD 2009:

- **Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

- At the Kids' Bird Watching Fair, visitors saw live birds of prey, witness bird banding in action, and net insects from the river. Visitors learned about wild bird identification, feeding birds and using field identification guides and binoculars.

- **Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge**

- Volunteers conducted a "May Day" bird count on the refuge.

- **Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge**

- To celebrate the return of millions of migratory birds to their breeding areas, Sherburne hosted guided bird tour including "Songbird Search" for more experienced birders, and "Birds in the Wetlands" for beginner birders and families.

- **DeSoto National Wildlife**



Refuge Visitor Center

- Families discovered and learned about birds and migration through a variety of activities.

To keep informed on IMBD news, sign on to the IMBD Listserv by e-mailing FWS-IMBD-request@lists.fws.gov with the word "subscribe" in the subject line. Historically IMBD was celebrated on the second Saturday of May, but since birds migrate in all seasons, you can hold an event on a day/time that reflects migratory trends in your area. For suggestions on educational activities, visit <http://birdday.org>. Finally, remember to enter your IMBD events in the IMBD Events Registry (http://birdday.org/register_festival.php) to share your event with others.

--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs



IMBD 2009 Factoid: Artist Andy Everson created this year the poster art is a "tessellation," design with non-overlapping, repeating images that form a pattern featuring eight birds. Indigenous Peoples, such as the Navajo, frequently used repeating patterns in their weavings, pottery, and baskets. Many of their designs came from plants, animals, the land, and the sky.



The Midwest Sweeps Junior Duck Stamp Contest

Celebrating Young Artists: Young Artists from Midwest Sweep the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest Ashley Spratt

Three young Midwest artists placed first, second and third in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Federal Duck Stamp Design contest held at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum



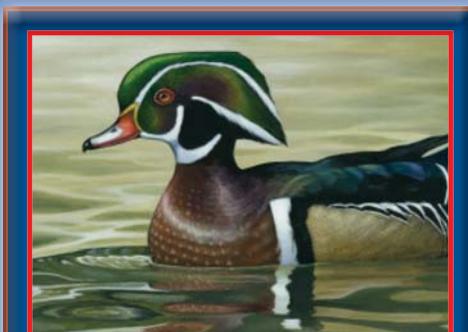
Abraham Hunter, age 15 of Vienna, Illinois, Common goldeneye (Acrylic)

in Washington, D.C. on April, 22. Lily Spang, age 16, of Toledo, Ohio won first place with her acrylic painting a wood duck. The entry, which previously won the Ohio State Junior Duck Stamp Contest, was judged the winner among the Best of Show entries from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Abraham Hunter, age 15 from Vienna, Illinois placed second with his acrylic painting of two golden-eyes, and Rebekah Nastav, age 18, from Amoret, Missouri placed third with her acrylic painting of a common golden-eye. Spang received a \$5,000 award for her winning entry, plus a free trip to

the First Day of Sale Ceremony for the Federal Duck Stamp on June 26 in Nashville, Tenn. The second place artist receives a \$3,000 award and third place received a \$2,000 award.

"The Midwest has produced some of the most talented wildlife artists in the history of both the Federal and Junior Duck Stamp programs," said Tom Melius, Midwest Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Midwest Region, which includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri, hosted the Federal Duck Stamp Contest last year, and will host the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest next April.



Lily Spang, age 16 of Toledo, Ohio, Wood duck (Acrylic)

This year's Junior Duck Stamp Contest judges included accomplished wildlife artist Joshua Spies, winner of the 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest.

"It has been a wonderful experience since winning the Federal contest last year, but it is a relief to be on this end of the contest," said Spies. "I realize how difficult it is to look at 51 pieces of

artwork and narrow it down to just one."

The five-judge panel also included Cindy Tackett with the United States Postal Service, Pam Matthes, retired Deputy Assistant Director of Migratory Birds with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Millicent D. Williams, with the DC



Rebekah Nastav, age 18 of Amoret, Missouri, Common goldeneye (Acrylic)

Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, and Sean Mann, world re-known waterfowl caller:

More than 60 children from St. John's Regional Catholic School participated in art activities and a museum tour led by Fish and Wildlife Service volunteers and Smithsonian Postal Museum staff during the event.

"Every single piece of artwork is phenomenal," said Matthes. "This program is all about the true art of observation, and is one of the best opportunities the Service provides to connect children with nature."

Continued on page 12.

The Midwest Sweeps Junior Duck Stamp Contest

Continued from page 11.

"I have followed this contest for years, and I have noticed the quality of art rises to a new level each year," said Mann. "It is a privilege to witness the reproduction of natural beauty in the entries. I think it tells you a lot about each of the artists."

The 2009-2010 Federal Junior Duck Stamp, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sells for \$5 to stamp collectors, conservationists and the general public was released on June 26. Proceeds from Junior Duck Stamp sales are used to support environmental education efforts and awards for contest winners.

The National Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest is the culmination of a year-long Junior Duck Stamp conservation curriculum used by educators across the nation. This year, more than 28,000 Junior Duck Stamp design entries were entered to be judged during State competitions held from February until mid-April. "Best-of-Show" winning designs were then judged nationally by the five-judge panel.

--Ashley Spratt
External
Affairs



Junior Duck Stamp Winners

Minnesota's Junior Duck Stamp Contest was held March 24 at Burnsville City Hall. Svitlana Poole, a fifth grade home-schooled student, jumped from the edge of her seat in the audience as the judges selected her drawing of a pintail for third place in the fourth-sixth grade category. Svitlana said she enjoys sitting at the lake and practicing drawing the water. Joseph, Svitlana's brother, won first place for his drawing of a ruddy duck in the Kindergarten- third grade category. Mara Poole, Joseph and Svitlana's mother, said, "This is a talented group of children - the number of hours spent on each piece of artwork is phenomenal."

Best of Show Winners in the Midwest

Rachel Thelen, age 17, Park Rapids, Minnesota, Cinnamon Teal (Acrylic)
Lily Spang, age 16 of Toledo, Ohio, Wood duck (Acrylic)
Yi Li, age 17 of Ann Arbor, Michigan, Harlequin duck (Oil)
Abraham Hunter, age 15 of Vienna, Illinois, Common goldeneye (Acrylic)
Alicia Borton, age 17 of Clemens, Iowa, Mallard pair (Acrylic)
Rebekah Nastav, age 18 of Amoret, Missouri, Common goldeneye (Acrylic)
Yvette Bauer, age 17 of Richland Center, Wisconsin, Wood duck (Acrylic)

Seth Spradlin, age 18, of Westfield, Indiana Green-winged teals (Acrylic)

The Midwest Region would like to extend a special thank you to all Junior Duck Stamp State Coordinators for their hard work in preparing for this spring's contests:

State Junior Duck Stamp Contest Coordinators:
Mara Koenig at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Rebecca Hinkle at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
Doreen Van Ryswyk at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Becky Goche at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge
Daniel Peterson at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge
Joe Bauer at Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Cyndi Duda at Chicago Ecological Service Field Office
Tim Haller at Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
Donna Stanley at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Spotlight

Distinguished Service

The Saginaw Bay Resource Conservation and Development Area presented the 2008 Distinguished Service Award to Michelle Vander Haar in recognition of her distinguished and dedicated service in improving the quality of life in the Saginaw Bay Watershed.

As the Private Lands Biologist at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Vander Haar has made many significant contributions to the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of wildlife habitat and water quality in the watershed. She has coordinated the restoration of hundreds of acres of wetland and grassland and miles of riparian habitat through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Further, she has formed a multitude of partnerships and leveraged resources to secure North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants and Service Challenge Cost Share Grants. In addition to improving wetlands, grasslands, and riparian habitats, these grants have gone toward removing fish barriers and eradicating invasive species.

A project of particular pride to Vander Haar has been working with schools to connect children with nature. Vander Haar has worked with several schools to restore small wetlands on their property. These wetlands serve as laboratories and study sites to support delivery of the school's curriculum as well as places for individual nature study and exploration. This project also provides trunks of study materials, including ID guides, binoculars, magnifying boxes, dip nets, curriculum

guides, and more to make the sites true outdoor learning centers.

Vander Haar has served on several coalitions. She contributed substantially in the formation and rapid development of the Cass River Greenway program and has been awarded for her contributions to the Rifle River Watershed Restoration Committee. She has served for several years on the Wildlife Task Group of the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network. Vander Haar also provides technical assistance to the USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service toward implementing the Conservation Reserve Program and Wetland Reserve Program.

Vander Haar also makes important contributions right at Shiawassee Refuge. She has been instrumental in developing a unique partnership with the Michigan Department of Corrections to create a source of native plants of local genotype and ecotype for refuge habitat restoration projects. Through this partnership, seed was collected from 52 species of wildflowers, grasses, and sedges from the refuge. This seed was processed and propagated by inmates at the Saginaw Correctional Facility's horticulture program. As a result, over 40,000 seedlings were produced in 2008. Vander Haar also coordinated the restoration of 138 acres of prairie and 13 acres of wetland on the Sawatski Tract. Further, she helped out with refuge events such as the annual Open House, Kids Free Fishing Day, the Junior Duck Stamp competition, and the goose hunt. --Steve Kahl



Above: Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge Private Lands Biologist Michelle Vander Haar doing good things for wildlife. Photo by Edward P. De Vries.

MoBCI wins National Award

This Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) group was initiated by Charlie Scott, one of the visionaries. Shortly thereafter, Scott nominated Kelly SrigleyWerner to serve on the Steering Committee as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) representative. The group has accomplished much in such a short time. They have worked to incorporate PFW funds into the grant program when there were shortfalls in the MoBCI grant allocation and ensured that projects meet the parameters of the PFW program and addresses the needs of Service trust species. For their tireless efforts, the group was presented with a national award. --Kelly SrigleyWerner

Refuge Spotlight

Birding on Refuges

Relatively undisturbed, and built around historical migration stopover points, the lands and waters that make up your National Wildlife Refuge System provide protected habitat for more than 700 species of migratory birds, waterfowl, shorebirds, and grassland birds across the country.

Birders from across the nation and world flock to National Wildlife Refuges during spring and fall migrations to catch a glimpse at not only the birds, but also the wildlife that call these natural communities home. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) along with multiple partner organizations and agencies joined forces in 2006 to develop a National Wildlife Refuge System Birding Initiative and Birders Team, and are working together to build quality visitor experiences on refuges for birders and wildlife viewers.

The Birders Team is made up of expert birders, biologists, refuge managers, visitor services staff, conservationists, and members of the business community all dedicated to strengthening the relationship between National Wildlife Refuges and the birding community.

“There are more than 50 million Americans that consider themselves part of the birding community- whether at an amateur or expert level,” said Jim Leach, Midwest Region Refuge Supervisor. The Birders Team is working to expand the opportunities that National Wildlife Refuges offer to those 50 million Americans who make birding a part of their lives. “Growing that connection between refuges and birders also ensures continued conservation of the birds, and the

habitat they depend on for survival.”

Midwest Region Visitor Services Supervisor Maggie O’Connell says that wildlife photographers and observers, including birders, make up 75 percent of visits to National Wildlife Refuges. “The sounds, colors and movements of birds really engage people in a very unique way that is different from other wildlife viewing,” O’Connell said.

The Service partnered in 2008 with Cornell Lab of Ornithology to share information and resources on education, citizen science, and conservation programs. For example, the Service is providing information and resources for field stations to implement BirdSleuth, an inquiry-based science education curriculum. BirdSleuth uses a web-based program, eBird, to engage both children and adults in bird research on refuges.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Citizen Science Programs, from Project Feeder Watch to Celebrate Urban Birds, allow people from across the world to participate in real research that benefits the species in their local communities. National Wildlife Refuges can use these programs to teach students about the scientific process, from making observations and collecting data to data analysis and drawing conclusions. eBird allows birders to record online bird sightings at refuges, and keeps a running tally of bird populations throughout the year at a given refuge. This data in turn helps scientists analyze migration trends and informs conservation efforts for resident bird populations.

As part of the Birding on Refuges initiative, eighty refuges across the country were given field guides



Pelican and egret. Photo credit: Stan Bousson

and binoculars to loan refuge visitors, thanks to contributions for Vortex Optics and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishers. The Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, located at the tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, loans binoculars and bird identification guides to birding visitors year-round. “The refuge acts as an avian migration funnel, hosting thousands of songbirds, raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and monarch butterflies that rest and feed before continuing their journeys to southern wintering grounds,” said Dorie Stolley, Visitor Services Manager at the refuge. “The new binocular and field guide lending program allows for a successful birding trip in any season!”

Birders and wildlife observers are being encouraged to contribute to their National Wildlife Refuge System by purchasing a Federal Duck Stamp. “One of the best ways for birders to give back to the birds they know and love is to buy a Federal Duck Stamp,” Leach said. The \$15 investment goes directly toward permanently protecting wetlands, grasslands



Refuge Spotlight

Birding on Refuges

and other habitat on the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) system. The most successful conservation program in U.S. history, the Federal Duck Stamp has helped generate more than \$700 million to purchase and protect more than 5.2 million acres for the benefit of migratory birds and resident wildlife. As part of the Birding Initiative, each region now has two portable banners for loan to encourage refuge visitors to purchase Duck Stamps.

Bob Russell, biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region, and expert birder, has been an avid birder since grade school, and was exposed at an early age to birds in both an urban and a rural setting. "Growing up in the Chicago area, I would see goshawks drop into my backyard," Russell said. "My dad, a science teacher, would also take me out to grandpa's farm to go birding." Russell has traveled far and wide as a birder and biologist, and offers up his expert opinion on some of the birding hotspots in his neck of the woods.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (Ohio)

Rated as one of Birder's World readers top 15 birding hotspots in the country, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in northern Ohio welcomes birding enthusiasts during the spring as migratory waterfowl and songbirds pile up on the south end of Lake Erie. Just 15 miles east of Toledo, Ottawa NWR sits on a small fraction of what once was the 300,000 acre Great Black Swamp, and is recognized as an Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy.

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge (Minnesota)

Forty percent of waterfowl in the United States use the Mississippi Flyway, and nestled right along this avian corridor is the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. "During spring migration, you can see upwards of 3,000 bald eagles and during late fall, around November, you can see upwards of 20,000 tundra swans," Russell said. More than 20 percent of the entire eastern tundra swan population uses the refuge as a staging area.

Seney National Wildlife Refuge (Michigan)

Seney National Wildlife Refuge, a popular tourist area in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, hosts a mosaic of birds and wildlife, with more than 96,000 acres of diverse habitat ranging from marsh, swamp and bog to grassland and forest. "Seney is a great place for a wildlife drive - you can see nesting loons, yellow rails, sandhill cranes and trumpeter swans all in one visit," Russell said. Seney is well-known for its Trumpeter Swan recovery program which began in the 1990s, and has brought the endangered species back from near extinction.

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge (Missouri)

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge was established as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. Located in Northwest Missouri, the refuge comprises more than 7,000 acres of loess hills, woodlands and grasslands. Squaw Creek is known for its remarkable display of hundreds of

thousands of snow geese during spring and fall migration. "The sound of nearly half a million snow geese can be deafening and even intimidating, but the sight is remarkable, and it makes Squaw Creek a sure birder's favorite," Russell said.

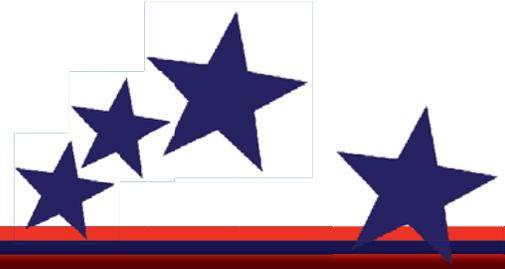
Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge (Minnesota)

"Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota is a new hotspot for both birders and wildlife watchers," Russell said. Glacial Ridge NWR, located in northwest Minnesota, recently acquired more than 15,000 acres of native tallgrass prairie and more than 8,000 acres of wetlands. "Visitors have a chance to see not only rare prairie birds, like the federally endangered prairie chicken, but also larger land mammals like the occasional moose and or timber wolf."

The National Wildlife Refuge System offers a network of diverse habitats that provide homes and resting places for more than 700 species of birds. Birding is a growing recreational activity for children and adults alike, and offers quality outdoor experiences for people of all demographics. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Birding on Refuges Initiative and Birders Team will continue to explore new ways to engage and facilitate quality outdoor experiences for birders and wildlife viewers on these public lands.

--Ashley Spratt,
External Affairs

Return of the Warbler!



The Return of the Warbler

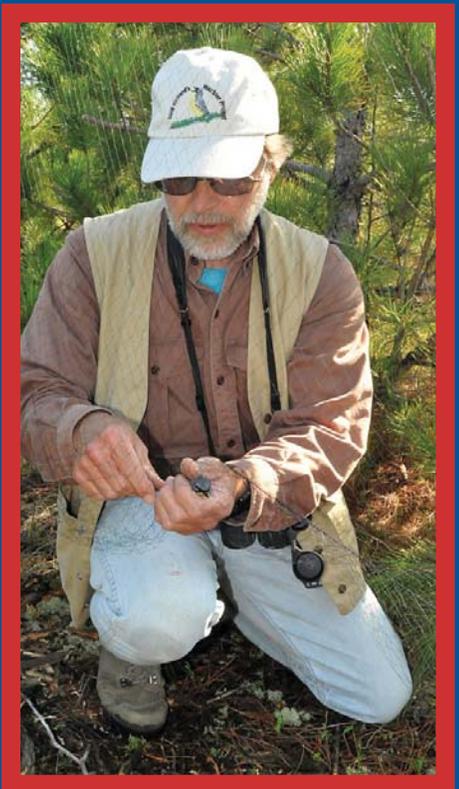
Monitoring of a new population of Kirtland's warblers in Wisconsin has begun to pay off, with at least five of the seven color banded birds present at the Wisconsin breeding site in 2008 returning to the site in 2009. Color banding was conducted in 2008 to facilitate monitoring of the nesting area, and to learn more about the movements and return rates of these pioneering birds. Observations of color banded birds could also yield important information on how birds identify and utilize new nesting areas. Green Bay Field Office biologist Joel Trick and retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) biologist Ron Refsnider recently captured and color banded two additional male Kirtland's warblers at the Adams County, Wisconsin site, bringing the total number of banded males currently at the site to seven. The Plum Creek Timber Company assisted by allowing the banding operations to occur on their lands.

Of the seven male Kirtland's warblers captured at the Adams County site in June 2008, one was already banded, having been previously captured and banded in March 2008 on the Bahamas wintering grounds. This same bird has again returned to Wisconsin in 2009,

having made the 3000 mile round trip to the Bahamas at least twice. In addition to the Kirtland's warblers present in Adams County, another male was also captured at a site in Marinette County, Wisconsin. This bird was also already wearing color bands, having been banded in April 2009 in the Bahamas.

Banding each bird with a unique combination of color bands allows us to track warbler movements on both the wintering grounds and the breeding areas, and to determine the locations of the territory of each male. Through time, being able to identify individually marked birds could provide insight into the mechanisms that allow Kirtland's warblers to find and utilize new nesting areas, which could then assist ongoing and future conservation efforts. Conservation efforts that benefit Kirtland's warblers are also expected to result in similar benefits to numerous other local nesting bird species, including multiple species identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan.

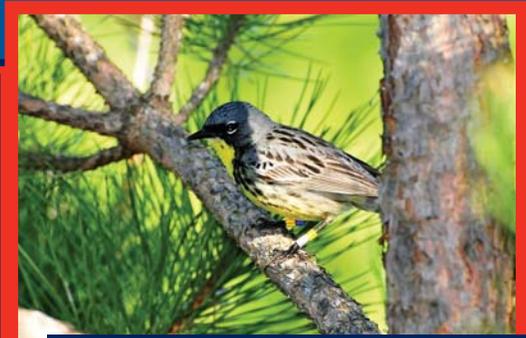
--Joel Trick, R3-Green Bay FO



Above: Retired Service biologist and current volunteer Ron Refsnider removes a Kirtland's warbler from a mist net during banding operations. Photo by Joel Trick.



A newly banded male Wisconsin Kirtland's warbler just prior to release. Photo by Joel Trick.



Above: This male Wisconsin Kirtland's warbler that was originally banded in the Bahamas has returned to the Wis. breeding site for the second straight year. Photo by Joel Trick.

Civil Servant of the Year Marianne Dahl



Every year the Federal Executive Board of Minnesota honors federal employees whose outstanding performance have earned them the distinguished title of “Civil Servant of the Year”. For a combined forty years of dedicated work to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and other federal agencies, Marianne Dahl was honored at this year’s program held on Friday, May 8, at the Sheraton Hotel in Bloomington, Minn.

Dahl began work as a GS-2 with the Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (USDA ASCS) office after graduating from high school. After six years, ASCS transferred to Kansas. During this transition period, Dahl took a job with USDA Food and Nutrition Service, which was the predecessor of the food stamp program.

After ten years with USDA, Dahl was offered a personnel job with the Service. She has worked in several departments

including, IT (formerly ADP), Safety, Engineering, and the Budget and Administration program (ABA) where she serves as secretary to the Assistant Regional Director, Chris Jensen.

ensured that her work is completed on time and without errors. As a well-respected and experienced lead for several members of an administrative support team, one of her best attributes is her willingness to stop what she’s doing and help her fellow employees.

Below: Dahl (L) receives a 40 Years of Service Award from Chris Jensen (C) and Tom Melius (R). USFWS Photo.



Left: Dahl (R) celebrates 40 years of service at a party with co-workers. USFWS Photo.

Below : Dahl addresses friends and family at the celebration. USFWS Photo.



Dahl has been instrumental to the success of ABA, which includes HR, IT, Contracting, Engineering and Finance. She does an excellent job keeping upper management up to date on issues affecting the program. Dahl has

Dahl’s strong customer service skills feature her meticulous attention to detail, her ability to follow through on assignments, and her great team-player attitude. Dahl takes the initiative to identify issues on her own and takes appropriate action to achieve quality end results.

Please take a moment to congratulate Dahl on her outstanding efforts and her proud representation of the Service.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Civil Servant of the Year Awards

Six U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional employees received graduation honors for completing the Federal Outreach and Leadership Development Program (FOLD) at this year's Civil Servant of the Year award program held on Friday, May 8, at the Sheraton Hotel in Bloomington, Minn. Sponsored by the Federal Executive Board (FEB), the program's mission is to identify and assist in the development of future federal executive leaders. Mat Weber, Lauretha Randle, Rich Weigel, Greg Westfall, Laurie Lewis, and Deb Peterson participated in the initial pilot program.

The program was a year long effort where the students would meet once a month, the last four of which were spent with prominent leaders in the community. The group visited the state capital, where they visited with the governor's advisor, the Regional Director equivalent for the USDA Department of Agriculture and a Fort Snelling Wing Commander (934 Airlift Wing) for the Air Force Reserves, among others. In addition to individual local leaders, the students also had access to an eight person leadership panel. The leaders were peppered with questions on the details of how they made it to their current positions, the steps they took, and what their leadership styles were.

"I thought it was a very cool program! Very informative!" said Matt Weber, one of the students who participated in this year's program.

The 2nd program begins in late summer. For more information contact Tiffany Mulvihill at 612-713-7200 or visit: <http://www.doi.gov/febtc/fold.htm>.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Service biologist, Jennifer Szymanski was also a Civil Servant of the Year award winner. Szymanski has distinguished herself through her excellent and innovative work in the Endangered Species Program. She has utilized the newest technological and scientific tools to increase productivity. Szymanski volunteered to involve herself in a number of time consuming tasks including a complex Endangered Species rule making while maintaining her current workload. While performing at the highest level, she continued to be trained in Structured Decision-Making techniques which she utilized heavily during this past year. Szymanski has become an instructor in teaching the Structured Decision-Making techniques to others. Her knowledge, tact, and honesty in dealing with peers and customers sets her a

part as a most effective member of the Fish and Wildlife Service. She is an inspiration to the program in which she serves.

--Excerpted from the Civil Servant of the Year Awards program

Columbia WOW

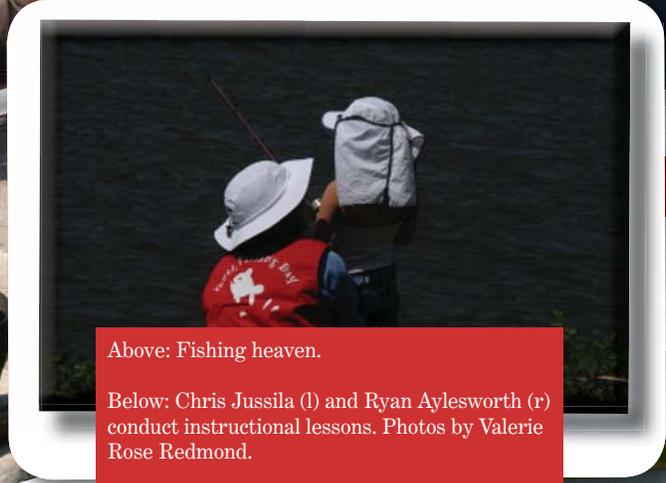
Columbia NFWCO Project Leader Tracy Hill instructed a course titled "Wild Edibles". The course demonstrated to students how to find morel mushrooms in Missouri. It was attended by approximately 20 people ranging in age for 6 years old to 40.

--Tracy Hill,
R3-Columbia FRO

Let's Go Outside: Kids Fishing Day at Minnesota Valley

Below: External Affairs Assistant Regional Director, Jason Holm (L) and Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius (R) joke on who will be the first to lose their bait to a sunny. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

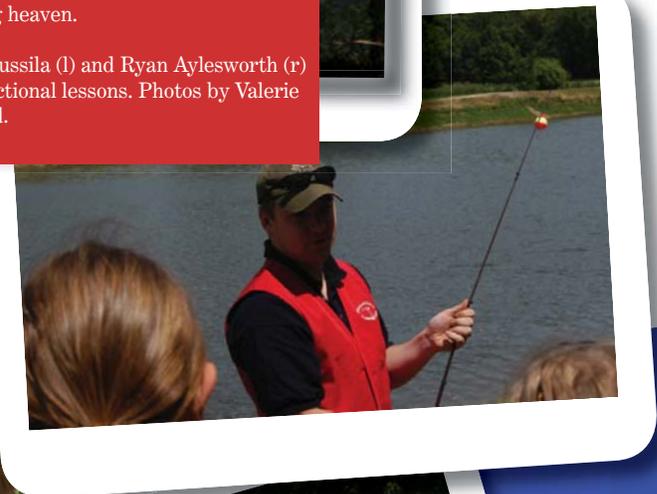
Below: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius shares fresh, hot walleye fish with a young participant. FWS Photo.



Above: Fishing heaven.

Below: Chris Jussila (l) and Ryan Aylesworth (r) conduct instructional lessons. Photos by Valerie Rose Redmond.

Above: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius (L) and a young participant exchange fishing secrets. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.



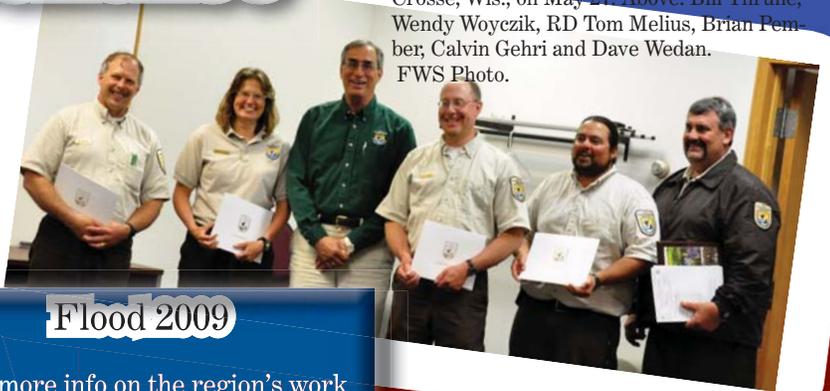
Above: Margie Maldonado (l), Bonnie Podlogar (c) and Beth Ullenberg (r) prepare for the big day. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.



Above: Hanna Beck (l) and Ashley Spratt (r) pose with two young participants. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

Celebrating Excellence

Below: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius presents awards to some of the Region's flood responders at a ceremony held in Detroit Lakes, Minn., on June 18. First row: Rich Papasso, Dave Bennett, Kim Bousquet and Jeff Lucas, back row: John Braastad, Tom Sienkaniec, Greg Knutsen, Sally Zodrow, Michelle McDowell, RD Tom Melius, Angie Larson, Duane King, Ron Beam and Dan Dearborn. FWS Photo.



Below: Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius presents awards to some of the Region's flood responders at a ceremony held in La Crosse, Wis., on May 27. Above: Bill Thrune, Wendy Woyczik, RD Tom Melius, Brian Pember, Calvin Gehri and Dave Wedan. FWS Photo.

Flood 2009

To get more info on the region's work on the floods, visit:
<http://midwest.fws.gov/flood2009>.



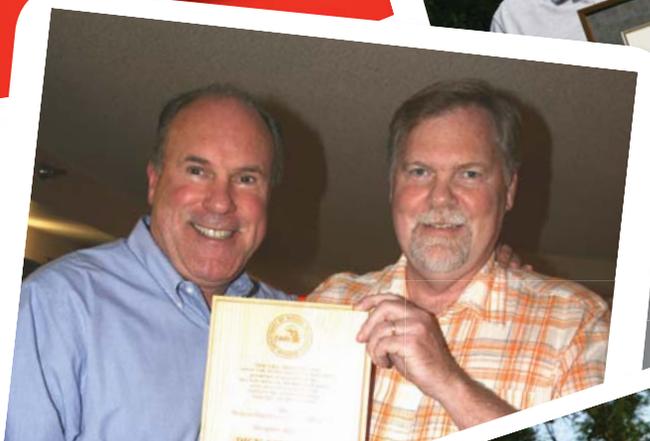
Below: Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge Manager Maggie Anderson (r) presented the first annual Dr. Janet Boe Memorial Award by Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Patty Gillespie (l) presented the award to Maggie Anderson at a ceremony in Mankato, Minn. FWS Photo.



Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Efforts Receives National Award; Above: Acting US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Rowan Gould (right) congratulates Service employee Kelly Srigley Werner (left, past MoBCI Chairperson). FWS Photo.



Left: Don Hultman capped a long and diverse career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by recently retiring from his position as Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Manager. FWS Photo.



Above: Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (left) and long-time Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuges Manager Leader Dick Steinbach. FWS Photo.



Federal Land Manager of the Year

Scott Glup from the Litchfield Wetland Management District has been named the Federal Land Manager of the Year for the Service by the Take Pride in America Awards Program.

Left: Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge Maintenance Mechanic Joe Reid recently ended a long career helping to keep things working on the river. FWS Photo.

National Spotlight

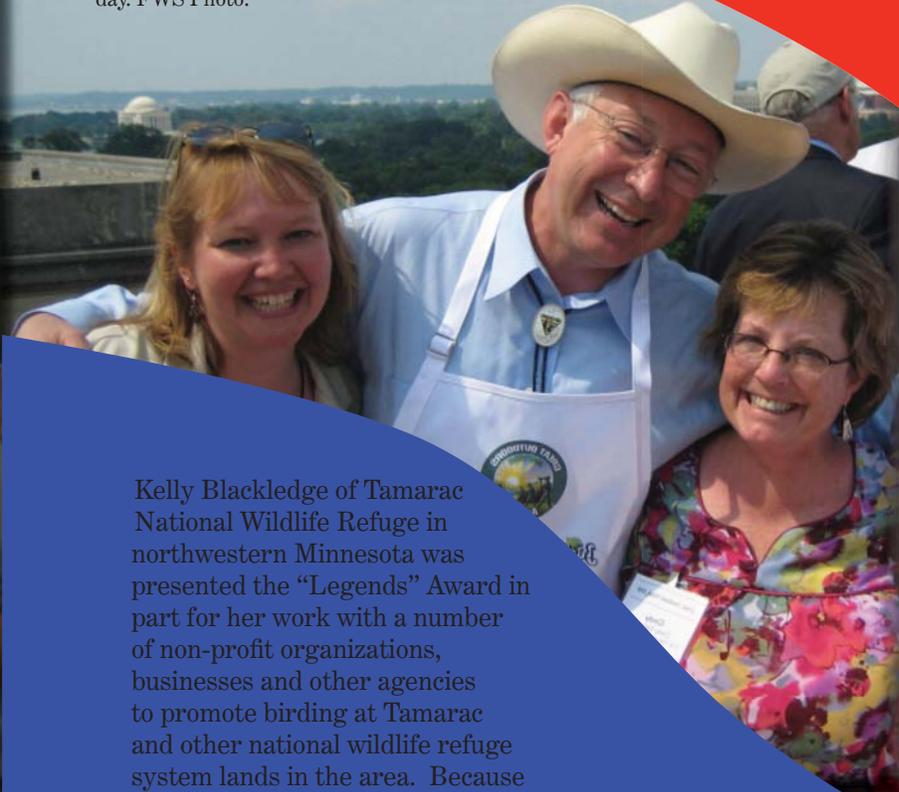
As part of the American Recreation Coalition's celebration of Great Outdoors Week, two of the Midwest Region's own were honored for their creative and enthusiastic approach to getting people excited about our nation's outdoor recreation opportunities. Upper Mississippi

River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge's Cindy Samples was presented a "Beacon" Award and Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge's Kelly Blackledge was presented a "Legends" Award. The two were presented with the awards at a ceremony hosted by Secretary Ken Salazar in Washington, D.C., on Monday, June 8.

Cindy Samples of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife

and Fish Refuge was presented the "Beacon" Award for her use of new technology in creative ways to facilitate visitor enjoyment within the 261-mile long refuge, including cell phone tours, mystery geocaching, and podcasts to help refuge visitors find, discover, and understand the refuge. Especially exciting is her use of geocaching as a tool to reach new audiences and to use "travel bugs" to encourage visitation of many sites on this and other refuges. Her efforts provide information to actual and potential visitors – and even with those who may never have the opportunity to visit the highlighted sites. Cindy's efforts included forging a partnership with the Geological Society of America replicable across the nation.

Below: Kelly Blackledge (l), Secretary Ken Salazar (c) and Cindy Samples (r) after the award ceremony in Washington, D.C., on Monday. FWS Photo.



Below: Cindy Samples (l) and Kelly Blackledge (r) at the awards ceremony held in Washington, D.C. on Monday.



Kelly Blackledge of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern Minnesota was presented the "Legends" Award in part for her work with a number of non-profit organizations, businesses and other agencies to promote birding at Tamarac and other national wildlife refuge system lands in the area. Because of Kelly's work with the local community, the Detroit Lakes/Tamarac Refuge area has become a destination for birders around the country.

For the past six years, Kelly has been co-chair of the Detroit Lakes Festival of the Birds, which is held each May. Over time, the festival has focused not only on outstanding bird viewing opportunities, but has incorporated information about the issues and

challenges of conservation in the area. Since Kelly's involvement with the festival there have been significant improvements in attendance, sponsorship and variety. The festival has expanded from three to four days and grown from 200 to more than 300 participants from most of the 50 states. The event is now considered one of the premiere birding festivals in the state.

Last year Kelly received the

Detroit Lakes Chamber of Commerce Tourism Award for her efforts in promoting the activities in the area. --Cindy Samples
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

Wild Ideas for Summer Reading

Warm weather, sunny skies, and blooming plants are a few of the indicators that it's time to pull out a lawn chair and crack into a good book about the great outdoors. The refuge system lends itself to particularly good outdoor subjects and the volume of titles to choose from in the Region 3 Resource Center includes some great summer reading ideas. Here are a few to consider:

Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn by Hannah Holmes is a view of the backyard from the perspective of its wild inhabitants who think of it as their own. *Wild Refuge*, a classic from 1969 by George Laycock, describes the significance of refuges and wildlife populations by describing specific refuges nationwide.

Fireside Waterfowler: Fundamentals of Duck and Goose Ecology, produced by Ducks Unlimited, takes a seasonal look at habitat, migration, and identification of North American waterfowl populations, and the future of management and conservation. Peter H. Kahn's *The Human Relationship with nature:*

Development and Culture looks at how societies value nature.

Exploring a Sense of Place by Karen Harwell and Joanna Reynolds provides a blueprint for creating your own programs designed to enhance reconnection with Nature.

If creativity inspires you then you might enjoy *River of Words: Images and Poetry in Praise of Water* featuring children's expressions of one of our most precious resources.

The Resource Center collection also includes a wide variety of guidebooks for wildlife, plants, and ecosystems.

This summer, literature connection book bags will be available for you to check out from the Resource Center. These carefully selected titles support Minnesota Valley's environmental education curricula and aids in the discover the habitats and signs of wildlife like aquatic and prairie insects, birds, deer, and frogs. Visit Minnesota Valley and discover

the wonders of urban wildlife! For information contact Judy Geck at Judy_Geck@fws.gov or call 952-858-0731.

Government Vehicle Use

Lynn Kelley, the Midwest Region's Property Disposal Specialist, Contracting and Facilities Management, has received hundreds of questions on government-owned vehicles (GOV) use, making her a resident expert. Below, Lynn covers her top 10 most frequently asked questions.

1. May non-federal employees (state employees, partners, contractors, and volunteers) ride in GOV when conducting official business?

Yes, non-federal employees may ride in GOV when it benefits the government. It benefits the government when the non-federal employee is (a) attending the same meeting in an official capacity (b) attending separate function where their representation would serve the interests of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) (c) business will be conducted during travel and it does not interfere with accomplishing government's primary business (e.g., cause additional time or money); and (d) work is carried out under contractual agreement. **Note:** Even though non-governmental personnel may be on the "same mission," if an accident occurs and a tort claim is filed, the Service will be held liable.

2. Can a contractor or volunteer operate a Service-owned vehicle?

Yes, but only when (a) required to perform the work authorized by a government contract, (b) the operator has written authorization from the Project Leader, a valid State driver's license, and the operator complies with the Service motor vehicle operator requirements.

3. When attending a government sponsored retirement seminar and the government is paying for my spouse to attend. May we travel together in the government vehicle?

No, even though the government has paid the fee for the spouse to attend the seminar; this is not considered "official" government business; A

private vehicle should be used and the employee will be reimbursed based on current costs per mile.

4. While in travel status can I use the GOV to go to the local mall for dinner and a little shopping?

You may use the GOV to travel to a local mall for dinner or shopping **ONLY** when: (a) no other reasonable means of transportation is available (e.g., no hotel limo or public bus or taxi) (b) shopping is necessary to the health and well-being of the employee and (c) travel is within 25 miles from place of lodging.

5. As the driver of GOV, may I have an alcoholic beverage with my dinner?

If you are driving a GOV, you may not drink and drive. This is covered in the current Department of Interior (DOI) Learn, Defensive Driving Course.

6. Since I can't have a cocktail with my dinner can I pick up an alcoholic beverage to enjoy back in my room?

Under no circumstances should alcoholic beverages be transported in GOV.

7. I am on travel duty (TDY) in winter, heading home when bad weather strikes, should I continue driving or check into the nearest hotel?

Use your best judgment. You may stop and check into a hotel until the weather improves. DOI and FWS policy is written to protect the employee.

8. I will be in travel status over the weekend and plan to go hunting with a friend who lives in the area. May I take my firearm with me in the GOV?

You may never carry a personal firearm in a GOV. Only Service firearms may be transported in a GOV for authorized purposes.

9. May I take the GOV home before and after travel?

Yes, when it is more efficient and economical to the government and an authorization is included and approved on the employee's travel authorization.

10. Is smoking allowed in a Government Vehicle?

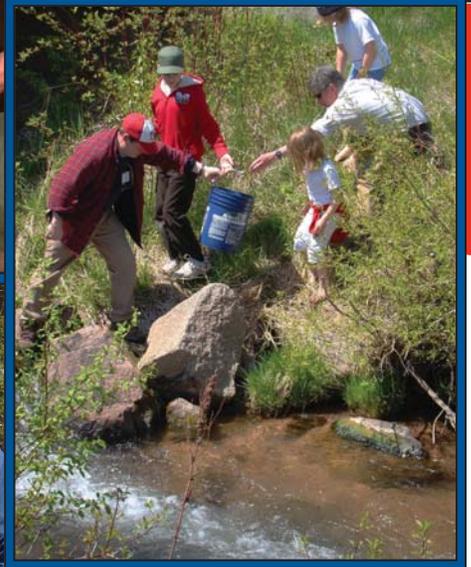
Smoking is not allowed in Region 3 service-owned vehicles.

--Marianne Dahl
Budget and Administration

Chequamegon Bay Birding and Nature Festival in Ashland May 15, 16 and 17

"...in action working with the public at the Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival up in Ashland...excellent work, as always! I'm in the process of drafting my first blog to provide my take on the day!" -- *Mike Weimer, Assistant Regional Director - Fisheries*

Below: Participants enjoy the festival.



Around the Region



Do you remember your first fishing or boating trip? Ask anyone to tell the story of who first took them boating or fishing - chances are good the story is deeply personal and meaningful.....

Frank Stone conducted a day of boat electrofishing to help transfer largemouth bass and assorted pan fish for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Communities (KBIC). In previous years, this fish transfer (to Lighthouse Pond) had been a big success during the KBIC Annual Kids Fishing Day. The small pond is located adjacent to the tribal PowWow grounds and serves as a great location to add a fun day of fishing to all the other activities associated with this very special event. Below: Frank Stone holding some of the largemouth bass to be transferred to Lighthouse Pond during KBIC Kids Fishing Day Activities. --Frank Stone, R3-Ashland FRO, FWS Photo.



Members of Columbia NFWCO, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge partnered to conduct spring sampling of DeSoto Lake and install an expanded vegetation growth study. Located on the Iowa Nebraska border, 25 miles north of Omaha, DeSoto Lake is a very popular and heavily used natural resource for anglers in the region.

The effort consisted of day and night electrofishing to sample the general fish population in the refuge. The purpose of the sampling event was to understand the current structure of fish populations in the lake and how it has changed over time.

--Aaron Walker, R3-Columbia FRO

Below, a large mouth bass caught while electrofishing at DeSoto Lake. FWS Photo.



Left: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Aleshia Kenney talks to a group of children at the 2009 Quad Cities Earth Week Fair. USFWS Photo,

Above: Cub scouts from Pack 89 in Big Lake look for songbirds on the Wildlife Drive during a birding tour for beginners at the International Migratory Bird Day event at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge on May 9. Photo by Gretchen Starks Martin.



Quotes of the Month

To see the Summer Sky Is Poetry,

though never in a Book it lie - True Poems flee. ~Emily Dickinson

New Species Caught!

Left: On June 5, students from American Indian Magnet, Anishinabe Academy, Kenny Community School, and Red Lake discovered the sport of fishing at the annual Youth Fishing Day held at Minnesota Valley NWR. One lucky student even caught a new species, the elusive milkweed fish! Regional Director Tom Melius was on hand to help with her "catch."

Photo by Kristin Raveling.

L to R: Adjutant General Martin Umbarger of the Indiana National Guard, John Christian and the pilot return from a flyover of the Atterbury Wildlife Management Area. They were reviewing a proposal by the ING to expand their military camp operations while providing offsetting benefits to the State DNR and the Fish and Wildlife Service. FWS Photo.

Left: Regional Director Tom Melius honored Dr. Francesca Cuthbert as a 2008 Region 3 Recovery Champion on April 6, at the University of Minnesota (U of M).

The award was presented in recognition for her achievements in helping recover the Great Lakes Piping Plover through her work at the U of M.

Women Taking the Lead

In celebration of Women's History Month, The Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Women's Program presented Rebecca Otto, Minnesota's State Auditor, a Constitutional Officer elected state-wide and Floriane Robins-Brown, founder and Executive Director/CEO of Nibakure Children's Village. Both women spoke on the 2009 theme of "Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet." The two speakers addressed details on how their gender has influenced and shaped their careers, experiences and opportunities.

The Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Women's Program seeks to raise awareness of the contributions of women, their sacrifices, and the challenges they have faced and continue to overcome.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

